



Exemplification Essay

An exemplification essay uses one or more well-developed examples to support a thesis statement.

Use Examples to Add Interest

Use Appropriate Detail

An essay will be more interesting and appealing if you provide your readers with appropriate detail. For example, you could write a paper about how missionaries have done much to affect and influence different cultures. It is more intriguing, however, to give specific examples of missionaries who have impacted the cultures they lived in, such as Lottie Moon in Asia, Jim Elliot in Latin America, and David Livingstone in Africa.

Use Applicable Examples

Be sure to use examples that are interesting as well as *applicable* to the subject matter in your paper. If your essay is about missionaries who have influenced the cultures they lived in, it is not important to discuss Lottie Moon's height and weight. However, you will want to show specifically how Lottie Moon made a difference in China.

Use Examples to Persuade

Examples can effectively convince your readers that the material presented in your essay is logical and convincing. Using a few excellent, well-developed examples can be much more powerful than several pages of general explanation.

For example, you could write an essay reasoning that the sale of cigarettes should be banned because of the negative effect tobacco has on smokers. However, instead of explaining from your own experiences and observations why it is harmful, you could give other researched and persuasive examples. For instance, you might present evidence that young users have abnormally high heartbeats, lower lung capacity, and more intense asthma. When you use research, you must be sure to give proper credit to your sources.

Use Examples to Test Your Point

You may also use examples to test your thesis and ideas in order to determine if you are making a valid assertion.

Perhaps you are planning to write a paper about how extensive reading, writing, and conversation practice can help strengthen an international student's grasp of the English language. To test your thesis, you should search for instances when you've noticed international students actually improving their language skills. You might remember how your friend, David, considerably improved his vocabulary and sentence structure after going through a period of extensive reading, writing, and conversing with American friends. Therefore, you realize that this example, among others, will support your thesis sentence.

Types of Examples

Brief Examples

Brief examples are helpful because, when gathered together, they serve as evidence for the thesis by covering a wide range of possibilities (possible outcomes).

If you were to discuss the theme of deceit in Shakespeare's plays, you would need to include several examples. Using only one play would show that the theme of deceit is only in one work; whereas, using examples from plays such as Much Ado about Nothing, Macbeth, and Julius Caesar would show the common theme throughout his work.

Extended Examples

Because they include greater detail, extended examples can add distinctness and appeal that brief examples sometimes cannot.

If your thesis is about how a mission organization should be financially supported, an in-depth study of a particular organization would be more useful than several different organizations as examples.

Use Enough Examples

There is no general rule to tell you whether to use one extended example or several brief examples to support your thesis. However, the most common method of developing an exemplification essay is by combining brief and extended examples. Having a few solid examples is better than having many weak examples. Exemplification essays sometimes lend to choppy, disorganized writing. Make sure you choose the best examples and tie them together appropriately.

Basic Structure of an Exemplification Essay

Introduction

State your thesis (See our thesis flyer for more information.)

Body

Support your thesis with examples. There are several ways to do this.

- Each paragraph could be an argument or point supported by small examples.
- Each paragraph could be a developed example that illustrates your thesis.
- Each paragraph could be a separate aspect of one extended example.

Conclusion

Restate your thesis in the conclusion and reiterate your main idea.

Example of an Informal Exemplification Essay

Introduction-Thesis statement: Extensive reading and writing combined with conversation practice can help strengthen international students' grasp of the English language.

Example 1-Yuriko practiced reading and writing but did not have conversation with Americans; her English did not improve too much, and she was still very afraid to speak to Americans.

Example 2-Marcus hated reading English, so he only talked to Americans. His speaking confidence and pronunciation improved, but his grammar was still very basic.

Example 3 –David and Fanny both went through a period of extensive reading and writing while living with American friends. Their vocabulary and grammar improved drastically as did their pronunciation and ease of talking with native English speakers.

Conclusion-In order for international students to improve their English, they need to concentrate on reading, writing, and speaking.

As you expand your informal outline into an exemplification essay, be sure to include vivid details to help support your examples fully.

The creator of this handout consulted *Patterns for College Writing: A Rhetorical Reader and Guide* by Laurie G. Kirszner and Stephen R. Mandell. 7th ed. New York; St. Martin's Press, 1997.