



## DALLAS BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

### Exemplification Essay

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

#### What is an exemplification essay?

An exemplification essay is an argumentative essay that provides examples to prove a point.

#### Things to Keep in Mind

- An exemplification essay begins with a generalization about the topic.
- Once a generalization is chosen, expand upon it with examples that are relevant to the purpose of the argument and increase the integrity of the paper.
- Organize the examples logically.
- Remember, this is a well-researched generalization. Do not jump to a hasty generalization. The audience needs to be able to follow the logic that is used in the paper.

#### Use Examples to Add Interest

##### Use Appropriate Detail

An essay will be more interesting and appealing if the readers are provided with appropriate details. For example, a paper could be written 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 Livingston in Africa.

##### Use Applicable Examples

Be sure to use examples that are interesting as well as *applicable* to the subject matter of the paper. If the 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, it would be beneficial to show, with specificity, how Lottie Moon made a difference in China.

##### Use Examples to Persuade

Examples can effectively convince your readers that the material presented in the 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, an essay could be written that explained that the sale of cigarettes should be banned because of the negative effect tobacco has on smokers. However, instead of explaining from a personal perspective why it is harmful, it would be more productive to use other researched and persuasive examples. For instance, present evidence that young users have abnormally high heartbeats, lower lung capacity, and more intense asthma. Remember to **always** cite the sources used.

##### Use Examples to Test the Point

Examples can be used to test the thesis and ideas in order to determine if the proposed point is a valid assertion.

Perhaps someone is 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 his or her thesis, the writer should search for instances when he or she has noticed international students actually improving their language skills by participating in the suggested activities. The student might remember how a friend considerably improved his vocabulary and sentence structure after going through a period of extensive reading, writing, and conversing with American friends. While this example does reinforce the point, try to avoid relying on too many personal examples.

## **Types of Examples**

### **Brief Examples**

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

If one were to discuss the theme of deceit in Shakespeare's plays, he or she 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 many of his works.

### **Extended Examples**

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

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

## **Use Enough Examples**

There is no general rule to help decide whether to use one extended example or several brief examples to support the 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. Make sure to choose the best examples and tie them together appropriately.

## **Basic Structure of an Exemplification Essay**

### **Introduction**

State the thesis (See the thesis flyer for more information).

### **Body**

Support the 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 the thesis.
- Each paragraph could be a separate aspect of one extended example.

### **Conclusion**

Restate the thesis in the conclusion and reiterate the 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 she avoided having conversations with Americans, so her English did not improve very much.

*Example 2*-Marcus avoided reading and writing, but he did talk to Americans. His speaking confidence and pronunciation improved, but his grammar was still very basic.

*Example 3* -Dr. Patricks and Dr. Fillman did a study on the different ways international students can improve their English. Their study showed that international students are more likely to improve their English through a combination of reading, writing, and conversing in English.

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

As one continually expands the formal outline into an exemplification essay, it is important to remember to include vivid details that help support the examples fully.

Kirszner, Laurie G., and Stephen R. Mandell. *Patterns for College Writing: A Rhetorical Reader and Guide*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997. Print.