

Guidelines for an Exemplification Paper*

Exemplification means using examples to make a general point specific or an abstract concept concrete. Using examples is one of the most common and effective ways of developing ideas in a piece of writing. To be effective, however, examples should be specific, vivid, and representative. Also, remember to provide enough examples to support your point.

How to use examples

A writer may use examples in the following ways:

- To explain and clarify.
If you are writing about an exciting experience, you want your reader to know why the experience is exciting. Use specific, vivid examples that clarify your point.
- To add interest.
When you are reading your paper, put yourself in your reader's place. If you don't find your essay lively and absorbing, your reader probably won't, either. If this is the case, try to add more engaging, interesting examples. Find examples that your reader can identify with.
- To persuade.
You might also use examples to show that what you are saying is reasonable and worth considering. A few well-chosen examples can replace pages of general and often unconvincing explanations.

Organizing an exemplification essay

When you organize an exemplification essay, you might find yourself wanting to use a large number of examples to prove your point. However, if you use too many examples, your paper can end up being a thesis statement with ten or fifteen very choppy paragraphs. The best way to avoid this situation is to use only your best examples, and then develop them fully in separate paragraphs. You might also group related examples in paragraphs, arranging the examples in order of increasing importance.

**(Always check with your instructor for specific requirements regarding your assignment.)*

The above information was compiled from Patterns for College Writing
by Laurie G. Kirzsner and Stephen R. Mandell, St. Martin's, 1998.