

The Definition Essay

□ When you are writing a definition essay you take the term or idea and write about what it is—true meaning combined with what the term means to you.

Three steps to an Effective Definition Essay

- Define the term—true meaning of the word or idea.
 - Present clear and basic information about the term.
 - Incorporate your meaning/feeling on the term with that of facts, examples, or anecdotes that your readers will be able to relate to and understand.
 - Ask yourself, “which examples will best help my readers understand this term? What example would most appeal to my readers? Will a brief story be able to reveal the term’s meaning?”
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Getting Started

- ⑩ Make sure you understand the term before you define it for others.
 - ⑩ Use the dictionary, but DO NOT just copy the definition!
 - ⑩ Explain the term briefly in your own words.
 - ⑩ Make sure you limit your definition before you start defining it.
 - ❖ EXAMPLE: the term “LOVE” can be defined by romantic love, platonic love, or first love—you need to narrow your definition down before you begin.
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Ways to define your term

- ⑩ Define by its **function**: explain what something does or how it works.
 - ⑩ Define by its **structure**: tell how something is organized or put together.
 - ⑩ Define by **analysis**: compare the term to other members of its class and then illustrate the differences. (Characteristics about the term)
 - ⑩ Define by what the term **does not mean**: this distinction can sometimes clarify a definition and help a reader to better understand it.
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The Thesis

- ⑩ The thesis statement of a definition essay usually identifies the term being defined and provides a brief, basic definition.

EXAMPLE: Assertiveness (term) is *standing up for your rights and what you believe in.*
