



**Academic Support Center  
Writing Center**

**Exemplification Essay**

Resources: Remington College

**Exemplification** means to provide examples about something. In this type of essay, examples act as supporting material to explain or clarify a generalization. The key to a good exemplification essay is to use enough detailed and specific examples to get the point across. Examples should be carefully chosen so that they will appeal to readers and help them understand the main point of your essay.

Exemplification essays may contain both **brief** and **comprehensive** examples. **Brief examples** may occur relatively frequently within the essay, with just enough concise details to illustrate clear-cut ideas. **Comprehensive examples** are used to illustrate complex ideas that cannot be adequately explained using brief examples.

**Steps for Writing an Exemplification Essay**

1. Decide on a topic. What generalization do you want to exemplify? If a topic is assigned, most likely you will already have a set of generalizations about it so you can just build your essay from that. If you choose your own topic, you will have to decide on a generalization about that topic that you can support with examples.
2. Determine a purpose. What angle of the generalization do you want to present to the reader? Having a clear purpose will help you choose examples and write your thesis.
3. Think about your audience. How do you think members of the audience feel about the generalization that you are discussing?
4. Make a list of examples related to your generalization. Initially list all examples that you can think of--you will narrow them down later. Include anecdotes (short stories), facts, statistics, and any other types of examples as appropriate.

5. Choose examples from the list that are relevant to your purpose. Make sure that all of the ones you choose support the generalization. Obviously, you do not want to choose examples that contradict your purpose.
6. Write a thesis statement. The thesis statement should state the generalization that you are exemplifying and make it clear that you are attempting to support it with examples.
7. Write an introduction that lets your reader know what to expect from your essay and states the thesis.
8. Write a well-developed body that supports the thesis. The body should fully support the generalization. Each paragraph should directly relate to the thesis. The body will be made up of all the examples you listed earlier.
9. Arrange your examples logically. It may be important to categorize examples if you have a lot of them so that you don't confuse your reader.
10. Use transitional words and phrases to guide readers through your essay.
11. Write a conclusion that sums up the essay's main points and restates the thesis. Remember to make it clear in the conclusion what you want readers to take away with them.

### **Organization**

A fundamental skill in writing this essay is that of organization.

Consider the order in which sub-claims that support the thesis statement are presented in the essay.

Writers call this the order of importance, and three basic methods exist:

1. Chronological
2. Ascending
3. Descending

#### **Chronological Order**

- The ideas are organized with respect to the time sequence.

#### **Ascending Order**

- The ideas are arranged from least significant to most significant so that the reader is left with the strongest point that has to be made.

- The points gradually build up to a powerful, loud crescendo at the end of the essay.

### **Descending Order**

- The main body paragraphs begin with the most compelling reason or point and gradually work down to the least important point.

### **Example Topic:**

Although faulty street lights contribute to neighborhood car thefts, pure forgetfulness gives thieves a prime opportunity to steal cars effortlessly.

If this thesis sentence were in an essay on the reasons cars get stolen, it is plain to see that "driver forgetfulness" could be the biggest reason cars get stolen. Under this claim, the writer could list several concrete examples or illustrations to make this point clear:

1. Drivers who leave their door unlocked
2. Drivers who leave the keys in the seat while they dash into the 7-11 store for a quick candy bar
3. Drivers who leave the keys in the ignition with the engine running

In these 3 internal examples for this paragraph, each is an example of an *increasingly stupid* mistake. The unlocked car is an invitation to steal a car, but the thief has to hotwire the vehicle. In the most severe case of forgetfulness (i.e., stupidity), the driver has practically handed the car over to the thief because the driver would never hear the sound of the engine turning over. Hence, this example shows the ascending order of importance to illustrate examples of driver forgetfulness.

### **Clear discussion**

The topic of this example essay is driver forgetfulness. But such a claim as the three example sentences above is not sufficient on its own. The writer must back it up with evidence. That is where the details of explanation come in. The unlocked door, the keys in the seat, and the keys in the ignition are all examples of forgetfulness (and stupidity, some people might argue). Each of these examples or details needs some explaining, so the writer should elaborate on what he or she means with thorough discussion.