Chapter 14

Definition: Clarifying Terms

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When to Use Definition

For College Writing Assignments
In all classes you will need to define both abstract and concrete terms in discussion and writing. Mastering techniques in defining can save you time and help you get credit for what you know. An identification item on a test requires only a sentence- or paragraph-long definition. An extended discussion of a term can require the bulk of an essay or a research paper.

In Careers and at the Workplace
Whether preparing for a vocation or performing at the workplace, you will encounter terms that are at the center of discussion and, often, debate.

- In career preparation, you will be expected to define your career and relate that definition to your value system. Just what is an accountant, a teacher, a nurse, an oceanographer, a coach, a physical therapist, or a pilot in the context of your anticipated life?
- At the workplace, you may ponder and have to explain terms as difficult as business ethics or integrity and as simple as a product or service.
Most definitions are short; they consist of a synonym (a word or phrase that has about the same meaning as the term to be defined), a phrase, or a sentence. For example, we might say that a hypocrite is a person “professing beliefs or virtues he or she does not possess.” Terms can also be defined by etymology, or word history. Hypocrite once meant “actor” (hypocrites) in Greek because an actor was pretending to be someone else. We may find this information interesting and revealing, but the history of a word may be of no use because the meaning has changed drastically over the years. Sometimes definitions occupy a paragraph or an entire essay. The short definition is called a simple definition; the longer one is known as an extended definition.

Techniques for Writing Simple Definitions

If you want to define a term without being abrupt and mechanical, you have several alternatives. All of the following techniques allow you to blend the definition into your developing thought.

- **Basic dictionary meaning.** You can quote the dictionary’s definition, but if you do, you are obliged to indicate your source, which you should do directly and explicitly. Always give the complete title of the dictionary, such as “American Heritage Dictionary says,” not simply “Webster’s says.” Dozens of dictionaries use the “Webster’s” designation.

- **Synonyms.** Although no two words have exactly the same meaning, synonyms often follow as if in parentheses.

  He was guilty of the ancient sin of hubris, of excessive pride.

- **Direct explanation.** You can state the definition.

  This spontaneous and loyal support of our preconception—this process of finding “good” reasons to justify our routine beliefs—is known to modern psychologists as rationalizing—clearly a new name for a very ancient thing.

  (James Harvey Robinson, “On Various Kinds of Thinking”)

- **Indirect explanation.** You can imply the definition.

  Trance is a similar abnormality in our society. Even a mild mystic is aberrant in Western civilization.

  (Ruth Benedict, Patterns of Culture)

- **Analytical or formal definition.** In using this method, you define by placing the term (the subject) in a class (genus) and then identifying it with characteristics that show how it differs from other members of the same class, as the following examples show:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A democracy</td>
<td>is a form of government</td>
<td>in which voters elect representatives to manage society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A wolf</td>
<td>is a dog-like mammal</td>
<td>that is large and carnivorous, with coarse fur; erect, pointed ears; and a bushy tail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jazz</td>
<td>is a style of music</td>
<td>that features improvisation and performance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Writing Simple Definitions

Complete the following formal definitions.

1. A workaholic is a person
   who lives to work instead of works to live.

2. Dreadlocks is a natural hairstyle in which hair is twisted into long, matted, or ropelike locks.

3. A hawk is a bird of prey that has a short, hooked bill and strong claws.

4. Hay fever affecting the mucous membranes of the upper respiratory tract and the eyes, causing sneezing, running nose, and itchy, watery eyes.

5. A muumuu is a dress made of loose material that hangs free from the shoulders.

6. Bongos are two connected drums that are fine-tuned and played by beating with hands.

7. A patriot is an individual who loves, supports, and defends his or her country.

8. A desert is a large land area that is dry, supports few plants, and has extreme temperatures.

9. Jealousy is a state of mind characterized by envy, suspicion, and fear.

10. Sociology is the study of human behavior with emphasis on the origins, organization, institutions, and development of human society.

Dictionary Entries—Which One to Use

Suppose that you do not know the meaning of the term in italics in the following sentence:

That kind of cactus is indigenous to the Mojave Desert.

As you consider the term in context, you look at the dictionary definitions.

in•di•gen•ous \ in-di’ə-nəs \ adj. 1. Originating and living or occurring naturally in an area or environment. See synonyms at native. 2. Intrinsic; innate. [From Latin indigena, a native. See INDIGEN.]

(American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 4th ed.)

The first definition seems to fit the context of indigenous. It is followed by a reference: “See synonyms at native.” Then you look at the second set of definitions: “In-
trinsic; innate.” The words are synonyms. You can see that only native fits. To provide more information for the reader, the dictionary also presents native with a special treatment of synonyms as indicated by the reference.

Looking under the word native, you find this definition:

**Synonyms** native, indigenous, endemic, autochthonous, aboriginal

These adjectives mean of, belonging to, or connected with a specific place or country by virtue of birth or origin. Native implies birth or origin in the specified place: a native New Yorker; the native North American sugar maple. Indigenous specifies that something or someone is native rather than coming or being brought in from elsewhere: an indigenous crop; the Ainu, a people indigenous to the northernmost islands of Japan. Something endemic is prevalent in or peculiar to a particular locality or people: endemic disease. Autochthonous applies to what is native and unchanged by outside sources: autochthonous folk melodies. Aboriginal describes what has existed from the beginning; it is often applied to the earliest known inhabitants of a place: the aboriginal population; aboriginal nature. See also synonyms at crude.

**Usage Note** When used in reference to a member of an indigenous people, the noun native, like its synonym aborigine, can evoke unwelcome stereotypes of primitiveness or cultural backwardness that many people now seek to avoid. As is often the case with words that categorize people, the use of the noun is more problematic than the use of the corresponding adjective. Thus a phrase such as the peoples native to northern Europe or the aboriginal inhabitants of the South Pacific is generally much preferable to the natives of northern Europe or the aborigines of the South Pacific.

Despite its potentially negative connotations, native is enjoying increasing popularity in ethnonyms such as native Australian and Alaska native, perhaps due to the wide acceptance of Native American as a term of ethnic pride and respect. These compounds have the further benefit of being equally acceptable when used alone as nouns (a native Australian) or in an adjectival construction (a member of a native Australian people). Of terms formed on this model, those referring to peoples indigenous to the United States generally capitalize native, as in Alaska Native (or the less common Native Alaskan) and Native Hawaiian, while others usually style it lowercase.

(American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 4th ed.)

In the synonyms at the close of the entry, did you observe the various shades of meaning, especially the meaning of indigenous and native? A dictionary is an invaluable aid to definition, but it must be used with care if you want to express yourself clearly and precisely. No two words have exactly the same meaning, and a word may have many meanings, some that extend to very different concepts.

**Avoiding Common Problems**

- Do not use the expression is where or is when in beginning the main part of a definition. The verb is (a linking verb) should be followed by a noun, a pronoun, or an adjective.

  **Weak:** A stadium is where they hold sports spectacles.

  **Better:** A stadium is a structure in which sports spectacles are held.
Socialism is when the ownership and operation of the means of production and distribution are vested in the community as a whole.

Better: Socialism is a theory or system of community organization that advocates that the ownership and control of the means of production, capital, land, and so forth, be vested in the community as a whole.

- Do not use the circular definition, a practice of defining a term with the term itself.

Circular: An aristocracy is a form of government based on rule by the aristocrats.

Direct: An aristocracy is a form of government in which the power resides in the hands of the best individuals or a small privileged class.

- Do not define the subject in more complicated language than the original.

Murky: Surreptitious means “clandestine.”

Clear: Surreptitious means “secret.”

- Do not substitute the example for the definition; the example may be excellent for clarification, but it does not completely define.

Weak: Political conservatives are people like William F. Buckley Jr. and Pat Robertson.

Better: Political conservatives are people who are dedicated to preserving existing conditions. Examples of conservatives are William F. Buckley Jr. and Pat Robertson.

Techniques for Writing Extended Definitions

Essays of definition can take many forms. Among the more common techniques for writing a paragraph or short essay of definition are the patterns we have worked with in previous chapters. Consider each of those patterns when you need to write an extended definition. For a particular term, some forms will be more useful than others; use the pattern or patterns that best fulfill your purpose.

Each of the following questions takes a pattern of writing and directs it toward definition.

- **Narration:** Can I tell an anecdote or a story to define this subject (such as jerk, humanitarian, or citizen)? This form may overlap with description and exemplification.

- **Description:** Can I describe this subject (such as a whale or the moon)?

- **Exemplification:** Can I give examples of this subject (such as naming individuals, to provide examples of actors, diplomats, or satirists)?

- **Analysis by division:** Can I divide this subject into parts (for example, the parts of a heart, a cell, or a carburetor)?

- **Process analysis:** Can I define this subject (such as lasagna, tornado, hurricane, blood pressure, or any number of scientific processes) by describing how to make it or how it occurs? (Common to the methodology of communicating in science, this approach is sometimes called the “operational definition.”)

- **Cause and effect:** Can I define this subject (such as a flood, a drought, a riot, or a cancer) by its causes and effects?
• **Classification:** Can I group this subject (such as kinds of families, cultures, religions, or governments) into classes?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A republic</td>
<td>is a form of government</td>
<td>in which power resides in the people (the electorate).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• **Comparison and contrast:** Can I define this subject (such as extremist or patriot) by explaining what it is similar to and different from? If you are defining orangutan to a person who has never heard of one but is familiar with the gorilla, then you could make comparison-and-contrast statements. If you want to define patriot, then you might want to stress what it is not (the contrast) before you explain what it is: a patriot is not a one-dimensional flag waver, not someone who hates “foreigners” because America is always right and always best.

When you use prewriting strategies to develop ideas for a definition, you can effectively consider all the patterns you have learned by using a modified clustering form (Figure 14.1). Put a double bubble around the subject to be defined. Then put a single bubble around each pattern and add appropriate words. If a pattern is not relevant to what you are defining, leave it blank. If you want to expand your range of information, you could add a bubble for a simple dictionary definition and another for an etymological definition.

![Figure 14.1](image-url)
Bubble cluster showing how a term could be defined using different essay patterns.
Order

The organization of your extended definition is likely to be one of emphasis, but it may be space or time, depending on the subject material. You may use just one pattern of development for the overall sequence. If so, you would use the principles of organization discussed in previous chapters.

Introduction and Development

Consider these ways of introducing a definition: with a question, with a statement of what it is not, with a statement of what it originally meant, or with a discussion of why a clear definition is important. You may use a combination of these ways or all of them before you continue with your definition.

Development is likely to represent one or more of the patterns of narration, description, exposition (with its own subdivisions), and argumentation.

Whether you personalize a definition depends on your purpose and your audience. Your instructor may ask you to write about a word from a subjective or an objective viewpoint.

FINDING PATTERNS IN PHOTOS

EXERCISE 2

A Text-Based Activity for Groups or Individuals

At the center of arguments about patriotism is, of course, a definition of the word patriotism. These three photos—two veterans at a ceremony, protesters at a demonstration, and two people voting (with child)—show American citizens in public life. Do all three photos demonstrate parts of a comprehensive definition of democracy or would you exclude one or more? What other components should be added? Complete the outlines (altering them as needed) to show some main characteristics of your definition of patriotism in terms of what it is and is not. Include supporting information under the Roman-numeral headings if you like.

Patriotism is not

I.

II.

III.

Patriotism is

I.

II.

III.
If your instructor directs, write a paragraph or an essay of definition based on the outlines. Consider explaining some of the parts of your definition by using examples from your personal experience or your studies.

Practicing Patterns of Definition

Doing the following exercise will help you remember the patterns of writing used in extended definitions.

Exercise 3

Completing Patterns of Definition

Fill in the double bubble with a term to be defined. You might want to define culturally diverse society, educated person, leader, role model, friend, infatuation, true love, success, or intelligence. Then complete a bubble on the right for each paragraph.
or essay pattern. If the pattern does not apply (that is, if it would not provide useful information for your definition), mark it NA (“not applicable”).

A. Using Patterns in Definitions

- narration
  - description
  - exemplification
  - analysis by division
  - process analysis
  - cause and effect
  - classification
  - comparison and contrast

B. Using Patterns in Definitions

- narration
  - description
  - exemplification
  - analysis by division
  - process analysis
  - cause and effect
  - classification
  - comparison and contrast
Techniques for Introducing and Developing Definitions

Pick one of the topics you selected for Exercise 3: 

A. Place an “X” beside each of the following techniques that might be useful in introducing the topic.

- A question calling for a definition.
- A statement about what the term does not mean.
- A statement about what the term meant originally (etymology).
- A statement about why a definition would help clarify an ongoing public debate.

B. Place an “X” beside each of the patterns that might be used in developing the topic.

- Exemplification
- Process analysis
- Analysis by division
- Cause and effect
- Comparison and contrast

Readings for Critical Thinking, Discussion, and Writing

Reading Strategies and Objectives

Underlining and annotating these reading selections will help you answer the questions that follow the selections, discuss the material in class, and prepare for text-based writing assignments. As you underline and annotate, pay special attention to the author’s writing skills, logic, and message, and consider the relevance of the material to your own experiences and values.

Some selections begin with a Mindset suggestion that can help you create a readiness for connecting with what you are about to read.
Georgia on My Mind

RAY JENKINS

What was it like to be a poor white Southerner in the Old South? Ray Jenkins knows. As you read this selection, anticipate a reading-related writing topic asking you to indicate what it is like to live in your neighborhood or in the neighborhood where your parents grew up.

MINDSET

Lock It In

If you had to give fifteen examples that would collectively define who you are, what would the examples be?

Unless a man has picked cotton all day in August; has sat in an outhouse in 20 degrees in January and passed this time of necessity by reading last year’s Sears Roebuck catalogue; has eaten a possum and liked it; has castrated a live pig with a dull pocket knife and has wrung a chicken’s neck with his own hands; has learned at least a few chords on a fiddle and guitar; has tried to lure a sharecropper’s daughter into the woods for mischievous purposes; has watched a man who had succeeded in doing just that have his sins washed away in the Blood of the Lamb in a baptism in a muddy creek; has been kicked by a mean milch cow and kicked her back; has drunk busthead likker knowing full well it might kill him; has wished the next day it had killed him; has watched a neighbor’s house burn down; has drawn a knife on an adversary in fear and anger; has half-soled his one pair of shoes with a tire repair kit; has gone into a deep dark well to get out a dead chicken that had fallen in; has waited beside a dusty road in the midday heat, hoping the R.F.D. postman would bring some long-coveted item ordered from the catalogue; has been in close quarters with a snake; has, in thirsty desperation, drunk water that worked alive with mosquito larvae called wiggletails; has eaten sardines out of a can with a stick; has killed a cat just for the hell of it; . . . has stepped in the droppings of a chicken and not really cared; has gone to bed at sundown because he could no longer endure the crushing isolation; has ridden a bareback mule three miles to visit a pretty girl who waited in a clean, flimsy cotton dress—unless he has done these things, then he cannot understand what it was like in my South.

EXERCISE 5

Discussion and Critical Thinking

1. This unconventional definition has no stated topic sentence. What is the unstated topic sentence?

2. What is the effect of using one exceedingly long sentence to develop the definition?
3. What pattern of development is featured in this definition?

4. Is there any overall pattern to Jenkins’s use of examples?

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**Tornado**

**MORRIS TEPPER**

A tornado may be identified as a particular kind of whirling, highly destructive wind-storm. Morris Tepper extends his definition so that readers will have a good understanding of the many facets of this phenomenon.

What exactly is a tornado? The general picture is familiar enough. The phenomenon is usually brewed on a hot, sticky day with south winds and an ominous sky. From the base of a thundercloud a funnel-shaped cloud extends a violently twisting spout toward the earth. As it sucks in matter in its path, the twister may turn black, brown or occasionally even white (over snow). The moving cloud shows an almost continuous display of sheet lightning. It lurches along in a meandering path, usually northeastward, at 25 to 40 miles per hour. Sometimes it picks up its finger from the earth for a short distance and then plants it down again. The funnel is very slender: its wake of violence generally averages no more than 400 yards wide. As the tornado approaches, it is heralded by a roar of hundreds of jet planes or thousands of railroad cars. Its path is a path of total destruction. Buildings literally explode as they are sucked by the tornado’s low-pressure vortex (where the pressure drop is as much as 10 percent) and by its powerful whirling winds (estimated at up to 500 miles per hour). The amount of damage depends mainly on whether the storm happens to hit populated areas. The worst tornado on record in the U.S. was one that ripped across Missouri, lower Illinois and Indiana in three hours on March 18, 1925, and killed 689 people. The tornado’s lifetime is as brief as it is violent. Within a few tens of miles (average: about 16 miles) it spends its force and suddenly disappears.

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**EXERCISE 6**

**Discussion and Critical Thinking**

1. Which sentence carries the most basic definition?

2. Which two patterns of development are used throughout this definition?

3. Which of those patterns is used more?
What does macho mean to you? If someone calls you or a person you respect “macho,” are you pleased or offended? Or, are you perhaps unsure and listen on, reserving judgment and trying to determine what the speaker means. The fact is that macho has two distinctly different meanings. This essay gives a Hispanic perspective on the different definitions.

If you are a male and someone calls you macho, are you pleased?

1. What is macho? That depends on which side of the border you come from.
2. Although it’s not unusual for words and expressions to lose their subtlety in translation, the negative connotations of macho in this country are troublesome to Hispanics.
3. Take the newspaper descriptions of alleged mass murderer Ramon Salcido. That an insensitive, insanely jealous, hard-drinking, violent Latin male is referred to as macho makes Hispanics cringe.
4. “Es muy macho,” the women in my family nod approvingly, describing a man they respect. But in the United States, when women say, “He’s so macho,” it’s with disdain.
5. The Hispanic macho is manly, responsible, hardworking, a man in charge, a patriarch. A man who expresses strength through silence. What the Yiddish language would call a mensch.
6. The American macho is a chauvinist, a brute, uncouth, selfish, loud, abrasive, capable of inflicting pain, and sexually promiscuous.
7. Quintessential macho models in this country are Sylvester Stallone, Arnold Schwarzenegger and Charles Bronson. In their movies, they exude toughness, independence, masculinity. But a closer look reveals their machismo is really violence masquerading as courage, sullenness disguised as silence and irresponsibility camouflaged as independence.
8. If the Hispanic ideal of macho were translated to American screen roles, they might be Jimmy Stewart, Sean Connery and Laurence Olivier.
9. In Spanish, macho ennobles Latin males. In English it devalues them. This pattern seems consistent with the conflicts ethnic minority males experience in this country. Typically the cultural traits other societies value don’t translate as desirable characteristics in America.
10. I watched my own father struggle with these cultural ambiguities. He worked on a farm for twenty years. He laid down miles of irrigation pipe, carefully plowed long, neat rows in fields, hacked away at recalcitrant weeds and drove tractors through whirlpools of dust. He stoically worked twenty-hour days during harvest season, accepting the long hours as part of agricultural work. When the boss complained or upbraided him for minor mistakes, he kept quiet, even when it was obvious the boss had erred.
11. He handled the most menial tasks with pride. At home he was a good provider, helped out my mother’s family in Mexico without complaint, and was indulgent with me. Arguments between my mother and him generally had to do with money,
or with his stubborn reluctance to share his troubles. He tried to work them out in his own silence. He didn’t want to trouble my mother—a course that backfired, because the imagined is always worse than the reality.

Americans regarded my father as decidedly un-macho. His character was interpreted as nonassertive, his loyalty non-ambition, and his quietness, ignorance. I once overheard the boss’s son blame him for plowing crooked rows in a field. My father merely smiled at the lie, knowing the boy had done it, but didn’t refute it, confident his good work was well known. But the boss instead ridiculed him for being “stupid” and letting a kid get away with a lie. Seeing my embarrassment, my father dismissed the incident, saying “They’re the dumb ones. Imagine, me fighting with a kid.”

I tried not to look at him with American eyes because sometimes the reflection hurt.

Listening to my aunts’ clucks of approval, my vision focused on the qualities America overlooked. “He’s such a hard worker. So serious, so responsible.” My aunts would secretly compliment my mother. The unspoken comparison was that he was not like some of their husbands, who drank and womanized. My uncles represented the darker side of macho.

In a patriarchal society, few challenge their roles. If men drink, it’s because it’s the manly thing to do. If they gamble, it’s because it’s how men relax. And if they fool around, well, it’s because a man simply can’t hold back so much man! My aunts didn’t exactly meekly sit back, but they put up with these transgressions because Mexican society dictated this was their lot in life.

In the United States, I believe it was the feminist movement of the early ‘70s that changed macho’s meaning. Perhaps my generation of Latin women was in part responsible. I recall Chicanas complaining about the chauvinistic nature of Latin men and the notion they wanted their women barefoot, pregnant and in the kitchen. The generalization that Latin men embodied chauvinistic traits led to this interesting twist of semantics. Suddenly a word that represented something positive in one culture became a negative prototype in another.

The problem with the use of macho today is that it’s become an accepted stereotype of the Latin male. And like all stereotypes, it distorts the truth.

The impact of language in our society is undeniable. And the misuse of macho hints at a deeper cultural misunderstanding that extends beyond mere word definitions.

**Exercise 7**

**Vocabulary Highlights**

Write a short definition of each word as it is used in the essay. (Paragraph numbers are given in parentheses.) Be prepared to use the words in your own sentences.

- subtlety (2)
- recalcitrant (10)
- connotations (2)
- stoically (10)
- alleged (3)
- upbraided (10)
- quintessential (7)
- transgressions (15)
- ambiguities (10)
- embodied (16)
EXERCISE 8

Discussion and Critical Thinking

1. What is Hispanic macho?

2. What is American macho?

3. What other examples of the different definitions of macho can you provide?

4. The author’s father worked “stoically.” What does the word stoical imply about how a person looks at life with its many problems?

5. How does the author relate the word macho to the feminist movement?

6. Would the word patriarch be regarded differently by people with different cultural or political views?

7. What makes the author’s view valuable?

8. To what kind of audience is this piece directed?

Whose Values?

JANET PEARSON

Janet Pearson is an editorial writer for Tulsa World, a metropolitan newspaper. Notice the care with which she identifies her sources as she deals with the important and difficult question posed in the title.

MINDSET

Lock It In

Imagine that a political candidate says to you, “I believe in family values.” What question do you ask?

1. The terms are all over the newspapers and the airwaves: Family values. Moral values. Traditional values. Judeo-Christian values. Elections are decided based on values. Contentious public battles are fought over values. People are killed every day over values. But what exactly do Americans mean by these terms? How do we view the family and what do we believe about religion in schools? Divorce? Gay marriage? Sex education?
If polls are to be believed, there is no one set of traditional American values anymore, if there ever was. The traditional, nuclear American family, along with its accompanying values, has become an elusive species, and taking its place is a new animal. American views about family life and values have become a sometimes-contradictory mishmash, perhaps of necessity. According to a recent poll on religion and the family conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research Inc., most Americans still view the traditional, one-man, one-woman union-for-life as “God’s plan” for us all. But at the same time, majorities of Americans don’t feel divorce is a sin and about half find cohabitation acceptable.

Changing American values probably are a reflection of the new status quo: The latest Census data show only 24 percent of American households have a traditional family structure—mother, father and their children. The Greenberg survey reflected these changes: Sixty-nine percent of respondents were single parents and 19 percent were living with a steady partner. Sixty percent had been married but were not currently married. The surveyors concluded: “We observe a disconnection between attitudes toward the family and lived experiences. . . Americans in traditional and nontraditional arrangements hold fast to the traditional ideal of marriage and family, where the lucky couples get to live ‘happily ever after.’ This vision is the aspiration.”

Though values were deemed a major factor in recent elections, there is not widespread agreement on what the term means. For about a third of those surveyed, the term means honesty and responsibility. About a quarter cited protecting children from sex and violence in the media. Only about 10 percent pointed to abortion or gay marriage and another 10 percent said moral values mean social justice. About 8 percent cited compassion and concern for the sick and needy. “Despite the intense focus on abortion and gay marriage during the election season, most Americans view moral values individualistically, as a set of values that motivate an individual toward acting responsibly and with integrity. They feel that family should remain in the private sphere and tend to balk at the notion that government should be involved in such things as marriage initiatives,” surveyors concluded.

When it comes to defining the family, Americans also offered a variety of meanings. Nearly two-thirds defined family as their own immediate family unit; only a third of those surveyed defined family in the most traditional sense—married parents and their biological children. Further indication of this broadening definition of family was the affirmative response rate—from 55 to 74 percent, depending on family structure—to this statement: “Love is what makes a family and it doesn’t matter if parents are gay or straight, married or single.” The survey found some surprising differences among religious groups. Traditional evangelical parents were more likely than other traditional parents to believe children suffer when the mother has a full-time job, but the evangelicals also were more likely to have two-income households. Religious devoutness, the survey also found, “does not make one immune to unsuccessful marriage.” Protestants and evangelicals are more likely to get married than other religious groups, but they are no more likely than others to stay married. In fact, about half or more of respondents from all faiths agreed that divorce “is usually the best solution” when a couple can’t work out marital problems.

There were even more surprises on subjects such as sex education and religion in the classroom. Most parents said they would speak to a teacher if objectionable religious material were presented in their child’s classroom. But surprising numbers said they would allow the child to be exposed to the material and then explain why it was wrong. Evangelicals were most inclined to try to have the material removed. Respondents had a “fairly pragmatic view” about sex education, with about 39 percent favoring instruction that focuses on abstinence but also offers instruction
about contraception. About 38 percent preferred programs that teach teens how to make responsible decisions about sex. Only 18 percent favored abstinence-only programs.

7 If the shifting beliefs of adult Americans surprise you, wait till you hear views from the younger generation, a majority of whom have had one parent leave the household before the child graduated from high school, and 87 percent of whom had working mothers. A sampling by the same research firm of 892 Generation Y young people—Americans ages 18–24—could portend what is to come for the American family. A shocking 57 percent majority agreed that the “institution of marriage is dying in this country,” and an equal number support gay marriage. A similar number also agreed that cohabitation without intent to marry is acceptable. The fact so many of this age group report having gay friends (more than 80 percent know a gay person and a third have a close gay or lesbian friend) explains their acceptance of gay marriage.

8 Of course, views can change with age, so it remains to be seen if the younger generation represents yet another shift in American family life. But history suggests that more than anything, the American family is adaptable and flexible. There’s a good explanation for that: It has to be.

**EXERCISE 9**

**Vocabulary Highlights**

Write a short definition of each word as it is used in the essay. (Paragraph numbers are given in parentheses.) Be prepared to use the words in your own sentences.

- contentious (1)
- status quo (3)
- nuclear (2)
- aspiration (3)
- elusive (2)
- deemed (4)
- cohabitation (2)
- immune (5)
- reflection (3)
- portend (7)

**EXERCISE 10**

**Discussion and Critical Thinking**

1. Pearson begins paragraph 2 with the words “If polls are to be believed.” Do you believe in polls? To what extent? What about the polls referred to in this article?

2. How do you reconcile the statement “Most Americans still view the traditional, one-man, one-woman union-for-life as ‘God’s plan’ for us all” (paragraph 2) with the statement “But at the same time, majorities of Americans don’t feel divorce is a sin and about half find cohabitation acceptable” (paragraph 2)?
3. What does Pearson mean by her statement that “Changing American values probably are a reflection of the new status quo” (paragraph 3)?

4. The author says, “Americans in traditional and nontraditional arrangements” believe in the “traditional idea of marriage and family” (paragraph 3). Why is this vision called an “aspiration”?

5. How do you rank these ideas as they relate to values: concern for the sick and needy, honesty, social justice, compassion, abortion, responsibility, protection of children from sex and violence in the media, and gay marriage?

6. How do you interpret the following statement? “Traditional evangelical parents were more likely than other traditional parents to believe children suffer when the mother has a full-time job, but the evangelicals also were more likely to have two-income households” (paragraph 5).

7. Pearson says, “A shocking 57 percent majority agreed that the ‘institution of marriage is dying in this country,’ and an equal number support gay marriage. A similar number also agreed that cohabitation without intent to marry is acceptable” (paragraph 7). Should she feel that these figures are shocking? Explain.

8. What possible explanations does Pearson have for the younger generation’s views and values?

9. What do the last two sentences mean? “But history suggests that more than anything, the American family is adaptable and flexible. There’s a good explanation for that: It has to be.”

Graffiti: Taking a Closer Look

CHRISTOPHER GRANT

First published as a cover story in the FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, this article is included as general-interest material in InfoTrac, a data service provider mainly for libraries. It offers a thorough analysis, but it also takes an argumentative position. See how it compares to your own views.

MINDSET

Lock It In

Situation: A tagger has just spray-painted your block wall by your home. Then the tagger jumps into his or her car, and the engine won’t start. What do you say—words only—to the tagger?
Not long ago, the word *graffiti* conjured images of innocent messages, such as “Tom loves Jane,” or “Class of ‘73.” Such simple and innocuous scribblings, although occasionally still seen, have become essentially messages of the past. Most of the graffiti that mars contemporary American landscape—both urban and rural—contains messages of hatred, racism, and gang warfare. Public attitudes toward graffiti tend to fluctuate between indifference and intolerance. On a national level, the criminal justice system has yet to adopt a uniform response to graffiti and the individuals who create this so-called street art. While some jurisdictions combat the problem aggressively, others do very little or nothing at all to punish offenders or to deter the spread of graffiti.

To a large degree, society’s inability to decide on a focused response to graffiti stems from the nature of the offense. It could be argued that graffiti falls into the grey area between crime and public nuisance. If graffiti is considered in a vacuum, such an argument could appear to have some credence. However, it is unrealistic, and ultimately foolhardy, to view such a public offense in a vacuum. There is a growing consensus in communities around the country that the problem of graffiti, if left unaddressed, creates an environment where other more serious crimes flourish and can quickly degrade once low-crime areas. At a time when law enforcement agencies nationwide are adopting more community-based policing philosophies, administrators are exploring ways to address the basic factors that lead to crime and neighborhood decline. The time has come to take a closer look at graffiti.

**Wall Writing**

*Graffiti* is a general term for wall writing, perhaps humankind’s earliest art form. The crude wall writings of prehistoric times and the highly stylized street art of today’s inner-city youths share one common feature: Each stems from a basic human need to communicate with others. For youths who may not be able to express themselves through other media, such as prose or music, graffiti represents an easily accessible and effective way to communicate with a large audience. Anyone can obtain a can of spray paint and “make their mark” on a highway overpass or the side of a building.

Modern graffiti generally falls into one of three categories—junk graffiti, gang graffiti, and tagging. *Junk graffiti* messages are not gang-related but often involve obscene, racist, or threatening themes. The line separating gang graffiti and tagging has become blurred in recent years. *Tagging*, once seen as a nonviolent alternative to more threatening gang activities, is now considered an entry level offense that can lead to more serious crimes, including burglary and assault. In addition, tagging often results in direct gang affiliation. While all types of graffiti threaten the quality of life in affected areas, tagging and graffiti tied to gang activities represent the most widespread and formidable challenges to communities around the country.

**Tagging**

Tagging as a form of graffiti first appeared in the early 1980s and has grown immensely popular in many parts of the country, in both rural and urban areas. A tagger is someone who adopts a nickname, or tag, and then writes it on as many surfaces as possible, usually in highly visible locations. Although spray paint is the most common medium, taggers—sometimes referred to as “piecers,” “writers,” and “hip-hop artists”—also may use magic markers or etching tools to create their images.

The motivation behind tagging involves fame, artistic expression, power, and rebellion—all integral parts of what has been referred to as the hip-hop culture. Tagging may fill an even deeper void for youths without a strong sense of personal
identity. Interviews with taggers reveal a deep desire simply to be known, to create an identity for themselves, and to communicate it to others. The thrill of risk-taking also appears to be an underlying motivation for many taggers. While the images taggers create may not necessarily be gang-related, research shows that most taggers hope to join gangs and use tagging as a way to gain the attention of gang members. The more often their monikers appear in different locations, the more publicity they receive. Consequently, a small number of taggers can cause a disproportionate amount of property damage in a community. Tagging messages usually resemble handwriting, but may be difficult, if not impossible, to read. Taggers also have been known to invent their own letters or symbols, often adding to the confusion over the message and the author.

**Communication and Territoriality**

7 In an article about the increase in area gang violence, a local California newspaper accurately described graffiti as a “crude but effective way for gang members to communicate among themselves, with the community, and with rival gangs.” Communication is an important attribute of graffiti that law enforcement and community leaders should understand as they attempt to address the problem. While neighborhood residents and police might see graffiti simply as a blight, gang members and many taggers view it not so much as property damage but as a means to send messages understood within the gang community.

The expressive value of graffiti also forms an important component of gang territoriality. Gangs, and potential gang members, use graffiti to identify and mark their territory. Although the traditional perception of gang territoriality has been altered by increased mobility via the automobile, research of a noted gang expert indicates that gangs continue to “mark, define, claim, protect, and fight over their turf.” In fact, territoriality among rival gangs continues to be a major source of gang violence. Graffiti as a primary form of communication and turf identification plays a direct part in feeding this violence.

**True Impact of Graffiti**

The threat posed by graffiti to neighborhoods and society in general goes much deeper than territorial gang violence. Community leaders need only to consider the reverberating effects of graffiti to understand how a seemingly low-grade misdemeanor can threaten or destroy the quality of life in an entire community. The monetary damages attributed to graffiti speak for themselves. In one year, the City of Los Angeles spent more than $15 million on graffiti eradication. This figure does not include the volunteer time devoted to graffiti cleanup or the estimated millions of dollars spent by private businesses taking care of the problem themselves. In addition, the Southern California Rapid Transit District spent $12 million on graffiti removal during the same year.

James Q. Wilson, UCLA criminologist and framer of the “broken windows” theory, states that signs of disorder in society—such as graffiti, abandoned cars, broken windows, and uncollected trash—frighten law-abiding citizens into avoiding public places. Those places are then left to criminals who further deface them, creating a downward spiral in which the fear of crime leads to an increase in criminal activity. The presence of graffiti discourages citizens from shopping or living in affected areas. As established businesses relocate or close, new businesses might be reluctant to move into areas where customers would feel unsafe. As property values decline and law-abiding citizens with resources move, once-thriving neighborhoods can quickly degrade into dangerous places. Thus, the
seemingly trivial offense of graffiti ultimately can have devastating consequences for a community.

Response

11 Most experts agree that allowing graffiti to remain visible in a community sends a message that this type of behavior is acceptable to residents. Further, allowing graffiti in an area encourages other offenders to degrade the community with more graffiti or other acts of vandalism. As stated in a newspaper article, “. . . removing graffiti as soon as it appears is the best way to deter further vandalism.”

12 Recognizing the serious threat posed by graffiti, a number of communities across the country have developed programs to respond to the problem. The City of Anaheim, California, is considered a leader in developing innovative programs dealing with taggers and the damage they cause. The city developed “Adopt-a-Block” and “Wipeout Graffiti” programs and also established a 24-hour graffiti hotline that encourages residents to report graffiti damage, as well as information about suspects. Information leading to an arrest and conviction can net the caller up to $500. The hotline has proven to be quite successful. To date, callers have received more than $16,500 for information provided about offenders. The courts sentence convicted taggers to perform community service that includes graffiti removal. Anaheim also adopted an antigraffiti ordinance that assigns responsibility for the cost of graffiti removal to taggers, prohibits possession of implements used to create graffiti, and requires merchants to keep aerosol spray cans or other implements used to create graffiti out of direct reach of the general public. . . . To enhance graffiti-related investigations, Orange County, California, uses a forensic scientist specializing in handwriting analysis to help identify chronic offenders. Several other localities in California have passed ordinances calling for convicted taggers to perform up to 80 hours of graffiti removal as part of their sentences.

The Future

13 Although these approaches represent a step in the right direction, they are reactive measures and do little to address the causes of the graffiti problem. The causes lie deep within the roots of social structure; it will require much more than rollers and paint to correct the problem.

14 One of the first steps is to educate the public about graffiti—its meaning and its potential impact on a community. Citizens must understand that this type of behavior cannot be tolerated because its insidious nature threatens communities from within. To deter new graffiti, young people should be taught that their actions can have far-reaching consequences. Law enforcement agencies may consider augmenting drug- and gang-prevention efforts with lessons on graffiti. Students should be advised that damaging property with graffiti is a serious crime and offenders will be punished. As part of the lesson, instructors also may suggest and encourage alternative methods of self-expression.

Conclusion

15 Like prostitution and illegal gambling, people often view graffiti as a victimless crime. But as communities around the country have learned, there is no such thing as a victimless crime. In fact, crimes that do not produce a single, identifiable victim generally have more impact on the entire community. As a highly visible offense, graffiti represents a particularly menacing threat to the quality of life in a community. The residual effects of reduced property values, lost business, increased gang territoriality, and heightened fear of crime escalate the severity of graffiti-related of-
fenses beyond their impact as visual pollution. Communities that do not develop measures to deter and prevent graffiti now may find themselves confronting more intractable problems in the future.

**Discussion and Critical Thinking**

1. Underline the sentence in paragraph 2 that indicates what the author is trying to do.

2. Underline the sentence in paragraph 4 that takes a clear position on graffiti and, therefore, can be called the proposition.

3. Draw vertical lines in the left margin to indicate the sentences in paragraphs 1 and 2 that tie this essay to an audience concerned with law enforcement.

4. According to Grant, what motivates taggers?

5. Why do many gang members do graffiti?

6. What is the “broken window” theory?

7. What form of writing is used in paragraph 10?

8. What is the best way to deter further graffiti?

9. What should be done to deal with the causes of graffiti problems?

10. Does the solution of educating young people about the problems caused by graffiti suggest that the writer has faith in human beings?

11. What parts of this essay do you agree and not agree with? Explain.

12. If you could add one more strong section (or strengthen one), what would it be? Discuss.

**Student Paragraph and Essay**

Linda Wong looked at a list of abstract terms for her assignment to write an extended definition and almost immediately found one that intrigued her. She had often heard people say things such as “I just can’t love him [or her] enough,” and “It was too much of a good thing,” and she connected those ideas with one of the terms: **extremist**.

Wong’s Writing Process Worksheet shows you how her writing evolved from idea to final draft. To conserve space here, the freewriting and the rough drafts marked for revision have been omitted. The balance of the worksheet has been lengthened for you to be able to see her other work in its entirety.

You will find a full-size blank worksheet on page 6, which can be photocopied, filled in, and submitted with each assignment if your instructor directs you to do so.
Writing Process Worksheet

Title: Going Too Far

Name: Linda Wong

Due Date: Monday, December 4, 8 a.m.

Use the back of this page or separate paper if you need more space.

ASSIGNMENT

In the space below, write whatever you need to know about your assignment, including information about the topic, audience, pattern of writing, length, whether to include a rough draft or revised drafts, and whether your paper must be typed.

Write a paragraph that defines an abstract word. Use at least three patterns of writing in your extended definition. Keep in mind that members of your audience may use your term in different ways, so using examples and clear explanations will be helpful for clarification. Submit your completed worksheet, one or more rough drafts marked for revision, and a typed final draft of about 300 words.

STAGE ONE

Explore Freewrite, brainstorm (list), cluster, or take notes as directed by your instructor.
Extremists are involved people who lose their sense of balance and go too far in concentrating on one thing.

Write an outline or an outline alternative. For text-based writing, include references and short quotations with page numbers as support in the outline.

I. Going too far
   A. Become preoccupied with one thing
   B. Lose sense of balance
II. Produce bad effect
   A. Are unpleasant to be around
   B. Are often destructive
III. Become incomplete
   A. Are often thought of as one kind of person
      1. Workaholics
      2. Zealots
      3. Superpatriots
   B. Diminished by loss of perspective

Some people believe that it is good to be an extremist in some areas, but those people are actually changing the meaning of the word. According to the Random House Dictionary of the English Language, the word extremism itself means "excessively biased ideas, intemperate conduct." The extremist goes too far; that means going too far in whatever the person is doing. I once heard someone say that it is good for people to be extremists in love. But that is not true. It is good to be enthusiastically and sincerely in love, but extremists love excessively and intemperately. People who love well may be tender and sensitive and attentive, but extremists are possessive or smothering. The same can be said of parents. We all want to be good parents, but parental extremists involve themselves too much in the lives of their children, who, in turn, may find it difficult to develop as individuals and become independent. Even in patriotism, good patriots are to be distinguished from extreme patriots. Good patriots love their country, but extreme patriots love their country so much that they think citizens from other countries are inferior and suspect. Extreme patriots may have Hitlerlike tendencies. Just what is wrong with extremists then? It is the loss of perspective. The extremists are so preoccupied with one concern that they lose their sense of balance. They are the workaholics, the zealots, the superpatriots of the world.
They may begin with a good objective, but they focus on it so much that they can become destructive, obnoxious, and often pitiful. The worst effect is that these extremists lose their completeness as human beings.

Discussion and Critical Thinking

1. Wong says that extremists “can become destructive, obnoxious, and often pitiful.” Can you think of any good effects from people who were extremists? For example, what about a scientist who works fifteen hours a day to find a cure for a horrible disease? Is it possible that the scientist may succeed in his or her profession and fail in his or her personal life? But what if the scientist does not want a personal life? Discuss.

2. Why does Wong use contrast so much?

3. According to Wong, is it bad for a person to be an extremist in religion? Discuss.

Text-Based

**My-graines**

*VINCENT SHEAHAN*

The assignment was to read several essays related to health and write a text-based, documented essay of extended definition about one health condition as it related to the student’s experience. The final product would include at least two quotations and several paraphrases from the source, each to be formally identified. The source would be listed at the end, according to MLA style for an article in an anthology. (Your instructor may not ask you to formally document an essay based on a single textbook source.)

The aura set in like a suffocating stillness before a tropical storm. “This is going to be a bad one,” I told myself as I shut off the lights, took my medication, lay down, and prepared for the inevitable—the relentless throbbing in my temple. About three hours of incapacitating agony later, I recovered, feeling strangely drained, and skimmed through my reading assignment for my college English class. What a coincidence! It included “In Bed,” an essay about migraines by Joan Didion. Because I had only recently been diagnosed with migraines (although I had long suffered), I naturally had enormous curiosity about the subject, and now homework coincided with my private need for information. By closely comparing my family history, my triggers for attacks, and my personality with Joan Didion’s, perhaps I could find some informed answers to my questions and be able to define migraines more precisely.
A year ago when I decided to seek medical help, the matter of family history was of immediate concern. At my first appointment, my neurologist informed me that, although no one knows why, migraines tend to run in families. I said the only person in my family who has migraines is my Uncle Joe, my father’s brother. For Didion, the family connection is more apparent and pervasive: Both of her grandmothers, her father, and her mother all suffer from migraine headaches. But she does go on to explain, “One inherits, of course, only the predisposition” (59). Therefore, it is possible that everyone on my father’s side has carried the gene for migraines, but only Uncle Joe has ever actually developed the headaches.

After the doctor asked his questions, I had one of my own: What actually causes migraine headaches? I was fearful that my job as an emergency medical technician (E.M.T.), with its debilitating stress and irregular hours, was the main reason. He explained that the exact causes are not completely understood and that my fatigue and irregular sleep patterns are not the causes of my migraines, because there are plenty of E.M.T.s who have the same sleep patterns as I do yet do not have migraines. Nevertheless, the fatigue and irregular sleep may trigger migraine headaches. For Didion, the triggers are varied. She says, “Almost anything can trigger a specific attack of migraine: stress, allergy, fatigue, an abrupt change in barometric pressure, a contretemps over a parking ticket. A flashing light. A fire drill” (60). Yet she explains that her headaches are not triggered at times when she needs to be alert and thinking clearly, such as an emergency situation, but instead, they are triggered when she is feeling overwhelmed or extremely stressed (60).

In addition to the exposure to these triggers, a migraine sufferer like me usually has what is called a “migraine personality.” Didion offers a good definition of that term, saying that she is typical, a perfectionist who is “ambitious, inward, intolerant of error, rather rigidly organized” (60). But she points out that not all perfectionists have migraines and not all people with migraines are perfectionists. She says that she is a perfectionist about writing, not housekeeping (60). And, as for me, I try—probably harder than most—to be organized when it comes to my education, work, and personal life.

Like Joan Didion, I am intensely interested in migraines, and I am learning about them. We migraine sufferers have much in common, though each of us has his or her own family history of migraines, triggers, and migraine personality. Knowing that others go through what I do and having more information about my condition make it easier for me to deal with the pain of my migraines. I will continue to do the same thing Joan Didion does when she has an aura: I will not try to fight it. I will lie down and endure. When it is finally over, I will count my blessings.

Work Cited

Discussion and Critical Thinking

1. Circle the thesis and underline the topic sentences in the support paragraphs.

2. Forms of writing other than definition are often used to define. Which form provides structure for this extended definition?

3. How is Sheahan’s introduction connected to his conclusion?

4. How do you explain Sheahan’s change of verb tenses?

Suggested Topics and Prompts for Writing Definition

Text-Based and Reading-Related Writing Topics

Text-based writing requires you to read a source or sources critically, write an analytical reply, and give credit to the author(s) for the ideas you borrow and the words you quote. The form may be a summary, a reaction, or a two-part response (with separated summary and reaction). Documentation may be either formal (MLA) or informal, as directed by your instructor. Both formal and informal documentation are discussed in Chapter 1.

The reaction, the most common form of text-based writing, has these features:

- In the reaction, the meaning of the text is central to your topic sentence or thesis and your development.
- Although the reaction is not a personal narrative by itself, it may include personal experience to explain elements of the text. For example, if your source is about driving styles, your own experiences as a driver or an observer of drivers could be relevant in your analysis of the text.
- The reaction may incorporate a summary to convey a broad view of the text, but the summary is never the main part of your reaction.

Reading-related writing requires you to read a source and to use it as a model of form and treatment of an idea. It differs from pure text-based writing in that it is parallel to the reading selection instead of being a critique of it and would not use direct references to or quotations from that source.

For example, if the reading selection is a professional restaurant review, a student writing a text-based piece would analyze the professional review, concentrating on its effectiveness; the student may or may not include personal experience. But the...
student with the reading-related writing assignment would incorporate some of the
form and techniques in writing his or her own review of, probably, a different restaur-
Ant. Both approaches require careful reading.

Text-Based Writing topics are marked with “TBW” and Reading-Related Writing
topics are marked with “RRW.”

“Georgia on My Mind”
RRW 1. Ray Jenkins defines traditional rural white southerner by listing the unique and
colorful experiences of such a person. Define a person by listing his or her asso-
ciation with a housing project, barrio, working- or middle-class neighborhood,
street life, prison, affluent suburb, migrant worker camp, small town, reserva-
tion, or refugee camp. If you use the same pattern as Jenkins, keep in mind that
the extremely long sentence form he uses so well here is unconventional and
should be used sparingly elsewhere.
RRW 2. Using Jenkins’s paragraph as a model, define (with personalized examples) day-
care worker, security guard, police officer, preacher, nurse, firefighter, parent,
coach, or aide in a retirement or nursing home.

“Tornado”
RRW 3. Using this paragraph as a model, define another natural disaster such as a flood,
a hurricane, a drought, a dust storm, or an earthquake. Consider incorporating
details from any personal experience.

“Americanization Is Tough on ‘Macho’”
RRW 4. Write a paragraph or an essay defining macho; include what the term does and
does not mean to you. Use examples.
RRW 5. Describe in one paragraph a person you know or a well-known person not men-
tioned in the article whom you consider to be macho.
TBW 6. Write a paragraph or an essay in which you analyze this reading in terms of its
thesis, its support, its effectiveness in addressing its intended audience, and its
use of logic.
TBW 7. Write a reaction in which you define “macho” by using comparison and contrast.

“Whose Values?”
TBW 8. Write a two-part response in which you first summarize Pearson’s report on val-
ues and then, in a separate section, evaluate the views as they stand and seem to
be changing. Explain how you feel about the reported changes, especially from
generation to generation. Use references and quotations as you discuss whether
current values are good or bad for society. Has reading this article made you re-
examine or redefine your own definition of family values?
TBW 9. Write a paragraph or an essay of reaction with summary points incorporated.
This will be much like the previous topic but will integrate rather than separate
the parts.

“Graffiti: Taking a Closer Look”
TBW 10. Write a reaction to Grant’s definition of graffiti in which you take issue with
some of his views. Use quotations from and references to his essay.
11. Write a reaction that is generally in agreement with Grant’s view, using your own examples to refer to neighborhoods or towns that have been damaged by graffiti.

12. If you know people who do or have done graffiti, interview them with questions framed around Grant’s argument. Then write an essay of argument that accepts or rejects their views.

“Going Too Far”

13. Apply Wong’s definition of extremist to a situation or situations with which you are familiar: an overprotective parent, a controlling companion, an overcontrolling boss, a too-strict police officer or teacher, a too-virtuous friend or preacher, a too-clean housekeeper, a zealous patriot, a person fanatical about a diet, or a person concerned too much with good health or exercise. You might begin your paragraph or essay with the statement: “It is good to be __________, but when __________ is carried to the extreme, the result is __________.”

“My-graines”

14. Using this essay as a model, consult the Internet or another source to investigate a disease and then discuss that disease by referring to and quoting from your source and by using examples from personal experience or observation.

General Topics

The following topics are appropriate for extended development of definitions; most of them will also serve well for writing simple definitions.

18. Educated

Cross-Curricular Topics

Define one of the following terms in a paragraph or an essay.

27. Philosophy: existentialism, free will, determinism, ethics, stoicism.
28. Education: charter schools, school choice, gifted program, ESL, paired teaching, digital school.
29. Music: symphony, sonata, orchestra, tonic systems.
30. Health science: autism, circulatory system, respiratory system, thyroid, cancer, herbal remedies, acupuncture.
31. Marketing: depression, digitalization, discretionary income, electronic commerce, globalization, marketing channel, free trade, telemarketing, warehouse clubs.
Career-Related Topics

32. Define one of the following terms by using other patterns of development (such as exemplification, cause and effect, narration, comparison and contrast): total quality management, quality control, business ethics, customer satisfaction, cost effectiveness, Internet, temporary worker, union, outsource, or downsize.

33. Define a good boss, good employee, good workplace, good employer, or good job. Analysis by division is a useful form.

34. Define a term from computer technology such as Internet, World Wide Web, search engine, or chat room.

Writer's Guidelines: Definition

Simple Definition

1. No two words have exactly the same meaning.

2. Several forms of simple definitions can be blended into your discussion: basic dictionary definitions, synonyms, direct explanations, indirect explanations, and analytical definitions.

3. For a formal or an analytical definition, specify the term, class, and characteristic(s).

Capitalism is an economic system characterized by investment of money, private ownership, and free enterprise.

4. Avoid “is where” and “is when” definitions, circular definitions, and the use of words in the definition that are more difficult than the word being defined.

Extended Definition

1. Use clustering to consider other patterns of development that may be used to define your term.
2. The organization of your extended definition is likely to be one of emphasis, but it may be space or time, depending on the subject material. You may use just one pattern of development for the overall organization.

3. Consider these ways of introducing a definition: with a question, with a statement of what it is not, with a statement of what it originally meant, or with a discussion of why a clear definition is important. You may use a combination of these ways before you continue with your definition.

4. Whether you personalize a definition depends on your purpose and your audience. Your instructor may ask you to write about a word within the context of your own experience or to write about it from a detached, clinical viewpoint.

5. Use the writing process.

- Write and then revise your paragraph or essay as many times as necessary for coherence, language (usage, tone, and diction), unity, emphasis, support, and sentences (CLUESS).
- Read your work aloud to hear and correct any grammatical errors or awkward-sounding sentences.
- Edit any problems in fundamentals, such as capitalization, omissions, punctuation, and spelling (COPS).