

Example/Illustration Essay

The example/illustration essay is the most simple, straightforward essay form you will encounter. It is also the one you will always continue to use in writing your future essays, because **all essays, whether argumentative or informational, need the support that good illustrations and examples provide.**

In essence, an example essay states a generalization and then sets out to support that generalization with an example. Example essays move an idea from the general to the specific so that readers can “see” it for themselves.

For example, let’s say you want to write a paper on friendship and family, and you want to say that sometimes friendship ties are stronger than familial ties. Your thesis ought to indicate that. For example: “Sometimes friendship ties are stronger than family ties.” **A clear thesis** is crucial to a successful example essay because without it readers can only guess what your illustrations or examples are trying to show or prove. Remember that your thesis statement is not so much arguing a position in the example essay as arguing that a certain condition or phenomenon exists.

Then, your task is to support that assertion through the use of examples. You may want to do a **single or extended example**, which is simply using one longer example to support your thesis. For example, you might highlight your relationship with your best friend and show how he or she has been like family to you. Another approach would be to use **multiple examples**, which rely on several examples to support the thesis. In this case, you might want to write about two or three of your friendships that would support the idea that friendship ties are sometimes stronger than family ties.

*** Make sure that your example has a point, and that the point is the one you’re trying to make.**

Example/Illustration Structure

I. Introduction

- States general idea to be proved (thesis statement)

II. Body

- Provides example(s) or illustration(s), which support(s) the thesis

III. Conclusion

- Restates the thesis and draws some conclusion from the paper; in the case of our example of friendship ties sometimes being stronger than family ties, the conclusion might suggest that while familial ties are stronger for many people, in your case, your friendship has been just as strong.

Finally, consider the following questions as you revise and edit your examples:

Are all the examples (or all of the single example’s points) relevant to the thesis?

Are the examples specific? Examples should be detailed and specific, highlighting exactly what it is we need to know in order to support your thesis.