



ENGL 1033

Assignment 2: Extended Definition

This assignment consists of two parts: (1) an extended definition and (2) a memo. An extended definition is a detailed clarification of an object, mechanism, process, or concept. Your memo, as in Assignment 1, will be addressed to your instructor and will explain the rhetorical choices you made while writing your extended definition.

Planning:

For your extended definition, select a topic you wish to research. Next, identify the larger document you would anticipate your definition appearing in (e.g., a user's manual, a textbook, an advertisement, a legal document). This larger document will determine your audience, which will then determine how specific you need to be with your definition and how formal its tone will be.

Organization:

Begin your extended definition with a sentence definition, which is a broad one-sentence definition of your topic. Sentence definitions begin with "(topic) is/was a/the..." (examples: *A guitar is a musical instrument belonging to the string family*; *George Washington was the first president of the United States*).

From here, there are eight definition strategies you can use to write your extended definition. Your topic will determine which ones you use; however, you should plan to use **several** of them.

Visuals: provide a graphic representation of a topic. For example, for a definition of *the water cycle*, the writer might use a visual illustration of the process to supplement his or her written description.

Examples: explain an abstract or complicated topic. For example, for a definition of *compound exercise*, the writer might provide several compound exercises as examples (squat, bench press, deadlift, etc.).

Partition: divides complex topics into multiple categories. For example, for a definition of *diabetes*, the writer would want to partition the three kinds of diabetes (type 1 diabetes, type 2 diabetes, and gestational diabetes) and discuss them one at a time rather than try to define them all at the same time.

Principle of Operation: defines a process or an object involved in a process; as such, it is likely to appear in documents like a user's manual or instructions. For example, for a definition of *four wheel drive*, the writer could explain, step-by-step, how four-wheel drive works.

Comparison and Contrast: useful when the topic consists of two categories with clear similarities and differences. For example, for a definition of *electric current*, the writer might want to set up the definition as a comparison/contrast between the two types of electric current: alternating current (AC) and direct current (DC).



Analogy: draws a comparison between the topic and something likely already familiar to readers. For example, for a definition of *central processing unit*, the writer might want to draw an analogy between how a CPU works and how the human brain works.

Negation: defines the concept by what it is *not*. For example, one way to define *automatic transmission* would be to explain how it is different from manual transmission, its predecessor.

Etymology: explains where the name of the topic comes from. For example, for a definition of *tyrannosaurus rex*, the writer might explain that the name comes from the Greek words meaning “tyrant” and “lizard” and the Latin word meaning “king.”

Typically, your extended definition will proceed from general to specific; start with the broad information—the “basics”—that your readers would need to know about your topic. Gradually make your paragraphs more and more specific, but remember that your larger document and your audience will determine how specific you need to get.

Memo:

The purpose of your memo is to explain to your instructor the choices you made while writing your extended definition. **The memo does not simply repeat the same information presented in the extended definition.** To format your memo, follow the instructions in [Memo](#). The recipient of your memo (the “To” line) is your instructor.

The “Discussion” portion of your memo is where you will explain, in detail, the various rhetorical choices you made while writing your extended definition. In the first half of the Discussion, provide the reader with background information, facts the reader will need to know for understanding, including:

- why you defined this object, mechanism, process, or concept
- how you conducted your research
- what larger document your definition could appear in
- what audience your definition serves

Essentially, in this first section of the Discussion, you explain everything you had to do *before* writing the extended definition.

In the second half of the Discussion, called the “Conclusion,” you explain everything you did *while writing* the extended definition. Explain your reasoning for the following:

- why you used the tone you did (cite examples from your letter)
- why you organized your definition the way you did
- why you included the content you did
- how your audience affected the way you wrote the definition
- why you used the definition strategies you did
- why you used the visuals you did