

How Do I Write a Classification/Division Essay?

A classification or division essay takes what you learned about using examples in the example/illustration essay and applies those examples more specifically to a thesis. In other words, you should be using examples that demonstrate the form of the composition: either how ideas or objects may be grouped into categories (classifying) or how an idea or object may be separated into parts (dividing).

Things to Watch For:

Classification

Think of classification as a way of categorizing. There are four food groups. Let's write about them and (here comes the thesis) what they contribute to proper nutrition:

- ✓ What you're doing when you classify is finding the common denominators among ideas or objects that are different: What do eggs, ice cream, and Swiss cheese have in common? Well, monster cholesterol, for one. But is there classification there? This might be a topic that works better as cause-effect. Be sure you don't stray beyond the point of your assigned rhetorical form unless your professor has allowed this.
- ✓ Once the classifications are under way, make sure they don't overlap.
- ✓ Don't omit an important category (all classifications must completely classify the topic or run the risk of merely being isolated examples).
- ✓ Make sure that they remain logical.

Example:

What's wrong with this picture? The classifications are of houses: brick, frame, ranch, and big. Big doesn't fit. Stucco fits. Adobe fits. Big belongs to a different basis of classification—size rather than style.

Division

Division, or analysis, breaks a thing down into parts so that (typically in a later essay like the argument/position paper), they can be restructured to form something new, or a synthesis (can you spot an important six-letter word hiding within "synthesis"?).

- ✓ Every time you outline, you do a division, breaking the essay down into all of its constituent parts (as in classification, failure to discuss all the parts results in an incomplete division paper, stocked only with isolated examples).
- ✓ **While classifications are separate, even disparate items brought together under some common denominator, divisions are much more explicitly parts of a single whole**

Example

Discussing the key components of a championship sports team, for instance, would be a division; for that matter, discussing the components of a successful division essay is also division.

Classification Structure:

I. Introduction

- States thesis

II. Body

- Identifies, in separate paragraphs, the various categories, with examples

III. Conclusion

- Restates the categories of the thesis and, as a significance—or answer to the question "so what?" implied in any composition, stresses the value of this classification system

Division Structure:

I. Introduction

- States thesis (idea or object to be analyzed, and to what end)

II. Body

- Renders the parts, in separate paragraphs, with examples and with transitional materials to provide a sense of their inter-relatedness

III. Conclusion

- Restates the parts of the thesis and (the significance—see Classification outline, part III) attempts a synthesis or new understanding of the constituent parts