

Writing Assignment

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Write an essay that defines one of these terms:

Persistence	Responsibility	Fear
Rebellion	Insecurity	Arrogance
Sense of humor	Assertiveness	Conscience
Escape	Jealousy	Class
Laziness	Practicality	Innocence
Danger	Nostalgia	Freedom
Curiosity	Gentleness	Violence
Common sense	Depression	Shyness
Soul	Obsession	Idealism
Family	Christianity	Spirituality

Teaching Tip
Encourage students to use the prewriting and revising ideas mentioned in Writing Assignments 1 and 2.

Writing Assignment

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Writing for a Specific Purpose and Audience

In this definition essay, you will write with a specific purpose and for a specific audience.

Teaching Tip
Encourage students to use the four steps to complete this assignment, including prewriting and revision.

You work in a doctor's office and have been asked to write a brochure that will be placed in the waiting room. The brochure is intended to tell patients what a healthy lifestyle is. Write a definition of *healthy lifestyle* for your readers, using examples wherever appropriate. Your definition might focus on both mental and physical health and might include eating, sleeping, exercise, and recreational habits.

Alternatively, you might decide to take a playful point of view and write a brochure defining an *unhealthy lifestyle*.



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ESL Tip

Nonnative speakers may not be familiar with some of the terms since they are part of English slang. Direct students to an Internet site on American slang.

Prewriting

- a. As you devise your opening paragraph, you may want to refer to the dictionary definition of the term. If so, be sure to use only one meaning of the term. (Dictionaries often provide several different meanings for a term.) *Don't* begin your paper with the overused phrase "According to Webster. . ."
- b. Remember that the thesis of a definition essay is a version of "What _____ means to me." The thesis presents what *your* experience has made *you* think the term actually means.
- c. As you plan your supporting paragraphs, think of different parts or qualities of your term. Here, for example, are the three-part divisions of the student essays considered in this chapter:

Football fans are crazy in terms of their behavior, their fascination with the past, and their loyalty.

Student zombies are the "living dead," are controlled by a "mysterious force," and are likely to suffer an "awful fate."

- d. Support each part of your division with either a series of examples or a single extended example.
- e. You may find outlining to be the most helpful prewriting strategy for your definition essay. As a guide, write your thesis and three supporting points in the spaces below. **Note:** Answers will vary.

Thesis: _____

Support: 1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

- c. Now go through the material you have compiled. If you think of other details as you read, jot them down. Next, decide just what information you will use in each supporting paragraph. List the details in the order in which you will present them.
- d. Now write the first draft of your essay.

Revising

After you have completed the first draft of the essay, set it aside for a while (if possible). When you reread what you have written, prepare for rewriting by asking yourself these questions:

FOUR BASES Checklist for Definition

About *Unity*

- Have I eliminated or rewritten any irrelevant material?

About *Support*

- Have I provided enough details to support each of the three characteristics of maturity?

About *Coherence*

- Have I used transition words to help readers follow my train of thought?
- Does my concluding paragraph provide a summary or a final thought or both?

About *Sentence Skills*

- Have I used a consistent point of view throughout my essay?
- Have I used specific rather than general words?
- Have I avoided wordiness and used concise wording?
- Are my sentences varied?
- Have I checked my writing for spelling and other sentence skills, as listed on the inside back cover of the book?

As you revise your essay through one or more additional drafts, continue to refer to this list until you can answer yes to each question.

5. The topic sentence of paragraph 5 states, “Finally, a serious addiction is distinguished from a habit by its distinctly destructive elements.” What details support this point?

heroin addict's damage

alcoholic's narrowed

Class activity

6. Paragraph 8
- supports the idea that people overestimate their control over TV watching.
 - raises a point not mentioned in the text.
 - supports the idea that people are stuck in a living holding pattern.

About Coherence

7. Which paragraph fully signals the author's switch from discussing addiction in general terms to talking specifically about addiction to television? 6
8. What key transitional word is used twice in the essay? Finally

About the Introduction and Conclusion

9. Which statement best describes the introductory paragraph of Winn's essay?
- It explains the importance of the topic of television addiction.
 - It tells an anecdote that illustrates the nature of television addiction.
 - It presents a type of “addiction” very different from the one discussed in the essay.
10. Which statement best describes the conclusion of “Television Addiction”?
- Winn recommends that the television addict try to “kick the habit.”
 - Winn summarizes the points made in the body of the essay.
 - Winn comments on the damage television does to society at large.

Writing a Definition Essay

Writing Assignment

- 1 Below are an introduction, a thesis, and supporting points for an essay that defines the word *maturity*. Using a separate sheet of paper, plan out and write the supporting paragraphs and a conclusion for the essay.

certain experience and an increasing inability to function without it. Thus a person will take two or three drinks at the end of the day not merely for the pleasure drinking provides, but also because he “doesn’t feel normal” without them.

An addict does not merely pursue a pleasurable experience and need to experience it in order to function normally. He needs to repeat it again and again. Something about that particular experience makes life without it less than complete. Other potentially pleasurable experiences are no longer possible, for under the spell of the addictive experience, his life is peculiarly distorted. The addict craves an experience, and yet he is never really satisfied. The organism may be temporarily sated, but soon it begins to crave again.

Finally, a serious addiction is distinguished from a harmless pursuit of pleasure by its distinctly destructive elements. A heroin addict, for instance, leads a damaged life: his increasing need for heroin in increasing doses prevents him from working, from maintaining relationships, from developing in human ways. Similarly, an alcoholic’s life is narrowed and dehumanized by his dependence on alcohol.

Let us consider television viewing in the light of the conditions that define serious addictions.

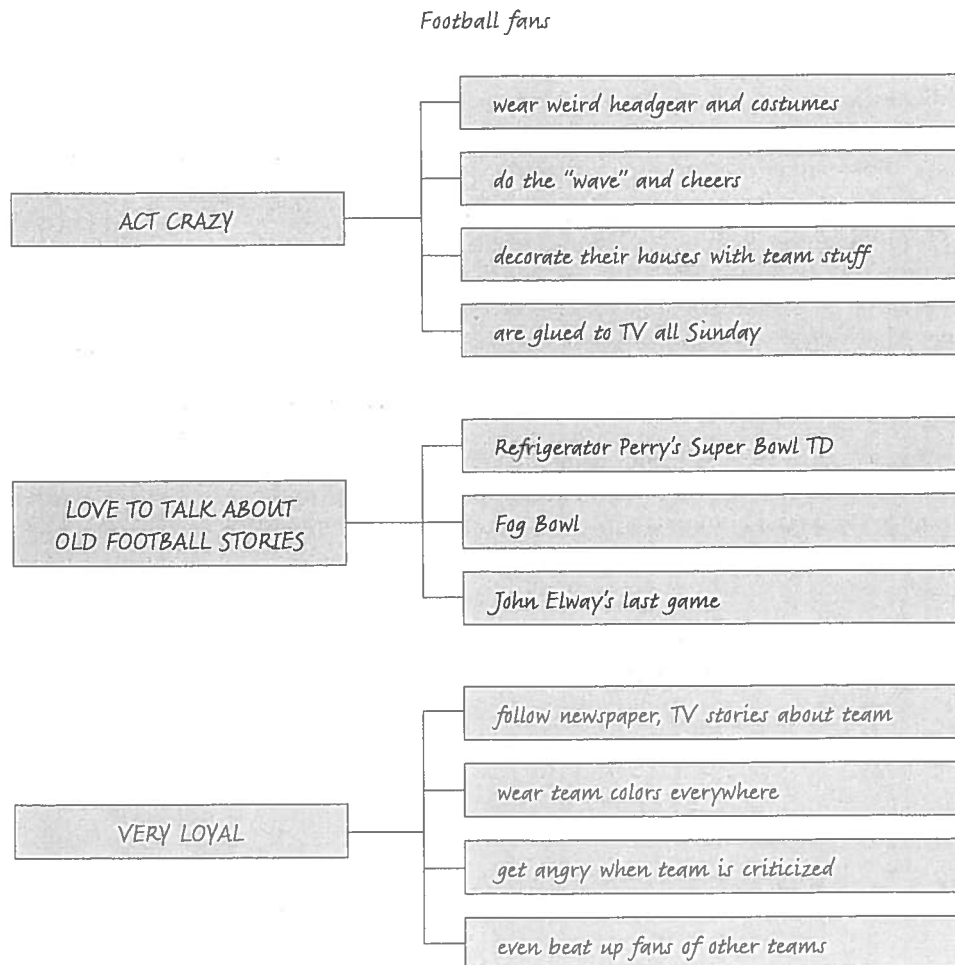
Not unlike drugs and alcohol, the television experience allows the participant to blot out the real world and enter into a pleasurable and passive mental state. The worries and anxieties of reality are as effectively deferred by becoming absorbed in a television program as by going on a “trip” induced by drugs or alcohol. And just as alcoholics are only vaguely aware of their addiction, feeling that they control their drinking more than they really do (“I can cut it out any time I want—I just like to have three or four drinks before dinner”), people similarly overestimate their control over watching television. Even as they put off other activities to spend hour after hour watching television, they feel they could easily resume living in a different, less passive style. But somehow or other while the television set is present in their homes, the click doesn’t sound. With television pleasures available, those other experiences seem less attractive, more difficult somehow.

A heavy viewer (a college English instructor) observes: “I find television almost irresistible. When the set is on, I cannot ignore it. I can’t turn it off. I feel sapped, will-less, enervated. As I reach out to turn off the set, the strength goes out of my arms. I sit there for hours and hours.”

The self-confessed television addict often feels he “ought” to do other things—but the fact that he doesn’t read and doesn’t plant his garden or sew or crochet or play games or have conversations means that those activities are no longer as desirable as television. In a way the heavy viewer’s life is as imbalanced by his television “habit” as a drug addict’s or an alcoholic’s. He is living in a holding pattern, as it were, passing up the activities that lead to growth or development or a sense of accomplishment. This is one reason people talk about their television viewing so ruefully, so apologetically. They are aware that it is an unproductive experience, that almost any other endeavor is more worthwhile by any human measure.

After looking over his list, Brian selected “A Green Bay Packers fan” as the topic that interested him most. He thought it would lend itself well to a lighthearted essay that defined the sometimes nutty fans of the Wisconsin football team. After giving it further thought, however, Brian decided to broaden his topic to include all football fans. “I realized I just didn’t know enough specifically about Green Bay fans to support an entire essay,” he said.

A person who likes to think in visual terms, Brian decided to develop ideas and details about his topic by clustering his thoughts.



When he looked over his diagram, Brian realized that he could characterize each of his three main topics as a kind of “insanity.” He decided on a thesis (he would define football fans as insane) that would indicate his essay’s plan of development (“they behave insanely, they are insane about the past, and they are insanely loyal”).