

Organizing Principle Decision Matrix

How to Use the Matrix

1. **List potential organizing principles** for your essay topic.
2. **Rate each principle** on the four criteria (Significance, Consistency, Clarity, Analytical Value).
3. **Score each criterion** on a scale of 1–5 (1 = weak, 5 = strong).
4. **Sum the scores** to identify the highest-scoring principle.
5. **Select the principle** that offers the clearest and most meaningful classification framework.

Evaluation Criteria

Criterion	Description
Significance	Does the principle meaningfully differentiate the items?
Consistency	Can all items be consistently classified under this principle?
Clarity	Is the principle easy for the reader to understand?
Analytical Value	Does using this principle provide insight or understanding beyond simple grouping?

Scoring Scale: 1 = Poor, 2 = Fair, 3 = Average, 4 = Good, 5 = Excellent

Organizing Principle Decision Matrix Template

Potential Organizing Principle	Significance (1–5)	Consistency (1–5)	Clarity (1–5)	Analytical Value (1–5)	Total Score
Principle 1					
Principle 2					
Principle 3					
Principle 4					
Principle 5					

Instructions for Filling the Matrix

1. **Brainstorm Principles:** List 3–5 potential organizing principles for your topic. Examples: type, function, purpose, audience, popularity.
2. **Rate Each Principle:** Use the 1–5 scale to evaluate each principle across the four criteria.
3. **Calculate Total Score:** Add the four ratings for each principle.
4. **Compare Scores:** Higher total scores indicate stronger organizing principles.
5. **Select the Best Principle:** Choose the principle with the highest score to guide your classification essay.

Example Completed Matrix

Potential Organizing Principle	Significance (1–5)	Consistency (1–5)	Clarity (1–5)	Analytical Value (1–5)	Total Score
Study Habits	5	5	5	5	20
Living Arrangements	4	4	4	3	15
Participation in Clubs	3	4	4	3	14
Personality Types	4	3	4	4	15

Interpretation: “Study Habits” is the strongest organizing principle based on total score and analytical clarity.

Tips for Choosing an Organizing Principle

1. **Focus on Insight:** The best principle should reveal patterns or differences that add meaning to your essay.
2. **Ensure Balance:** Avoid principles that create uneven or tiny categories.
3. **Clarity for Readers:** Readers should immediately understand why items are grouped together.
4. **Applicability:** The principle must be suitable for all items you plan to classify.