Classification Essay Outline Template

Basic Structure

Total Paragraphs: 5-7+ (depending on number of categories)

Format: 1. Introduction (1 paragraph) 2. Body (3-5 paragraphs = 3-5 categories) 3. Conclusion (1 paragraph)

I. Introduction

Hook

- Start with interesting fact, question, or scenario
- Example: "Walk into any college library during finals week and you'll immediately notice distinct types of students…"

Background Information

- Brief context about your topic
- Explain what you're classifying
- Why this classification matters

Classification Statement (Thesis)

- Announce your categories clearly
- Example: "College students can be classified into three types based on their study habits: the Procrastinator, the Planner, and the Crammer."

Template:

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[Topic] can be classified into [number] categories/types based on
[classification principle]:
[Category 1], [Category 2], and [Category 3].
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II. Body Paragraph 1 - First Category

Topic Sentence

- Introduce the first category
- Example: "The first type of college student is the Procrastinator."

Definition/Characteristics

- Define this category clearly
- List 2-3 key characteristics
- What makes this category distinct?

Examples

- Provide specific, concrete examples
- Real-life scenarios or situations
- Illustrate the characteristics

Analysis

- Explain why this category exists
- What causes people/things to fall into this category?
- Brief comparison to other categories (if relevant)

Template Structure: - Topic sentence introducing category - 2-3 defining characteristics - 1-2 specific examples - Brief analysis (2-3 sentences)

III. Body Paragraph 2 - Second Category

Topic Sentence

- Introduce the second category
- Use transition: "Unlike Procrastinators, the second type is the Planner."

Definition/Characteristics

- Define this category clearly
- List 2-3 key characteristics
- Highlight what distinguishes it from Category 1

Examples

- Provide specific, concrete examples
- Show contrast with first category if relevant

Analysis

- Explain this category's unique traits
- Why do people/things fit here?

IV. Body Paragraph 3 - Third Category

Topic Sentence

- Introduce the third category
- Use transition: "The final type combines elements of both…"

Definition/Characteristics

- Define this category clearly
- List 2-3 key characteristics

Examples

- Provide specific, concrete examples

Analysis

- Explain this category
- How it relates to other categories

V. Body Paragraph 4+ - Additional Categories (if

needed)

Repeat the same structure for each additional category: - Topic sentence - Definition/characteristics - Examples - Analysis

Note: Only include as many body paragraphs as you have categories

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VI. Conclusion

Restate Classification

- Summarize your categories briefly
- Don't just repeat thesis word-for-word
- Example: "Understanding these three types of study behaviors—procrastinating, planning, and cramming—helps explain…"

Synthesis

- Show how categories relate to each other
- Are they mutually exclusive or overlapping?
- Which is most common/effective/important?

Significance

- Why does this classification matter?
- What insight does it provide?
- Practical applications or implications

Final Thought

- End with memorable statement
- Call to action, prediction, or broader connection
- Example: "Next time you're in the library, see if you can identify which type of student you are—and whether you want to change categories."

Quick Example: Types of Social Media Users

I. Introduction

Hook: "Scroll through any social media platform and you'll notice vastly different posting patterns among users."

Background: "With over 4 billion social media users worldwide, people engage with these platforms in distinctly different ways."

Thesis: "Social media users can be classified into three main types based on their posting behavior: the Oversharer, the Lurker, and the Curator."

II. Body - Category 1: The Oversharer

Topic Sentence: "The first type, the Oversharer, posts everything from breakfast photos to detailed relationship updates."

Characteristics: - Posts multiple times daily - Shares personal information freely - Seeks constant engagement and validation

Examples: "You know the Oversharer—they've documented their entire vacation with 50+ photos, shared their workout routine, and posted about their argument with their

roommate, all before noon."

Analysis: "Oversharers use social media as a digital diary, finding validation through likes and comments…"

III. Body - Category 2: The Lurker

Topic Sentence: "In stark contrast, the Lurker observes silently, consuming content without contributing."

Characteristics: - Rarely posts original content - Reads/watches but doesn't comment - Maintains minimal profile presence

Examples: "The Lurker might have created their account years ago but has only five posts, all from 2018…"

IV. Body - Category 3: The Curator

Topic Sentence: "The third type, the Curator, carefully selects and shares high-quality, purposeful content."

Characteristics: - Posts thoughtfully and selectively - Shares informative or artistic content - Maintains consistent aesthetic/theme

Examples: "Curators might post once a week with carefully chosen articles, beautiful photography, or meaningful quotes…"

V. Conclusion

Restate: "These three types—Oversharers, Lurkers, and Curators—represent the spectrum of social media engagement."

Synthesis: "While most users exhibit traits from multiple categories, understanding these types helps explain different motivations for social media use."

Significance: "Recognizing your own social media behavior can help you use these platforms more intentionally."

Final Thought: "The next time you open Instagram, ask yourself: which type of user are you?"

Classification Principles Guide

Choose ONE Clear Principle

Your categories should follow one consistent organizing principle:

Common Principles: - By behavior/actions - By appearance/characteristics - By function/purpose - By skill level/expertise - By frequency/intensity - By attitude/mindset - By time period/era - By location/geography

Example Topics: - **Students:** by study habits, learning styles, participation level - **Teachers:** by teaching methods, personality, experience - **Restaurants:** by cuisine, price range, atmosphere - **Movies:** by genre, quality, target audience - **Drivers:** by behavior, skill level, attitude - **Shoppers:** by spending habits, decision-making style - **Employees:** by work ethic, communication style

Key Requirements Checklist

Your classification essay must have:

☐ Clear introduction with classification statement
☐ One consistent organizing principle
☐ 3-5 distinct, mutually exclusive categories
☐ Equal development for each category (similar paragraph length)
☐ Specific examples for every category
☐ Logical order (least to most important, or chronological, or simple to complex)
☐ Transitions between categories
☐ Conclusion that synthesizes categories

Avoid:

- ☐ Too many categories (more than 5 gets confusing)
- ☐ Too few categories (2 is usually comparison/contrast, not classification)
- ☐ Overlapping categories (should be distinct)
- ☐ Unequal development (one detailed paragraph, others thin)
- ☐ Changing classification principle mid-essay
- ☐ Missing examples (every category needs them)

Transition Words for Classification Essays

Introducing Categories: - The first type/category/kind is… - Another category includes… - The second type can be identified as… - The final/last category consists of…

Within Categories: - For example/instance… - Specifically… - In particular… - To illustrate…

Between Categories: - In contrast… - Unlike the first type… - While [Category 1] focuses on X, [Category 2]… - Similarly… - On the other hand… - Another distinct type…

In Conclusion: - These categories demonstrate… - Understanding these types reveals… - Each category serves to… - Taken together, these classifications…

Fill-in-the-Blank Template

Use this quick template to start your outline:

Introduction

My topic: _____ Classification principle (based on what?): _____ Number of categories: _____

Thesis Statement: [Topic] can be classified into [#] types based on [principle]: [Category 1], [Category 2], and [Category 3].

Categories

Category 1: _____ - Characteristic 1: _____ - Characteristic 2: _____ - Example: _____

Category 2: _____ - Characteristic 1: _____ - Characteristic 2: _____ - Example: _____

Category 3: _____ - Characteristic 1: _____ - Characteristic 2: _____ - Example: _____

Conclusion Main Point

Why this classification matters: _____

Last Updated: November 2024
Print this template and fill in your own topic to create a custom outline!