

Category Evaluation Checklist

Ensure your classification system is logical, clear, and effective before you start drafting.

Part 1: Distinctiveness Check

Do your categories avoid overlapping?

- **Clear Boundaries:** Each category has a unique definition that doesn't blend into others
- **No "Gray Areas":** An example/item can only logically fit into ONE category
- **Separate Criteria:** Categories aren't just slight variations of the same characteristic
- **Mutually Exclusive:** Your organizing principle naturally creates separate groups

Red Flag Test:

- Can you think of something that fits into TWO of your categories? If yes, redefine categories.
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Part 2: Comprehensiveness Check

Do your categories cover the entire topic?

- **Complete Coverage:** Most examples/items in your topic fit into your category system
- **"Other" Category:** If using an "other" or "miscellaneous" category, it's small and justified
- **Scope Appropriate:** Your categories match the scope promised in your thesis
- **No Major Gaps:** You haven't excluded obvious or important types

Red Flag Test:

- Can you think of a common example that doesn't fit ANY category? If yes, add a category or broaden definitions.
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Part 3: Balance & Parallelism Check

Are your categories equally developed and parallel in structure?

- **Equal Importance:** Categories are at similar levels of significance (no major/minor mix)

- **Consistent Scope:** Each category covers roughly the same amount of "conceptual territory"
- **Parallel Structure:** Categories are described using consistent types of characteristics
- **Similar Development:** Each category deserves and will receive similar detail/explanation

Red Flag Test:

- **Do you have one "main" category and others that feel like afterthoughts? If yes, rebalance.**
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Part 4: Logical Organization Check

Does your category arrangement make sense to the reader?

- **Clear Order:** Categories follow a logical sequence (simple→complex, small→large, common→rare)
- **Effective Flow:** The order helps build your overall point or insight
- **Transitions Ready:** You can explain why categories are presented in this order
- **Reader-Friendly:** The organization feels natural and easy to follow

Possible Organizational Patterns:

- **Chronological** (by time)
 - **Spatial** (by location/arrangement)
 - **Hierarchical** (by importance)
 - **Sequential** (by process steps)
 - **Thematic** (by conceptual groups)
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Part 5: Support & Examples Check

Can you adequately support each category?

- **Clear Examples:** You have specific, concrete examples for each category
 - **Adequate Detail:** Each category has enough substance for a full body paragraph
 - **Relevant Evidence:** Examples directly illustrate the category definition
 - **Varied Examples:** You have multiple examples, not just one per category
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Final Verification

Thesis Alignment:

- All categories directly relate to your organizing principle
- Your thesis statement accurately reflects your final category list
- The classification provides the insight promised in your thesis

Overall Effectiveness:

- Passes the "So What?" Test: Your classification reveals something interesting about the topic
 - Audience-Appropriate: Categories will make sense to your intended readers
 - Purposeful: The classification serves your essay's overall goal
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Revision Action Plan

Based on your checklist results, note needed changes:

Categories to Redefine: _____

Categories to Combine/Split: _____

Organization Sequence to Change: _____

Examples to Add/Improve: _____

Thesis Statement Updates Needed: _____

How to Use This Checklist:

Complete this evaluation after creating your categories but before writing body paragraphs. Use the results to refine your classification system for maximum clarity and impact.

Save this completed checklist with your essay planning materials!