

Organizing Principles Worksheet

Selecting the right principle is the foundation of a strong classification essay.

Part 1: Understanding the Organizing Principle

What is an Organizing Principle?

It is the single, specific standard you use to sort your broad topic into categories. It is the "lens" through which you view your subject.

- **GOOD Principle:** Clear, specific, and reveals something interesting. (e.g., *by primary learning style*)
 - **BAD Principle:** Vague, overlapping, or too obvious. (e.g., *by type*)
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Part 2: Brainstorming Your Topic & Principles

My Broad Topic: _____

Now, brainstorm 3-4 different ways you could classify this topic.

Principle #1:	Principle #2:	Principle #3:
<i>e.g., By time commitment</i>	<i>e.g., By primary goal</i>	<i>e.g., By skill level required</i>
Categories it would create:	Categories it would create:	Categories it would create:
1. _____	1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____	3. _____

Part 3: Examples of Effective Principles

Use this table for inspiration.

Topic	Principle #1	Principle #2	Principle #3
Friends	By role they play	By how you met	By emotional support level
Music	By decade/genre	By listening context	By lyrical complexity
Employees	By work ethic	By communication style	By problem-solving approach

Movies	By genre	By plot structure	By intended audience
Social Media	By primary content	By user motivation	By platform culture
Books	By genre	By narrative pace	By emotional impact
Students	By learning style	By academic motivation	By study habits
Vacations	By desired activity	By budget level	By travel philosophy
Restaurants	By cuisine/price	By dining atmosphere	By occasion suitability
Hobbies	By cost	By social vs. solitary	By physical/mental focus
Leaders	By leadership style	By decision-making process	By source of influence
Shops	By product type	By customer experience	By business model
Drivers	By adherence to rules	By confidence level	By primary motivation
Coffee Orders	By caffeine purpose	By flavor preference	By customization level
Gamers	By play motivation	By preferred game type	By time investment

Part 4: The Decision Matrix

Evaluate your best 2-3 potential principles from Part 2. Rate each one on a scale of 1 (Poor) to 5 (Excellent).

Evaluation Criteria	Principle: _____	Principle: _____	Principle: _____
1. Distinct Categories: Do the categories avoid overlap? (1-5)			
2. Equal Level: Are categories of similar importance/scope? (1-5)			
3. Sufficient Examples: Can I think of strong examples for each? (1-5)			

4. Insightful: Does it reveal something new about the topic? (1-5)			
5. Manageable: Do I have 3-5 clear categories? (1-5)			
TOTAL SCORE			

My Chosen Organizing Principle:

Why I Chose It: _____

Part 5: Draft Your Thesis Statement

Template: "[Broad Topic] can be classified into [Number] categories based on [Your Chosen Principle]: the [Category 1], the [Category 2], and the [Category 3]."

My Thesis Statement Draft:

Instructions for Use: Copy this text into a document editor. Fill out the blanks, tables, and matrix. Once complete, save your document as a PDF for future reference.