

المحاضرة الثالثة

المادة: مصطلحات علمية باللغة الإنجليزية

الفرقة الأولى – شعبة العلوم البيولوجية

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WRITING DEFINITIONS

DEFINITIONS

A **definition** is a statement of meaning of a word or phrase.

The term to be defined is known as the **definiendum**.

The words which define it are known as the **definiens**.

A definition consists of the **genus** (the family of the thing to which the defined thing belongs) and **the differentia** (the distinguishing feature which marks it off from other members of the same family).

For example: 'triangle' is defined as 'a plane figure (genus) bounded by three straight sides (differentia).

Certain rules have traditionally been given for writing a definition

1. A definition must set out the essential attributes of the thing defined
2. Definitions should avoid circularity.

To define a horse as 'a member of the species equus' would convey no information whatsoever. For this reason, locate adds that a definition of a term must not consist of terms which are synonymous with it. Note, however, the disacceptable to define two relative terms in respect of each

other. Clearly, we cannot define 'antecedents' without using the term 'consequent', nor 'conversely'.

3. The definition must not be too wide or too narrow. Must be applicable to everything to which the define term applies (i.e., not miss anything out), and to nothing else (i.e., not include anything to which the define term would not truly apply)

4. The definition must not be obscure. The purpose of the definition is to explain the meaning of the term which may be obscure or different, by the use terms that are commonly understood and whose meaning is clear.
5. Definitions should not be negative where it can be positive. We should not define 'wisdom' as the absence of folly or a healthy thing as whatever is not thing. Sometimes this is unavoidable.

WRITING DEFINITIONS

A formal definition is based upon a concise, logical pattern that includes as much information as it can within a minimum amount of space. The primary reason to include definitions in your writing is to avoid misunderstanding with your audience.

A formal definition consists of three parts:

1. The term (word or phrase) to be defined
2. The class of object or concept to which the term belongs.
3. The differentiating characteristics that distinguish it from all others of its
class

For example:

- Water (term) is a liquid (class) made up of molecules of hydrogen and oxygen in the ratio of 2 to 1 (differentiating characteristics).
- Comic books (term) are sequential and narrative publications (class) consisting of illustrations, captions, dialogue balloons, and often focus on super-powered heroes (differentiating characteristics).

- Astronomy (term) is a branch of scientific study (class) primarily concerned with celestial objects inside and outside of the earth's atmosphere (differentiating characteristics).

Although these examples should illustrate the manner in which the three parts work together, they are not the most realistic cases. Most readers will already be quite familiar with the concepts of water, comic books, and astronomy. For this reason, it is important to know when and why you should include definitions in your writing.

When to Use Definitions

- When your writing contains a term that may be key to audience understanding and that term could likely be unfamiliar to them
- When a commonly used word or phrase has layers of subjectivity or evaluation in the way you choose to define it

Note: not everyone may define "classic gaming "within this same time span; therefore, it is important to define your terms

- When the etymology (origin and history) of a common word might prove interesting or will help expand upon a point

Additional Tips for Writing Definitions

- Avoid defining with "X is when" and "X is where" statements. These introductory adverb phrases should be avoided. Define a noun with a noun, a verb with a verb, and so forth.
- Do not define a word by mere repetition or merely restating the word.

"Rhyming poetry consists of lines that contain end rhymes."

Better:

"Rhyming poetry is an art form consisting of lines whose final words consistently contain identical, final stressed vowel sounds."

- Define a word in simple and familiar terms. Your definition of an unfamiliar word should not lead your audience towards looking up more words in order to understand your definition.

- Keep the class portion of your definition small but adequate. It should be large enough to include all members of the term you are defining but no larger. Avoid adding personal details to definitions. Although you may think the story about your Grandfather will perfectly encapsulate the concept of stinginess, your audience may fail to relate. Offering personal definitions may only increase the likeliness of misinterpretation that you are trying to avoid.

In academic writing, you may need to formulate definitions, there are two methods of making definitions. The first method can be summarized as follow:

1. Thing to be defined + verb + general class + word + wh - word + particular characteristics

Examples:

- a. Bacteria are single –celled organisms that are classified as prokaryotes.
- b. Locus is a location which reside a specific place on chromosomes

c. Microbiologist is a scientist who specializes in the study of microscopic form on life.

d. Biochemical is organic compound made by living organisms

2. The second method can be formulated as in the following

Examples:

a. Bacteria that cause diseases in humans can be defined as pathogens.

b. Scientists who study insects are called entomologies.

c. Green molecules in plants needed for making glucose are called chlorophyll.