

UNIVERSITY OF HAIL
ENGLISH LANGUAGE CENTER



Writing Definitions

English 101

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CHAPTER ONE

Short and Extended Definitions

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Chapter Overview:

- ❑ Introduction
- ❑ What is a definition ?
- ❑ Why do we need to write one?
- ❑ Types of definitions
 - ✓ A short or formal definition
 - ✓ An extended definition
- ❑ Choosing a definition
- ❑ How to write an effective definition
- ❑ Group work (In-class task)

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❑ Introduction

- **When you write academic essays or reports you will often need to define key words and concepts. You are most likely to write definitions when you introduce the word or concept. In your writing you will probably need to write both formal definitions and/or extended definitions.**

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■ What is a definition?

- **Definition** is writing that explains what a word or term means.
- Having a clear understanding of what a word or term means can avoid confusion and mistakes. Some words, like table, book, tree, have definite, concrete meanings. Such words are often defined in just a few carefully chosen words in a dictionary and you can depend on the dictionary definition for their meanings.



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□ Why do we need to write one?

The primary reason to include definitions in your writing is to avoid misunderstanding with your audience (reader).

Writing definitions in your writing helps you convey what you mean to say and to avoid misunderstanding.

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□ Types of definitions

Formal Definition (Short)

- A **formal** definition is a short, complete definition of a concrete word or concept. Here is an example of a formal definition:

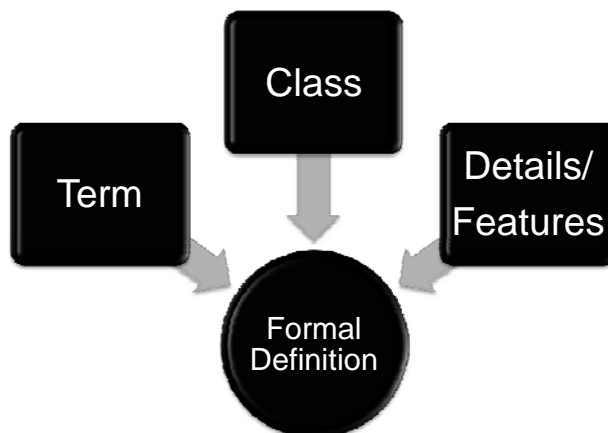
Change is a type of process which involves passing from one state or phase to another

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□ Formal (short) definition



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Formal Definition (Short)

We normally write formal definitions like this:

Term	Verb	Class	Distinguishing features
Change	is	a type of process	which involves passing from one state or phase to another

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Formal Definition (Short)

Here is another way of writing a formal definition:

Class	Distinguishing features	Verb	Term
The process	which involves passing from one state or phase to another	is called	change

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Task One

**Find short/formal definitions in
chapter 1 extract from chp.19
“Changing Earth”**

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Task One

1. **An earthquake is a violent shaking of the ground caused by the sudden shifting of deep rocks.**
2. **A volcano is a vent in the earth crust through which ash, gases, and molten rock erupt.**
1. **The place where the rocks break deep below the surface is called the focus.**
2. **The place on the surface directly above the focus is called the epicenter.**
3. **The record of an earthquake is called a seismogram.**

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Extended Definition

Topic Sentence (formal definition)

Supporting Sentences (Give Examples)

Provide Extra Facts/
Information

Description

Say what cannot
be included in
your definition

Concluding
sentence

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Extended definition

What is transmission?

A transmission is a system which carries force from one place to another or changes its direction. Transmissions are used to carry force and motion from the engine of a power system to the object to be moved (the load). They can be mechanical, using parts such as gears, pulleys, cams and levers to transmit force; hydraulic, using pressure on a fluid such as water; or electrical, using wires to carry current from its place of generation to the point where it will be used.

From living with technology, by Hacker and Barden

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Extended definition

Topic
Sentence

What is transmission?

Supporting
sentences
Examples

A transmission is a system which carries force from one place to another or changes its direction. Transmissions are used to carry force and motion from the engine of a power system to the object to be moved (the load). They can be mechanical, using parts such as gears, pulleys, cams and levers to transmit force; hydraulic, using pressure on a fluid such as water; or electrical, using wires to carry current from its place of generation to the point where it will be used.

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How to write an effective definition

- Start your paragraph with a dictionary or other authority's definition of the word or phrase you are writing about. This is usually stated in a topic sentence.
- Add another point, your own, to this definition.
- Choose another point and explain it here.
- Choose one of the other points you can think of, and explain it here.
- Tell your reader one thing that your definition is not.
- If you have another point, explain it here.
- Finish with a concluding sentence which reflects all that you mentioned in your paragraph.

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Examples of a Short definition

1. Lemonade is a drink made of lemons, sugar, and water.
 2. An orphan is a child without living parents.
 3. Water is a liquid made up of molecules of hydrogen and oxygen in the ratio of 2 to 1.
1. **WORD/TERM:** Lemonade
CLASS: drink
SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OR DETAILS: made of lemons, sugar, and water
 2. **WORD/TERM:** orphan
CLASS: child
SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OR DETAILS: without living parents
 3. **WORD/TERM:** Water
CLASS: liquid
SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS OR DETAILS: made up of molecules of hydrogen and oxygen in the ratio of 2 to 1

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Examples of an extended definition

Expository writing is a type of writing which is to inform, explain, describe, or define the author's subject to the reader. Expository text is meant to deposit information and is the most frequently used type of writing by students in colleges and universities. A well-written exposition remains focused on its topic and lists events in chronological order. Types of expository writing are definition, classification and partition, cause and effect, and comparison and contrast. Key words such as first, after, next, then and last usually signal sequential writing. Personal pronouns may be used in such writing, if needed. Expository essays will have a thesis that is an opinion of the writer and is supported by the facts in the body

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