The Definition Essay:

Definition: 1. The act of defining a word, phrase, or term. 2. The act of making clear and distinct. 3. A determining of outline, extent, or limits.

Consider the following guidelines as you write your definition essay:

- Make your essay personal, amusing, vigorous, stimulating, and memorable.
- Choose a generic topic rather than a specific topic. For example, write about schools but not BYU-H.

Any combination of these traditional types of definitions can help clarify meaning for the reader of your definition essay:

- Analysis: divide the subject into parts and define each part separately.
- Classification: according to dictionary definitions, what classes does the subject belong to?
- Comparison: the unfamiliar may be defined by showing its likeness to the familiar or the differences from it.
- Details: what are the physical characteristics, traditional thoughts, and other distinguishing attributes that describe the subject of the paper?
- Examples and incidents: narrate illustrations that can clarify a group, theory, or object.
- Negation: mention what it is not in order to clear the ground for what it is.
- Origins and Causes: where did the subject come from? What is the background information? What is the history of the subject?
- Results, Effects, and Uses: discuss the consequences and uses of the subject.

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