

To begin, you need to find a topic that is worth defining, a term or concept that is somehow controversial or open to debate.

Consider your audience—how they define the term, what reluctance they might have to learning a definition different than their own. What is your purpose? Are you simply exploring the nature of your selected topic, or are you trying to get the audience to consider your definition and possibly accept it? Are you making an argument regarding your definition?

**Introduction:** What are you defining and why?

The **thesis** should give a clear basic definition of your subject and then extend that definition in a thought-provoking way. Your essay map may be explicit or implied.

**Body:** Discuss your extension of the definition, identifying and describing additional features that distinguish your subject—your definition of the subject—from others.

You may use synonyms or etymologies, and you might find that you employ other expository methods, such as narration, description, process analysis, or comparison and contrast.

**Conclusion:** Tie everything together, and make sure that the significance of your topic and definition is clear to the reader. Provide a sense of closure.