

We Learn as We Grow

● Your tasks in this unit ●

To learn the basics of exemplification

- definition
- kinds of examples
- sources of examples

To learn to outline expository essays

▶ Task One

Exemplification

Guidelines



What is exposition?

Exposition is explanatory writing. Its purpose is to explain or clarify a point.



Patterns of exposition

- Exemplification.
- Process analysis.
- Cause-Effect analysis.
- Comparison and contrast.
- Classification.
- Definition.
- Analogy.



What is exemplification?

Exemplification is a method of supporting a thesis statement with a series of specific examples or, sometimes, with a single extended example. It is one of the most common and most useful means of developing a paragraph or an essay.



What kind of example to choose

- Choose **relevant examples**. The examples you choose must clearly demonstrate the point or idea you want to illustrate.
- Choose **striking examples**. Include examples that will capture your readers' attention and make a vivid impression.
- Choose a **variety of useful examples**. Choose examples that reveal different aspects of your topic or that contribute new information.
- Choose **representative examples**. Choose typical cases, not rare or unusual ones, to illustrate your point.
- Choose **accurate examples**. Be sure the examples you include are neither exaggerated nor understated. They should present the situation realistically.



Where to find appropriate examples

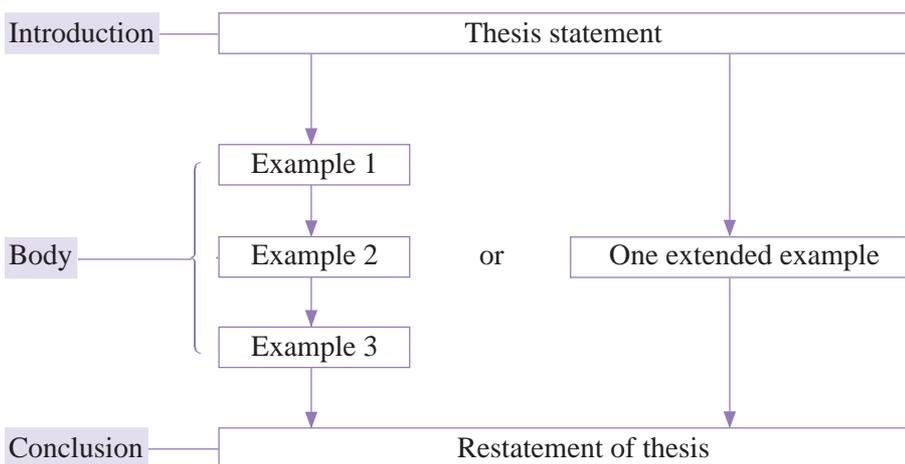
- From your personal experience.
- From your personal observations.
- From short stories, novels, television, or movies.
- From authoritative sources: facts, statistics or reports.

Note: When you use information gathered from outside sources, it is important that you mention where they come from.

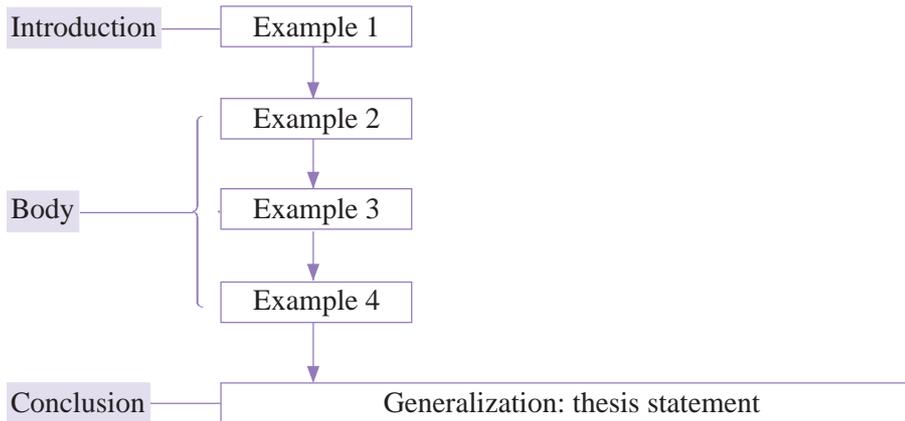


How to organize an exemplification essay

Pattern A: Generalization (thesis) → Specifics (supporting examples)



Pattern B: **Specifics** (examples) → **Generalization** (thesis)



How to write a good exemplification essay

- Begin with a clear introduction. In most exemplification essays the thesis is stated at the outset. Your introduction should arouse the readers' interest and include necessary background information on the topic.
- Provide sufficient examples and use vivid language so that your readers feel as if they are experiencing or observing the situation themselves.
- Connect the topic sentence and your example(s) with a linking sentence.
- Use transitions to lead your readers from one example to another. Transitions such as *for example*, *once*, *another time*, *in particular* help to keep your readers on track.
- End with an effective conclusion. Your essay should conclude with a final statement that pulls your ideas together and reminds the readers of your thesis.

Activity 1 Practicing guidelines on exemplification



Compare the two paragraphs that attempt to make the same point and explain why one is better than the other.

- 1) In the summer vacation everything bores my friend Xiao Lin. Nothing seems to interest or excite him. He begins the day convinced that it will be dull and that nothing interesting will happen. This attitude, of course, requires no energy from him. He can just give in to it and let it overcome him. Sometimes, I wonder what would happen if an earthquake hit. Would that raise Xiao Lin's blood pressure?
- 2) In the summer vacation everything bores my friend Xiao Lin. Nothing seems to interest or excite him. For instance, last week a group of us decided to go on a three-day trip to the beach.

The more we planned our trip, the more thrilled we became. But when we asked Xiao Lin to join us, he just shrugged his shoulders and said, “That sounds pretty pointless to me.” On another occasion, I wanted Xiao Lin to help me choose a new MP3 player at a store near his home, for he is something of an expert in things like that. He agreed, but before we could fix a date, he changed his mind, saying he didn’t feel like going to the store because of an unhappy experience there. On still another occasion, when I was utterly fascinated after watching a terrific *kongfu* film, Lin looked at me with scorn and commented, “That sort of movie is trash.” Sometimes, I wonder what would happen if an earthquake hit. Would that raise Xiao Lin’s blood pressure or would he just yawn and say, “So what?”



Study the following paragraphs. Highlight or underline the topic sentence and number the examples. Point out how each paragraph concludes and highlights the linking sentence, i.e. one that connects the topic sentence and the example(s) if any.

The first two paragraphs are selected from Contemporary College English, Intensive Reading.

- 1) As predicted, during his [Stephen Hawking’s] first two years at Cambridge, the effects of the disease rapidly worsened. He was beginning to experience great difficulty in walking and was forced to use a stick in order to cover just a few feet. With the support of walls and objects, as well as sticks, he would manage, painfully slowly, to move across rooms and open areas. There were many times when these supports were not adequate, and he would turn up in the office with a bandage around his head, having fallen heavily and received a nasty bump. Meanwhile, his speech rapidly became first slurred and then very hard to follow, and even those close to him were having difficulty understanding what he was saying. (B1, L9 “Against All Odds”, Para.7)
- 2) In addition to affirming personal values, college students develop new ways to organize and use knowledge. The challenges of academic life not only introduce them to new knowledge but force them to evaluate how they gather, process, and apply knowledge in their lives. For some, this will be a painful experience, but for all it will be a growing experience. One student with whom I had worked went on to become an English teacher. She shared with me how her attitude toward literature changed during her college years. “In high school I made good grades in English,” she observed, “but the material meant very little to me.” She then went on to explain how in college she came to realize that literature is one of the best ways to understand a culture. Her way of learning had changed. All students should be aware of how they react to new knowledge and new ways of learning, how they process the knowledge presented to them, and

how they organize this knowledge. (B3, L1 “Your College Years”, Para.8)

- 3) Let us imagine a country in which reading is a popular voluntary activity. There, parents read books for their own edification and pleasure, and are seen by their children at this silent and mysterious pastime. These parents also read to their children, give them books for presents, talk to them about books and underwrite (support with money), with their taxes, a public library system that is open all day, every day. In school—where an attractive library is invariably to be found—the children study certain books together but also have an active reading life of their own. Years later it may even be hard for them to remember if they read *Jane Eyre* at home and *Judy Blume* in class, or the other way around. In college young people continue to be assigned certain books, but far more important are the books they discover for themselves—browsing (looking through the pages of a book, magazine, etc. without a particular purpose) in the library, in bookstores, by the shelves of friends, one book leading to another, back and forth in history and across languages and cultures. After graduation they continue to read, and in the fullness of time produce a new generation of readers. Oh happy land! I wish we all lived there.



Pick out the topic sentence and the supporting examples in the following paragraph. Cut out examples which do not support the central idea or merely repeat what has been said.

Early Americans had to rely on their own ingenuity to make life comfortable or even to survive. They turned survival skills into a type of art that was passed down from generation to generation. Some of these art forms, which may no longer be practical in today’s society, were a part of living for our great-grandparents. In the West, sturdy houses could be made from adobe brick, but first the brick had to be made from mud and straw. Making clothes was also an art of the past that few people could accomplish today. Even buying material for clothes was a luxury few knew. The process of making a new dress or shirt or pants involved shearing sheep, carding wool, spinning yarn and weaving cloth. Sometimes the clothing maker dyed the yarn different colors, using natural materials like walnut shells. The women enjoyed growing flowers to make the home look more attractive. Tatting—making lace by hand—became an art form that was used to decorate collars or to bring beauty to something as necessary as pillowcases. People loved to get together in the evenings and have dances. Since there were no refrigerators, families found that making beef jerky was a way to preserve meat and have a year-round supply. And if they wanted to take a bath, they needed soap, but making soap at home, an art almost unheard of today, was required before that bath could take place. When the supply of candles, the source

of night light, became low, there was one solution—making more from melted lard. Sometimes the men and women would work from sunup to sundown so they could take a day off for celebration. Today, we talk of “the good old days” when life was simple, but maybe we should say when families were resourceful and used art in order to survive.

Activity 2 Reading on the subject

Not Always Bad

Russ C.

In my first semester of college, I found myself, somewhat reluctantly, enrolled in a beginning economics class. I say “reluctantly” because I was not the slightest bit interested in economics, nor did I see how a physical therapist¹ really needed to know a lot about economics. I was not looking forward to this required class. I was mainly interested in taking courses in my major, graduating, and then getting a job and some money.

I soon learned, however, that I was badly mistaken; I was very naïve to think anyone living at this time did not need to know basic economic principles. I had failed to realize that once I graduated, I would be working and one of my goals was to earn money and become financially secure. The economics class was intended to help me learn to understand how to achieve that security.

During the semester we studied all about the various ways of earning money, wise methods of investment and saving, different ways to budget², how to keep records for taxes, how to shop wisely and be a smart consumer, etc. We also studied the various economic principles and theories, including national and international markets.

I was amazed to find how little I really knew about financial and economic matters. One of the areas the instructor covered in the class was home buying. One of my plans for the future is to own my own home; needless to say, this unit proved to be important to me. We covered areas of home buying such as mortgages, insurance, interest rates, etc. It was very practical and very informative; although I don’t intend to shop around for a home for a few more years, I know I’ll be much better informed when the time comes.

1. **physical therapist**: someone who has been trained to give a particular form of treatment for physical illness
理疗师

2. **budget**: to carefully plan and control how much money you spend and what you will buy with it

The next semester I found myself enrolled in the composition class. I really didn't see the necessity for my taking a composition class, either. After all, physical therapists do very little writing...or so I thought.

Since this is one of my last semesters here, I just recently started to do some job hunting. One of the things I have to do is to write a decent application letter. Application forms sometimes include questions that require more than a yes or no answer. For example, to answer one of the questions I had to write several paragraphs about why I wanted to work in physical therapy¹, why I wanted to work in a specific clinic or office, etc. I found that the composition course gave me the knowledge and confidence to tackle that writing.

I have also discovered in talking to people who work full time in the physical therapy field that they do write on the job. There are reports, memos, letters, etc. I'm glad now that I took the course, although I probably wouldn't have if it hadn't been required.

I thought I would be wasting time and money taking classes that bored me to death. Now I know I have learned things that are very useful, and that required courses are not always bad.

(513 words)

Questions to think about

- What did the writer major in at college?

- Why did he take a course in economics in the first semester? Was he interested in economics? How did he later find the course useful?

- Why was he enrolled in a composition class in the second semester? Did he think writing important at first? How did he find writing important both in job hunting and on the job as a physical therapist?

- What is the function of the last sentence of the essay?

- Which pattern of development is employed in this essay?

- Where does the writer draw his examples?

1. physical therapy: 理疗

Trial and Error

Cathy Gerretse

As in anything you learn, trial and error is involved. While I was learning sign language¹, I often mixed up some of the signs because there was only a slight difference. Believe me, more than once I have signed incorrectly and have misinterpreted.

One day in a signing class we each had a partner for our quiz. Each pair had a piece of paper with a question and an answer printed on it. One person was to ask the question and the other was to answer it. My partner's question was, "Where do you have fun?" I was supposed to respond, "In the game room." I initialized my word incorrectly and my answer came out, "I have fun in the bedroom." Before I realized what I had said, my teacher made a big question mark and asked, "Doing what in the bedroom?" Did I feel stupid! Oh, well. It wasn't the first time, and it won't be the last.

It was around Christmas time, a time when many children only think of Santa without actually knowing why we celebrate this holiday. So the teacher told the story of how Mary was pregnant and had Jesus in a manger² in Bethlehem³. Well, I was busy interpreting the story to the deaf child in the classroom when, all of a sudden, he started laughing and shaking his head, saying, "No." And I shook my head saying, "Yes." He then said in sign language, "Your mom didn't have baby Jesus in a garage!" Well. It dawned on me that I had maybe misinterpreted a few words.

At a signing convention, I was conversing with a deaf person from New York. People from the east coast have a different variation in their signing, just as people from different parts of the country speak with a different accent. So, I figured I would stick to simple questions; it was hard for me to understand what he was signing. So, I asked him, "How do you like it here?" I was having the hardest time figuring out what he was saying. He was also getting frustrated because I couldn't understand him. So, eventually, he looked me straight in the eyes and slowly signed, "Stupid hearing person." Needless to say, I definitely understood what that meant.

My signing teacher had introduced me to one of her deaf friends. I thought we were having

1. **sign language**: a language that uses hand movements instead of spoken words, used by people who cannot hear 哑语

2. **manger**: a long open container that horses, cattle, etc. eat from

3. **Bethlehem**: a town on the West Bank of the River Jordan, near Jerusalem, thought to be where Jesus Christ was born

a nice conversation about work, friends, etc. Then he wiggled¹ his fingers under his chin and pointed to his head. I thought he was saying I had a stinky² head. So I just let it pass instead of asking what he meant. At our next signing class, my teacher asked what I had said to her friend during our conversation. He had told her that I have a dirty mind.

Trial and error helped me a lot when I was learning sign language. Now I remember to initialize words—and to think about what I am signing before I sign it! (501 words)

Questions to think about

- What do you learn from the essay about its writer?

- What is the central idea of the essay?

- How does the writer develop this idea?

- What pattern of development does she use?

- How does the essay conclude?

Activity 3 Reading what your peers have written

Mistakes—Learning Opportunities

Ma Nan

In my first semester at college, I chose Japanese as my second foreign language. Once I was invited to a Japanese friend's home for dinner. At dinner, they served rice, *sachimi*³, and a small bowl of water. I was thirsty, so I immediately drank all the water. My friend's family all looked at me in surprise, and then they burst into laughter. Afterward they told me that the water was not for drinking. In Japan, if a guest is served with a small bowl of water, he or she is honored as a distinguished guest. What a silly mistake!

Another time, a Saturday morning, I went shopping with another Japanese friend. Because

1. *wiggle*: to move something with small movements from side to side or up and down

2. *stinky*: smelling unpleasant

3. *sachimi*: vegetable

the street was crowded, I accidentally stepped on her foot. Immediately I said sorry to her in Japanese. But she looked a bit confused, and after a while she asked me in English, “Why did you say ‘thanks’ to me?” I was shocked, “ ‘Thanks’? I thought I said ‘sorry’ .” My friend laughed, and she said, “Oh, you mixed up those two words.” From then on, I never made the same mistake.

Looking back on my first year at college, I find I made a lot of such mistakes in learning Japanese as well as in learning English, but I also find that making mistakes is not a terrible thing if we can learn through trial and error. (228 words)

Learning Beyond the University Classroom

Wang Yingchong

“Hard disk error!” I was helpless sitting in front of the computer. A friend told me, over the phone, to open the chassis and check. Gosh! I had never used a screwdriver before. At home, my parents did all the mechanical, as well as, manual jobs so that I could concentrate on “academic” tasks. Now, at college far away from home, I had to do it all on my own—borrowing the tools, opening the chassis and finding out what was wrong. Thus using a screwdriver became my first lesson outside the classroom.

In fact doing such minor repairs is relatively easy. A tough task is communicating with my fellow students and handling relationships. For instance, last term I was put in charge of writing the script and directing a play for the annual Drama Night. Writing the script was no challenge for me, but the rehearsal really was. The cast often disagreed, and sometimes disagreements developed into quarrels. As organizer of the rehearsal, I had to listen to everyone, and try to calm both sides and call upon them to sit down and find a solution through discussion. Such occasions turned to opportunities for me to learn to control my temper for the sake of our common goal. Finally, our play *The Call* made a big hit on campus.

Similarly, no course will teach us how to wash a quilt cover, schedule our time or find financial support for a campus activity. There is much to learn outside the university classroom. (252 words)

Getting Independent —A Lesson I Learned at University

Zhang Qing

Becoming college students, many think of freedom, colorful activities and campus love.

I am not such a romantic. To me, becoming a university student means, first of all, independence.

Before coming to university, I hung around my parents' neck day and night. They told me to study hard and worry about nothing, since there was nothing else for me to worry about. I willingly obeyed. But here at this university far away from my home, I have started a new life, a life on my own.

I am as hard-working as before, but I have learned to plan my time efficiently all by myself so that I have time to spare for sports, videos, books and even window-shopping. Besides, I have taken up a job as a private English tutor. It takes two hours a week and I get sixty *yuan*. Not much, but enough to cover my everyday expenses. To learn that this amount of money I can really call my own, and to use it in whatever way I like gives me a sense of achievement. The idea that I do not have to always depend on my parents began to dawn on me. And with this came another revelation: Becoming independent is a lesson I have to learn whether I like it or not. And the fact is: I like it.

I am convinced that I should work out my own future, and I will. For I am no longer a child nestling in the bosom of my parents, and I am ready to spread my wings for flight. (262 words)

Questions to think about

- Do you think the three essays fit the description of an example paper in terms of organization? If so, in what ways?

- What message does each try to communicate to the reader?

- What do you think of the examples they use? Are they relevant to the thesis statement? Are they representative and striking?

- Which of the three do you think is the best example essay? Why do you think so?



Writing Assignment One

Write an exemplification paper of 200–250 words on any of the following topics:

- My first year of college was rewarding
- How college has affected my life

- Making mistakes is a great way to learn
- There is a lot to learn outside the classroom
- College turns young people into useful members of society
- The person who did most in helping me adjust to life at college

The Procedure

Prewriting: choosing a topic and exploring ideas

- Discuss, in pairs or small groups, how you have benefited from your first year at college.
- Choose a topic you find interesting and have something to say about and narrow it to a manageable scope.
- Decide what point you want to make, or what idea you want to get across to your readers.
- Find as many examples as you can think of to support your point.
- Select two or three examples that you can develop fully and are most closely related to one another.

Drafting: getting your ideas on paper

- Decide how you are going to organize your paper—from generalization to specifics, or the other way round.
- Make a plan for your paper.

Topic: _____

Thesis statement: _____

Tentative title: _____

Method of organization: _____

Supporting details:

Example 1: _____

Example 2: _____

Example 3: _____

Conclusion: _____

- Discuss the plan in pairs/groups and seek peer advice.
- Write the first draft.

Revising: strengthening your essay

- Read your paper carefully and objectively.
- Ask yourself whether your examples are relevant, representative and striking.

- Check on the transition and see if the parts are well connected and the examples are properly introduced.
- Cut out any information that does not relate to your thesis statement.

Editing and proofreading: eliminating technical errors

- Check your spelling and grammar.
- Make sure you have used correct punctuation marks.
- Observe essay format: capitalization, indentation and spacing.
- Make sure your paper has a title.

Task Two

Elements of the Essay: Outlining

———— Guidelines ————



What is an essay?

An **essay** is a related group of paragraphs written for some purpose.



Types of essays

Essays can be classified into types, or modes, according to their purposes.

- **Narrative essays** relate a sequence of events, whether factual or not.
- **Descriptive essays** create a word picture of a scene, a person, or an object.
- **Expository essays** explain—to inform, instruct, clarify, illustrate, or define.
- **Argumentative essays** state an opinion and defend it logically.



Basic structure of an expository essay

An expository essay has three parts:

- A beginning called **the introduction**.
- A middle called **the body**.
- An end called **the conclusion**.



Elements of the expository essay

- Outlining.
- Thesis statement.
- Title.

➤ Transitions.

Note: In the following units, you will learn how to write the three parts of an expository essay, how to construct the thesis statement and the title, and how to achieve essay coherence.



What is an outline?

An **outline** is a method of organizing materials in logical order. It is a list that shows the main ideas and the structure of something you are planning to write. In other words, it is a plan for a piece of writing. Constructing an outline makes the writing of your essay easier.



Types of outline

- Topic outline, which uses only key words and phrases.
- Sentence outline, which uses complete sentences.



Format (the arrangement, design, or organization of something)

A topic outline looks like this:

Thesis: In my first year at college, I learned to spend my money wisely.

- I. Poor budgeting in the first semester
 - A. Used books
 - B. A used CD player
 - C. A *tae kwon do* training course
- II. My parents' tight budget
 - A. No new clothes for my mother
 - B. Extra work for my father during the Spring Festival
- III. Careful budgeting in the second semester
 - A. Buying only what was necessary
 - B. Paying attention to the quality of used goods
- IV. Conclusion: result of careful budgeting
 - A. ¥1,000 less than in the first semester
 - B. Importance of budgeting

A sentence outline looks like this:

Thesis: In my first year at college, I learned to spend my money wisely.

- I. In the first semester I didn't budget carefully.
 - A. I bought books I didn't need.
 - B. I bought a used CD player and repairing it cost me much money.
 - C. I paid a lot of money to go to a *tae kwon do* training course, but didn't keep it up.
- II. I found my parents on a tight budget and decided to budget wisely.
 - A. My mother didn't buy herself new clothes for the Spring Festival.
 - B. My father worked during the Spring Festival.
- III. In the second semester I spent money carefully.
 - A. I bought only what was necessary.
 - B. I paid more attention to the quality of used goods.
- IV. I learned to spend money wisely.
 - A. In the second semester I spent much less.
 - B. I learned the importance of money management.

Note: Roman numerals (I, II, III, IV) for the main ideas in the essay.
 Capital letters (A, B, C, D) for major subdivisions.
 Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4) for further subdivisions.



Rules concerning outlining

- An idea is not divided unless there are at least two points, therefore never an A without a B, never a 1 without a 2.
- All the points/items in a division/subdivision should be related and explain or support the topic/subtopic under which it is placed.
- In a topic outline, the words and phrases used within a division/subdivision should be parallel (in the same grammatical form).

Activity 1 Practicing guidelines on outlining



The outline below is faulty. Find out what is wrong with it.

Thesis statement: The first day at college, I realized that what lay ahead of me was a life of exertion, struggle and perseverance.

- I. A top student at high school, I expected to do well at college.
 - A. I got up early the first day of class.
 - B. I prepared for my lessons well.

- II. The day turned out to be a mess.
 - A. I couldn't understand a thing of the recorded dialogue.
 - B. I could hardly open my mouth in the oral class.
 - C. The Intensive Reading class seemed better.
 - D. I didn't have any more lessons.
- III. Conclusion: I realized what I had to do.
 - A. I must forget that I had been a top student at middle school.
 - B. I have to work hard to succeed at college.



Study the following outline for the body of an essay, point out what is wrong and improve it.

Topic: How college has affected my life

- I. What is college for?
 - A. A training camp rather than a relaxing paradise
 - B. Seemingly dull and useless but necessary classes
- II. Improved character
 - A. Think for myself
 - 1. I no longer follow instructions blindly
 - B. Learning to handle relationships
 - 1. More tolerance
 - 2. Being able to get along with different classmates
- III. Having a better attitude
 - A. Concentrating better
 - B. Aiming higher

Activity **2** Reading on the subject

Remember, We're Raising Children, Not Flowers!

Jack Canfield

One day David, my next-door neighbor, was teaching his seven-year-old son Kelly how to push the gas-powered lawn mower around the yard. As he was teaching him how to turn the mower around at the end of the lawn, his wife, Jan, called to him to ask a question. As David turned to answer the question, Kelly pushed the lawn mower right through the flowerbed at the

edge of the lawn!

When David turned back around and saw what had happened, he began to lose control. David had put a lot of time and effort into making those flowerbeds the envy of the neighborhood. As he began to raise his voice to his son, Jan walked quickly over to him, put her hand on his shoulder and said, “David, please remember...we’re raising children, not flowers!”

Jan reminded me how important it is as a parent to remember our priorities¹. Kids and their self-esteem are more important than any physical object they might break or destroy. The windowpane shattered by a baseball, a lamp knocked over by a careless child or a plate dropped in the kitchen are already broken. The flowers are already dead; I must remember not to add to the destruction by breaking a child’s spirit and deadening² his sense of liveliness.

I was buying a sport coat a few weeks ago and Mark Michael, the owner of the store, and I were discussing parenting³. He told me that while he and his wife and seven-year-old daughter were out for dinner, his daughter knocked over her water glass. After the water was cleaned up without any recriminating⁴ remarks from her parents, she looked up and said, “You know, I really want to thank you guys for not being like other parents. Most of my friends’ parents would have yelled at them and given them a lecture about paying more attention. Thanks for not doing that!”

Once, when I was having dinner with some friends, a similar incident happened. Their five-year-old son knocked over a glass of milk at the dinner table. When they immediately started in on⁵ him, I intentionally knocked my glass over, too. When I explained how I still knock things over even at the age of 48, the boy beamed⁶ and the parents seemingly got the message and backed off. How easy it is to forget that we are all still learning.

I recently heard a story from Stephen Glenn about a famous research scientist who had made several very important medical breakthroughs. He was being interviewed by a newspaper reporter who asked him why he thought he was able to be so much more creative than the average person. What set him so far apart⁷ from others?

1. **priority**: the thing that you think is most important and that needs attention before anything else

2. **deaden**: to make a feeling or sense less strong

3. **parenting**: the skill or activity of looking after your own children

4. **recriminate**: to blame or criticize someone for something that has happened

5. **start in on sb**: to begin criticizing someone about something

6. **beam**: to smile very happily

7. **set sb apart (from sb else)**: to make someone different from other people

He responded that, in his opinion, it all came from an experience with his mother that occurred when he was about two years old. He had been trying to remove a bottle of milk from the refrigerator when he lost his grip on the slippery bottle and it fell, spilling its contents all over the kitchen floor—a real sea of milk!

When his mother came into the kitchen, instead of yelling at him, giving him a lecture or punishing him, she said, “Robert, what a great and wonderful mess you have made! I have rarely seen such a huge puddle of milk. Well, the damage has already been done. Would you like to get down and play in the milk for a few minutes before we clean it up?”

This renowned¹ scientist then remarked that it was at that moment that he knew he didn’t need to be afraid of making mistakes. Instead, he learned that mistakes were just opportunities for learning something new, which is, after all, what scientific experiments are all about. Even if the experiment “doesn’t work”, we usually learn something valuable from it.

Let’s remember that our children’s spirits are more important than any material things. When we do, self-esteem and love blossom and grow more beautifully than any bed of flowers ever could. (674 words)

Questions to think about

- What topic does the essay deal with?

- What specific aspect of the topic does the writer narrow down to?

- Do you think there are enough examples to make the essay convincing?

- Are the examples relevant, representative and properly introduced?

- How many parts would you divide the essay into? Analyze the function and organization of each part.

- Do you think the parts are closely connected?

- What pattern of development is used?

1. **renowned**: known and admired by a lot of people, especially for a special skill, achievement, or quality

Double Vision

(Excerpts)

Lynn Minton

When I was a little girl, my mother told me to wait for the light to turn green before I crossed the street and to cross always at the corner. This I did. Indeed, I was positive¹ as a very young child that I would get smashed² like a potato if I even so much as stepped a foot off the sidewalk while the light turned red. I followed my mother's advice until I realized that she herself jaywalked³ constantly, dodging in and out of moving traffic—and pulling me with her. And after a while I followed her example and not her advice.

My father told me never to cheat or steal and I remember my intense humiliation the day, when I was only 6 years old, I received a public spanking⁴ for swiping⁵ three dimes from the windowsill where they had been left by a visiting uncle. Yet my father pushed me under the turnstile⁶ to get into the subway and got me into the movies for half price, way⁷ after I was old enough to pay full price. And my mother continually brought home reams of⁸ stationery and other supplies lifted⁹ from the offices where she worked.

Both my parents exacted¹⁰ severe punishment for lying and yet I knew, in time¹¹, that they lied to me and to each other and to others when, presumably¹², they felt the occasion warranted¹³ it.

1. **positive**: very sure, with no doubt at all that something is right or true

2. **smash**: to break something into pieces violently or noisily, by dropping, throwing, or hitting it

3. **jaywalk**: to walk across a road at a place where it is dangerous to do so

4. **spank**: to hit a child on their bottom with your open hand, as a punishment

5. **swipe**: (*AmE, informal*) to steal something

6. **turnstile**: a mechanical barrier at the entrance to a place. Turnstiles have metal arms that you push round as you go through them and enter the place.

7. **way**: by a large amount

8. **reams of**: (*plural, informal*) a large amount of

9. **lift**: (*informal*) to steal something

10. **exact**: (*formal*) to make something necessary

11. **in time**: after a certain period of time, especially after a gradual process of change and development

12. **presumably**: used to say that you think something is probably true

13. **warrant**: to need or deserve

And this was just part of the story. But hypocrisy about sex, about race relations, about religion, took me a longer time to see. I was out of high school before that picture began to pull together¹. Understanding didn't devastate² me because I had begun to absorb the knowledge little by little, through the years. By the time I was 18 or 19 I guess I was both old enough to understand and strong enough to face what I saw. And I could face it because I learned my parents were not unusual. Almost everybody's parents were the same. And we, my friends and I, did come to take it for granted. Parents were that way. Older people were that way. The word for what we found out about our parents' generation was hypocrisy. And most of us accepted it as part of³ life—as the way things were. (380 words)

Questions to think about

- How does the writer open the essay?

- What does the writer want to drive home in the second paragraph?

- What does the writer bring up in the next paragraph?

- What do these experiences finally lead to?

- What method of development does the writer use?

1. **pull together**: when different facts, ideas, etc. pull together, a single theory, argument, etc. begins to form in someone's mind

2. **devastate**: to make someone feel extremely shocked and sad

3. **be (a) part of sth**: to be included or involved in something

Activity 3 Reading what your peers have written

Money Management —A Lesson I Learned at College

Li Na

I have been at BFSU for a year, and an important lesson I've learned is how to spend my money wisely.

In my first semester at college, with so much money in my bank account, I spent it carelessly. I spent quite a sum on used books which I didn't really need. I bought a second-hand CD player, but it broke down so frequently that I paid nearly as much to repair it. Also I took an expensive *tae kwon do* training course without knowing whether I would keep it up. It turned out that I didn't. So at the end of the semester, I had little money left and had to ask my parents for more.

Back at home in the winter vacation, I was ashamed of myself when I found my parents on a tight budget. My mother didn't buy herself any new clothes for the Spring Festival. My father worked in the holidays. My heart ached when I realized that they were working hard and trying to save every penny possible for my education. But what had I done? To ease their financial burden, I made up my mind then to use their hard-earned money wisely.

In the following semester, I always thought twice when I wanted something badly, and I bought only what was necessary. I also paid more attention to the quality of the used goods I wanted to buy. As a result, that semester, I spent 1,000 *yuan* less than in the first semester. What's more, I learned the importance of money management. (259 words)

Journey into Maturing

Hu Wei

It is almost ten months since I came to college. Looking back, I find university has affected my attitude toward life, improved my character and motivated me to work harder in search of knowledge.

I have become more realistic and positive about what university is for. I used to think it was a relaxing paradise. But I was wrong. I have never undergone such pressure before. Now I know ours is a competitive society. To succeed, we often have to learn what is rather dull and what

seems rather useless. There is little sense in complaining. For what is necessary is not always pleasant. I have learned to face this reality.

Living on campus, my character has definitely improved. I didn't realize that I was beginning to think for myself until I went back home in the winter holiday. I could no longer lend a receptive ear to all my parents' instructions, and I even got a little annoyed when they interfered in my affairs. Fortunately, I have very understanding parents, and I was glad when my father said this was a sign of maturity. In addition, in middle school I could only get along with people who had something in common with me, and I didn't appreciate lifestyles other than my own. Now I have become more tolerant and much friendlier to people with whom I have little in common.

Also, the competitive atmosphere on campus often compels me to remain in the same posture the whole morning reading. In the past, I could never have concentrated for more than two hours unless I was reading *kongfu* fiction or a detective story. Now I aim high and don't accept just OK in my studies.

In the remaining days of college, I am ready to meet new challenges cheerfully and confidently. (231 words)

Rediscovering Myself

Cheng Minghui

I never regarded myself as talented until I entered university.

As I was interested in drawing and calligraphy, I applied for a position in the propaganda department of the Students' Union. But I was not at all confident of getting it. At the interview I showed them a drawing of mine, but I was so nervous that I stammered a lot when answering their questions. To my surprise, I was soon informed that I had been given the position; my drawing had impressed them and they thought I was "talented".

Am I? I was flattered. Though doubtful about their conclusion, I was eager to show my "talent". With energy, I made posters for all kinds of activities and some of them won praise from the head of the department and from my classmates as well. For the first time in my life, I was proud of my "talent".

In another school-wide competition called "Charm of Our Dormitory", one of my roommates and I made a large comic poster with crayons, colored pencils, watercolor and chalk. It won a second prize. My Intensive Reading teacher said I was a "talented" artist when she saw the poster. Spurred on by this modest success, I made an even better poster to promote the play my class was going to perform at the annual Drama Night. Another success!

College life is an eye-opener to me; it offers opportunities for me to discover my abilities. If I had this talent for drawing, who knows what other hidden talents I might possess and should tap? (258 words)

Questions to think about

- Do the three essays follow the same pattern of development? Explain.

- Where do the writers place the thesis statements of their essays?

- How does each essay develop its central idea?

- What strengths and weaknesses do you find in the three essays?

- Which do you like best? Explain.



Writing Assignment Two

Write an essay of 200–250 words on any of the following topics, using either a single extended example or two or three short ones to develop your thesis statement.

- One good turn deserves another
- Growing up, I found that... (e.g. honesty really was the best policy)
- The longer I live, the more I discover that...
- My parents are good examples for me
- My upbringing has prepared me for...
- I had a strict/sheltered, etc. upbringing
- The greatest joy/sorrow/pain/trouble in adolescence is...
- An essential quality for young people is...

The Procedure

Prewriting: choosing a topic and exploring ideas

- Discuss, in pairs or small groups, in what way you are becoming mature or what you have discovered about your upbringing.

- Choose a topic you find interesting and have something to say about and narrow it to a manageable scope.
- Revise the topic you have chosen to make it fit your case.
- Find as many examples as you can think of to support the point you intend to make.
- Select the one you can develop fully or those that can best illustrate your point and are most closely related to one another.

Drafting: getting your ideas on paper

- Decide how you are going to organize your paper—from generalization to specifics or the other way round.
- Make a plan for your paper.

Topic: _____

Thesis statement: _____

Tentative title: _____

Method of organization: _____

Supporting details:

Example 1: _____

Example 2: _____

Example 3: _____

Conclusion: _____

- Discuss the plan in pairs/groups and seek peer advice.
- Write the first draft.

Revising: strengthening your essay

- Read your paper carefully and objectively.
- Ask yourself whether your examples are relevant, representative, and striking.
- Check on the transition and see if the parts are well connected and the examples are properly introduced.
- Cut out any information that does not relate to your thesis statement.

Editing and proofreading: eliminating technical errors

- Check your spelling and grammar.
- Make sure you have used correct punctuation marks.
- Observe essay format: capitalization, indentation and spacing.
- Make sure your paper has a title.

You cannot teach people anything. You can only help them discover it within themselves.

— Galileo

A good education is not so much one which prepares a man to succeed in the world, as one which enables him to sustain a failure.

— Bernard Iddings Bell

Good writers are those who keep the language efficient. That is to say, keep it accurate, keep it clear.

— Ezra Pound