

Successful College Writing

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PART 3 Patterns of Development

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CHAPTER 17

Definition: Explaining What You Mean

WRITING QUICK START

The photograph on the opposite page depicts volunteers providing food at a soup kitchen. Suppose your psychology instructor were to show this photograph to the class and ask, "What human behavior is being exhibited here?" What would be your response? You might say the volunteers are demonstrating altruism, generosity, or compassion, for example.

Write a paragraph defining the behavior of the soup kitchen volunteers. First, choose a term that describes their behavior. Then write a brief definition of the term you chose and explain the qualities or characteristics of the behavior.

WRITING A DEFINITION

In your paragraph in response to the Writing Quick Start on the previous page, you named and described the behavior illustrated in the photo, perhaps including one or more qualities or characteristics that distinguish the behavior from other behaviors. In other words, you have just written a definition. This chapter will show you how to write effective definitions, how to explore and explain a topic using an extended definition, and how to incorporate definition into essays using other patterns of development.

What Is a Definition?

A **definition** explains what a term means or which meaning is intended when a word has several different meanings. You use definitions every day in a variety of situations. If you call a friend a *nonconformist*, for example, she might ask you what you mean. If you and a friend disagree over whether you are feminists, you might need to define the term in order to resolve your dispute.

Often a definition is intended for someone who is unfamiliar with the thing or idea being defined. You might define *slicing* to someone unfamiliar with golf or explain the term *koi* to a person unfamiliar with tropical fish. Many academic and work situations require that you write or learn definitions, as the examples in the box below indicate.

The essay that follows is an example of an extended definition. The term it defines is *freegan*, a person who rejects our consumer society, culling only what he or she needs from the stuff others wastefully discard.

SCENES FROM COLLEGE AND THE WORKPLACE

- On an exam for a *health and fitness* course, the following short-answer question appears: "Define the term *wellness*."
- Your *philosophy* instructor asks you to write a paper exploring the ethics of mercy killing; as part of the essay, you need to define the concepts *terminal illness* and *chronic condition*.
- As a *chemical engineer* responsible for your department's compliance with the company's standards for *safety* and *work efficiency*, you write a brief memo to your staff defining each term.

Freegans: They Live Off What We Throw Away

Jan Goodwin

READING

Jan Goodwin is currently a senior fellow at Brandeis University's Schuster Center for Investigative Journalism and Senior International Editor for *Marie-Claire* magazine in which this article appeared. She has written about the threat of extremism in the Muslim world in her books *Point of Honor* (2002) and *Caught in the Crossfire* (1987) and publishes widely on issues of social justice both in the United States and overseas. As you read the essay below, highlight the different aspects of the freegan lifestyle that Goodwin describes in order to define the term.



One man's trash is another man's treasure. A group of freegans forages through bags outside a store in New York City.

It's nearly closing time on a crisp Monday night at a Midtown Manhattan supermarket, 1 when a burly crew begins tossing bulging black bags filled with the day's trash — crusty breads, salad-bar fixings, last week's fruits and vegetables — to the curb. Just then, a cadre of 15 jeans-and-sneakers-clad men and women turn the corner and quietly descend upon the heaps, gingerly opening and dissecting their contents. As they forage through the small mountains of discarded food, a 30-something woman sporting a green rain slicker calls out, "Over here, expensive Greek yogurt." Seconds later, a ponytailed guy wearing a backpack hollers, "Here's bacon and chicken for anyone who eats meat — and a perfect eggplant." Someone shouts a reminder not to tear the bags or leave litter on the ground, lest the store get fined. After less than 30 minutes, they excitedly depart the scene, each shouldering at least one tote bag filled with booty.

These urban foragers are neither homeless nor destitute. They are committed 2 freegans, radical environmentalists (typically vegan) who reject our wasteful con-

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sumer culture by living almost entirely on what others throw away. Freegans rarely go hungry thanks to the colossal amount of food Americans dump every day—38 million tons annually, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. Here's another way to look at it: The United Nations says our leftovers could satisfy every single empty stomach in Africa. Those castoffs are composed, in part, of the less-than-perfect products consumers instinctively reject: bruised apples, wilted lettuce, dented cans. Who hasn't passed on an entire carton of eggs after discovering a single slight fracture among the dozen? Supermarkets can't unload the quarts of milk tagged with yesterday's use-by date—which many of us interpret as a product's expiration but in fact refers to its period of peak flavor. Meaning, there's still plenty of life left in those quarts.

Freegans, like 24-year-old Leia MonDragon, a buxom Latina with a taste for heavy eye makeup, feast on those castoffs. "It's amazing what you can find and the good condition it's in," she exclaims, holding aloft a week's worth of produce, including watermelon, summer squash, kale, tomatoes, onions, and bananas. Though technically past their prime, they look pristine. MonDragon also scored half gallons of soy milk and lemonade, both unopened and still chilled, and bagels that only an hour earlier were for sale. "I once found 200 one-pound bags of organic fair-trade coffee beans just dumped outside a store with the trash," she brags, like a woman combing the racks at a Gucci clearance sale.

Aside from the \$1600 a month in rent MonDragon pays for her two-bedroom Brooklyn apartment, which she shares with her boyfriend, Tate, their 1-year-old daughter, Uma, and her retired grandfather, just about everything she owns has been salvaged or handmade. She found her ivory faux-leather couch, dishes, and flatware on the street; many of Uma's clothes and toys were recovered from boxes abandoned on sidewalks and stoops, a common sight in New York, where apartment detritus—from halogen lamps to bed frames—is blithely left on the streets. MonDragon used to get around on a bicycle she and Tate cobbled together from discarded parts, but not long ago it was stolen. "So now I'm building another one," she says.

Though official figures are hard to come by, freegan ranks are believed to be in the thousands, with an estimated 500 practitioners living in New York City alone. Born of the extreme environmentalist and anti-globalization movements of the '90s, freeganism is a wholly modern crusade whose followers live off the grid while simultaneously exploiting it. Freegans gravitate toward cities—and their relentless mounds of garbage; Web sites keep devotees in close contact with each other so they can plan group foraging outings, recruit new members, and spread word of upcoming events, like move-out day at a college dorm, a veritable freegan Christmas. Using a discarded computer they restored, MonDragon and her boyfriend routinely scour Craigslist for freebies. (The Web connection comes from a cable package her grandfather pays for.) "The only thing I don't have yet is a skillet. But I'll find one," MonDragon declares confidently, as she ladles dinner—tofu-and-veggie stir-fry with lime zest—from a large stockpot.

MonDragon first embraced freeganism five years ago as a student at a Minnesota community college, where she met Tate. "We were broke, trying to find the money for

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even a simple meal like rice and beans," she explains. "We saw a freegan flyer and hooked up with some people who showed us how to do it. And just like that, we had a source of free food. It was amazing." The more time the pair spent with entrenched freegans, the more exposure they got to the movement's renegade rhetoric. Since relocating to New York two years ago, they have become ardent practitioners, positioning their lifestyle as a boycott of "corporate greed" and an alternative to capitalism. "It's so wrong when people are losing their jobs, struggling to survive, that stores are throwing out such vast quantities of good food," MonDragon sighs, as Papo, her wiry gray mutt, nips the hem of her long black skirt. She tosses him a roasted chicken leg, retrieved from her last supermarket trash run.

MonDragon admits she was initially skeeved out by the prospect of eating garbage — 7 Dumpsters are a frequent freegan haunt — but says she was reassured by the movement's common-sense safety measures. Some freegans show up for Dumpster dives armed with rubber gloves and antibacterial lotion. Produce is washed thoroughly, withered leaves discarded; baked goods bearing even a hint of mold are tossed. Everything undergoes a basic smell test. (Tate says he once scarfed down day-old sushi, despite its funky aroma, and ended up with food poisoning.) And since stores generally separate discarded food from, say, bathroom trash bins, the ickiest finds are usually just putrid meats and dairy. MonDragon decontaminates all salvaged housewares with a mixture of vinegar, baking soda, and hydrogen peroxide and launders all of Uma's secondhand stuffed animals and clothes. Though she draws the line at pre-owned underwear, instead buying new pairs from discount stores, MonDragon makes her own reusable sanitary napkins from cloth in much the same way women did a century ago. (Think that's hard-core? Some freegans squat in abandoned buildings and jerry-rig toilets that compost their own waste matter.) "People in this country are a lot more freaked out about dirt than they need to be. We need a little dirt in our lives for our immune systems to be strong," MonDragon says.

"Freegans have been living this way for years and are very healthy," says Dr. Ruth 8 Kava, director of nutrition at the American Council on Science and Health. "In fact, a freegan's biggest risk may be falling headfirst into a Dumpster." That, or being slapped with a fine — or worse — for trespassing on private property to scavenge. It's not uncommon for store owners, mistaking freegans for homeless people or burglars, to call the police. Two years ago, a pair of freegans in Steamboat Springs, CO, were sentenced to six months in jail after jumping a fence and taking a couple of handfuls of fruit and vegetables from a grocery store's trash. For that reason, MonDragon confines her searches to whatever she finds on the street. She and Tate get by on less than \$20,000 a year — he drives a taxi, and she clerks at a nonprofit during the summer. Their meager income is earmarked for inescapable expenses, like their tuition at a community college and rent. The couple qualifies for food stamps, which pay only for Uma's formula (MonDragon stopped breast-feeding once she started working).

Though she lives hand to mouth, MonDragon insists she wants for nothing. Her 9 family eats three hearty meals a day; their closets are crammed with wool coats, shoes, shirts with tags still dangling from their sleeves. She's got an active social

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life, towing Uma to playdates with other freegan moms and fielding invitations to watch DVDs with freegan friends. A week earlier, she and Tate uncovered a hoard of unopened Chinese food inside a streetside trash can, still warm in its gleaming white containers. They took it to a friend's house for an impromptu dinner party. "We usually never take more than we need," she explains, unzipping her black Patagonia shell and tossing it onto her bed—everything from the taupe sheets to the queen-size mattress were recovered from the streets of Manhattan. "We don't need to. There will be more trash out there tomorrow."

Characteristics of Extended Definitions

If you wanted to define the term *happiness*, you would probably have trouble coming up with a brief definition because the emotion is experienced in a variety of situations. However, you could explore the term in an essay and explain all that it means to you. Such a lengthy, detailed definition is called an **extended definition**.

Extended definitions are particularly useful in exploring a topic's various meanings and applications. In some instances, an extended definition may begin with a brief standard definition that anchors the essay's thesis statement. At other times, an extended definition may begin by introducing a new way of thinking about the term. Whatever approach is used, the remainder of the definition then clarifies the term by using one or more other patterns of development.

An Extended Definition Is Focused and Detailed

An extended definition focuses on a specific term and discusses it in detail. In "Freegans: They Live Off What We Throw Away," Goodwin concentrates on a lifestyle choice. She explains the origin of the word *freegan*, describes the freegan philosophy, explains how and where freegans forage for food, and discusses safety measures.

An Extended Definition Often Includes a Brief Explanation of the Term

In an essay that provides an extended definition of a **term**, readers often find it useful to have a brief definition to help them begin to grasp the concept. A brief or standard definition is the kind found in a dictionary and consists of three parts:

- The *term* itself
- The *class* to which the term belongs
- The *characteristics or details* that distinguish the term from all others in its class

For example, a wedding band is a piece of jewelry. "Jewelry" is the **class** or group of objects that includes wedding bands. To show how a wedding band differs from other members of that class, you would need to provide its **distinguishing characteristics**—the details that make it different from other types of jewelry: it is a ring, often made of gold, that the groom gives to the bride or the bride gives to the groom during a marriage ceremony.

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Here are a few more examples of this three-part structure.

Term	Class	Distinguishing Characteristics
fork	utensil	Two or more prongs Used for eating or serving food
Dalmatian	breed of dog	Originated in Dalmatia Has short, smooth coat with black or dark brown spots

To write a standard definition, use the following guidelines:

1. **Describe the class as specifically as possible.** This will make it easier for your reader to understand the term you define. In the preceding example, notice that for *Dalmatian* the class is not *animal* or *mammal* but *breed of dog*.
2. **Do not use the term (or forms of the term) as part of your definition.** Do not write, "*Mastery* means that one has *mastered* a skill." In place of *mastered*, you could use *learned*, for example.
3. **Include enough distinguishing characteristics so that your readers will not mistake the term for something similar within the class.** If you define *answering machine* as "a machine that records phone messages," your definition would be incomplete because cell phones also record phone messages. To make the definition complete, you would need to add "land-line" before "phone messages."
4. **Do not limit the definition so much that it becomes inaccurate.** Defining *bacon* as "a smoked, salted meat from the side of a pig that is served at breakfast" would be too limited because bacon is also served at other meals. To make the definition accurate, you could either delete "that is served at breakfast" or add a qualifying expression like "usually" or "most often" before "served."

Look at the following definition of the term *bully*, taken from a magazine article on the topic. As you read it, study the highlighting and marginal notes.

Term The term *bully* does not have a standard definition, but Dan Olweus, professor of psychology at the University of Bergen, has honed the definition to three core elements —

Three characteristics bullying involves a pattern of *repeated aggressive behavior* with *negative intent* directed from one child to another where there is a *power difference*. Either a larger child or several children pick on one child, or one child is clearly more dominant than the others. Bullying is not the same as garden-variety aggression; although aggression may involve similar acts, it happens between two people of equal status. By definition, the bully's target has difficulty defending him- or herself, and the bully's aggressive behavior is intended to cause distress.

Distinguishes this term from similar terms

Example of power difference

Hara Estroff Marano, "Big, Bad, Bully."

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Exercise 17.1

Write a standard definition for two of the following terms.

1. hero
2. giraffe
3. science fiction
4. ATM
5. friendship

Exercise 17.2

For one of the terms listed in Exercise 17.1, list the distinguishing characteristics that you might use in building an extended definition.

An Extended Definition Makes a Point

The thesis of an extended definition essay tells why the term is worth reading about. In "Freegans : They Live Off What We Throw Away," Goodwin explains that a "colossal amount of food" is dumped every day (para. 2) and demonstrates how freegans salvage this waste.

The following thesis statements include a brief definition and make a point about the term.

Produced by the body, hormones are chemicals that are important to physical as well as emotional development.

Euthanasia, the act of ending the life of someone suffering from a terminal illness, is an issue that should not be legislated; rather, it should be a matter of personal choice.

An Extended Definition Uses Other Patterns of Development

To explain the meaning of a term, writers usually integrate one or more other patterns of development. Suppose you want to define the term *lurking* as it is used in the context of the Internet, where it usually means reading postings or comments on an online forum without directly participating in the ongoing discussion. You could develop the essay by using one or more other patterns, as noted in the following list:

<i>Pattern of Development</i>	<i>Defining the Term Lurking</i>
Narration (Chapter 11)	Relate a story about learning something important by lurking.
Description (Chapter 12)	Describe the experience of lurking.
Illustration (Chapter 13)	Give examples of typical situations involving lurking.
Process analysis (Chapter 14)	Explain how to lurk in an Internet chatroom.
Comparison and contrast (Chapter 15)	Compare and contrast lurking to other forms of observation.

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Classification and division (Chapter 16)	Classify the reasons people lurk—for information, entertainment, and so on.
Cause and effect (Chapter 18)	Explain the benefits or outcomes of lurking.
Argument (Chapters 19 and 20)	Argue that lurking is an ethical or unethical practice.

In “Freegans : They Live Off What We Throw Away,” Goodwin relies on several patterns of development. She uses *process analysis* to describe how freegans find food and other consumer goods, she uses *narrative* to tell the story of Leia MonDragon, and she uses *cause and effect* to explain why freegans have chosen their lifestyle.

Exercise 17.3

For one of the terms listed in Exercise 17.1 (p. 448), describe how you might use two or three patterns of development in an extended definition of the term.

An Extended Definition May Use Negation and Address Misconceptions

A writer may use **negation**—explaining what a term *is not* as well as what *it is*—to show how the term is different from the other terms in the same class. For example, in an essay defining *rollerblading*, you might clarify how it is unlike *roller skating*, which uses a different type of wheeled boot that allows different kinds of motions. In “Freegans: They Live Off What We Throw Away,” Goodwin explains that freegans are not all strict vegetarians (1), not homeless or too poor to buy food (para. 2), and not greedy (9).

You can also use negation to clarify personal meanings. In defining what you mean by *relaxing vacation*, you might include examples of what is not relaxing—the pressure to see something new every day, long lines, crowded scenic areas, and many hours in a car each day.

In addition, an extended definition may need to address popular misconceptions about the term being defined. In an essay defining *plagiarism*, for instance, you might correct the mistaken idea that plagiarism is only passing off an entire paper written by someone else as your own, explaining that it actually also includes using excerpts from other writers’ work and not giving them credit.

Exercise 17.4

For two of the following broad topics, select a narrowed term and develop a standard definition of it. Then, for each term, consider how you could address misconceptions and use negation in an extended definition of the term.

1. A type of dance
2. A play, call, or player position in a sport
3. A piece of clothing (hat, jacket, or jeans)
4. A term related to a course you are taking
5. A type of business

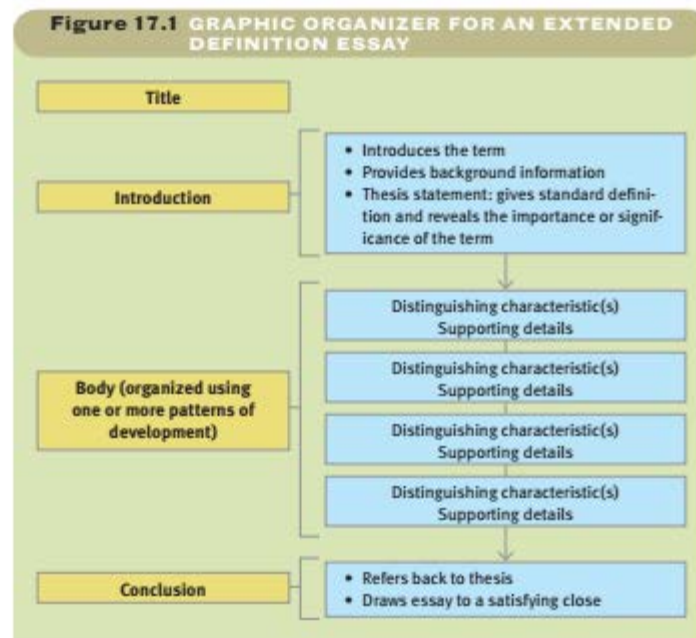
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Visualizing an Extended Definition Essay: A Graphic Organizer

For more on graphic organizers, see Chapter 3, pp. 59–67.

The graphic organizer in Figure 17.1 shows the basic organization of an extended definition essay. The introduction announces the term, provides background information, and usually includes the thesis statement (which briefly defines the term and indicates its significance to readers). The body paragraphs, which are organized using one or more patterns of development, present the term's distinguishing characteristics along with supporting details. The conclusion refers back to the thesis and brings the essay to a satisfying close.

As you read the essay that follows, look for the elements illustrated in the basic graphic organizer for an extended definition. Then study the graphic organizer for the essay in Figure 17.2.



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Dude, Do You Know What You Just Said?

Mike Crissey

READING

Mike Crissey is a staff writer for the Associated Press. The following article, which appeared in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* on December 8, 2004, is based on research done by Scott Kiesling, a professor of linguistics at the University of Pittsburgh. Kiesling's work focuses on the relationship between language and identity, particularly in the contexts of gender, ethnicity, and class. As you read, notice how the writer uses a combination of expert testimony, anecdotal evidence, and personal observations to support his main point.

Dude, you've got to read this. A University of Pittsburgh linguist has published a scholarly 1 paper deconstructing and deciphering *dude*, the bane of parents and teachers, which has become as universal as *like* and another vulgar four-letter favorite. In his paper in the fall edition of the journal *American Speech*, Scott Kiesling says *dude* is much more than a greeting or catchall for lazy, inarticulate, and inexpressive (and mostly male) surfers, skaters, slackers, druggies, or teenagers. "Without context there is no single meaning that 2 dude encodes and it can be used, it seems, in almost any kind of situation. But we should not confuse flexibility with meaninglessness," Kiesling said.

Originally meaning "old rags," a "dudesman" was a scarecrow. In the late 1800s, 2 a "dude" was akin to a dandy, a meticulously dressed man, especially in the western United States. *Dude* became a slang term in the 1930s and 1940s among black zoot suiters and Mexican American pachucos. The term began its rise in the teenage lexicon with the 1982 movie *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*. Around the same time, it became an exclamation as well as a noun. Pronunciation purists say it should sound like "duhd"; "dood" is an alternative, but it is considered "uncool" or old.

To decode *dude*, Kiesling listened to conversations with fraternity members he taped in 3 1993 and had undergraduate students in sociolinguistics classes in 2001 and 2002 write down the first twenty times they heard *dude* and who said it during a three-day period. He's also a lapsed *dude*-user who during his college years tried to talk like Jeff Spicoli, the slacker surfer "dude" from *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*.

According to Kiesling, *dude* has many uses: an exclamation ("Dude!" and "Whoa, 4 Dude!"); to one-up someone ("That's so lame, dude"); to disarm confrontation ("Dude, this is so boring"), or simply to agree ("Dude"). It's inclusive or exclusive, ironic or sincere.

Kiesling says *dude* derives its power from something he calls cool solidarity: an ef- 5 fortless or seemingly lazy kinship that's not too intimate; close, dude, but not that close. *Dude* "carries . . . both solidarity (camaraderie) and distance (non-intimacy) and can be deployed to create both of these kinds of stance, separately or together," Kiesling wrote. Kiesling, whose research focuses on language and masculinity, said that cool solidarity is especially important to young men — anecdotally the predominant *dude*-users — who are under social pressure to be close with other young men but not enough to be suspected as gay. "It's like *man* or *buddy*. There is often this male-male addressed term that says, "I'm your friend but not much more than your friend," Kiesling said. Aside from its duality, *dude* also taps into nonconformity, despite everyone using it, and a new American image of leisurely success, he said.

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The nonchalant attitude of *dude* also means that women sometimes call each other *dudes*. And less frequently, men will call women *dudes* and vice versa, Kiesling said. But that comes with some rules, according to self-reporting from students in a 2002 language and gender class at the University of Pittsburgh included in his paper. “Men report that they use *dude* with women with whom they are close friends, but not with women with whom they are intimate,” according to his study.

His students also reported that they were least likely to use the word with parents, bosses, and professors. “It is not who they are but what your relationship is with them. With your parents, you likely have a close relationship, but unless you’re Bart Simpson, you’re not going to call your parent *dude*,” Kiesling said. “There are a couple of young professors here in their thirties and every once in a while we use *dude*. Professors are *dudes*, but most of the time they are not.”

And *dude* shows no signs of disappearing. “More and more our culture is becoming youth centered. In southern California, youth is valued to the point that even active seniors are dressing young and talking youth,” said Mary Bucholtz, an associate professor of linguistics at the University of California, Santa Barbara. “I have seen middle-aged men using *dude* with each other.”

So what’s the point, *dude*? Kiesling and linguists argue that language and how we use it is important. “These things that seem frivolous are serious because we are always doing it. We need to understand language because it is what makes us human. That’s my defense of studying *dude*,” Kiesling said.

Exercise 17.5

Draw a graphic organizer for “Freegans: They Live Off What We Throw Away” on pages 443–46.

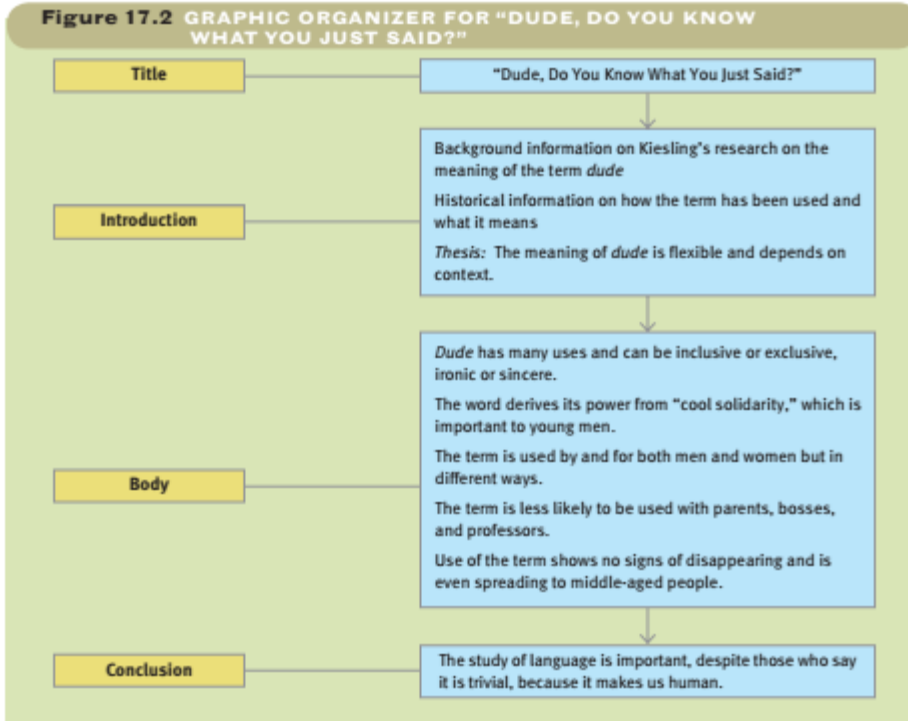
To draw detailed graphic organizers using a computer, visit www.belfordistmartins.com/successfulcollege.

Integrating Definitions into an Essay

You will often need to include either standard or extended definitions in writing that is based on other patterns of development. For example, on college exams, you may need to write a definition as part of a response to an essay question. Definitions are also useful for explaining unfamiliar terms in any type of essay. Whatever the type of essay, the following kinds of terms usually require definition:

- **Define judgmental terms.** Judgmental terms mean different things to different people. If you describe a policy as “fiscally unsound,” you would need to define your use of *fiscally unsound*.
- **Define technical terms.** Technical terms are used in a particular field or discipline. In the field of law, for example, such terms as *writ*, *deposition*, *hearing*, and *plea* have specific meanings. Especially when writing for an audience that is unfamiliar with your topic, be sure to define technical terms.
- **Define abstract terms.** Abstract terms refer to ideas or concepts rather than physical objects. Examples are *happiness*, *heroism*, and *conformity*. Because abstract terms can seem vague or, like judgmental terms, mean different things to different people, they often need explanation and definition.
- **Define controversial terms.** The definitions of terms that evoke strong emotions—such as *politically correct*, *affirmative action*, and *chemical warfare*—are often the subject of controversy. When writing about controversial subjects, define exactly how you use each related term in an essay.

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In general, if you are not sure whether a term needs a definition, you should include one. At times you may want to provide your definition in a separate sentence or section. At other times a brief definition or synonym can be incorporated into a sentence. In this case, you use commas, dashes, or parentheses to set off the definition.

Implicit memory, or the nonconscious retention of information about prior experiences, is important in eyewitness accounts of crimes.

Empathy—a shared feeling of joy for people who are happy or distress for people who are in pain—explains the success of many popular films.

In "The Appeal—and Danger—of War Porn" (p. 466), Jessica Ramirez uses definition within an essay that mixes several other methods of development.

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A GUIDED WRITING ASSIGNMENT

The following guide will lead you through the process of writing an extended definition essay. Although you will focus on definition, you will need to integrate one or more other patterns of development to develop your essay.

The Assignment

Write an extended definition essay on one of the following topics or one that you choose on your own. You will need to narrow one of these general topics to a more specific term for your essay. Your audience is made up of your classmates.

1. A type of music (rock, jazz, classical)
2. Inappropriate behavior
3. A type of television show
4. Social problems
5. Leisure time
6. Athletics

For more on using examples or comparison and contrast, see Chapters 13 and 15.

As you develop your extended definition essay, consider how you can use one or more other patterns of development. For example, you might include several examples of the inappropriate behavior you choose to write about, or you might explain R & B music by comparing it to and contrasting it with rock music. For more on patterns of development, see pages 448 to 449.

Generating Ideas

The following guidelines will help you narrow your general topic and identify distinguishing characteristics.

Narrowing the General Topic to a Specific Term

Your first step is to narrow the broad topic you have selected to a more specific term. For example, *celebrity* is probably too broad a topic for a brief essay, but the topic can be narrowed to a particular type of celebrity, such as a *sports celebrity*, *Hollywood celebrity*, *local celebrity*, or *political celebrity*. You might then focus your definition on sports celebrities, using Tom Brady and Kobe Bryant as examples to illustrate the characteristics of the term.

For more on narrowing a topic, see Chapter 5, pp. 104–6.

For more on prewriting strategies, see Chapter 5, pp. 110–18.

For more on classification and division, see Chapter 16.

Use the following suggestions for finding a suitable narrowed term for your definition essay:

Learning Style Options

1. Use a branching diagram or clustering to classify the general topic into categories. Choose the category that you are especially interested in or familiar with.
2. Think of someone who might serve as an example of the general topic and consider focusing your definition essay on that person.
3. Discuss your general topic with a classmate to come up with specific terms related to it.

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Essay in Progress 1

For the assignment option you chose on page 454 or on your own, narrow your general term into several specific categories of terms. Then choose one narrowed term for your extended definition essay.

Considering Your Purpose, Audience, and Point of View

Carefully consider your purpose and audience before you develop details for your essay. The purpose of a definition essay can be expressive, informative, or persuasive. You might, for example, write an essay that defines *search engines* and that expresses your frustration or success with using them to locate information on the Internet. Or you might write an informative essay on search engines in which you discuss the most popular ones. Finally, you might write a persuasive essay in which you argue that one search engine is superior to all others.

When your audience is unfamiliar with a term, you will need to present detailed background information and define all specialized terms that you use. Your audience for this Guided Writing Assignment is your classmates. As you develop your essay, keep the following questions in mind:

1. What, if anything, can I assume my audience already knows?
2. What does my audience need to know to understand or accept my definition?

In addition, consider which point of view will be most effective for your essay. Most definition essays are written in the third person, as is "Freegans: They Live Off What We Throw Away," while the first and second person are used occasionally.

For more on purpose, audience, and point of view, see Chapter 5, pp. 106–9.

Identifying Distinguishing Characteristics and Supporting Details

The following suggestions will help you identify distinguishing characteristics and supporting details for the specific term you intend to define in your essay:

1. Discuss the term with a classmate, making notes as you talk.
2. Brainstorm a list of (a) words that describe your term, (b) people and things that might serve as examples of the term, and (c) everything a person would need to know to understand the term.
3. Observe a person who is associated with the term or who performs some aspect of it. Take notes on your observations.
4. Look up the term's *etymology*, or origin, in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, *A Dictionary of American English*, or *A Dictionary of Americanisms*, all of which are available in the reference section of your library. Take notes; the word's etymology will give you some of its characteristics and details, and might give you ideas on how to organize your essay.
5. Think of incidents or situations that reveal the meaning of the term.
6. Think of similar and different terms with which your reader is likely to be more familiar.
7. Do a search on the Internet for the term. Visit three or four Web sites and take notes on or print out what you discover at each site.

Learning Style Options

For more on observation, see Chapter 20, pp. 617–18.

For more on Internet research, see Chapter 22, pp. 603–6.

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Essay in Progress 2

For the narrowed term you selected in Essay in Progress 1, use the preceding suggestions to generate a list of distinguishing characteristics and supporting details.

Developing Your Thesis

For more on thesis statements, see Chapter 6.

When you have gathered the distinguishing characteristics and supporting details for your term, you are ready to develop your thesis. It is a good idea to include a brief standard definition of the term within your thesis and an explanation of why your extended definition might be useful, interesting, or important to readers.

Notice how the following weak thesis statement can be revised to reveal the writer's main point.

WEAK	Wireless cable is a means of transmitting television signals through the air by microwave.
REVISED	The future of wireless cable, a method of transmitting television signals through the air using microwaves, is uncertain.

Essay in Progress 3

Write a working thesis statement that briefly defines your term and tells readers why understanding it might be useful or important to them.

Evaluating Your Ideas and Thesis

Take a few minutes to evaluate your ideas and thesis. Highlight details that best help your readers distinguish your term from other similar terms. If you are writing on a computer, highlight key information in bold type or move it to a separate file. Also check your prewriting to see if you have enough details—examples, facts, descriptions, expert testimony, and so forth. If you find that your characteristics or details are skimpy, choose a different method from the list on page 455 to generate additional material. If you find you still need more details, research the term in the library or on the Internet.

Trying Out Your Ideas on Others

Working in a group of two or three students, discuss your ideas and thesis for this chapter's assignment. Each writer should state his or her term, thesis, distinguishing characteristics, and supporting details. Then, as a group, evaluate each writer's work and offer suggestions for improvement.

Essay in Progress 4

Using the preceding suggestions and comments from your classmates, evaluate your thesis, distinguishing characteristics, and details. Refer to the list of characteristics on pages 446–49 to help you with your evaluation.

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Organizing and Drafting

When you have evaluated your distinguishing characteristics, supporting details, and thesis, and considered the advice of your classmates, you are ready to organize your ideas and draft your essay.

For more on drafting an essay, see Chapter 7.

Choosing Other Patterns of Development

To a considerable extent, the organization of an extended definition essay depends on the other pattern or patterns of development you decide to use. Try to choose the pattern(s) before you begin drafting your essay, using Table 5.2 on page 116 to help you. Use patterns that suit your audience and purpose as well as the term. For instance, narrating a story about lurking in online forums might capture the interest of an audience unfamiliar with such forums and thus help persuade them to explore them, whereas classifying different types of people who lurk might be of interest to an audience of forum sponsors whom you are trying to inform about ways they might encourage lurkers to participate.

With your pattern(s) firmly in mind, think about how to organize your characteristics and details. An essay incorporating several patterns of development might use a number of arrangements. At this stage, it is a good idea to make an outline or draw a graphic organizer.

Essay in Progress 5

For the thesis you wrote in Essay in Progress 3, decide which pattern(s) of development you will use to develop your characteristics and details. Draw a graphic organizer or write an outline to help you see how each pattern will work.

For more on organizing an essay, see Chapter 7.

Drafting an Extended Definition Essay

Use the following guidelines to draft your essay:

1. **Include enough details.** Be sure you include sufficient information to enable your reader to understand each characteristic.
2. **Consider including the history or etymology of the term.** You might include a brief history of your term in the introduction or in some other part of your essay to capture your readers' interest.
3. **Use transitions.** As you move from characteristic to characteristic, be sure to use a transitional word or phrase to signal each change and guide your readers along. The transitions *another*, *also*, and *in addition* are especially useful in extended definitions.
4. **Write an effective introduction and a satisfying conclusion.** Your introduction should introduce the term, provide any needed background information, and state your thesis (which often includes a standard definition as well as your main point). When introducing your term, it may be helpful to use negation, explaining what the term is and what it is not, as Goodwin does in the ninth paragraph of "Freegans: They Live Off What We Throw Away." You might also use your introduction to justify the importance of your topic, as Goodwin does in her second paragraph.

For more on transitions, see Chapter 7, pp. 150–52.

For more on drafting introductions and conclusions, see Chapter 7. For more on writing effective paragraphs, see Chapter 8.

Your conclusion should reinforce your thesis and draw the essay to a satisfying close, as Crissey's conclusion does in "Dude, Do You Know What You Just Said?"

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Essay in Progress 6

Draft your extended definition essay, using the pattern(s) of development you selected in Essay in Progress 5 and the preceding guidelines for drafting.

Analyzing and Revising

If possible, set your draft aside for a day or two before rereading and revising it. As you review your draft, concentrate on your ideas and organization, not on grammar or mechanics. Use one or more of the following suggestions to analyze your draft:

Learning Style Options

1. Delete or make unreadable the title and all mentions of the term, and then ask a classmate to read your essay. Alternatively, you could read your essay aloud, substituting “Term X” each time the term occurs. Then ask your classmate to identify the term you are defining. If your reader or listener cannot come up with the term or a synonym for it, you probably need to make your distinguishing characteristics more specific or add details.
2. Test your definition by trying to think of exceptions to it as well as other terms that might be defined in the same way.
 - *Exceptions.* Try to identify exceptions to your distinguishing characteristics. Suppose, for example, you define *sports stars* as people who exemplify sportsmanlike behavior. Since most people can name current sports stars who indulge in un-sportsmanlike behavior, this distinguishing characteristic needs to be modified or deleted.
 - *Other terms that fit all of your characteristics.* For example, in defining the term *bulletproof vest*, you would explain that it is a piece of clothing worn by law-enforcement officers, among others, to protect them from bullets and other life-threatening blows. Another kind of protective clothing—a helmet—would also fit your description, however. You would need to add information about *where* on the body a bulletproof vest is worn.
3. To see if your essay follows the organization you intend, draw a graphic organizer or make an outline (or update the organizer or outline you made earlier).

For more on the benefits of peer review, see Chapter 9, pp. 188–89.

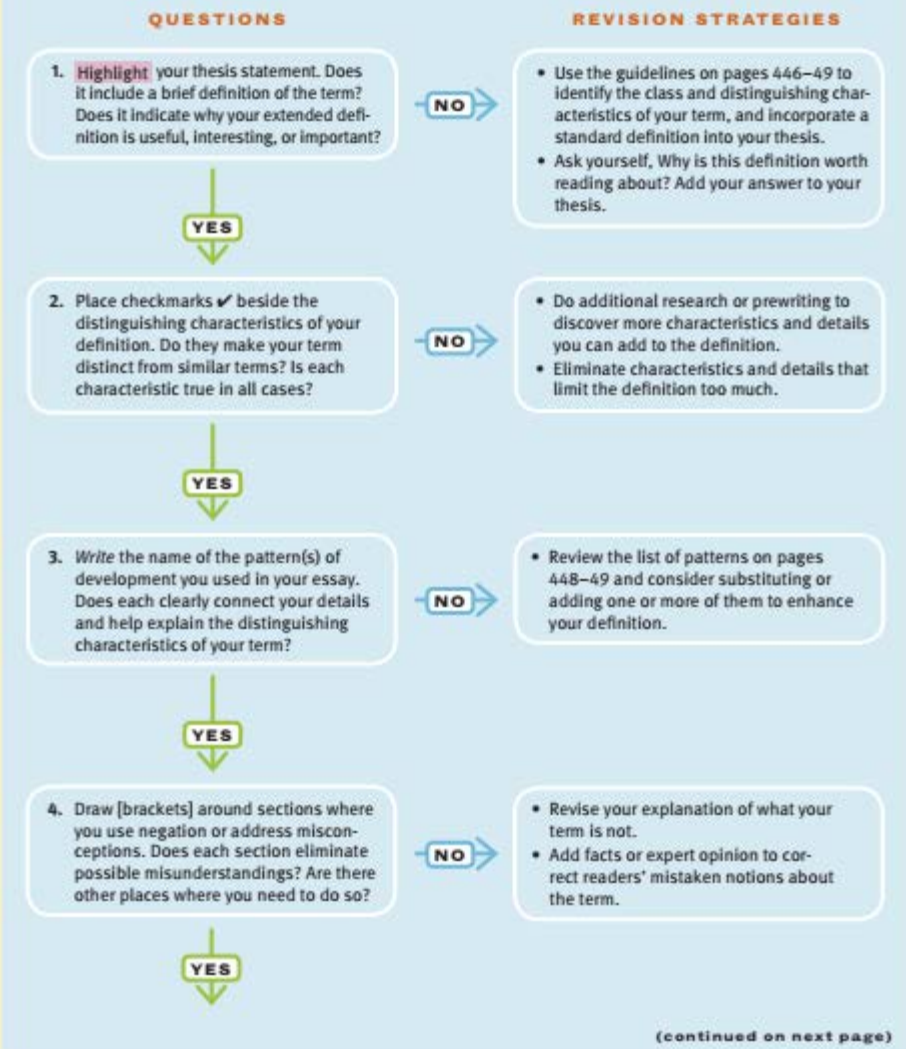
Use Figure 17.3 to guide your analysis. You might also ask a classmate to review your draft using the questions in the flowchart. For each “No” answer, ask your reviewer to explain his or her answer. In addition, ask your reviewer to describe his or her impressions of your main point and distinguishing characteristics. Your reviewer’s comments will help you identify the parts of your essay that need revision.

Essay in Progress 7

Revise your draft using Figure 17.3 and any comments you received from peer reviewers.

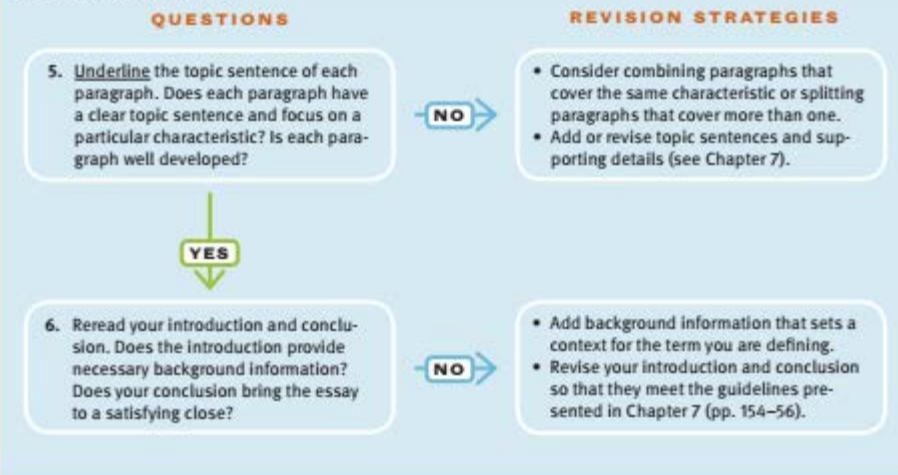
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Figure 17.3 Flowchart for Revising an Extended Definition Essay



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(Figure 17.3 continued)



Editing and Proofreading

For more on keeping an error log, see Chapter 10, pp. 221–22.

The final step is to check your revised essay for errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and mechanics. Be sure to check your error log for the types of errors you commonly make.

As you edit and proofread your extended definition essay, watch out for the following types of errors commonly found in this type of writing:

1. **Avoid the awkward expressions *is when* or *is where* in defining your term.** Instead, name the class to which the term belongs.
 - Early bird specials ^{are reduced-priced dinners offered in} ~~is when~~ restaurants ~~offer-reduced-price-dinners~~ late in the afternoon and early in the evening.
 - A rollover ^{is a transaction in which} ~~is where~~ an employee transfers money from one retirement account to another.
2. **Make sure subjects and verbs agree in number.** When two subjects are joined by *and*, the verb should be plural.
 - Taken together, the military and Medicare ^{cost} ~~costs~~ U.S. taxpayers an enormous amount of money.

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When two nouns are joined by *or*, the verb should agree with the noun closest to it.

- For most birds, the markings or wing span ^{is} ~~are~~ easily observed with a pair of good binoculars.

When the subject and verb are separated by a prepositional phrase, the verb should agree with the subject of the sentence, not with the noun in the phrase.

- The features of a hot-air balloon ^{are} ~~is~~ best learned by studying the attached diagram.

Essay in Progress 8

Edit and proofread your essay, paying particular attention to avoiding *is when* or *is where* expressions and correcting errors in subject-verb agreement.

Students Write

Kate Atkinson wrote the following essay for an assignment to write an extended definition of a specialized term related to one of her interests. Atkinson decided to write about guerrilla street art. As you read, note how Atkinson uses other patterns of development—such as description and illustration—to define guerrilla street art as a nontraditional art form growing in popularity.

Guerrilla Street Art: A New Use of Public Space

Kate Atkinson

Guerrilla street art is everywhere, if you look for it. There are countless examples in the small college town where I grew up, where the dense population of college students and artists breeds creativity. Just around the corner from my school, stickers litter sign posts, colorful graffiti is scrawled on exposed brick walls, homemade posters advertise local bands at the bus stop, and a cheerful Dr. Seuss character is stenciled on the sidewalk. These small works of art can easily go unnoticed, but they bring an unexpected vibrancy to the city and raise the controversial question of what constitutes art.

By taking art out of its traditional context, guerrilla street artists use public space to create controversy and intrigue while at the same time making art free and accessible to a broad audience.

Common forms used by street artists today include graffiti, stenciling, poster art, sticker art, and yarn bombing. Graffiti, the most prevalent form of guerrilla street art, is unauthorized writing or drawing on a public surface. It dates back centuries, and artists have been known to use chalk, markers, paint, and even carving tools to inscribe their messages on public property. Graffiti is so

READING

Title: Atkinson identifies her subject and creates interest.

Introduction: Atkinson provides background information on guerrilla street art and explains by example what it is.

In her thesis statement, Atkinson offers a brief definition and suggests the value and importance of guerrilla street art. Atkinson presents the first distinguishing characteristic—use of common techniques—and describes five. Notice that the first sentence in this paragraph is the topic

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sentence that is supported by the rest of the paragraph—a pattern followed in each of the next three paragraphs.

The second distinguishing characteristic: Atkinson discusses the motives of the artists and offers examples of the various motives.

Atkinson uses sources to document an example of political activism, one of the motives.

The third distinguishing characteristic: Atkinson discusses the appeal of street art and gives examples.

The fourth distinguishing characteristic: Atkinson discusses the secrecy of the artists and uses Banksy as an example.

common that it is difficult to travel far in most urban settings without coming across a word or image scrawled in spray paint on a public surface. Stenciling is simply a form of graffiti in which artists use precut stencils to guide their work. Posters and stickers are popular because they can be easily mass-produced and quickly applied. Posters are usually applied with a technique called “wheat pasting”—using a vegetable-based adhesive to attach posters to walls. Artists apply the clear paste with a roller in a thin layer to both sides of the poster, making it weather-proof and durable. A less common street-art technique is “yarn bombing,” in which craft artists knit colorful sheaths of wool and acrylic and wrap them around telephone poles and park benches. The finished pieces are eye-catching and unusual but not permanent or damaging to public property.

The various motives behind guerrilla street art are as diverse as the artwork itself and range from social and political activism to self-promotion of the artist. Artists embellish telephone poles with colorful yarn and train carriages with ornate murals as a way to reclaim and beautify public space. Others use public space as a billboard to advocate for a cause. An example of street art as political activism is artist Shepard Fairey’s iconic image of Barack Obama (Wortham). The simple design combines a striking red, white, and blue portrait of Obama with the word “Hope.” With the approval of Obama’s 2008 campaign team, Fairey and his team dispersed and pasted, stenciled, or tacked the image onto countless public surfaces across the United States until it became an important facet of the campaign. The picture itself is powerful, but what made it even more effective as a campaign tool was the distribution of the image by supporters and the youth appeal that it garnered as a result.

Street art has many appeals. It is an easy way for new artists to gain notoriety, and anyone with a spray can and a flair for creativity can partake. A tag, which is an artist’s signature or symbol, is the most common type of graffiti. Before the Obama campaign, Shepard Fairey gained international acclaim for a sticker depicting wrestler Andre the Giant and the word “Obey.” The image soon became his tag and can be found in almost all of his work, making it instantly recognizable. The anonymity of street art also gives artists the freedom to express themselves without fearing the judgment of their peers. At worst, this freedom can result in crude or offensive inscriptions on public property; but at best, it can produce bold, striking statements. Guerrilla street art is contemporary and can be enjoyed without a visit to a museum. It is free and encourages the belief that art should be accessible and available to everyone. It is also a movement that anyone can take part in and that challenges traditional standards of art.

Due to the illicit nature of their art, the street artist community is shrouded in secrecy. In the film *Exit through the Gift Shop*, a documentary by notorious British street artist Banksy, hooded figures in ski masks are shown scaling buildings and perched precariously on ledges, armed with spray cans and buckets of industrial paste and always on the lookout for the police. Despite his celebrity, Banksy has managed to keep his identity anonymous, and his face is never

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shown in the film. It is common for street artists to be arrested for trespassing and vandalism, and the risk and intentional disobedience involved in street art adds to its appeal, especially among young people.

Guerrilla street art has blossomed from an underground movement to a cultural phenomenon. At the very least, it brings up the question of what constitutes art and whether public space is an appropriate place for it. Although it does not adhere to all traditional standards of art, guerrilla street art provokes thought, brings beauty and intrigue to urban spaces that would otherwise go unnoticed, and is a tool for artists to exercise freedom of speech and expression.

6 Conclusion: Atkinson comments on the street art movement as a cultural experience, notes that it raises the question of what constitutes art, claims it is appropriate in public places, and confirms its values.

Works Cited

Exit through the Gift Shop. Dir. Banksy. Perf. Banksy and Thierry Guetta. Paranoid Pictures, 2010. Film.

Wortham, Jenna. "Obey" Street Artist Churns Out 'Hope' for Obama." *Wired.com*. Condé Nast Digital, 21 Sept. 2010. Web. 15 Nov. 2010.

Analyzing the Writer's Technique

1. How does Atkinson define *guerrilla art*?
2. Evaluate the effectiveness of the title, introduction, and conclusion.
3. Locate one of each of these in the essay—a judgment term, a technical term, an abstract term, and a controversial term.

Thinking Critically about Definition

1. Atkinson is not neutral on the subject of this essay. Explain her bias. How does this affect the essay?
2. What other types of sources could Atkinson have included to make her essay more comprehensive? What do her two sources reveal about her attitude about the topic?
3. Atkinson uses words such as "vibrancy" (para. 1) and "blossomed" (6) to describe guerrilla street art. What kind of connotation do these words have, and how do the connotations play into the overall tone of the essay?
4. Is "guerrilla street art" a euphemism? Why or why not? If so, how would the same idea be expressed in more direct language?
5. Atkinson limits her definition of guerrilla street art to items that have no commercial or financial purpose. She does not mention posters promoting businesses or paid entertainment, signs and banners used for fund-raising by organizations, and advertising flyers, even though these items also are often displayed in the same places as those she does discuss and with the same lack of legal permission. How are these items similar to and different from the kinds of items she includes in her definition?

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MAKING CONNECTIONS**Culture**

Both “Freeriders: They Live Off What We Throw Away” (pp. 443–46) and “Guerrilla Street Art” (pp. 461–63) discuss the activities of a subculture—dumpster divers and artists who create street art.

Analyzing the Readings

1. In what way does each essay demonstrate how the activities of each subgroup set it apart from the larger society?
2. Write a journal entry exploring this question: What motivates various subgroups to set themselves apart from the society as a whole, for example, through use of a specific word or phrase or through an activity?

Essay Idea

Write an essay in which you explore a subgroup of college students, such as fraternity brothers or vegans. Give examples of ways in which certain groups on campus set themselves apart through their language, their activities, or some other way.

Reacting to the Reading

1. Have you ever created any graffiti? Discuss how doing it made you feel. If you have not ever created any, discuss how doing so might make you feel.
2. Discuss the value of work like Shepard Fairey’s, which takes political messages and conveys them in street art. Why is this strategy effective? How does it reach a broader audience than other methods of communication?
3. Write a journal entry discussing whether guerrilla art adds value to public space or devalues the space. How should the answer to this question be determined?

READING DEFINITIONS

The following section provides advice for reading definitions as well as a model essay. The essay uses definition along with other methods of development and provides opportunities to examine, analyze, and react to the writer’s ideas.

Working with Text: Reading Definitions

As you encounter new fields of study throughout college, you will be asked to learn sets of terms that are specific to academic disciplines. Articles in academic journals, as well as most textbooks, contain many new terms.

For more on reading strategies, see Chapter 3.

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If you need to learn a large number of specialized terms, try the index-card system. Using three- by five-inch cards, write a word on the front of each card, and on its back write the word's meaning, pronunciation, and any details or examples that will help you remember it. Be sure to write the definition in your own words; don't copy the author's definition. To study, test yourself by reading the front of the cards and trying to recall the definition on the back of the cards. Then reverse the process. Shuffle the pack of cards to avoid learning terms in a particular order.

What to Look For, Highlight, and Annotate

1. As you read a definition, identify the class and highlight or underline the distinguishing characteristics. Mark any that are unclear or for which you need further information.

2. Make sure you understand how the term differs from similar terms, especially those presented in the same article or chapter. If a textbook or article does not sufficiently explain how two or more terms differ, check a standard dictionary. Each academic field of study also has its own dictionaries that list terms specific to the discipline. Examples include *Music Index*, *Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary*, and *A Dictionary of Economics*.

3. Highlight definitions using a special color of pen or highlighter, or designate them using annotations. You might use *V* for vocabulary, *Def.* for definition, or some other annotation.

How to Find Ideas to Write About

As you read an extended definition or an article containing brief definitions, jot down any additional characteristics or examples that come to mind. When you respond to the article, you might write about how the definition could be expanded to include these. You might also try the following strategies:

For more on discovering ideas for a response paper, see Chapter 4.

- Think of other terms in the same class that you might write about.
- Try to relate the definitions to your own experience. Where or when have you observed the characteristics described? Your personal experiences might be used in an essay in which you agree with or challenge the writer's definitions.
- If the writer has not already done so, you might use negation to expand the meaning of the term, or you might explore the word's etymology.

Thinking Critically about Definition

Some definitions are more straightforward and factual than others. Standard definitions of terms such as *calendar*, *automobile*, or *taxes* are not likely to be disputed by most readers. At other times, however, definitions can reflect bias, hide unpleasantness, or fail to include important elements of what is being defined. Use the following questions to think critically about the definitions you read.

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1. Are the Writer's Definitions Objective?

Especially in persuasive essays, definitions are sometimes expressed in subjective, emotional language that is intended to influence the reader. For example, a writer who defines a *liberal* as “someone who wants to allow criminals to run free on the streets while sacrificing the rights of innocent victims” reveals a negative bias toward liberals and intends to make the reader dislike them. When reading definitions of a term that is controversial for any reason, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I agree with the writer's definition of this term?
- Do I think these characteristics apply to all members of this group?
- Is the writer's language meant to inflame my emotions?

2. Are the Writer's Definitions Evasive?

A **euphemism** is a word or phrase that is used in place of an unpleasant or objectionable word. For example, *irregularity* is often used in commercials as a euphemism for *constipation*, and *passed away* is often used instead of *died*. At times, a writer may offer a euphemism as a synonym. For example, in describing a military action in which innocent civilians were killed, a writer may characterize the killings as “collateral damage.” Be alert to the use of euphemisms. Like persuasive definitions, they are intended to shape your thinking.

3. Is the Term Defined Completely?

As you evaluate extended definitions, determine whether the author has defined the term completely, covering all aspects or types. For example, can you think of any uses of “dude” or any aspects of its use that Crissey has not included in “Dude, Do You Know What You Just Said?”

DEFINITION COMBINED WITH OTHER PATTERNS

In the following selection, Jessica Ramirez uses definition as well as other patterns to discuss combat footage from Iraq and Afghanistan that is distributed on the Internet.

READING

The Appeal—and Danger—of War Porn

Jessica Ramirez

Jessica Ramirez is a senior reporter for *Newsweek* magazine, where this essay appeared in 2010. As you read, notice how Ramirez uses examples to make her extended definition vivid and real.

The video isn't quite clear. Three Iraqis stand in a field, unaware that a U.S. Apache helicopter is eyeing them from afar. Two of the men are handling what looks like a weapon, but there's no time to check. The Apache pilot gets an order: hit them. The 30mm bullets go clack-clack-clack. “Got [one].” says the pilot. “Good, hit the other

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one," says a voice on the radio. Clack-clack-clack. No. 2 goes down. The third man tries to hide behind a truck as bullets slam into the vehicle. After a few seconds a figure crawls into the open. "He's wounded," says the pilot. "Hit him [again]," says the voice. Clack-clack-clack. When the dust settles, the third man is dead.

Some 7,000 miles away, Nate J. sat in front of his computer, mesmerized by these images. It was 2006, and Nate, who owns a decal company, got his first taste of what soldiers and scholars call *war porn*. Although he's never been a soldier, Nate loves all things military. But this was better than anything he'd seen on the Military Channel. "I was just like 'Wow,'" he recalls. "I have to find more."

That was easy enough. Although the recently released footage of U.S. Apache helicopters gunning down two Reuters journalists appalled many, similar war videos are plentiful on Web sites like GotWarPorn.com and YouTube. Nate, who asked *Newsweek* not to use his last name because he's received death threats, has uploaded more than 800 to his own channel on LiveLeak.com and other sites.

When the Afghanistan and Iraq conflicts broke out, the military officially released some of the raw combat footage now on the Internet to build a stronger bond between the home front and the battlefield. Soldiers also took their own videos or pulled them from cameras on military systems like Predator drones. But almost as soon as these images became available, civilians and soldiers alike started splicing the clips together, often adding soundtracks and spreading them across the Web. Today there are thousands of war-porn videos, and they've been viewed millions of times. Like sexual porn, they come in degrees of violence, ranging from soft-core montages of rocket-propelled grenades blowing up buildings to snuff-film-like shots of an insurgent taking a bullet to the head. And even as the U.S. begins its march toward the end of two long conflicts, these compilations continue to attract viewers. With a videogame sensibility, they fetishize — and warp — the most brutal parts of these high-tech wars.

Historically, combat images have been captured and disseminated by a handful of professionals, such as the photographers Mathew Brady during the Civil War and Robert Capa during World War II. Now the immediacy of the Internet, coupled with the spread of cheap video technology, allows anyone to document war as they see it. "There's a new order," says James Der Derian, a professor at Brown University's Watson Institute for International Studies. "Unlike the photograph, the moving image creates a feeling that it more accurately depicts what it is representing, whether it does or not."

Academics date the origins of war porn to the scandalous images from Abu Ghraib Prison, in which Iraqi prisoners were stacked on top of each other to form naked pyramids, forced to simulate sexual acts, or otherwise abused. The snapshot of Pvt. Lynndie England holding a naked prisoner by a leash became an iconic representation of the war. The acts were born of an aimless power and a pornographic sensibility, argued the French social theorist Jean Baudrillard, who defined this form of "war porn" in a 2004 essay in the French newspaper *Libération*.

After Abu Ghraib the floodgates burst, with U.S. soldiers even trading war porn for real porn. Chris Wilson was running a user-generated porn site when he started getting requests for sexual material from soldiers in both war zones. But when paying via credit card proved problematic, Wilson let them swap war footage for access to the site's sexual content. The first images he received were fairly tame. But as the

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Iraq War took a turn for the worse in late 2004, the photos and footage got bloodier and included shots of headless corpses and body parts like intestines, brains, and what appeared to be limbs. By 2005, Wilson had an estimated 30,000 U.S. military personnel as members. "It was a view of war that had never been seen," he says.

Eventually the Office of the State Attorney in Polk County, Fla., charged Wilson with 300 obscenity-related misdemeanor counts and one felony count. A Pentagon investigation into the war footage on his site led to no charges against him or military members. (The Department of Defense says it is against its policy to show "recognizable photos of wounded or captured enemy." The Marines, Air Force, and Navy haven't prosecuted anyone for such posts; the Army says it has no way to track this.) Wilson did plead no contest to five of the misdemeanor charges; he served no time, but his site was shut down. He believes that decision had more to do with the war porn than the sexual content. "If you're curious, and you're an adult, and you live in a free country, there should be no reason why you can't look at this stuff," he says. "I don't think there's any harm in it."

Critics disagree. The videos, after all, depict attacks only on enemy combatants and civilians — never American troops. (In many ways they're strikingly similar to jihadist propaganda.) Aside from providing a one-sided perspective of conflict, war porn soft-pedals the horrors of battle. "People watching it on their iPhone or on their home computer don't generally do it for the information; they do it be-

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cause it's entertainment," says P. W. Singer, author of *Wired for War*. "That's the porn part of it. The soldiers use the word because they know there's something wrong with it."

What gets lost in the highlight reels of explosions and bodies is the moral complexity of war, says Bryant Paul, an expert on the psychological and sexual effects of media. He points to a video of American soldiers making fun of a dog eating a dead Iraqi. "The behavior may be a coping mechanism for war, because they might have to normalize what is not normal in order to survive," he says. "But the people who watch this stuff can't know that, so they can't understand the entirety of what they're seeing."

Yet these images will perpetuate a particular version of these wars, says Paul. It is a version that does not treat the enemy as human, or life as valuable. It is a version that does not recognize the pain of some of the U.S. soldiers who pull the trigger. And as realistic as these videos might seem, they do not show war for what it actually is: terrifyingly real.

Examining the Reading

1. Why does Wilson believe he was prosecuted?
2. Why does the military release combat videos?
3. What damage can these videos do, according to Ramirez?
4. Explain the meaning of each of the following words as it is used in the reading: *mesmerized* (para. 2), *montages* (4), *fetishize* (4), and *disseminated* (5).

Analyzing the Writer's Technique

1. Is it helpful or unnecessary for Ramirez to include the description of what happens in a war video?
2. Identify and evaluate Ramirez's thesis statement. How clear and specific is it?
3. Who is Ramirez's intended audience? How can you tell?

Visualizing the Reading

What other patterns of development does Ramirez use in the essay? Complete the following chart by listing the pattern and providing an example of how each pattern is used. The first one has been done for you.

Pattern of Development	Example
Narration	Para. 1 Three Iraqis being shot

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Thinking Critically about Text and Images

1. What connotation does the phrase “war porn” have?
2. Describe the tone of the essay. What does it reveal about Ramirez’s attitude toward the videos?
3. What is “taking a bullet in the head” (para. 4) a euphemism for?
4. What types of sources and information help to support Ramirez’s thesis?
5. The photograph that Ramirez mentions and that appears on page 468 has been published around the world, both in print and online. What message did it and similar images from Abu Ghraib send about the U.S. imprisonment system in Iraq and the behavior of the guards there? Given that it was taken by one of Lynndie England’s fellow guards, what would you say its purpose was?
6. What is the emotional effect of the photograph? How might its effect be different for Americans, for Iraqis, and for people in other countries?

Reacting to the Reading

1. Discuss any war footage that you have seen in the media. How did it make you feel? What type of footage was it?
2. Write a journal entry exploring how war images affect the people who view them.
3. Write an essay about real war images versus video-game war images. What are the differences? What similarities are there? Does one affect the other? How do they affect viewers?

For more on locating and documenting sources, see Chapters 22 and 23.

Applying Your Skills: Additional Essay Assignments

Write an extended definition essay on one of the following topics, using what you learned about definition in this chapter. Depending on the topic you choose, you may need to conduct library or Internet research.

To Express Your Ideas

Choose a specific audience and write an essay defining and expressing your views on one of the following terms:

1. Parenting
2. Assertiveness
3. Sexual harassment

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To Inform Your Reader

4. Write an essay defining a term from a sport, hobby, or form of entertainment. Your audience is a classmate who is unfamiliar with the sport, hobby, or pastime.
5. Write an essay defining the characteristics of the “perfect job” you hope to hold after graduation. Your audience is your instructor.
6. Write an essay defining an important concept in a field of study, perhaps from one of your other courses. Your audience consists of students not enrolled in the course.

To Persuade Your Reader

“Freegans: They Live Off What We Throw Away” (pp. 443–46) addresses the issue of consumer waste and excess. Write an essay defining a term and demonstrating that the problem is either increasing or decreasing in your community. Your audience consists of readers of your local newspaper. Choose a term from the following list:

7. Racism or ethnic stereotyping
8. Sexual discrimination
9. Age discrimination

Cases Using Definition

10. You are a fifth-grade teacher working on a lesson plan entitled “What Is American Democracy?” How will you limit the term *American democracy* to define it for your audience? What characteristics and details will you include?
11. Write a press release for a new menu item as part of your job as public relations manager for a restaurant chain. First choose the new menu item, and then define the item and describe its characteristics using sensory details.