

Structuring a Division-and-Classification Essay

A classification or division essay groups objects, people, or events by the characteristics that they share. Usually, the writer begins with a group of people or things and then separates them into subgroups or types. There are several steps to writing an effective division or classification essay.

1. Establish a subject

Select a topic that has a general grouping that can be classified into subgroups or classifications.

Examples:

Sports activities for children

baseball
soccer
tennis
swimming
basketball

Music

country-western
classical
rhythm and blues
rock
rap

2. Present a clear thesis

Thesis should inform reader of your purpose or intention and the principle of classification.

3. Follow an organizational pattern

An outline of your subgroups and their characteristics will help you write a logical classification essay. You should include specific details that form a basis of classification.

4. Use transitions

Transitional words help the reader follow your cause-and-effect analysis.

5. Draw a conclusion

Restate the thesis and reach a conclusion concerning the group and subgroup. Conclusions for classification essays offer an opportunity for creativity, including humor or a recommendation.

Classification Sample

Title:

Note how title relates to essay. Title of essay is not underlined.

Introduction:

Introduction guides reader to the thesis statement, indicating a general group that will be classified into subgroups.

First body paragraph:

This body paragraph takes the general classification of tourists and breaks it into a sub-category: the tropical adventurer.

Second body paragraph:

This body paragraph indicates a subgroup of the main group: visitors to theme parks. Note the transition word: "another."

Third body paragraph:

Sometimes, a second paragraph may be needed to expand upon an idea or concept. In this case, it is the sub-category of tourists at theme parks.

Florida's Trapped Tourists

Florida is the nation's virtual melting pot for many reasons. One of the biggest reasons is that the state is awash in tourist attractions. The Sunshine State's variety of attractions often makes it easy for those who live there to identify and classify the tourists. South Florida's natural attractions hint of adventure; Orlando's theme parks lure families and newlyweds; West Palm Beach promises a snobby, luxurious life-style; and Key West offers hedonistic escapades.

One classification of Florida tourists is the tropical adventurer, easily distinguishable by an ever-present camera or video recorder. Although even Floridians occasionally take pictures, cameras provide one clue that someone is a visitor to the state. For example, a man wearing a pith helmet, a fifty-pocket photo vest, Banana Republic shorts, and L.L. Bean super-duty sandals while taking pictures of children looking miserably cute in the glaring sun could be a Floridian; however, if the guy in the pseudo-adventurer garb is telling the children to move closer together so he can include a palm tree, airboat, stuffed alligator, or bikini-clad bimbo, he is a tourist. This man falls into the tropical adventurer category because he is not trying to capture a special moment in his children's lives, but endeavoring to record a particular object that proves to friends and family that he has indeed led his brood upon a Sunshine State safari. It is always the background that this type is focused on, the proof of tropical adventure.

Another type of easily identified tourists includes those drawn like lemmings to the magical, mystical, or confined-animal theme parks. These people may include families or hand-holding, smooching newlyweds. They are all under the impression that a park such as Rodent World is the perfect fun or romantic getaway. These tourists obviously find it fun and romantic to stand in long lines among rude teenagers and whiny toddlers who are constantly being chastised by grumpy, overweight, under-dressed, sweaty parents -- all suffering from the heat and habitual humidity or the punctual afternoon thunderstorms.

When the storms do strike, a bizarre scenario unfolds: The individual tourists are transformed into a giant pulsating entity composed of a zillion bright yellow plastic ponchos bearing a portrait of "the Rodent." Battalions of these tourists, all clad in these fourteen-dollar-bright-yellow slickers are a true testament of the Rodent's mass-marketing magic. If it isn't raining, this variety of tourist is distinguishable by goofy-looking hats and T-shirts bearing the likenesses of various princesses, ducks, mice, dogs, chipmunks, or various other cutesified critters.

Essay continues on next page

Note to students: This essay is a sample to illustrate format. Course instructors have copies. Duplication or near duplication would be regarded as plagiarism.

Classification Sample (continued)

Fourth body paragraph:

A transitional phrase in the first sentence notes another tourist category: the Palm Beach set.

Body paragraph:

Transition indicates another subgroup (Daytona tourists) and even breaks that sub-group into three classifications.

Body paragraphs:

Transition indicates final subgroup (Key West tourists) and gives specific, descriptive examples. Again, for longer papers, more than one paragraph may be necessary to provide details.

Conclusion:

Last paragraph shows creative possibilities for a classification essay.

The Palm Beach set also stands out as a distinct variation of tourists. Often, these are successful businessmen (or their sons) and their wives, all of whom showcase deep tans from leisurely or sporting activities. They often wear expensive, name-brand resort clothes, or nautical-motif attire. The women can be identified by "name-dropping" shopping bags, enormous sunglasses, strange hats, and expensive sandals on perfectly pedicured feet. The men are usually found on the golf course or in the country club lounge, where they brag of luxury cars, sailboats, stock market prowess, or deep-sea fishing conquests. Because some of these people spend many months in the state, they have even convinced themselves that they are true "Floridians," not tourists.

Daytona Beach also adds to Florida's melting-pot of tourism, but Daytona visitors arrive by season: In February and July, it's auto-racing fans; in March and April, it's college students on spring break; and in the fall, it's Speed Week bikers. However, if a member of one group tends to stray into another group's season, it's still easy to sort out who's who. Auto racing fans wear shirts with giant numbers that barely cover giant bellies; the college kids don't wear shirts at all; and the bikers are the totally nude, tattooed dudes (and dudettes) spraying one another down in the car washes.

The final group of tourists is far more difficult to spot because it is easy to blend into the locale: Key West. There are few places, for example, where a large man can slip into a small, tight-fitting, zebra-striped dress; plant a cheap, blond wig on his head; toss on a pair of spiked heels; and fit right in with the crowd.

Although the Key West carnival atmosphere can make tourists more difficult to spot, they are not completely invisible. Pale skin, fiery red skin, or peeling skin are clues. So are new Hawaiian shirts, designer swim suits, and the stench of Coppertone. So too are the stunned looks at restaurants when visitors learn that the glass of water they requested costs more than the rum-laden planter's punch. By happy hour, however, all differences tend to dissolve in Margaritaville as everything becomes a tropical blur, and all are totally uncaring of who is native and who is tourist.

Of course, all of this is not to say that Floridians begrudge tourists their "traps" because the "natives" often visit them, too. In fact, many Floridians visit theme parks, the Palm Beaches, Daytona, or Key West because they enjoy watching tourists. The tourists who flock to Florida attractions become Florida attractions themselves.

- Jamie Harris