# Types of Evidence

Evidence is any type of information that will convince readers that a point or claim is reasonable or correct. Effective paragraphs and essays usually present a carefully chosen combination of evidence. While insufficient evidence results in weak paragraphs, too much evidence can be overwhelming for readers. Therefore, good writers make decisions about the amount of evidence and the types of evidence they will use, based on their purpose, audience, and topic sentence/thesis.

**1. Brief Personal Examples or Observations**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *What are they?* Writers use examples from their own lives to represent a larger group or typical situation.  | *Why use them?** Can make writing interesting

and believable, especiallywhen readers can relate to or identify with the examples | *Considerations** May not be enough to prove a point
* May not be as credible and convincing as more objective evidence such as statistics and expert opinion
* Need to be specific and real (representative)
 |

**2. Brief Examples from Other Sources**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *What are they?*Brief examples gathered from readings, television,film, lectures, or from experiencesof people they know | *Why use them?** Can make writing interesting

and believable, especiallywhen readers can relate toor identify with the examples* Can be persuasive because it builds connections to other human experiences
 | *Considerations* * May not be enough to prove a point
* May not be as credible and convincing as more objective evidence such as statistics and expert opinion
* Need to be specific and real (representative)
 |

**3. Extended Examples or Observations from Personal Experience or from Other Sources**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *What are they?*Longer, more detailed narratives of events that have involved you or people you know; representative events gathered from readings or interviews | *Why use them?** Can add more emotional impact than brief examples
* Can help readers more fully understand a point than brief examples can
 | *Considerations** May not provide the range of experience necessary to prove your point
 |

**4. Facts**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *What are they?*Provable information; who, what where, when, how, and why | *Why use them?** Provide clarity and context
* Readers expect facts
 | *Considerations** Facts alone may not satisfy, engage, or persuade readers
 |

**5. Statistics**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *What are they?*Numerical data fromresearch studies | *Why use them?** More objective and measurable than examples
* Appeal to a reader’s intellect
* Persuasive because they cover more situations than one or even several examples do
 | *Considerations** Can be misleading
* Check reliability of sources
 |

**6. Information/Opinions from Expert Sources (Authorities)**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *What is it?*Evidence from people who have special knowledge and experience on a subject | *Why use it?** Persuasive and convincing to readers
* Adds credibility to writing
 | *Considerations** Consider the expertise and reputations of authorities
* Determine whether other experts in the same field agree
* Quote or paraphrase correctly
 |

**7. Definitions**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *What are they?*Explanation of what a term or concept means | *Why include them?** If the meaning or understanding of a term or concept may not be clear to readers
* If reader and writer may have differing ideas on the meaning of a word or concept
 | *Considerations** Be sure the definition is necessary
* Provide the source of the definition
* Use dictionary definitions sparingly; they can be dry
 |

**8. Descriptive Details**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *What are they?*How something looks, smells, feels, sounds, or tastes | *Why include them?** Make writing “come alive”
 | *Considerations** Weigh their usefulness compared to other types of evidence
 |

**9. Logical Reasoning**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *What is it?** Compare/Contrast
* Causes and/or Effects
* Advantages/Disadvantages
* “If” statements (scenarios/hypotheticals)
 | *Why include it?** Persuasive and powerful, especially when used in conjunction with more concrete forms of evidence such as examples and statistics
 | *Considerations** Think evidence through carefully
* Be complete
 |

**This handout was adapted from the following sources:**

 **McWhorter, Kathleen. *Successful College Writing,* 4th edition. Bedford/ St. Martin’s, 2009.**

**Salomone, William and MacDonald, Stephen. *The Writer’s Response*, 4th edition. Thomson Wadsworth, 2008.**

|  |
| --- |
| Types of Evidence Used to Support a PointWorking Thesis: The lack of courtesy in our culture has a negative impact on our everyday lives.Topic Sentences: Rude behavior damages family relationships.  Disrespectful behavior can create a toxic work environment. A decline in courtesy can be dangerous on the road.*Types of Evidence Example*  |
| Brief Personal Examples My various experiences with rude people at work |
| Extended Personal Example My experience in getting onto the 78 freeway one afternoon |
| Brief Examples from Other Examples of rudeness in the family from class discussionSources |
| Extended Example from Example of a man with an arrogant attitude from “Common Courtesies Other Source Show Genuine Class” by Gabriel Castillo |
| Facts/Statistics Associated Press Ipsos Poll on public attitudes about rudeness |
| Information/Opinions from Norman Vincent Peale’s comments on empathy and its relationship to Experts courtesy in “Courtesy: Key to a Happier World” |
| Definition My explanation of what courtesy means  |
| Descriptive Details How did the rude driver look? How did I feel when she chased me?   |
| Causes/Effects Why aren’t family members more polite to one another? What happens when people are treated rudely by family members? |
| Comparison/contrast Contrast an example of polite behavior with an example of impolite  behavior   |
| Advantages/Disadvantages Why is it better to be polite? What is the downside of being impolite *or*at times, the downside of being polite? |
| “If” statements What would have happened if the driver who got so angry with me had  caused me to get in an accident because I was driving fast to get away from  her? |