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Essays: The CLASSIFICATION ESSAY - Example

When you return home from your weekly trip to the supermarket with five brown bags packed with your purchases, how do you sort them out? You might separate the food items from the nonfood items (like toothpaste, paper towels, and detergent). Or, you might divide and classify the items into groups intended for the freezer compartment, the refrigerator, and the kitchen cupboards. You might even put the items into groups like "to be used tonight," "to be used soon," and "to be used last." Sorting supermarket items in such ways is just one small example of how we spend much of our time organizing – 'classifying' - our environment in one manner or another.

The following essay is one example of a *classification* essay:

Mall People

Having fun can exhaust one's bank account. By the time a person drives to the city and pays the tired-looking parking attendant the hourly fee to park, there is little money left to buy movie tickets, let alone popcorn and soft drinks to snack on. As a result, people have turned from wining, dining, and movie going to the nearby free-parking, free-admission shopping malls. Teenagers, couples on dates, and the nuclear family can all be observed having a good time at this alternative recreation spot.

Teenagers are the largest group of mall goers. The guys saunter by in sneakers, T-shirts, and blue jeans, complete with a package of cigarettes sticking out of their pockets. The girls stumble along in high-heeled shoes and daring tank tops, with hairbrushes tucked snugly in the rear pockets of their tight-fitting designer jeans. Traveling in a gang that resembles a wolf pack, the teenagers make the shopping mall their hunting ground. Their raised voices, loud laughter, and occasional shouted obscenities can be heard from as far as half a mall away. They come to "pick up chicks," to "meet guys," and basically just to "hang out."

Couples are now spending their dates at shopping malls. The young lovers are easy to spot because they walk hand in hand,

stopping to sneak a quick kiss after every few steps. They first pause at jewelry store windows so they can gaze at diamond engagement rings and gold wedding bands. Then, they wander into furniture departments in the large mall stores. Whispering happily to each other, they imagine how that five-piece living room set or brass headboard would look in their future home. Finally, they drift away, their arms wrapped around each other's waists.

Mom, Dad, little Jenny, and Fred, Jr. visit the mall on Friday and Saturday evenings. Jenny wants to see some of the special mall exhibits geared toward little children. Fred, Jr. wants to head for the places that young boys find appealing. Mom walks around looking at various things until she discovers that Jenny is no longer attached to her hand. She finally finds her in a favorite hiding place. Meanwhile, Dad has arrived at a large store and is admiring the products he would love to buy. Indeed, the mall provides something special for every member of the family.

The teenagers, the couples on dates, and the nuclear family make up the vast majority of mall goers. These folks need not purchase anything to find pleasure at the mall. They are shopping for inexpensive recreation, and the mall provides it.



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