A main idea must be supported by details. Using an illustration is one of the best ways to do this.

Illustration (often called example or exempliﬁ cation) is a method of developing an idea by providing one or more instances of that idea. Illustrations or examples serve to clarify the idea, make the idea more convincing, or make an abstract idea more concrete.

One example of American craftsmanship is the Tiffany lamp.

352

Copyright 2010 Cengage Learning. All Rights Reserved. May not be copied, scanned, or duplicated, in whole or in part.

Writers use illustration in three basic ways. 1. To provide a list of brief examples, given without any particular grouping:

As a child, I had pen pals from all over the world. These included my cousin Britt-Marie from Sweden, Ying from Hong Kong, Simone from France, Etsuko from Japan, and several children from Kenya.

2. To provide a list of brief examples arranged into groups:

As a child, I had pen pals from all over the world. From Europe were my Swedish cousin Britt-Marie and a pretty French girl named Simone. From the Paciﬁ c came the beautiful monthly letters of Etsuko and an occasional postcard from Ying in Hong Kong. Finally, from Africa came a number of charming letters from several school-children in Kenya.

3. To select one item from a possible list and develop it more fully into a longer and more developed example, called an extended example (possibly consisting of an anecdote based on the principles of narration):

As a child, I had pen pals from all over the world. It all started when my cousin Britt-Marie in Sweden sent me a funny little letter in crazy English. Sitting on our front porch swatting ﬂ ies one morning in August, I was considering walking the two miles uptown to the library when the mailman handed me an envelope with colorful stamps on it. It was probably the ﬁ rst piece of mail I had ever received. I barely knew I had a cousin Britt-Marie. But there she was—a young girl writing just to me from across the Atlantic Ocean. I was hooked from that very day. Although I eventually had pen pals from many other countries, Britt-Marie remained my favorite. In fact, we still communicate, now by e-mail, at least once every few weeks.

Always remember that the anecdote must support the larger point contained in the topic sentence—namely, the writer had pen pals from all over the world.

WHERE DOES THE WRITER FIND EXAMPLES? Writers draw on four main sources for examples. 1. Personal experience and knowledge of the world. Writers fi nd supporting examples for their work everywhere, beginning with their own experience. What you have observed and what has happened to you are two excellent sources of examples for your writing. You have gained a great deal of knowledge either formally or informally, and you can call upon that knowledge when you look for examples to illustrate your points. 2. Imagination. When writers need examples for their work, they often fi nd it useful to create imaginary examples or situations that provide specifi c details. Humorous writers do this all the time when they tell jokes. You, too, can use your

Topic sentence

Topic sentence

Topic sentence

CHAPTER 18 DEVELOPING PARAGRAPHS: ILLUSTRATION 353

Copyright 2010 Cengage Learning. All Rights Reserved. May not be copied, scanned, or duplicated, in whole or in part.

imagination to generate examples when your writing does not require strictly factual information. A hypothetical example is particularly useful to illustrate a point, and it often begins with a phrase such as “Imagine the following situation” or “Consider this hypothetical case” or “Ask yourself what would happen if. . . .” 3. Interviews and surveys. Obtaining examples through interviews and informal surveys can enrich your writing by allowing you to present very specifi c information and facts about your main idea. We see and hear interviews on television and radio every day, as people from all walks of life tell their stories on every topic imaginable. We are accustomed to seeing professional interviewers ask questions, but you can also gain examples in this way by talking to your friends and classmates and learning from them. 4. Outside research. Printed or electronic material from outside sources can provide specifi c examples for your work. This research usually involves the resources of a library, using the online databases as well as other online resources. This kind of research is necessary for term papers and many other kinds of college work, and it always requires a careful listing of the sources used.

The Sources for Illustrations Each of the following three paragraphs develops an idea by using illustration. Read each paragraph and decide what source the writer used to obtain the illustration. Choose from the following list: example from personal experience or knowledge• imaginary or hypothetical example• information from an interview or survey conducted by the writer• outside research (material found in books, in articles, or on the Internet)• 1. Most students today believe they must learn how to use a computer if they are to be competitive in the job market. A case in point is my ﬁ rst-year writing class. Out of the twenty-three students surveyed, all but two felt they must be computer literate before they leave college or they might not be able to get the jobs they want. Fifteen of the students currently own their own computers and claim they are able to get their college work done more easily. Two of these ﬁ fteen students actually have part-time jobs, one in the library and one in the history department, where they both enter data on computers. This seems to show that these students already are at an advantage over the rest of the students who are still learning to use a computer. Type of illustration: 2. Most students today believe they must learn how to use a computer if they are to be competitive in the job market. Just to illustrate, if a person wants a career in auto mechanics and thinks he or she has no need to learn how to use a computer, that person is likely to be surprised. What if the auto mechanic needs to operate a sophisticated computer to determine malfunctions in cars? What if the staff expects the mechanic to understand how to enter data on the ofﬁ ce computer and also expects the person to know how to read the computer printouts? What if he or she must go to school to learn the newest technology, and instead of working with actual cars, everyone works on computer simulations? Type of illustration:

EXERCISE 1

Topic sentence

information from a survey

Topic sentence

hypothetical example

354 PART 4 CREATING EFFECTIVE PARAGRAPHS

Copyright 2010 Cengage Learning. All Rights Reserved. May not be copied, scanned, or duplicated, in whole or in part.

3. Most students today realize they must learn how to use computers to compete in the job market. Last semester, I took my ﬁ rst computer course. To my great pleasure, I found that my new skills helped me not only write compositions but also practice my math. I also discovered that I could go online and talk with people all over the world who have interests similar to my own. In addition, I was able to use the computer to access information from the school library. I plan to become a teacher, and I will be able to use my computer skills to make tests and worksheets, research information for class, and help students make discoveries for themselves. Type of illustration:

The Sources for Illustrations Below is a topic sentence. Write a paragraph in which you support the idea of the topic sentence by using an example from your personal experience or knowledge. Topic sentence: Many advertising claims are deceptive. Your paragraph:

The Sources for Illustrations Below is a topic sentence. Write a paragraph in which you support the idea by using information from a survey of several of your classmates. Topic sentence: Taste in music is very personal. Your paragraph:

Topic sentence

example from personal experience

EXERCISE 2

Answers will vary.

EXERCISE 3

Answers will vary.

CHAPTER 18 DEVELOPING PARAGRAPHS: ILLUSTRATION 355

Copyright 2010 Cengage Learning. All Rights Reserved. May not be copied, scanned, or duplicated, in whole or in part.

Analyzing Paragraphs That Use Examples Read the following paragraph by Suzanne Britt, and then answer the questions about it.

Being a connoisseur of junk has wonderfully mucked up my entire life. You know the song about favorite things like raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens? Well, I’ve got my own list of favorite things: I like the insides of ﬁlthy bus stations, unsavory characters, a Dr Pepper can ﬂoating on the sun-ﬂecked water, Jujubes, the greasy tug and tang of beef jerky wrapped in cellophane, the kitchen drawer beside the phone, the Sunday clutter around the house, the noble whiff of manure, the sweaty odor of a person I love, the smokeﬁlled room in which I get to inhale the equivalent of eleven cigarettes without breaking my promise to quit, the pigeon droppings in the square, the grease under the ﬁngernails of a gas station attendant (if I can still ﬁnd one), the rusty Brillo on the sink, the bathroom glass placidly growing bacteria for the whole family, People magazine, a dog-eared paperback, a cold pork chop eaten at the refrigerator door.

EXERCISE 4

Topic sentence

ACHIEVING COHERENCE CHOOSING AN ORDER DEPENDING ON THE TYPE OF ILLUSTRATION USED 1. If the illustration is a story or an anecdote, the writer usually uses time order. 2. If the illustration is made up of several descriptive examples, the writer might use spatial order (top to bottom, right to left, etc.). 3. If the illustration calls for a logical order, this logic will determine the sequence. 4. If no special order seems necessary, the writer often places the strongest or most important example last, because this is what the reader is likely to remember best.

USING TRANSITIONS Writers often signal the beginning of an illustration by using a key phrase. Below is a list of phrases commonly used to signal the beginning of an illustration.

Transitions Commonly Used in Illustration

For example, . . . Consider the case of . . . Another example is . . . For instance, . . . To illustrate, . . . A personal anecdote that An illustration of this is . . . illustrates this point is . . . One such case is . . . To be speciﬁ c . . .