Examples are used in academic writing for support and illustration. Suitable examples can strengthen the argument, and they can also help the reader to understand a point. This unit demonstrates the different ways in which examples can be introduced, and practises their use.

1 Using examples

Generalisations are commonly used to introduce a topic:

Many plants and animals are threatened by global warming.

But if the reader is given an example for illustration the idea becomes more concrete:

Many plants and animals are threatened by global warming. Polar bears, for example, are suffering from the lack of Arctic ice.

The example may also support the point the writer is making:

A participatory public has been a defining feature of American politics and historically a strength of the political system.
Alexis de Tocqueville’s classic treatise on ‘Democracy in America’ (1966) stressed the participatory tendencies of Americans in contrast to European publics.

See Unit 2.7 Generalisations

2 Phrases to introduce examples

(a) for instance, for example (with commas)

Some car manufacturers, for instance Hyundai, now offer five-year guarantees.

(b) such as, e.g.

Many successful businessmen such as Bill Gates have no formal qualifications.

(c) particularly, especially (to give a focus)

Certain Masters courses, especially American ones, take two years.

(d) a case in point (for single examples)

A few diseases have been successfully eradicated. A case in point is smallpox.

Add a suitable example to each sentence and introduce it with one of the phrases above.

Examples:

A number of sports have become very profitable due to the sale of television rights.
A number of sports, for instance motor racing, have become very profitable due to the sale of television rights.

(a) Some twentieth-century inventions affected the lives of most people.

(b) Lately many countries have introduced fees for university courses.

(c) Various companies have built their reputation on the strength of one product.
In recent years more women have become political leaders.

Certain countries are frequently affected by earthquakes.

Many musical instruments use strings to make music.

A group of root crops constitute an important part of our diets.

Politicians have discussed a range of possible alternative punishments to prison.

3 Practice A

Study the following text and add examples from the box where suitable, using one of the introductory phrases in (2) above.

free delivery or discounted prices
bookshops
clothing and footwear
books and music
many supermarkets offer delivery services for online customers

Widespread use of the internet has led to a major change in shopping habits. It is no longer necessary to visit shops to make routine purchases. With more specialised items internet retailers can offer a wider range of products than bricks-and-mortar shops. They can also provide extra incentives to customers, in addition to the convenience of not having to visit a real shop. As a result certain types of store are disappearing from the high street. Other products however, appear to require personal inspection and approval, and in addition many people enjoy the activity of shopping, so it seems unlikely that the internet will completely replace the shopping centre.
4 Practice B

Read the text below and then insert suitable examples where needed.

Students who go to study abroad often experience a type of culture shock when they arrive in the new country. Customs that they took for granted in their own society may not be followed in the host country. Even everyday patterns of life may be different. When these are added to the inevitable differences that occur in every country students may at first feel confused. They may experience rapid changes of mood, or even want to return home. However, most soon make new friends and, in a relatively short period, are able to adjust to their new environment. They may even find that they prefer some aspects of their new surroundings, and forget that they are not at home for a while!

5 Restatement

Another small group of phrases is used when there is only one ‘example’. (Brackets may also be used for this purpose.) This is a kind of restatement to clarify the meaning:

The world’s leading gold producer namely South Africa has been faced with a number of technical difficulties.

Add a suitable phrase from the box below to the following sentences, to make them clearer.

(a) The company’s overheads doubled last year.
(b) The Roman empire was a period of autocratic rule.
(c) The Indian capital has a thriving commercial centre.
(d) Survival rates from the most common type of cancer are improving.
(e) Participation rates in most democracies are in decline.

that is to say fewer people are voting (27 BC – 476 AD)
in other words the fixed costs i.e. breast cancer
namely New Delhi
Generalisations are often used to introduce a topic. They can be powerful statements because they are simple and easy to understand. But they must be used with care, to avoid being inaccurate or too simplistic. This unit explains how to generalise clearly and effectively.

1 Using generalisations

(a) Generalisations are used to give a simple picture of a topic. Compare:

The majority of smokers in Britain are women.

and

Of all smokers in the UK, 56.2 per cent are women and 43.8 per cent are men.

Although the second sentence is more accurate, the first is easier to understand and remember. The writer must decide when accuracy is necessary, and when a generalisation will be acceptable.

(b) You must avoid using generalisations that cannot be supported by evidence or research, e.g. Students tend to be lazy.
Decide which of the following are valid generalisations:

(a) Cats are more intelligent than dogs.
(b) Earthquakes are difficult to predict.
(c) There is a link between poverty and disease.
(d) Women work harder than men.
(e) Air travel is faster than train travel.

2 Structure

Generalisations can be made in two ways:

(a) Most commonly using the plural:

Computers have transformed the way we live.

(b) Using the singular + definite article (more formal):

The computer has transformed the way we live.

Avoid absolute phrases in generalisations such as:

Young children learn second languages easily.

Such statements are dangerous because there may well be exceptions. Instead, it is better to use cautious phrases such as:

Young children tend to learn second languages easily.

See Unit 3.4 Caution
3 Practice A

Write generalisations on the following topics.

(a) fresh fruit/ health

_Eating fresh fruit is important for health._

(b) regular rainfall/ good crop yields

(c) honest judges/ respect for the law

(d) adequate sleep/ academic success

(e) industrial growth/ pollution
(f) cold weather/ demand for gas

(g) job satisfaction/ interesting work

4 Practice B

Study the table and write five generalisations using the information.

Results of a college survey on where students prefer to study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Undergraduates (%)</th>
<th>Graduates (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own room in silence</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own room with music</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own room in bed</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoors</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(a) __________________________________________________________

(b) __________________________________________________________

(c) __________________________________________________________

(d) __________________________________________________________

(e) __________________________________________________________
5 Building on generalisations

Most essays move from the general to the specific, as a generalisation has to be supported and developed. For example, an essay with the title ‘The impact of globalisation on the Chinese economy’ might develop in this way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generalisation</th>
<th>Support</th>
<th>Development &gt; Specific</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Since the mid-twentieth century there has been a remarkable increase in international trade.</td>
<td>The reasons for this are a combination of international agreements such as GATT, better transport and improved communications.</td>
<td>China has played a significant part in this process, with its international trade growing by 16 times in just 20 years, while its GDP increased by nearly 10 per cent per year.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

■ Choose a title from the list below, or select one from your own subject. Write a generalisation and develop it in the same way.

(a) Does tourism always have a negative effect on the host country?

(b) Should governments use taxation to promote public health?

(c) Is it more important to protect forests or to grow food?

(d) Is it better for the state to spend money on primary or university education?

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Generalisation</th>
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<th>Development &gt; Specific</th>
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Part 2 Elements of writing