

Classification Essay

A classification essay takes a group of things and breaks it down in one of the three ways:

- **Parts**

The essay breaks the topic down into component **parts** that make up the topic (the whole).

Example: Three important parts of a car are the engine, the axis, and the body.

- **Types**

The essay breaks the topic down into the main **kinds** of the subject.

Example: Three main types of cars on the road today are mini vans, SUVs, and sedans.

- **Characteristics**

The essay describes significant **features** or **characteristics** of the subject.

Example: Important features of a sports car are a bright colour, a high speed, and an attractive interior.

Classification can also be used to define a subject. For example, you can define a concept (like a good student) by dividing it into the characteristics (hard-working, creative, and interested), and then describe or give examples of each characteristic.

How to Write a Classification Essay

1. Choose your main points carefully so that
 - a. all your points are of equal weight and importance
 - b. the points don't overlap (e.g. in a paper on popular music, the category of male vocalist would overlap with the categories of folk and rock)
 - c. no part of your subject is omitted
2. Write a thesis statement that states your subject and your main points. *Be sure to make the main points grammatically parallel.*

Example: Our softball team is made up of has-beens, might-have-beens, and never-weres.

3. In your body paragraphs, define and explain each main point. Each point should be the focus of a separate paragraph.

For example, you would have a paragraph to explain the has-beens category, another paragraph to explain the might-have-beens, and another paragraph to describe the never-weres.

4. Conclude by summarizing the main points in a conclusion and re-emphasizing the purpose of your classification.

Sample Classification Essay Plan

Thesis: To be considered great, a rock band must have musical talent, an exciting stage performance, and focused musicians.

Musical Talent (Main Point 1)	Live Performance (Main Point 2)	Lifespan (Main Point 3)
Lyrics – well written	Personality – more than a CD	Change as times change
Instruments – in-depth knowledge	Special effects – involve audience	Band’s interest = 1 st priority
Genres – many different styles	Showboating – mesmerizing (doesn’t take away from the music)	Handle the pressures of fame

Conclusion: It takes years for bands to make it onto the music scene, but years more to make it into the hall of fame.

Sample Classification Essay

Rock of Ages

There are not many rock bands that can be defined as truly great. The history of rock is full of “one-hot wonders” and cult favourites, but very few groups have achieved both popular success and staying power. Many people dream of being rock stars, but very few actually make it into the industry. Even once a band has penetrated the scene, there is still a lot left to be done before a band can go into the rock and roll hall of fame. To be considered great, a rock band must have musical talent, an exciting stage performance, and a long lifespan.

Musical talent is the first criterion of greatness, and great bands need to have outstanding lyrics, knowledge of instruments and a firm understanding of many music genres. First, bands need to be capable of writing lyrics that people can relate to. The favourite hits of all time take listeners to a special place in their lives. For example, “We’re Not Gonna Take It” by Twisted Sister pumps up listeners with the emotion-filled chorus. Second, great bands need to know the instruments they are playing inside out. In fact, many of these bands have musicians who specialize in a single instrument. A special relationship is needed between the instruments and the players in order to make a band great. Furthermore, all band members need an understanding of many different genres of music. The best bands need to bring something new to the scene, and a strong understanding of many different types of music can help them do just that. Although musical talent is the first step towards greatness, it is not the only element of a great band.

Another important characteristic is the ability to perform well live. Personality, special effects and showboating are all key ingredients in making a live performance great. Fans expect more from a live performance than they do from listening to a CD; therefore, bands need to have personalities that will encourage audience involvement. An awesome live performance also needs to have special effects. Lights, smoke and pyrotechnics are some special effects that can really help the spectators experience the music; Kiss, for example, often has sparks flying from the set. These sparks help the audience really feel the emotional power of the song. Showboating is another element that great bands must master. Musical stunts are mesmerizing and can really add to a band’s performance, as long as the stunts do not take away from the musical talent. It is

exciting to watch members of a band perform tricks, like the crisscross playing of guitars. If a band can master the art of stage performing, it is well on its way to becoming great.

A masterful stage performance alone is not sufficient; a long lifespan is also important for a band to be considered great. Many bands today have the ability to obtain greatness, yet they are not able to stay together long enough. There are many reasons why bands fall apart. First, some bands are unable to change with the time. In order to remain on the scene, bands need to be able to adapt. Great bands, like Led Zeppelin, have a distinct sound that will never go out of style; however, fad bands, like the Backstreet Boys, have a sound that can be easily reproduced, so they quickly fade out of fashion. Furthermore, members of great bands will always put the interest of the band ahead of their own personal interests. Often, band members will leave a band because they feel that they can make it alone. However, this usually leads to the break up of the band, which would otherwise have a lot of potential. Bands, which might have otherwise been great, often have trouble dealing with fame. It is important that bands be able to handle the pressures of being famous. Band members often resort to drugs and alcohol, and the band quickly falls apart. Truly great bands must change with the times, have members who are committed, and be able to handle the pressures of being famous.

Naturally, personal tastes will differ, but no one can deny that musical talent, spectacular live performance, and a long lifespan are the factors that made The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Dire Straits, and others like them the most popular rock bands. Each of these qualities on its own is not enough to distinguish a band. Great bands combine all three ingredients and offer a unique experience to their listeners. It takes years of commitment and perseverance to make it into the industry, but to go down in the history books takes much more.