

# DEFINITIONS

## Theoretical introduction:

A **formal definition** is based upon a concise, logical pattern that includes as much information as it can within a minimum amount of space. Such definition consists of three parts.

1. The term (word or phrase) to be defined.
2. The class of object or concept to which the term belongs.
3. The differentiating characteristics that distinguish it from all others of its class.

## For example:

- **Water** (*term*) — a liquid (*class*) made up of molecules of hydrogen and oxygen in the ratio of 2 to 1 (*differentiating characteristics*).
- **Comic books** (*term*) — sequential and narrative publications (*class*) consisting of illustrations, captions, dialogue balloons, and often focused on super-powered heroes (*differentiating characteristics*).
- **Astronomy** (*term*) — a branch of scientific study (*class*) primarily concerned with celestial objects inside and outside of the Earth's atmosphere (*differentiating characteristics*).

(**Note:** Informal definitions, e.g. synonyms, have no fixed parts but still follow the guidelines delineated below.)

## Additional Tips for Writing Definitions:

- Avoid defining with “X is when” and “X is where” statements. These introductory adverb phrases should be avoided.
- Write the definition so that it matches the part of speech. Define a noun with a noun, a verb with a verb, and so forth.

*Stationary* — something that is not moving.

**Better:**

*Stationary* — standing still instead of moving.

- Avoid circular definitions (i.e. do not define a word by mere repetition or merely restating the word).

*Rhyming poetry* — consists of lines that contain end rhymes.

**Better:**

*Rhyming poetry* — an art form consisting of lines whose final words consistently contain identical, final stressed vowel sounds.

- Define a word in simple and familiar terms. Your definition of an unfamiliar word should not lead your audience towards looking up more words in order to understand your definition.

*Pluck* (*n.*) — gumption; grit; mettle.

**Better:**

*Pluck* (*n.*) — courage and determination.

## DEFINITIONS — ADDITIONAL EXERCISES

*I. Define the following words:*

1. Sword
2. Pollution
3. Reign
4. Cartoon
5. Hallucination
6. Draught
7. Bury
8. Neglect
9. Humiliate
10. Apathetic
11. Elbow
12. Crawl
13. Shortage
14. Abundance
15. Familiar
16. Mysterious
17. Survey
18. Astrology
19. Hedge
20. Tiptoe
21. Request
22. Broom

*II. Explain the difference between:*

1. correspondent & journalist
2. land & soil
3. grant & scholarship
4. economic & economical
5. acquaintance & colleague
6. historic & historical