

Elaborate is made up of three word cells: *-e-* (out), *-labor-* (work), and *-ate-* (to make). When you elaborate on your claim or thesis statement, you are literally *making it work out*. In other words, you are **developing a topic sentence or claim with specific*, relevant** details** so that your reader will better understand and appreciate the points you are making in your essay. **Elaboration includes the citation of textual evidence as well as the explanation of why that evidence is significant to the topic/argument at hand.** The addition of extraneous, unnecessary language or information just to make your essay longer is not elaboration, and you should not do it.

How to Elaborate

- 1) Have a clearly stated topic sentence or claim already in place.
- 2) Include relevant textual evidence that supports it. Always cite sources, regardless of the method you use.
 - a. Quote no more than 15-20 words directly from the text, with quotation marks and source citation.
 - b. Summarize/Paraphrase longer sections, and include the source citation.
- 3) Keeping your audience in mind, explain why the textual evidence is significant. How does it support your topic sentence? (*So what?*) Explain the reasoning that led to the conclusion you've reached. The following techniques will help you elaborate.

Explanation...

- ...goes into greater depth than the original evidence or quote from the text.
- ...uses alternate language from the original text.

Example of elaboration from a paragraph about geodes:

Another way to think about geodes is to recognize that nature abhors a vacuum. Anytime a hollow area exists in a rock formation, it will eventually be filled by minerals. When those filler minerals outlast the original surrounding rock, a geode is formed.

Analysis...

- ...examines the parts or components of the original topic and shows how they relate or work together.
- ...may include specific description.

Example of elaboration from a paragraph about internal combustion engines:

An internal combustion engine is composed of a few basic systems: fuel delivery, ventilation, compression, and ignition. Without any one of these systems, the engine will not function.

Figurative Language...

- ...includes poetic/literary comparisons like simile and metaphor.
- ...includes analogies, which compare the cited textual evidence to something that is easier to understand.
- ...involves comparison and contrast.

Example of elaboration from a paragraph explaining elections:

An election campaign is like a battle. One side "fires" by saying something against the other side, and then the other side retaliates by doing the same thing.

Relationship...

- ...helps the reader understand where the evidence fits into a hierarchy.
- ...explains how the evidence fits into a greater sequence.
- ...shows how the topic compares and/or contrasts with other concepts.

Example of elaboration from a paragraph explaining photosynthesis:

Photosynthesis is a process where plants take in carbon dioxide from the air and produce oxygen as a byproduct. This is the opposite of respiration, the process used by animals (like humans), in which oxygen is used to metabolize fuel for energy.

Examples...

- ...may be concrete or abstract.
- ...may include multiple/alternate contexts.

Example of elaboration from a paragraph explaining the legalities of private property:

For example, even on private property, structures must conform to the building codes of the relevant jurisdictions (city, county, state). Often, they must be inspected during different phases of construction by representatives of these bodies to ensure compliance.

Implications...

- ...extrapolate (make predictions).
- ...interpolate (make inferences).
- ...show cause and effect.

Example from a paragraph about how a new law will affect the community:

If the legislation in question is upheld by the court, it will lead to a number of unintended consequences, including...

Sentence Starters to Encourage Effective Elaboration

Evidence Stems: Use these to smoothly embed your evidence into your essay.

- According to [Name of source and/or author], ...
- [Name of author] claims ...
- The article titled [Title of article] indicates...
- As stated in the article [Title of article] by [Name of author], ...
- The illustration shows that...
- For example, ...
- For instance, ...
- The text states...
- On page _____, the author wrote...

Elaboration Stems: Use stems like these to explain how the textual evidence supports your thesis or claim.

- This [textual evidence] means...
- In other words, ...
- This shows that...
- Based on this information, one can infer/conclude that...
- The quote proves...
- This evidence clearly shows...
- The following information reveals...
- These events confirm that...
- This relates to...
- It is evident since...
- Because of this, it is clear that...
- Since this is the case, we know that...
- This leads one to the conclusion that...

Counterclaim Stems: Use these to integrate your rebuttal into an argumentative essay.

- Opponents of _____ may claim _____; however, ...
- Although _____ may be against _____, actually...
- Even though some may think _____, according to [Name of source and/or author], ...
- On the contrary, ...
- Although this may be true, it is also...
- Counter to...
- Nevertheless, ...
- After all,
- By comparison, ...
- Despite this,

*Specific evidence is an actual, focused, complete, detailed, fully explained example – not a generalization.

**Relevant evidence and elaboration actually support the thesis; they are not there just to lengthen the paper.

Finally, remember that elaboration is just one important part of an effective essay or paragraph, which must also include a thesis, examples, details, transitions, a conclusion, and correct grammar/conventions.