



Device #22

Enumeratio:

This section will cover two essential ideas: what enumeratio is, and when it is appropriately used.

Enumeratio refers to the act of supplying a list of details about something. It is used structurally to expand on a central idea, lending force to that idea by enumerating its many different facets. Use of this device tends to come naturally to people in writing, as important issues beg to be expounded upon.

The form can simply be a list of single words related to the central point, as in this first example.

Example #1: "I went to the mall, the park, the river, the salon, and, finally, home."

It can also go into greater detail in a point-by-point analysis, as in the second example.

Example #2: "There are three main reasons we should pay attention to this: first, the impact on our home town could be substantial; second, as voting citizens, we have a responsibility to keep abreast of changes in the political structure; and third, if no one pays attention to these things, politicians will have carte blanche to do whatever they choose."

Enumeratio may also be effectively combined with *hypophora* as an introduction. You can first ask a question whose answer involves numerous details and then proceed to list them. This can be seen in the famous Elizabeth Barrett Browning poem that begins with the *hypophora*, "How do I love thee?" and continues through *enumeratio*, "Let me count the ways."

By spending sufficient time outlining its details, you send a clear message to the reader about the importance of your main idea. *Enumeratio* is a good way to lend special force to a concept, while at the same time giving you a functional way to explain it in greater depth.

Example #3: "There are plenty of great sites to choose from when visiting Washington, D.C. You can go to the National Mall, the Lincoln Memorial, the Jefferson Memorial, the National Gallery, the Smithsonian, the Library of Congress, Ford's Theatre, and the International Spy Museum, to name just a few."

Exercise 1:

Write 9 original constructions that employ enumeration. The first one has been done for you as an example.

1. This is actually a multi-step process: Think of an example, write it down, turn it in, and get a good grade.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.

Your intentional use of rhetorical devices, especially enumeration, simile, and parenthesis, will mark you as a skillful writer.

Note how it works in this example: "How can this be? The problem begins with our schools, which do not provide moral models, discipline, or proper education to our children." An unknown situation is presented in the question, but when enumeration is added, it becomes obvious that the educational system is being attacked.

Because writers use enumeration on ideas they think are important, readers should be attentive to it when it appears. Since a carefully spelled-out list usually indicates what the writer thinks is important, you may want to take notes or explore the details listed to better understand what the writer is trying to communicate. When overused, however, the technique can be a bit numbing because you may feel overpowered by listed objects or ideas. Writers may ask a question that involves a multi-part answer and then enumerate the details in a response designed to show the concept better.

Example #1: "He started in the produce aisle, moving to the dairy section for cheese, before picking up bread in the bakery aisle, and finally stopping in the liquor section for some wine."

Example #2: "The reasons for this are many, but include the rising cost of crude oil, limited access to secure supplies, threats to global shipping traffic, and the tendency of refineries to place a heavy emphasis on certain products."

Exercise 2:

Create a sentence in which you use *enumeratio* to describe each of the following topics. *The first one has been done for you as an example.*

1. *your favorite holiday*

The reasons Halloween makes me happy are many, but I certainly enjoy seeing children in their costumes and disguises, I love giving candy and treats to little kids, and sometimes I get a thrill from scaring teenagers when they come begging for sweets.

2. things you like to do during summer vacation

3. where you see yourself in the next five to ten years and how you got there

4. the events that led to a well-known war

5. the cycle of rain formation

6. how to set up an email account