

8

Choosing Effective Examples and Analogies

PROBLEM SET

- For each of the following topics, give an analogy to suit a general audience.
 - A 12-inch snowfall.
 - Two numbers at opposite ends of a distribution.
 - An erratic pattern of change.
 - Something moving rapidly.
 - A few things.
 - Something very heavy.
 - Prices that are rising rapidly.
 - Something that has been level for a long time and then declines suddenly and substantially.
 - A repetitive pattern.
- Repeat the previous question but for a scientific audience in your field.
- Devise short phrases to convey the concept of small size to the people listed below.
 - A cooking aficionado
 - A gardening nut
 - An artist
 - A sports fanatic
- Each of the following analogies would work better for some audiences than others. Name a suitable audience, an unsuitable audience, and an improved analogy for the latter group.
 - “The size of a Palm Pilot.”
 - “The gasoline shortage of the early 1970s.”
- For each of the following topics, state whether information from Illinois in 1990 would be useful as a numeric example. If so, give an example of a type of contrast in which that information could be used.
 - Chicago in 1990.
 - Illinois in 2000.
 - Illinois schoolchildren in 1990.
 - Iowa voters in 2004.

6. Your state is considering three alternative income tax scenarios: a stable tax rate (at 5%), an increase of 0.5 percentage points, and an increase of 1.0 percentage points. Your local representative wants to know how each scenario would affect low-, moderate-, and high-income residents.
 - a. What criteria could you use to define “low,” “moderate,” and “high” income?
 - b. What kinds of numeric contrasts would you use to compare the different scenarios?
 - c. Create a table to present those effects to the government budget agency.
 - d. Create a chart to illustrate the effects to citizens of the state.

7. State whether a \$1.00 increase would be a useful contrast for each of the following topics. If not, suggest a more reasonable increment. Assume that all examples are for the year 2000 in the United States.
 - a. Weekly allowance for an eight-year-old child
 - b. Weekly wages for a supermarket checkout clerk
 - c. Hourly wages for a supermarket checkout clerk
 - d. Sales tax on a package of cigarettes
 - e. Sales tax on a new SUV