

PROCESS-ANALYSIS WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Writing Situation: In this assignment, you will be using the organizational method of chronology. So arranging these specific details, steps, or stages in the correct chronological order as you explain your subject is your goal in this process-analysis writing assignment. Writers distinguish between two types of process essays: a **directive process** (frequently called a "how-to" essay) and an **informative process**. The difference between the two process types lies in the purpose; however, the how-to variety usually involves a little less of the analysis part of the assignment—although it is a necessary component. The informative process attempts to discuss how some phenomenon works or occurs. Moreover, the how-to (directive process) essay mainly describes a set of instructions and expects a reader to be able to follow them and not as much analysis is given. For your essay, you must select either the directive process or the informative process, keeping in mind that both require analysis.

Assignment: You will do best if you pick a subject with which you are intimately familiar. So that your essay stands out among your classmates' papers, pick a topic that is going to be engaging for your reader. Or at least pick an unusual topic, one that is not hackneyed, one that is not clichéd, one that "cuts against the grain", one that will perhaps raise your reader's eyebrow. Because this is called a process-analysis essay, you are going to be working on an additional skill: analyzing. The analyzing part comes into play when you explain the reasons for performing certain steps or stages of the process. Therefore, to write a successful essay, you must focus your energy on accuracy of the steps and on explaining why those steps or stages are necessary. Below are some sample topics:

- Building a computer from scratch
- Planning the perfect date
- Selling retail merchandise to customers
- Coping with holiday season shoppers

Preparing the Essay:

- Brainstorm for a while until you come up with at least 10 different topics you could write on.
- Once you have chosen a subject, make an outline by breaking your chosen process down into the major stages that are involved. The number of stages will vary depending on your subject, but think of each stage as a paragraph, that basic unit of information that organizes an essay. The purpose of this outline is not to work out the details of your process but to see the bigger picture and how the stages fit together.
- Break each stage down into smaller steps. You should have multiple steps for each stage of the process. It will be easier if you devote a sheet of paper to one stage as you are drafting your essay.
- Next focus on the smaller details. The more precise you are, the better your readers will be able to understand your essay and "see" how the process works.
- Start drafting your main body section of the essay.
- The informative process approach needs to be written in the third person point of view. So if you are explaining a process that you usually go through, you will need to generalize it and cast it into the third person.
- For the directive (how-to) process essay, it will need to be written in the second person point of view, but *avoid overusing* the words "you" and "your".
- Regardless of the approach you take, your essay will also sound better if you write in the **present tense** rather than the past tense.

PROCESS-ANALYSIS WRITING ASSIGNMENT

Organizing and Structuring the Essay:

1. *Introductory Paragraph:* Begin your expository essay by arousing the audience's interest in the introductory paragraph. This is the paragraph that must clearly establish the subject of your essay and that must identify the purpose for writing the essay. But don't be so blunt by saying "The reason I am writing this essay is that...." Be more subtle and weave your reason for writing the essay into your introduction so that you aren't beating the reader over the head. In the very last sentence of your introductory paragraph, state your expository thesis. You can also build your purpose for explaining your process into your thesis statement.
2. *Main Body section:*
 - In the main body of your essay, take the outline you developed above and begin writing the paragraphs that you can build from your carefully detailed notes.
 - You will have several main body paragraphs, but the number will vary depending on your subject. Each paragraph, though, should start off with a topic sentence that indicates the next stage you will be explaining.
 - Remember to add the analysis part to each of the paragraphs. By blending the analysis in with the steps, explain why this particular stage or even the various steps within the stage are necessary or why they need to occur in this particular order. You can build a hypothetical example to explain what would happen if the steps were not followed in the prescribed order.
 - Keep in mind that the organizing principle is always chronological order. Getting the sequence accurate is the key.
 - Don't stray from your process and go off on an unrelated tangent.
 - You must use transitional expressions to help unify all these stages and steps. Using phrases such as "After doing X, now Y must happen". Or use key words like "first," "second," "next," and "last" to signal a transition either within steps or from one stage to another.
3. *Conclusion Paragraph:* Your conclusion paragraph should clearly bring the essay to a close. While you do not need to restate the stages or steps, you might want to reiterate your essay's purpose that was stated in the introductory paragraph. A technique that is often used is called "framing". Echoing a key phrase from the introduction, returning to anecdote in the introduction, or answering a question that the introductory paragraph raised are among the several ways that you can apply this framing technique. Good readers will recognize your method and acknowledge you as a skilled writer.

- **Page length:** Your essay must be between 3 and 5 typed, double-spaced pages. Remember to title your essay uniquely. Don't call it the "Process-Analysis Essay" or "Essay #2".
- **Audience:** academic; assume they're not knowledgeable about the process you are explaining.
- **Writing Mode:** expository, analytical.
- **Purpose:** to practice the skill of accurately explaining sequential details and analyzing why those steps are necessary.
- **Standard American English (SAE):** Remember, your paper must follow the basic conventions of standard American written English (correct mechanics, usage, grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and so forth).

PEER CRITIQUE DRAFT DUE: _____

FINAL DRAFT DUE: _____