

## Essay Format: Process

### UWF Writing Lab

NOTE: First decide between these two approaches: directional and informational (See the attached pages for explanation)

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

- a) Present thesis: *Painting a room is much easier than it seems.*
- b) Give any necessary background information.
- c) Indicate any special ingredients or equipment that will be needed.

#### 2. BODY

- a) Be sure you are writing a process (a series, a sequence, or an orderly progression).
- b) Use strict chronological order.
- c) Write each step completely, allowing the topic sentence to present the step.
  - (1) Start of paragraph 2: *To prepare the room, you need only a dust cloth, lots of masking tape, and spackling paste.*
  - (2) Start of paragraph 3: *If preparing the room was easy, the painting itself is child's play.*
  - (3) Start of paragraph 4: *Cleaning up is the easiest part of all.*
- d) Anticipate difficulties.
  - (1) Warn the reader in advance if a notably tough step is coming up: *Now comes the hard part.*
  - (2) Advise the reader of what can be done to make the process easier or more pleasant: *If any paint should get onto the window. . .*
- e) Arrange steps into groups when possible: How to Paint a Room (Give each division a separate paragraph)
  - (1) Preparation                      1.      Phase I
  - (2) Painting                      or      2.      Phase II
  - (3) Cleaning up                      3.      Phase III

- f) Define unfamiliar terms.
  - (1) Avoid highly technical processes.
  - (2) Avoid subjects for which pictures work better than words.

### 3. CONCLUSION

- a) Review main points; do not use exact repetition
- b) Present conclusion, solution, and/or personal statement

## TWO APPROACHES TO WRITING A PROCESS ANALYSIS

--from Thinking in Writing

PROCESS ANALYSIS explains how to do something, how something works, or how something happened. As a procedure for developing sequences in thinking and writing, this is a very effective technique. For instance, as soon as we consider how an automobile works, how it is made, how it can be repaired, or how it can be driven, we are engaged in process analysis. Process analysis examines a series of actions that bring about a particular result.

There are two basic kinds of process analysis: directional (specified) and informational. The directional type explains how to do something (for example, how to get from one place to another or how to prepare for a job interview). The informational type explains how something works or happened, that is, how something is or was done (for example, how a computer works, how oil is refined, how calculators are manufactured, or how a dictatorship was overthrown). In both forms of process analysis, the writer presents a brief overview of the subject to be covered, then divides the parts of the whole operation into steps or stages and considers each in precise enough detail for readers either to perform the actions indicated or to understand them fully. The writer of a successful process analysis relies on simple language, accurate verbs, distinct transitions, and most importantly on a clear chronological sequence to explain or make a single point: say, how to take better notes in class or how a group of people effected a change in a system.

We are all familiar with the many forms of the directional approach. We commonly encounter it in cookbooks, instruction manuals, handbooks, rule books, and textbooks of various sorts. A directional process analysis is frequently written in the second person; the writer leads an audience through a series of moves to a predetermined end. Suppose our neighbor wanted to know how we prepared an especially tasty spaghetti sauce. We might well begin our recipe with a brief general statement about how it saves time and money. We would then list the necessary ingredients and equipment and follow up with a precise set of directions for preparing and serving it. The directional approach may be applied to any subject that calls for how-to-do-it guidance: writing an essay, achieving success in business, coping with gadgets, managing personal finances, or putting an end to procrastination. In each case, we examine the situation carefully, clarify our purpose, and identify our audience. We also need to consider the kind and amount of information required to complete the process, being careful not to overestimate what our audience knows about the subject. We would then move on to establish

as simple a sequence as possible for the process. In effect, we must present information complete enough for anyone in our established audience to go through the process, carry out all procedures, and produce the intended results. To that end, we may supplement our written instructions with graphically descriptive details--especially when they will enable us to simplify, clarify, or condense our words and thereby heighten reader responsiveness and comprehension. For instance, in explaining that for a camping trip a person should first choose a good camping site, we should clarify what places are more feasible for camping.

The information approach provides readers with thorough understanding of a process that they would like to know something (or know more) about: how a friend settled on a particular college, how earthquakes get started, or how a “gasahol” engine works. The process may also be one that readers are unlikely or unable to perform themselves: how hang-gliders stay aloft, how lasers are used in surgery, or how a photographer shoots an underwater scene in shark-infested waters. In informative process, the emphasis shifts from how-to-do-it instructions to how-it-is-done explanations. Readers should come away from informative-process writing with a general understanding of the principles involved in how something works or happens—whether it is a simple household appliance or a complex political crisis. The informative process analysis may be classified as mechanical (how an instant camera works), scientific (how our lungs function), historical (how the United States came to suffer in Vietnam, what has been called its first defeat in war), natural (how rain clouds form), social (how women’s roles in society have changed), creative (how songs are written), or psychological (how dreams are interpreted).

The writer of any process-analysis essay typically follows a sequence of moves. First, he presents a general description of the process and its purpose. This makes the writer’s next move more readily accessible to the audience: breaking the process down into its chief stages and further down into particular steps. Each step in the process is then described in detail. In doing so, the writer needs to maintain a balance between presuming too little knowledge on the part of the audience (thus risking boredom) and presuming too much (thus nearly guaranteeing confusion). Along the way, the writer defines any unavoidable special terms and identifies any ingredients crucial to completing the process. Finally, the writer may choose to conclude the essay by summarizing the main stages of the process and perhaps offering a general comment on it.

The most important factor in the success of a process-analysis essay is a clear and systematic chronological sequence. That is, we must create a sense of closure--a satisfying sense of completeness--for the process analyzed.

Process analysis can be applied to any number of actions, operations, functions, or changes--each with a distinctive sequence to be developed. The decision whether to use the directional or informational approach depends, of course, on the subject--the process of repairing a motorcycle would necessitate directional; the process of explaining how a roommate passed math for the first time, informational. In each instance, there is a different set of principles underlying the sequence.

## SUGGESTED TOPICS

### Informational

Writing a Good Paper

Planning a Wedding

Preparing for a Trip

Writing a Book Review or Research Paper

Events or Steps Leading to (War in Vietnam, Resignation of President Nixon, Panama Canal Treaty, Battle of Waterloo, Bombing of Pearl Harbor, Signing of the Egypt-Israel Peace Agreement)

How an American President Is Elected

How Esprit de Corps Is Achieved in Groups

How a Meeting Is Conducted

How I Selected a (Major, College, Mate, Home, Job, etc.)

How Lightning Kills

How \_\_\_\_\_ Is Made

How a Potential Riot Was Stopped

How a Public Official Is Elected

How the Air Becomes Polluted

How One Becomes a \_\_\_\_\_

How a Criminal Is Convicted

How You Pursued Your Favorite Hobby or Sport

How You Prepare a Dish or Drink

How an Atomic Bomb (or something else) Works

Preparing for a Camping Trip

### Directional

How to impress--sell yourself to--an interviewer or someone whom you've just met

How to avoid academic "burn-out"

Writing Good Advertising Copy

Doing Good Journalistic Writing or Broadcasting

How to Train a Dog in Obedience

How to Detect Counterfeit Money

How to Approach a Shoplifter

Working with Macrame

Balancing a Budget

How to Stop Smoking (Drinking, etc.)

How to Play (Poker, Pinochle, Bid Wist, Hide and Seek, etc.)

How to Get a Job

How to Overcome (Shyness, Tension, etc.)

How to Develop Courage

How to Start a Club

How to Sharpen a Knife

How to Survive a Hurricane

How to Study or Make the Best of Study Time

How to Take a Test

How to Enter a Room Gracefully When You're Tardy

How to Submit a Late Theme

How to Fall Asleep in Class Without Being Detected

How to Impress the Opposite Sex

How to Ask a Friend Or a Relative For a Loan (not from a professional loan office)

How to Select Your College Courses

How to Break a Date

How to Explain a Former Lover to Your Current Lover

How to Catch an Adulterer/ress  
How to Tell or Spoil a Bad Joke  
How to Get the Attention of Someone Who is Ignoring You  
How to Entertain a Disappointing Blind Date  
How to Wait With Poise in a Doctor's Office, Airport, or Street Corner  
How to "Play" Sick  
How to Talk an Instructor About a School Problem (poor grades, late compositions, excessive absences, harassment)  
How to Diagram a Sentence, Make Subjects and Verbs Agree, Write a Paragraph or Read a Story  
How to "Goof-off" or Appear Busy When You're Not  
How to Ask Our Parent(s) to Borrow the Car  
How to Entertain a Small Child or Children  
How to Talk to a Police Officer Who Has Accused You of Speeding or Loitering  
How to Entertain at a Social Gathering  
How to Appear Sober in the Presence of a Teetotaler When You've Had a Few  
How to Keep From Laughing in Church or Someplace Else Where Laughter is Inappropriate  
How to Tell a Social Lie Such as Pretending to be Wild About a Friend's New Outfit When You Are Not, Pretending to be Grateful For a Gift You Care Nothing About, or Pretending to Like Some Exotic Food of Which You Can't Stand the Taste  
How to Cheat On An Examination  
How to Make Conversation With Someone You Haven't Seen in Years After the Usual Questions and Answers Have Been given  
How to Converse With a Person Whose Name You've Forgotten  
How to Use Your Time Wisely  
How to Wear a Social Mask--Be Something or Someone You're Not  
How to Beat the System  
How to Cope With Frustration (being "down in the dumps")