

Writing Center

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PROCESS ANALYSIS

One type of process analysis presents a *chronological sequence of steps* explaining how something works or is done to readers who want or need to perform the process: how to register for the draft or how to cook an artichoke, for example. Another type of process analysis presents a *chronological sequence of steps* explaining how something works or is done to readers who want to understand the process but not perform it: how a car's air conditioning unit works or how a bill becomes a law, for example.

Technique

1. Choose an interesting process that you understand fully from your own experience or observation. Be sure the topic is not too complicated or too technical for your readers.
2. Make a list of all the steps in the process.
 - a. Organize the steps in a sequence, classifying major and minor steps if necessary.
 - b. Make sure that you have not omitted any steps.
3. Write your first draft.
 - a. Write an introduction clearly identifying the process.
 - (1) Explain how readers would benefit from following the directions or from learning the sequence.
 - (2) Informal process—assure readers that they can duplicate the process.
 - b. List any equipment or information the reader will need to understand or follow the process.
 - c. Introduce and explain all steps in the process, using examples when necessary.
 - d. Warn readers about dangers or pitfalls.
 - e. Use a consistent mood.
 - (1) Imperative mood gives commands in present tense: “Next, turn knob to the left.
 - (2) Indicative mood makes statements: “Next, you should turn the knob to the left. * Make sure it is acceptable to use “you.”

- f. Write a conclusion that reiterates the main idea without repeating the exact steps
4. Edit the draft carefully for clarity, logical organization, sufficient explanations, unity, and consistency.
 - a. Provide transitions to signal major steps, subtopics and examples.
 - b. Avoid passive voice as much as possible.
5. Proofread the draft for spelling, punctuation and grammar.
6. Prepare and proofread the final copy.

Please note that a reader may or may not want to perform the process cited below.

A Sample Process Paragraph

Use a number of time-proven techniques to harass an instructor. First of all, interrupt the beginning of the instructor's presentation when you show up late for class. Saunter into the class nonchalantly; try to find a seat near your friends. In your normal tone of voice, greet each friend as you sit down, and scrape your chair as loudly as possible while you make yourself comfortable in it. Then just sit in class and do anything but pay attention. For example, turn around in your seat so that you can look out of the window, pull out your favorite magazine so that you can laugh out loud when you read an amusing section in it. Then raise the lower part of your arm as you use the upper part of it for a pillow to support your neck when you place your head on the desk. During the break, ask your instructor several annoying questions that you should be able to answer yourself. For instance, you need to ask, "What assignment should I submit today? How many absences do I have in this class? May I write on the back of the paper when I submit my paragraph? Why did you mark up my last paper?" Soon after the class reconvenes, make special demands for leaving the classroom early. First, tell the instructor that you need to make a telephone call to your neighbor who is keeping your cat. Also, announce that you need to go to the library to check out a book for tomorrow's math assignment since you have not been to school for two weeks. Then inform your teacher that you always have to go to the washroom at least fifteen minutes before the bus comes to take you home. Finally, allow others to address your concerns about the class. Tell your mother to write a letter to your instructor to ask for an explanation of the grading policy that is unclear to you. Then send your spouse to your instructor to report that you do not understand the work covered in the last two classes. Next, ask your classmate to inform your teacher that you need to make arrangements for making up an in-class writing assignment. Thus, when you want to torment your instructor, follow these steps.

A Variation of a Sample by Langan

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