Writing a Process Essay

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**1. Writing a Process Essay**

Process writing can be classified into two types according to its purpose.

One type explains how to do something.  
The other type explains how something works.

**2. How to do something**

This type process writing is designed to tell someone how to do something. The reader should be able to follow the directions your essay and successfully do what you are explaining.

How to do something  
How to find a new boy- or girlfriend.  
How to get a better hotel room  
How to repair your computer  
How to plant a garden

**3. How Something Works**

The purpose of this type of process essay is to inform the reader. The reader is not going to do the process explained in the essay, but the reader will understand the process when he or she finishes reading the essay.

How Something Works.  
How your car engine works  
How a plant traps the sun’s energy  
How a new federal law is created  
How jurors are selected

**4. The Introduction**

The introduction to a process essay may tell the reader about a problem. The thesis statement, which is usually the last sentence of the introduction, tells the reader how to solve the problem. In the example introduction, the writer presents a child with a behavioral problem; then the writer presents a solution to the child’s behavioral problem. The writer uses a psychologist name Dr. Mo to present the solution to Reza’s son’s problem. Do you think Dr. Mo, Reza, and little Ali are real people?

The Introduction  
One way to start your process essay is to present a problem in the introductory paragraph; then present your thesis as the solution to the problem you presented.   
Example:   
Yesterday, when Reza tried to get his three year old son Ali to eat, little Ali threw his dinner on the floor. After Reza put some more food on Ali’s plate, Ali threw it on the floor again. Frustrated, Reza called called Dr. Mo, his son’s psychologist. Dr. Mo recommended these three steps to overcoming infant temper tantrums.

**5. The Body**

When describing a process, it is important to make a plan so you don’t skip any important steps. It is also important to list all the materials that the reader needs to have in order to follow the steps. It is important to be very familiar with the process you are writing about. Think the process through very carefully and make sure you have included all the necessary steps and that they are in the correct order.

The Body  
The body paragraphs of a process essay are the steps.  
Each step is presented in the topic sentence of its paragraph. Example: The first step in overcoming infant temper tantrums is understanding why the child is misbehaving. Usually the answer is he or she wants attention.  
If you need materials, you should say what these are in the first supporting paragraph.  
Example: Before you start working on your computer, make sure you have the necessary tools. First, you will need a set of small screwdrivers. Second, you should have a grounding clip. This is used to …..

**6. The Conclusion**

The conclusion may be similar to the introduction. It will remind the reader of both the problem and the solution. The conclusion sometimes warns the reader about the dangers involved in following the steps incorrectly or offer suggestions about overcoming certain difficulties.

The Conclusion  
The concluding paragraph will remind the readers of what they can do next time they have the problem you mentioned in the introduction. The conclusion may also offer some advice or warnings about the process.  
Example: The next time your three year old behaves badly at the dinner table, just follow Dr. Mo’s three easy steps. However, be careful not to repeat them to many times because…….   
Transitions

**7. Transitions**

Since process essays follow time order, they use time order transitions. Be careful to use the correct punctuation with each transition. Use these transitions to help mark the steps in your process essay so they are easy to follow.

The first step is  
Second,….  
After that,….  
Before doing the next step, …..  
The next to the last thing you need to do is…  
Finally,….  
Last,….  
The last step is ….

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **One time** | **Transition** | | **Another time** |
|  | **TIME** | |  |
|  | *After a few hours,* | *Immediately following,* |  |
|  | *Afterwards,* | *Initially,* |  |
|  | *At last* | *In the end,* |  |
|  | *At the same time,* | *In the future,* |  |
|  | *Before* | *In the meantime,* |  |
|  | *Before this,* | *In the meanwhile,* |  |
|  | *Currently,* | *Last, Last but not least, Lastly,* |  |
|  | *During* | *Later,* |  |
|  | *Eventually,* | *Meanwhile,* |  |
|  | *Finally,* | *Next, Soon after,* |  |
|  | *First, Second, Third, etc.* | *Previously,* |  |
|  | *First of all,* | *Simultaneously,* |  |
|  | *Formerly* | *Subsequently,* |  |
|  | *Immediately before,* | *Then,* |  |

## What to consider when writing a process essay

A process paper either tells the reader how to do something or describes how something is done. As you write your process essay, consider the following:

* What process are you trying to explain? Why is it important?
* Who or what does the process affect?
* Are there different ways of doing the process? If so, what are they?
* Who are the readers? What knowledge do they need to understand this process?
* What skills/equipment are needed for this?
* How long does the process take? Is the outcome always the same?
* How many steps are there in the process?
* Why is each step important?
* What difficulties are involved in each step? How can they be overcome?
* Do any cautions need to be given?
* Does the process have definitions that need to be clarified?
* Are there other processes that are similar and could help illustrate the process that you are writing about?
* If needed, tell what should not be done or why something should be done.
* Process papers are often written in the second person (you), but some teacher prefer that you avoid this. Check with your teacher.

## A Sample Process Essay

### Kool-Aid, Oh yeah!

It has been said that Kool-Aid makes the world go 'round. Let it be advised, however, that without the proper tools and directions, the great American beverage is nothing more than an envelope of unsweetened powder. There are five simple steps to create this candy-tasting concoction.

Picking the proper packet of flavoring is the first step in making Kool-Aid. Check the grocer's shelf for a wide variety, ranging from Mountain Berry Punch to Tropical Blue Hawaiian. If it is a difficult decision for you, knock yourself out and buy two. The packets usually run under 65 cents.

After choosing the flavor that best suits your taste buds, the second step is making sure that your kitchen houses some necessary equipment for making the Kool-Aid. Find a two-quart pitcher. Plastic is nice, but glass pitchers allow the liquid to shine through and add festive coloration to any refrigerator shelf. Next, find a long-handled wooden spoon, a one-cup measuring cup, a water faucet that spouts drinkable water, usable white sugar, and an ice cube tray full of ice. Then, you are ready to mix.

Third, grab the left edge of the Kool-Aid packet between your thumb and index finger. With your other hand, begin peeling the upper-left corner until the entire top of the envelope is removed. Next, dump the contents of the envelope into the pitcher. Notice how the powder floats before settling on the bottom of the pitcher. Then, take the measuring cup and scoop two cups of sugar into the pitcher as well. At this point, adding the water is a crucial step. Place the pitcher under the water faucet and slowly turn on the cold water. If the water is turned on too quickly, powder will fly all over when the initial gusts of water hit. After the pitcher is filled within two inches of the top, turn the water off and get prepared to stir. With the wooden spoon submersed three-quarters of the way in the liquid, vigorously stir in a clockwise motion until all of the powder is dissolved. Taste it. If the Kool-Aid is not sweet enough, feel free to add more sugar.

Fourth, when you are finished seasoning the Kool-Aid to your liking, rinse off the spoon and the measuring cup. Take a glass from the cupboard. An eight-ounce glass is usually sufficient. But stronger thirsts might prefer a 32-ounce mug. Add ice and then fill the glass with Kool-Aid. Find a comfortable chair, put your feet up, and drink away. After all, Kool-Aid makes the world go 'round.