

Chronological Order: Process Essay

Process Essay



Basic Info

- A Process essay is a description of a procedure, a step-by-step analysis and explanation of a process.
- Many tasks that we do every day are processes that we follow in a specific order.
- It addresses a familiar process that we currently do regularly or that you have done in the past.
- You are "the expert" and the organization of the essay is governed by chronological order, so it should be the easiest essay to write for you.

Use First Person

I am asking that you explain a process, and use expressions such as:
"I (or we) did this, and then I (or we) did that (first person)"

Do not use 2nd person such as:
"you do this next, and you will see...(second person)."

NEVER, EVER use second person in this essay for me!!

Audience

- Your audience is your reader.
- Keep your reader (me) in mind, and assume that I know nothing or very little about your topic.
- Therefore, you must define any terms I may not be familiar with.
- Don't assume that I am an expert in computers or in any other subject.
- Clarify your descriptions so that any reasonable person would understand your meaning.
- **Do not instruct me on how I can perform the task you have done. Rather, explain how YOU did it.**

Writing Style

- This is not a diary or journal exercise. It is **not** a narrative or story.
- It must describe a procedure that can be broken down into steps or stages.
- I suggest that you should try to organize your topic into **three main categories**
- When you are organizing, first make sure your thesis statement is written correctly.
- The thesis should immediately lead to the three divisions you make for your body categories.
- Make sure that each paragraph then has a suitable topic sentence that outlines that stage of the process.

Organizing the Essay

The organization of the process essay should look like this:

- Introduction paragraph
- Stage one paragraph
- Transition, stage two paragraph
- transition, stage three paragraph
- {any other stages if necessary}
- transition, conclusion

Organization continued...

- Each body paragraph will be one step in the process, and various sub-steps should be explained within each body paragraph.
- Be sure to use transitions to tie steps and sub-steps together: to act as bridges so that your writing flows more smoothly and coherently.
- Most of the transitions will refer to time because the process paper analyzes steps of a process in time: *first, second, third, next, then, soon after, later, last, finally*, and so on.
- A body paragraph should have a minimum of five sentences, so avoid having them be too short.

The Intro Paragraph

- Good process intros open with a general subject and gradually move toward the THESIS STATEMENT.
- A good intro flows well, with no choppy sentences appearing out of nowhere. They transition well.
- The reader knows immediately that the essay will be about a procedure.

The Intro Paragraph

- First, always remember that the thesis statement of your essay is the LAST sentence in your introductory paragraph.
- It is the most important sentence of your essay, so a great deal of thought goes into that sentence.
- All of the ideas you present in your body paragraphs must flow from that sentence, and in many ways, your thesis controls your conclusion as well.

The Thesis

Do **not** "announce" or "talk" to the reader as in the following examples of **bad writing**:

- "In this essay, I will explain...,"
- "As I mentioned above...,"
- "As I have shown...,"
- "I have chosen to write about...,"
- "the above reasons,"

Never use the following expressions:

- "I think,"
- "I feel,"
- "In my opinion."

The thesis continued...

- If you are somewhat creative, you can begin with a creative introduction
- Even if you aren't especially creative, your thesis statement must set the tone for the rest of your essay.
- It must have a subject and a comment about it.

Sample Thesis Statements

(General introductory material comes before the thesis)

- ...Once those decisions have been made, the difficulty of learning all the steps involved in diaper changing comes: **preparation, procedure, and clean-up.**
- ...There are many delicious shrimp recipes. However, I enjoy preparing a French appetizer called "Shrimp Bordelaise."
- ...The actual process of preparing a bowl of cereal is not difficult; what is hard is selecting what I want.
- ...to maintain a healthy, attractive, and happy Shih-Tzu, a regimen of weekly grooming is required. (Regimen indicates a process, something repeated.)
- ...To make this popular "Y" shaped necklace, several easy steps must be followed.

Writing Topic Sentences

One of the dangers of this type of essay is to write a topic sentence that is too narrow or limited.

For example, if your topic sentence is:

"Next, I wrote a resume,"

that body paragraph can discuss ONLY writing the resume.

You cannot switch the subject matter in the middle of the paragraph and begin discussing how you contacted employment agencies or how you phoned for interviews.

Mistakes witnessed by Mr. Sholtis

- Remember, all of your body paragraphs' topic sentences must flow from the thesis statement, so pick a thesis statement that is broad enough to cover all of your stages in your process.
- For example, I had a lady who wrote about her daughter's birthday party and wrote her thesis like this:
 - "After selecting the theme, the next step was to prepare the food."
 - Then, the entire essay must be about the food preparation.
 - No other topic, such as the games, the location, or the invitations could be mentioned, so she painted herself into a corner.
 - Therefore, if she had wanted to discuss those issues, she could have written:
- **After selecting the theme of the party, preparations focused on planning the invitations, the games, and the food.** (Also notice that active verbs such as preparations focused on planning is better than the next step **was**. To be verbs are usually boring.)

Suggestions to Aid Paragraph Development

- Not only tell what to do but also tell why to do it.
- Sometimes it's important to tell the readers what **not to do. And why.**
- Inform readers of necessary cautions or warnings.
- Include not only information about the process but also enough text to "prove" your point of view about the process.
- Define any terms with which the readers may not be familiar.
- Use pictures or diagrams that are helpful.

Conclusions

- As in any essay, your conclusion of a process paper summarizes the essay.
- It brings the reader "up to date" on the process, such as explaining the results of this process.
- **For example:**
 - you might discuss how much the family enjoys the patio you built
 - how pleased your sister was with the quilt you made her
 - how much everyone enjoyed the party you planned
 - how you got a promotion for handling your procedure so well

Conclusions

- Whatever the current status is on the project you did.
- Even if you just do a recipe, you can tell about how people feel when they see it or taste it, and how satisfied you become when you see others' reactions to your work.
- There is a sense of completion to the essay
- It just doesn't stop abruptly causing the reader to wonder how it all turned out.
- One way to see if your conclusion is good is to read your introduction and then jump directly to the conclusion and see if the two flow together well, or do they seem to be part of two different essays.
- They should be similar in tone; if you start your intro humorously, your conclusion should be also.
- Similarly, if your intro is formal, your conclusion should be formal as well