

Process Analysis Essay Guidelines

Structuring a Process Analysis Essay

A process essay describes a series of steps or events. A coherent essay requires a clear purpose or unifying idea (thesis).

There are two basic types of process essays: directional (how to do something) and informational (how something works). A directional essay provides directions to achieve a particular result (how to cook perfect grits). An informational essay explains something for a reader (how a rocket engine works).

There are three basic steps to writing a process essay.

1. Divide the process

Have a clear purpose and divide the process into basic, well-defined steps, usually following a time order. An outline will help you organize the paper.

2. Use effective transitions

Use transitional words help clarify a process analysis essay. Phrases such as *then*, *next*, and *after doing this* help the reader.

3. Read the paper carefully

Examine the process essay step-by-step, looking for possible omissions (for example, from a recipe).

Process Sample

In the example below, the essay explains how to write an essay. Therefore, this is an informational essay. **Note** the bold and underlined thesis statement that contains the unifying theme for the essay. Also, transitions and key words that indicate the process essay development are bold and italicized.

Title:

Do not underline your own title. Note how the title complements the topic.

Introduction:

First paragraph contains the thesis statement (underlined) which informs the reader of the unifying theme of the essay.

Body paragraphs:

Note how the author makes effective use of transitional and key words (bold and italicized). The use of transitions and key words helps the author to clearly spell out the process to the reader.

The Essay Writing Process

Writing is a process that allows ideas to be expressed on paper. Writing an essay can be a task that requires some time to complete, but if a writer allows preparation time, then the process can be quite simple. Several steps are involved in the process of writing. **Five basic steps will allow a writer to achieve the best possible outcome when trying to develop an essay.**

First, the writer must choose a topic or subject. If the topic is assigned, this step is unnecessary. But, if the writer must choose, he or she can incorporate two questions into the selection process. What is my purpose for developing the essay? Who is my audience? ***When*** the answers are clear, and a topic has been chosen, it is time to formulate the thesis statement.

Next, step two of the writing process is drafting a thesis statement which will make clear the author's position on the topic. The thesis statement is the central idea that the rest of the essay will support. It is the main point of the paper and is usually written in one complete sentence. In the thesis statement, the writer explains, defends, or proves the chosen topic. Usually, the thesis statement also identifies the writer's method of essay development. Examples of essay development are cause/effect, definition, compare/contrast, exemplification or illustration, process analysis, classification, analysis, persuasion or argument, description, and narration. ***Once*** the thesis is declared, the writer is ready for the ***next step***, organizing the ideas to support the thesis.

Step three, organizing ideas, can be accomplished in a variety of ways. The writer can free-write, that is, begin writing whatever thoughts pop into his or her head, and organize them later. The writer can also organize ideas in a prearranged fashion. If a writer chooses to brainstorm, he or she will write down all of his or her ideas in no particular order. Clustering, sometimes called mapping, is similar to brainstorming; however, it is a more organized way to write ideas because a diagram is constructed to illustrate how one idea branches off from another. Clustering can also be utilized as a flowchart. ***Finally***, a writer may choose to include an outline, which will arrange ideas in a logical order, including the thesis statement, main ideas, and supporting points. Whatever way a writer chooses to organize his or her ideas, ***once*** the ideas are structured, the writer is ready for ***step four***, writing the rough draft.

Continued on next page

Body paragraphs:

Note the details at each step. Again, this helps the reader to clearly understand the process.

Conclusion:

The final paragraph summarizes the main idea (thesis statement).

After organizing the ideas, all of the ideas are now formed into complete paragraphs when writing the rough draft. The introduction paragraph will include the thesis statement, normally located at the end of the paragraph. The thesis statement is followed by supporting paragraphs using the organized ideas. *During* this stage of writing, the writer writes without worrying about sentence structure or spelling. Paragraphs are constructed as follows: main idea, major supporting sentences, and minor supporting details. *When* all of the ideas have been exhausted, and there is no more to write, the writer is ready for the *final step*, revising the piece of writing.

Revising consists of two important parts: proofreading and editing. The writer reads what he or she has written and uses this step to perfect sentence structure and grammar. He or she must be sure that the essay follows the expected pattern of organization, supports the main idea, and contains enough examples and details so that the essay is clear to the reader. Writers should ask themselves some questions before considering the essay finished. Is the thesis clear and well supported? Are the sentences in the correct order? Is every word necessary? Are the ideas fully explained? Are transitional words used, and are they effective? Are words spelled correctly and capitalized when necessary? Are punctuation marks used properly? These are some of the questions that must be answered and changes may be made before the writer is ready to present the *final* version for review.

A writer's point of view can be expressed on paper when it is presented in a clear, concise form. By following the strategies outlined in the essay writing process, a writer can expect his or her essay to make a lucid connection with every person who reads it. Choosing a topic and considering the assignment, drafting a thesis statement, organizing ideas, preparing a rough draft, and revising an essay are five effective *steps* for writing that will allow a writer to complete a well-developed essay.

--Josephine Lewis

Note to students: This essay is a sample to illustrate format. Course instructors have copies. Duplication or near duplication would be regarded as plagiarism.