

Process analysis Essays

We're involved in process analysis every day. Most things we take for granted were once difficult processes to be mastered, processes someone taught us how to do. Getting dressed each morning for many of us is an automatic activity, but think about how hard it is for a two-year-old to learn how to tie a shoelace or button a shirt. Remember the challenges of learning to drive a car. At some point, for most of us, someone walked us through the procedure time and again with patience, and often, amusement.

All processes involve step-by-step procedures to accomplish some state of completion. A process essay outlines these steps and it does so clearly and succinctly. Analysis involves taking these steps apart and explaining them so that the reader understands the entire process better than she did before. It's a way of seeing the subject better, or more completely, perhaps for the first time. The subject can be as simple as chocolate chip cookies or as complex as a war.

Process analysis essays explain actions, mechanisms, and even events, from beginning to end, and these analyses usually take one of two forms: **directive**, or **informative**.

Directive essays give us directions on how to do something. Informative essays explain, or give us information about how things happen and what things mean.

When analyses provide information about what happens in certain times and places—kitchens or theaters of war—they give us a chance to understand the phenomenon more completely. This can lead to better understanding of our complex world and can help raise our consciousness and our standard of living. We are less apt to react irrationally about big issues when we understand the complex elements that drive them

The step-by-step description of events in a process analysis essay usually falls into three categories: chronological, simultaneous, and cyclical.

Chronological sequence is in order to time: first, second, third, and so on. Simultaneous description deals with events that happen at the same time. Finally, cyclical description deals with events that repeat.

A good process analysis essay will allow your readers to see things clearly and understand events in a totally new light.

When you start to read these sorts of essays, pay attention to the title: it should direct your attention to where the essay intends to take you. Take note of this when choosing your own title. Then scan the essay quickly to get a sense of the essay. Remember to check on the writer by referencing a biography: who is this person;

why is he or she writing the essay, and just how much does the person actually know? Does she have first-hand experience, or is she repeating the words of other people? Determine the reliability and the agenda of the writer.

Knowing these things will allow you to determine why the author wrote the piece and who the intended audience was.

At this point, establish if the essay is directive or informative.

Before you begin writing, try to go through the process you are describing at least one. You will want to become familiar with the stages, the mechanics, or the events you intend to describe. If you are describing the complex issues or poverty or war, try to do so in as objective a manner as you would use for outlining an oil change or baking cookies. Don't let prejudice or emotion cloud your understanding.

Begin your essay with an introduction that is an overview of what you will cover. Introduce your subject and outline the steps you will explain. Mention the result. All this will prepare your reading for the details that follow.

Next, go through the steps logically and in a sensible sequence with adequate details. Don't forget to use transitions: "first," "second," "next," and so on.

Don't forget your audience: are they experts in your topic? If so, you will make different assumptions and select different details than you would if they were not. Explaining how to frame a house is different when you are addressing professional carpenters than when talking to people who have never held a hammer. The details of the explanations and the terminology would differ in each case.

In your final section, sum up the process again.

When you review your essays, ask yourself these questions:

- Is your introduction clear?
- Have you written to the right audience?
- Is there an overview for your readers?
- Are the steps outlined adequately?
- Is there a summary at the end of your essays that helps your readers see the process as a whole?