

Notebook for

Successful College Writing

McWhorter, Kathleen T.

PART 3 Patterns of Development

Highlight (**orange**) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 337

Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done

WRITING QUICK START

The screen shot on the opposite page shows people using Skype, the Internet service that offers free communication between computers allowing users both to see and to hear each other.

Write a brief paragraph describing how to get, set up, and use Skype or another Internet service or device. Your audience is other people who wish to use the service or device for the first time.

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 338

WRITING A PROCESS ANALYSIS

To describe the steps involved in using Skype, you had to explain a process. You use process analysis whenever you explain how something is done or how it works—how to make lasagna, how to change a flat tire, or how a bill becomes law. This chapter will show you how to write a well-organized, easy-to-understand process analysis essay and how to incorporate process analysis into essays that use other patterns of development.

What Is Process Analysis?

A **process analysis** explains in step-by-step fashion how something works or how something is done or made. Process analyses provide people with practical information—directions for assembling equipment, instructions for registering for classes, an explanation of how a medication works. Whatever the purpose, the information in a process analysis must be accurate, clear, and easy to follow.

Process analysis is a common type of writing in college and on the job (see the accompanying box for a few examples). Two types of writing situations call for the use of process analysis:

- To explain *how to do something* to readers *who want or need to perform the process*
- To explain *how something works* to readers *who want to understand the process but not actually perform it*

The first type, a *how-to essay*, may explain how to teach a child the alphabet, for instance. Your primary purpose in writing a how-to essay is to present the steps in the process clearly and completely so that your readers can perform the task you describe. For the second type of process analysis, a *how-it-works essay*, you might explain how a

SCENES FROM COLLEGE AND THE WORKPLACE

- For a *child development* course, your assignment is to visit a day-care center, choose one confrontation between a child and a teacher, and explain how the teacher resolved the conflict.
- As part of a *chemistry* lab report, you are asked to summarize the procedure you followed in preparing a solution or conducting an experiment.
- While working as an *engineer* at a water treatment plant, you are asked by your supervisor to write a description of how the city's drinking water is tested and treated for contamination.

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 339

popular radio talk show screens its callers. Your primary purpose in writing a how-it-works essay is to present the steps in the process clearly enough so that your readers can fully understand it. At times, you may read or write essays that contain elements of both types of process analysis. In writing about how a car alarm system works, for example, you might find it necessary to explain how to activate and deactivate the system as well as how it works.

The following essay exemplifies a how-to process analysis essay.

How to Interview

MONSTER.COM

Monster.com is one of the largest employment sites on the Internet. It offers extensive job listings and advice on job searches, résumé preparation, and salary negotiation. As you read the selection, highlight the steps in the interview process.

Today's job marketplace is hypercompetitive. There can be dozens or even hundreds of 1 people vying for one quality position. If you want to land that dream job, you will need to know some specific tips that will keep you head and shoulders above the rest of the pack. Interviewing for a job is not most people's favorite situation. In effect, an interview is where one is evaluated by an employer. In many cases, in order to land that job, you can't crack under the pressure; you have to be strong and sell yourself. Here are some tips to remember for the next time you interview.

So, you are looking for a job, have sent in your résumé and finally have been called 2 in to interview for the position. The good news is that your chances of landing the job have just gone up; the bad news is that you are not through the woods yet. While being called for an interview reduces the number of people that you are in competition with, it also raises the stakes as well. Where maybe a hundred people send in a résumé for a job, an interview usually thins the competition to about 3 to 10 applicants. If you really want to land the job, here are some things to keep in mind.

BE PREPARED

Being prepared cannot be emphasized enough. Preparation is essential to doing well 3 on an interview and landing a job. You don't want to come off to your interviewer as if you just stepped in off the street. Preparation can come in many different forms; the most apparent ones are discussed below.

Know about the company. Interviewers want to see that you don't just want a job, 4 but want to work for their company.

Be prepared to talk about yourself. Make sure you are ready to talk about yourself. 5 This is an interview, so if you don't want to talk about your past, future goals or your skill set, don't bother showing up.

Be prepared to ask smart questions. Interviews are not interrogations. There should 6 be a back and forth of communication and ideas. You should not only be answering questions, but asking intelligent questions. Before arriving for the interview, memorize or write down a few questions that interest you.

READING

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 340

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Once you are called in for an interview, you will need to sell yourself in a short period of time to someone that you have never met before. Human resource recruiters are quite skilled at arrival and judging others. There are winning candidates and candidates that are total losers. Your mission is to come off as a winner. You should show yourself in a good light and present yourself as an excellent candidate. Here are some tips on making a great first impression.

Show up on time. One of the worst things that you can do is show up late to an interview. A late interviewer tells the recruiter that you don't take the job seriously, you are not punctual and are unmotivated to find a new job. If you are running late or are experiencing traffic or an unforeseen event, call ahead. Nine out of 10 times calling ahead will not put any negative consequences on your chances of employment.

Dress to impress. One of the most important pieces to the puzzle of making a good first impression is to dress to impress. Dressing well for an interview means that you are wearing smart business attire and are well groomed. This shows that you care how you look, have confidence and will be a good representative for the company if you are hired. During the summer months, many job applicants sometimes dress down. Dressing down can only hurt your chances of landing a job. Always dress appropriately. If you have the slightest doubts about an outfit, choose another outfit to wear.

Be confident. It is imperative that you show confidence when you show up for your interview. No one is impressed by someone who is very meek or extremely shy. You don't have to be obnoxious or act super cool, but be the best that you can be.

Greet the recruiter properly. Believe it or not, the way you greet the recruiter matters. A nice proper hello with a smile and a decent handshake will do the trick. Never



Which person would you hire?

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 341

frown, look down or look away when meeting someone. Also, it is good to stand up and show interest. The recruiter is a person, and it is not only what you say that matters, but also how you make the other person feel.

DURING THE INTERVIEW

Now that you are done with the meet and greet and have given the recruiter a good first 12 impression of yourself, the interview begins. Some applicants freeze up and get very self-conscious. No one likes being judged, and while the interview process is exactly this, there are ways to avoid the common pitfalls and instead shine during the interview process.

Be prepared. Make sure you have done your homework and are well prepared for 13 the interview. This means that you should have researched the company beforehand, understood its products or services and know a few interesting facts about the company. What you want to convey to the employer is that you are genuinely interested in working for this company. Anyone can find a job, but human resource recruiters want to hire people who genuinely want to work for their firm.

Answer questions clearly and completely. Obviously, the interview process involves 14 the job recruiter asking you questions. It is very important that you answer these questions clearly and be thorough with your answers. It is extremely easy to tell when someone is lying, so be honest and forthcoming. Many questions that recruiters ask are obvious questions and are quite common. You can easily prepare beforehand for many of these obvious questions. Some of the most common questions asked by recruiters are

- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- Why do you want to work for this organization?
- Why are you leaving your current or last position?
- What would you like to achieve at your new position if hired?
- Do you work well with others or prefer to work on your own?
- What are your successes and failures?
- What kind of salary range are you looking to be in?
- What are your credentials (education, special training, etc.)
- Do you have any hobbies?

ASK QUESTIONS DURING THE INTERVIEW

Try to think of the interview as a conversation instead of an interrogation. Many job 15 applicants receive high marks by the recruiter if they ask insightful and intelligent questions. You should be very engaging in the interview. This shows the recruiter that you are genuinely interested in the position. While questions are good, make sure they are intelligent; asking questions just for sake of asking is a waste of time for both you and the recruiter. Some of the questions you might want to ask an interviewer are

- What are you looking for in an employee?
- What is the reason for the open position (is it due to growth or turnover)?
- Could you describe some of the challenges this position offers?
- Could you describe the working environment, work culture, etc.?
- Could you describe some of the benefits of working for your company?

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 342

- When will the job be available (are you looking to hire someone as soon as possible or in the next few months)?

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Once the interview is complete, it is wise to do a couple of things. You should write the recruiter a thank-you letter and follow up with the recruiter. These days, a job applicant might have to go through 3 interviews to land a job. It is important to stay on the recruiter's radar as being a high-quality applicant. Many times, after an interview is over, recruiters will state that if they are interested they will give you a call; other times they will try to schedule you for a second interview.

If a recruiter doesn't give you a definite vote of confidence once the interview is over, it doesn't mean that you didn't do well or you aren't a good applicant. Many times, there are other things working in the background. Some departments wait to the last possible moment to fill positions; other times a key executive who gives the green light to hire might be out of the office. If you are not hired, don't consider yourself a failure. There are plenty more jobs out in the marketplace.

Characteristics of Process Analysis Essays

A process analysis essay should include everything your reader needs to know to understand or perform the process. In addition to presenting an explicit thesis, the essay should provide a clear, step-by-step description of the process; define key terms; give any necessary background information; describe any equipment needed to perform the process; supply an adequate amount of detail; and, for a how-to essay, anticipate and offer help with potential problems.

Process Analysis Usually Includes an Explicit Thesis Statement

A process analysis usually contains a clear thesis that identifies the process to be discussed and suggests why the process is important or useful to the reader. In "How to Interview," for instance, the writer states, "If you really want to land the job, here are some things to keep to key in mind" (para. 2).

Here are two examples of thesis statements for how-to process analyses:

Switching to a low-fat diet, a recent nutritional trend, can improve weight control dramatically.

By carefully preparing for a vacation in a foreign country, you can save time and prevent hassles.

Here are two examples of thesis statements for how-it-works essays:

Although understanding the grieving process will not lessen the grief that you experience after the death of a loved one, knowing that your experiences are normal does provide some comfort.

Advertisers often appeal to the emotions of the audience for whom a product is targeted; some of these appeals may be unethical.

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 343

Process Analysis Is Organized Chronologically

The steps or events in a process analysis are usually organized in chronological order—that is, the order in which the steps are normally completed. For essays that explain lengthy processes, the steps may be grouped into categories or divided into substeps to make the process easier to understand. Headings and transitional expressions and sentences are also often used to make the order of steps and substeps clear.

In “How to Interview,” the writer divides the process into the stages of the interview process (“Be Prepared,” “First Impressions,” “During the Interview,” and “After the Interview.”) To make the overall organization clear, the writer uses headings for these parts. To indicate movement from one stage to the next, the writer also uses transitions such as “*Once you are called for an interview,*” “*Now that you are done with the meet and greet,*” and “*Once the interview is complete.*”

On occasion, the steps of a process may not have to occur in any particular order. For example, in an essay on how to resolve a dispute between two coworkers, the order of the recommended actions may depend on the nature of the dispute. In this situation, some logical progression of recommended actions should be used, such as starting with informal or simple steps and progressing to more formal or complex ones.

Exercise 14.1

Choose one of the following processes. It should be one you are familiar with and able to explain to others. Draft a working thesis statement and a chronological list of the steps or stages of the process.

1. How to use a computer program
2. How to study for an exam
3. How to perform a task at work
4. How to operate a machine
5. How to complete an application (such as for college, a job, or a credit card)

Process Analysis Provides Background Information Helpful to Readers

In some process analysis essays, readers may need background information to understand the process. For example, in an explanation of how CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation) works, general readers might need information on how the heart functions to understand how pressing down on a person’s breastbone propels blood into the arteries.

In some cases your audience may not be familiar with the technical terms associated with the process you are describing. If so, be sure to define such terms. In describing how CPR works, you would need to explain the meanings of such terms as *airway*, *sternum*, and *cardiac compression*.

When special equipment is needed to perform the process, you should describe the equipment for readers. For example, in an essay explaining how to scuba dive to unfamiliar readers, you would need to describe equipment such as dive masks, buoyancy compensators, and dive gauges. If necessary, you should also explain where to obtain the equipment.

For more on defining terms, see Chapter 17, p. 446–47.

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 344

Exercise 14.2

Choose one of the following processes that you are familiar with and are able to explain to others. For the process you choose, list the technical terms and definitions that you need to use to explain the process.

1. How to perform a task at home or at work (such as changing the oil in a car or taking notes during a court hearing)
2. How a piece of equipment or a machine works (such as a treadmill or a lawn mower)
3. How to repair an object (such as restringing a tennis racket or a violin)

Exercise 14.3

For the process you selected in Exercise 14.2 (above), consider what background information and equipment are needed to understand and perform the process.

Process Analysis Provides an Appropriate Level of Detail

In deciding what to include in a process analysis essay, you should be careful not to overwhelm your readers with too many details. An explanation of how to perform CPR written by and for physicians could be highly technical, but it should be much less so if written for a friend who is considering whether to enroll in a CPR course. In “How to Interview,” the writer (although he or she is not writing about a technical topic) is careful to provide detailed information on how to be prepared and how to make a positive first impression, for example.

Keep in mind that when you write essays explaining technical or scientific processes, you can use sensory details and figures of speech to make your writing lively and interesting. Rather than giving dry technical details, try using descriptive language.

For a process involving many complex steps or highly specialized equipment, consider using a drawing or diagram to help your readers visualize the steps they need to follow or understand. For example, in an essay explaining how to detect a wiring problem in an electric stove, you might include a diagram of the stove’s circuitry.

Process Analysis Anticipates Trouble Spots and Offers Solutions

Especially in a how-to essay, you need to anticipate potential trouble spots or areas of confusion and offer advice to the reader on how to avoid or resolve them. In “How to Interview,” the writer cautions readers to be prepared and “not to look as if you just stepped in off the street,” for example. A how-to essay should also warn readers of any difficult, complicated, or critical steps, encouraging them to pay special attention to a difficult step or to take extra care in performing a critical one. For instance, in a how-to essay on hanging wallpaper, you would warn readers about the difficulties of handling sheets of wallpaper and suggest folding the sheets to make them easier to work with.

Exercise 14.4

For one of the processes listed in Exercise 14.1 or Exercise 14.2, identify potential trouble spots in the process and describe how to avoid or resolve them.

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 345

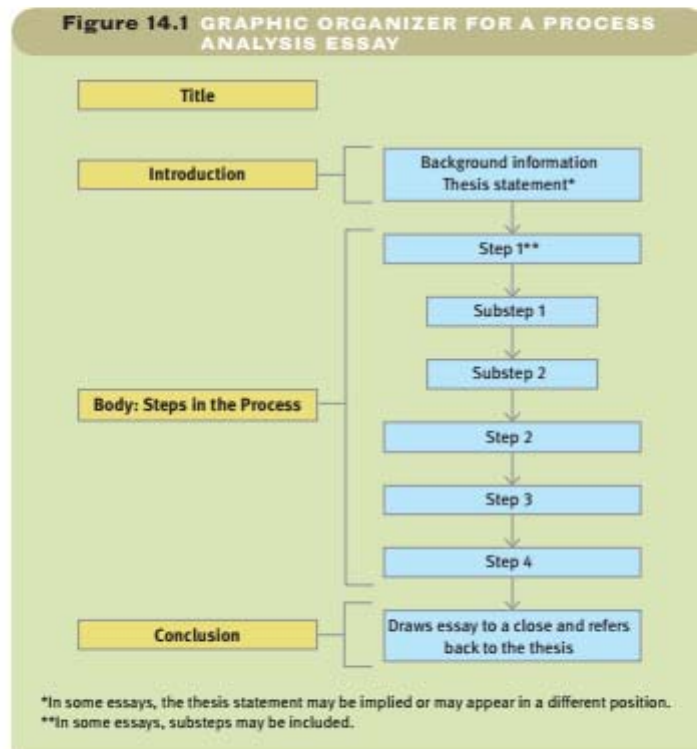
Visualizing a Process Analysis Essay: A Graphic Organizer

The graphic organizer in Figure 14.1 shows the basic organization of a process analysis essay. When your main purpose is to explain a process, you should follow this standard format, including a title, an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Your introduction should include any necessary background information and present your thesis statement. Your body paragraphs should explain the steps of the process in chronological order. Your conclusion should draw the essay to a satisfying close and refer to the thesis.

For more on graphic organizers, see Chapter 4, pp. 53–61.

When you incorporate process analysis into an essay using one or more other patterns of development, briefly introduce the process and then move directly to the steps involved. If the process is complex, you may want to add a brief summary of it before the transition back to the main topic of the essay.

Read the following how-it-works essay, “Inside the Engine,” and then study the graphic organizer for it in Figure 14.2 (on p. 349).



Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 346

READING

Inside the Engine

Tom and Ray Magliozzi

Tom (b. 1938) and his younger brother Ray (b. 1947) Magliozzi, better known to their listening audience as Click and Clack, the Tappet Brothers, are the award-winning hosts of *Car Talk* on National Public Radio. After graduating from MIT, the brothers opened The Good News Garage in their hometown of Cambridge, Massachusetts. In 1977 they appeared on a local radio station to talk about cars. This appearance led to *Car Talk*, a call-in radio show that is now broadcast nationally to millions of listeners every week. The show has a devoted following because the brothers mix humor with automobile repair advice and life lessons learned on the job at their auto repair shop.

This selection was taken from *Car Talk* (1991). It features some of the best advice from the brothers' radio show in its early years. The authors begin with a story about a customer. As you read, notice how effectively they explain complex terms and technology in order to make their how-it-works essay easy to understand.

A customer of ours had an old Thunderbird that he used to drive back and forth to 1
New York to see a girlfriend every other weekend. And every time he made the trip he'd
be in the shop the following Monday needing to get something fixed because the car
was such a hopeless piece of trash. One Monday he failed to show up and Tom said,
"Gee, that's kind of unusual." I said jokingly, "Maybe he blew the car up."

Well, what happened was that he was on the Merritt Parkway in Connecticut 2
when he noticed that he had to keep the gas pedal all the way to the floor just to
go 30 m.p.h., with this big V-8 engine,¹ and he figured something was awry.

So he pulled into one of those filling stations where they sell gasoline and chocola- 3
te chip cookies and milk. And he asked the attendant to look at the engine and, of course,
the guy said, "I can't help you. All I know is cookies and milk." But the guy agreed to
look anyway since our friend was really desperate. His girlfriend was waiting for him and
he needed to know if he was going to make it. Anyway, the guy threw open the hood
and jumped back in terror. The engine was glowing red. Somewhere along the line,
probably around Hartford, he must have lost all of his motor oil. The engine kept getting
hotter and hotter, but like a lot of other things in the car that didn't work, neither did his
oil pressure warning light. As a result, the engine got so heated up that it fused itself to-
gether. All the pistons melted, and the cylinder heads deformed, and the pistons fused
to the cylinder walls, and the bearings welded themselves to the crankshaft—oh, it
was a terrible sight! When he tried to restart the engine, he just heard a *click, click, click*
since the whole thing was seized up tighter than a drum.

That's what can happen in a case of extreme engine neglect. Most of us wouldn't do 4
that, or at least wouldn't do it knowingly. Our friend didn't do it knowingly either, but
he learned a valuable lesson. He learned that his girlfriend wouldn't come and get him
if his car broke down. Even if he offered her cookies and milk.

The oil is critical to keeping things running since it not only acts as a lubricant, but 5
it also helps to keep the engine cool. What happens is that the oil pump sucks the oil

¹V-8 engine: powerful engine so called because of its eight cylinders arranged in two rows situated at right angles to each other

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 347

out of what's called the sump (or the crankcase or the oil pan), and it pushes that oil, under pressure, up to all of the parts that need lubrication.

The way the oil works is that it acts as a cushion. The molecules of oil actually separate the moving metal parts from one another so that they don't directly touch; the crankshaft *journals*, or the hard parts of the crankshaft, never touch the soft connecting-rod *bearings* because there's a film of oil between them, forced in there under pressure. From the pump.

It's pretty high pressure too. When the engine is running at highway speed, the oil, at 50 or 60 pounds or more per square inch (or about 4 bars, if you're of the metric persuasion—but let's leave religion out of this), is coursing through the veins of the engine and keeping all these parts at safe, albeit microscopic, distances from each other.

But if there's a lot of dirt in the oil, the dirt particles get embedded in these metal surfaces and gradually the dirt acts as an abrasive and wears away these metal surfaces. And pretty soon the engine is junk.

It's also important that the motor oil be present in sufficient quantity. In nontechnical terms, that means there's got to be enough of it in there. If you have too little oil in your engine, there's not going to be enough of it to go around, and it will get very hot, because four quarts will be doing the work of five, and so forth. When that happens, the oil gets overheated and begins to burn up at a greater than normal rate. Pretty soon, instead of having four quarts, you have three and a half quarts, then three quarts doing the work of five. And then, next thing you know, you're down to two quarts and your engine is glowing red, just like that guy driving to New York, and it's chocolate-chip cookie time.

In order to avoid this, some cars have gauges and some have warning lights; some people call them "idiot lights." Actually, we prefer to reverse it and call them "idiot gauges." I think gauges are bad. When you drive a car—maybe I'm weird about this—I think it's a good idea to look at the road most of the time. And you can't look at the road if you're busy looking at a bunch of gauges. It's the same objection we have to these stupid radios today that have so damn many buttons and slides and digital scanners and so forth that you need a copilot to change stations. Remember when you just turned a knob?

Not that gauges are bad in and of themselves. I think if you have your choice, what you want is idiot lights—or what we call "genius lights"—and gauges too. It's nice to have a gauge that you can kind of keep an eye on for an overview of what's going on. For example, if you know that your engine typically runs at 215 degrees and on this particular day, which is not abnormally hot, it's running at 220 or 225, you might suspect that something is wrong and get it looked at before your radiator boils over.

On the other hand, if that gauge was the only thing you had to rely on and you didn't have a light to alert you when something was going wrong, then you'd look at the thing all the time, especially if your engine had melted on you once. In that case, why don't you take the bus? Because you're not going to be a very good driver, spending most of your time looking at the gauges.

Incidentally, if that oil warning light ever comes on, shut the engine off! We don't mean that you should shut it off in rush-hour traffic when you're in the passing lane. Use all necessary caution and get the thing over to the breakdown lane. But don't think

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 348

you can limp to the next exit, because you can't. Spend the money to get towed and you may save the engine.

It's a little-known fact that the oil light does *not* signify whether or not you have 14
oil in the engine. The oil warning light is really monitoring the oil *pressure*. Of
course, if you have no oil, you'll have no oil pressure, so the light will be on. But it's
also possible to have plenty of oil and an oil pump that's not working for one rea-
son or another. In this event, a new pump would fix the problem, but if you were to
drive the car (saying, "It must be a bad light, I just checked the oil!") you'd melt the
motor.

So if the oil warning light comes on, even if you just had an oil change and the oil is 15
right up to the full mark on the dipstick and is nice and clean—don't drive the car!

Here's another piece of useful info. When you turn the key to the "on" position, all 16
the little warning lights *should light up*: the temperature light, the oil light, whatever
other lights you may have. Because that is the *test mode* for these lights. If those lights
don't light up when you turn the key to the "on" position (just before you turn it all the
way to start the car), does that mean you're out of oil? No. It means that something is
wrong with the warning light itself. If the light doesn't work then, it's not going to work
at all. Like when you need it, for example.

One more thing about oil: overfilling is just as bad as underfilling. Can you really 17
have too much of a good thing? you ask. Yes. If you're half a quart or even a quart
overfilled, it's not a big deal, and I wouldn't be afraid to drive the car under those cir-
cumstances. But if you're a quart and a half or two quarts or more overfilled, you could
have so much oil in the crankcase that the spinning crankshaft is going to hit the oil
and turn it into suds. It's impossible for the pump to pump suds, so you'll ruin the mo-
tor. It's kind of like a front-loading washing machine that goes berserk and spills suds
all over the floor when you put too much detergent in. That's what happens to your mo-
tor oil when you overfill it. . . .

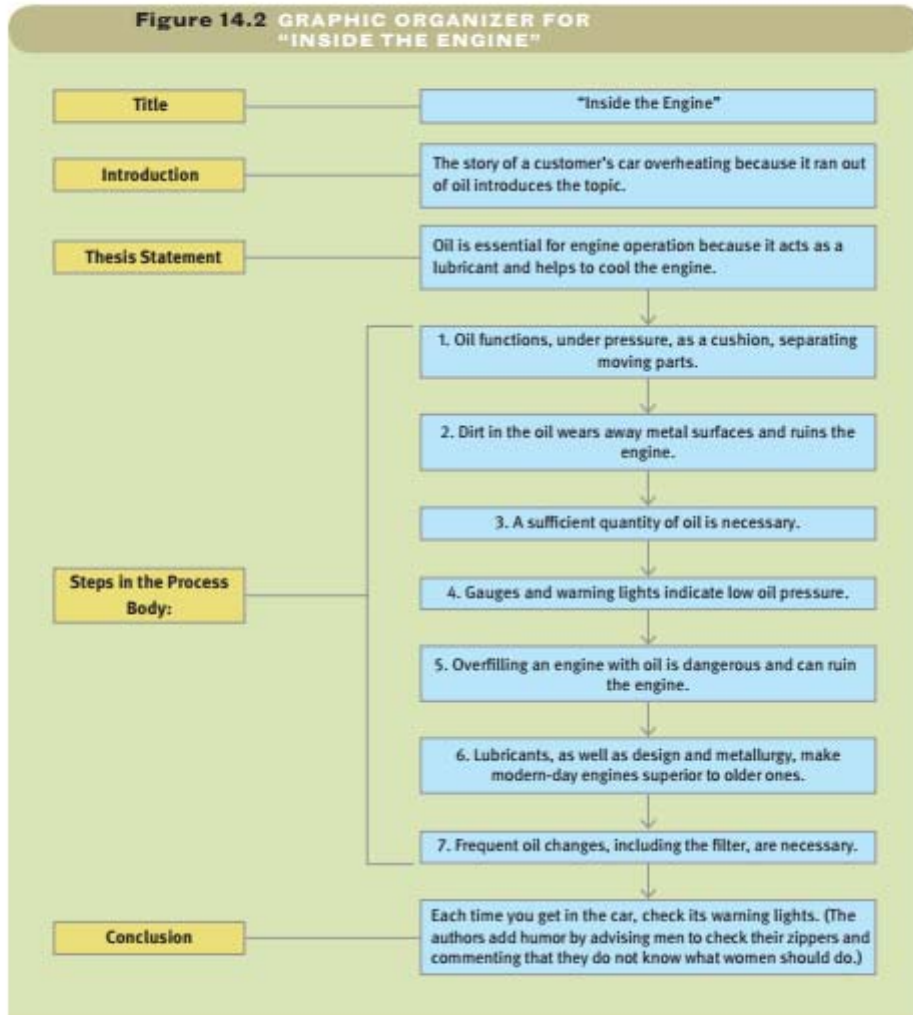
The best way to protect all the other pieces that you can't get to without spend- 18
ing a lot of money is through frequent oil changes. The manufacturers recommend oil
changes somewhere between seven and ten thousand miles, depending upon the car.
We've always recommended that you change your oil at 3,000 miles. We realize for
some people that's a bit of an inconvenience, but look at it as cheap insurance. And
change the filter every time too.

And last but not least, I want to repeat this because it's important: Make sure your 19
warning lights work. The oil pressure and engine temperature warning lights are your
engine's lifeline. Check them every day. You should make it as routine as checking to
see if your zipper's up. You guys should do it at the same time.

What you do is, you get into the car, check to see that your zipper's up, and then 20
turn the key on and check to see if your oil pressure and temperature warning lights
come on.

I don't know what women do. 21

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 349



Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 350

To draw detailed graphic organizers using a computer, visit www.bedfordstmartins.com/successfulcollege.

Exercise 14.5

Draw a graphic organizer for "How to Interview" (pp. 339–42).

Integrating Process Analysis into an Essay

Although some essays you write will focus solely on explaining a process, others will incorporate a process analysis into a discussion that relies on a different pattern of development. Suppose, for instance, that you are writing a descriptive essay about an alcohol abuse program for high school students. Although description is your primary pattern of development, you decide to include a brief process analysis of how alcohol impairs mental functioning.

Use the following tips to incorporate process analysis into essays based on other patterns of development:

1. Provide a brief summary or overview of the process rather than a detailed step-by-step explanation. Too much detail will divert your readers from the primary focus of your essay. Consider explaining only the major steps in the process rather than every step in detail.

2. Make it clear *why* the process analysis is included. Use a transitional sentence to alert readers that a process analysis will follow and to suggest why. For example, here is how you might introduce a brief summary of the process by which AIDS is spread through HIV (human immunodeficiency virus).

Before you explain to teenagers *how* to avoid contracting HIV, you need to let them know *what* they are avoiding. Teenagers need to know that HIV is transmitted by . . .

3. It is sometimes helpful to use the word *process* or *procedure* to let readers know that a process analysis is to follow. In the preceding example, the final sentence might be revised to read as follows.

Teenagers need to know that HIV is transmitted by the following process.

4. When you have completed the process analysis, let readers know that you are about to return to the main topic. You might conclude the process analysis of the way HIV is transmitted with a summary statement.

Above all, teenagers need to know that HIV is transmitted through an exchange of bodily fluids.

In "Shitty First Drafts" on pages 367–69, Anne Lamott uses process analysis along with other patterns of development to explain steps in the writing process.

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 351

A GUIDED WRITING ASSIGNMENT

The following guide will help you write a process analysis essay. It may be either a how-to or a how-it-works essay. Although you will focus on process analysis, you may need to integrate one or more other patterns of development in your essay.

The Assignment

Write a process analysis essay on one of the topics below or one of your own choosing. Be sure the process you choose is one that you know enough about to explain to others or can learn about through observation or research. Your audience consists of readers who are unfamiliar with the process, including your classmates.

How-To Essay Topics

1. How to improve _____ (your study habits, your wardrobe, your batting average)
2. How to be a successful _____ (diver, parent, gardener)
3. How to make or buy _____ (an object for personal use or enjoyment)
4. How to prepare for _____ (a test, a job interview, an oral presentation)

How-It-Works Essay Topics

1. How your college _____ (spends tuition revenues, hires professors, raises money)
2. How _____ works (an answering machine, a generator, email, a cell phone)
3. How a decision is made to _____ (accept a student at a college, add or eliminate a local or state agency)
4. How _____ is put together (a quilt, a news broadcast, a football team, a Web site)

As you develop your process analysis essay, you will probably use narrative strategies, description (for example, to describe equipment or objects), or illustration (such as to show an example of part of the process).

For more on narration, description, and illustration, see Chapters 11–13.

Generating Ideas

The following guidelines will help you select a process to write about and choose details to include. You may want to use one of the prewriting techniques discussed in Chapter 5. Consider your learning style when you select a prewriting technique. You might try questioning, group brainstorming, or sketching a diagram of a process.

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 352

Selecting a Process

Be sure to keep the following tips in mind when selecting a process:

- For a how-to essay, choose a process that you can visualize or perform as you write. Keep the equipment nearby for easy reference. In explaining how to scuba dive, for example, it may be helpful to have your scuba equipment in front of you.
- For a how-it-works essay, choose a topic about which you have background knowledge or for which you can find information. Unless you are experienced in wood-working, for example, do not try to explain how stains produce different effects on different kinds of wood.
- Choose a topic that is useful and interesting to your readers. Unless you can find a way to make an essay about how to do laundry interesting, do not write about it.

Essay in Progress 1

Using the preceding suggestions, choose a process to write about from the list of essay topics on page 351, or choose a topic of your own.

Considering Your Purpose, Audience, and Point of View

Your main aim in process analysis is to inform readers, but you may also want to persuade them that they should try the process (how-to) or that it is beneficial or should be changed (how-it-works). As you develop your essay, keep the following questions about your audience in mind:

1. What background information does my audience need or want?
2. What terms should I define?
3. What equipment should I describe?
4. How much detail does my audience need or want?
5. What trouble spots require special attention and explanation?

Writers of how-to essays commonly use the second-person point of view, addressing the reader directly as *you*. The second person is informal and draws the reader in, as in “How to Interview.” For how-it-works essays, the third person (*he, she, it*) is commonly used.

Essay in Progress 2

For the process you selected in Essay in Progress 1, use the preceding guidelines to consider your purpose, the needs of your audience, and your point of view.

Developing Your Thesis

The thesis of a process analysis essay tells readers *why* the process is important, beneficial, or relevant to them (see p. 342). Considering your audience is especially important in developing a thesis for a process analysis, since what may be of interest or importance to one audience may be of little interest to another audience.

Essay in Progress 3

Write a working thesis statement that tells readers why the process you have chosen for your essay is important, beneficial, or relevant to them.

For more on purpose, audience, and point of view, see Chapter 5, pp. 106–9.

For more on thesis statements, see Chapter 6.

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 353

Gathering Details

To gather appropriate and interesting details, you may need to do additional prewriting to generate details that will help you explain the process. Use the following suggestions:

For more on prewriting strategies, see Chapter 5.

1. List the steps in the process as they occur to you, keeping these questions in mind.
 - What separate actions are involved?
 - What steps are obvious to me but may not be obvious to someone unfamiliar with the process?
 - What steps, if omitted, will lead to problems or failure?
2. Discuss your process with classmates to see what kinds of details they need to know about your topic.
3. Once you have a list of steps, generate details through additional prewriting or by doing research in the library or on the Internet. You might include sensory details about the process. (Check the five questions on page 352 to make sure you have included sufficient detail.)

For more on library and Internet research, see Chapter 22.

Essay in Progress 4

Using the preceding guidelines, brainstorm a list of the steps involved in the process. Then add details that will help you explain the steps. If necessary, interview someone knowledgeable about the process, or do library or Internet research to gather more details.

Evaluating Your Ideas and Thesis

Is the process you have chosen meaningful and relevant to your audience? Start by re-reading everything you have written with a critical eye. Highlight usable details; cross out any that seem unnecessary or repetitious. As you review your work, add steps, details, definitions, and background information where they are needed.

Trying Out Your Ideas on Others

Working in a group of two or three students, discuss your ideas and thesis for this chapter's assignment. Each writer should state his or her topic and thesis and describe the steps in the process. Then, as a group, evaluate each writer's work. Group members should answer the following questions:

1. How familiar are you with the process the writer has chosen?
2. Is the writer's explanation of the process detailed and complete?
3. What additional information do you need to understand or perform the process?
4. What unanswered questions do you have about the process?

Essay in Progress 5

Using the preceding suggestions and the feedback you have received from classmates, evaluate your thesis and your steps and decide whether you need to add details.

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 354

For more on drafting an essay, see Chapter 7.

Organizing and Drafting

Once you have gathered enough details to explain the steps in the process, developed your thesis statement, and considered the advice of peer reviewers, you are ready to organize your ideas and draft your essay.

Organizing the Steps in the Process

For a process that involves fewer than ten steps, you can usually arrange the steps chronologically, devoting one paragraph to each step. However, for a more complex process, group the steps into three or four categories (or divide the process into three or four main steps and each step into substeps) to avoid overwhelming your reader.

Try experimenting with different orders and groupings. For an essay on how to run a garage sale, the steps might be grouped in the following way:

Group 1: Locating and collecting merchandise

Group 2: Advertising

Group 3: Pricing and setting up

Group 4: Conducting the sale

You may want to devote one paragraph to each group of steps. A topic sentence introduces the group, and the rest of the paragraph explains the individual steps involved.

Essay in Progress 6

Review the list of steps you generated in Essay in Progress 5. If your process involves ten or more steps, use the preceding guidelines to group the steps into related categories. Write an outline or draw a graphic organizer to ensure that your steps are in chronological order.

Drafting the Process Analysis Essay

Use the following guidelines to draft your essay:

1. Include reasons for the steps. Unless the reason is obvious, explain why each step or group of steps is important and necessary. For instance, if you mention that robberies often occur during garage sales, then readers will be more likely to take the precautions you suggest, such as locking the house and wearing a waist-wallet.

2. Consider using graphics and headings. A drawing or diagram is sometimes necessary to make your steps easier to understand. (Remember, however, that a graphic is not a substitute for a clearly written explanation.) When using a graphic, be sure to introduce it in your essay and refer to it by its title. If you are including more than one graphic, assign a number to each one (*Figure 1*, *Figure 2*) and include the number in your text reference.

When writing about a lengthy or complicated process, consider adding headings to divide the body of your essay. Headings also call attention to your main topics and signal changes in topic.

3. Use transitions. To make the process easier to follow and avoid making your analysis sound monotonous, use transitions such as *before removing the lid*, *next*, and *finally*.

For more on transitions, see Chapter 7, pp. 150, 152.

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 355

4. Write an effective introduction. The introduction usually presents your thesis statement and includes necessary background information. It should also capture your readers' attention and interest. For a lengthy or complex process, consider including an overview of the steps or a brief list of them.

5. Use a tone appropriate to your audience and purpose. By the time your readers move from your introduction to the body of your essay, they should have a good idea of your tone. In some situations, a matter-of-fact tone is appropriate; other times, an emotional or humorous tone may be suitable.

6. Write a satisfying conclusion. Especially in a how-it-works essay, simply ending with the final step in the process may sound incomplete to your readers. In your conclusion, you might emphasize the value or importance of the process, describe particular situations in which it is useful, or offer a final amusing or emphatic comment or anecdote.

For more on writing effective paragraphs, including introductions and conclusions, see Chapter 7.

For more on tone, see Chapter 10, pp. 215–17.

Essay in Progress 7

Draft your process essay, using the organization you developed in Essay in Progress 6 and the preceding guidelines for drafting.

Analyzing and Revising

If possible, wait at least a day before rereading and revising your draft. As you reread, concentrate on organization and ideas, not on grammar or punctuation. Use one or more of the following suggestions to analyze your draft:

1. Read your essay aloud to one or two friends or classmates. Ask them to interrupt you if they have questions or if a step is unclear.
2. For a how-to essay, try visualizing the steps or following them exactly. Be careful to complete only the ones actually included in your essay. Following your directions to the letter will help you discover gaps and identify sections that are unclear.
3. Update the graphic organizer or outline you prepared earlier. Look to see if the steps are sequenced correctly and if each step is covered in enough detail.

Use Figure 14.3 to guide your analysis. You might also ask a classmate to review your draft essay using the questions in the flowchart.

For more on the benefits of peer reviews, see Chapter 9, pp. 188–91.

Learning Style Options

Essay in Progress 8

Revise your draft using Figure 14.3 (pp. 357–58) and any comments you received from peer reviewers.

Editing and Proofreading

The last step is to check your revised essay for errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, and mechanics. As you edit and proofread your process analysis essay, watch out for two grammatical errors in particular—comma splices and shifts in verb mood.

1. **Avoid comma splices.** A comma splice occurs when two independent clauses are joined only by a comma. To correct a comma splice, add a coordinating conjunction

For more on keeping an error log, see Chapter 10, p. 221.

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 356

(*and, but, for, nor, or, so, or yet*), change the comma to a semicolon, divide the sentence into two sentences, or subordinate one clause to the other.

- The first step in creating a flower arrangement is to choose an attractive container,^{but} the container should not be the focal point of the arrangement.
- Following signs is one way to navigate a busy airport,ⁱ looking for a map is another.
- To lower fat consumption in your diet, first learn to read food product labels,^{next} eliminate those products that contain trans fats or unsaturated fats.
- ^{After you have placed} Place the pill on the cat's tongue, hold its mouth closed, rubbing its chin until it^s swallows the pill.

2. **Avoid shifts in verb mood.** A verb can have three *moods*—indicative, imperative, and subjunctive. The **indicative mood** is used to express ordinary statements and to ask questions.

- The modem is built into the computer.

The **imperative mood** is used for giving orders, advice, and directions. The subject of a verb in the imperative mood is understood to be *you*, but it is not expressed.

- (You) Plant your feet firmly before swinging the club.

The **subjunctive mood** is used for making statements contrary to fact or for wishes and recommendations.

- I suggest that a new phone line be installed.

When writing a process analysis, be sure to use a consistent mood throughout your essay.

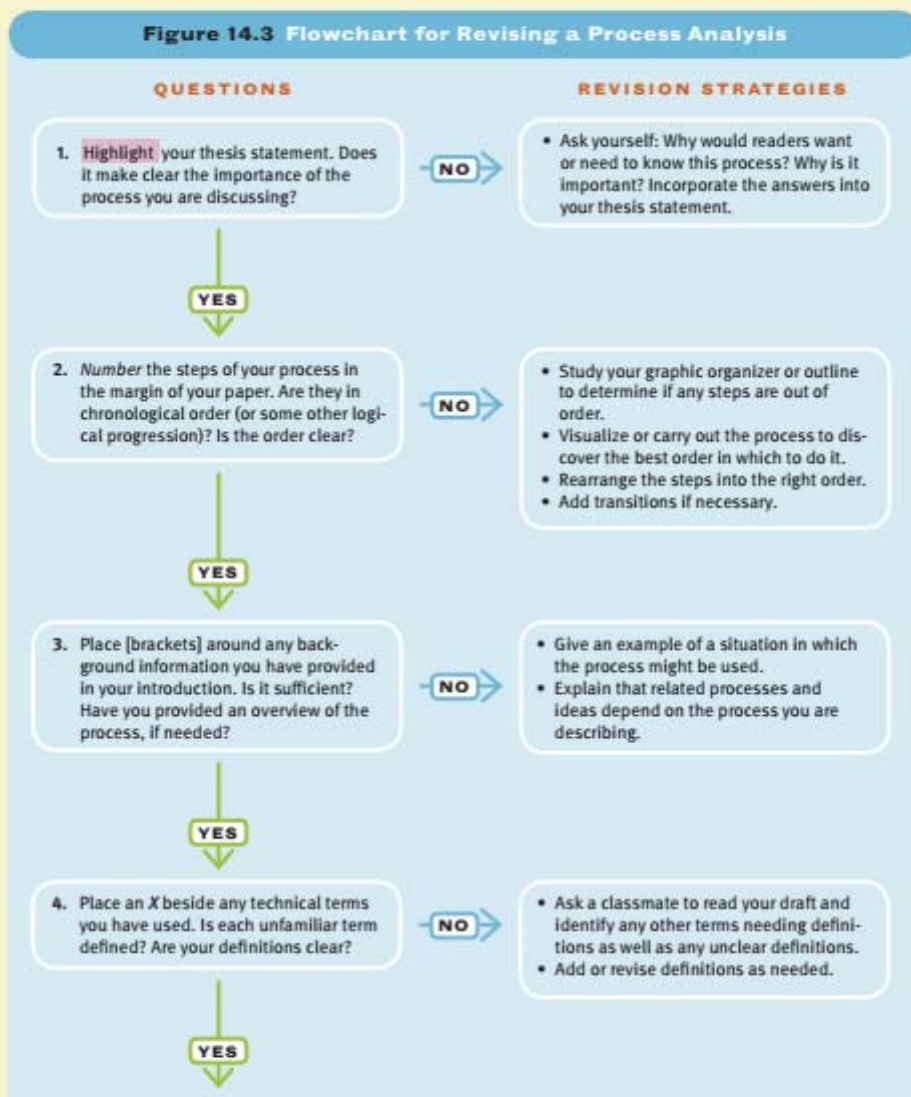
- The firefighters told the third-grade class the procedures to follow if a fire occurred in their school. They emphasized that children should leave the building quickly. Also,^{they should} move at least 100 feet away from the building.

Essay in Progress 9

Edit and proofread your essay, paying particular attention to avoiding comma splices and shifts in verb mood.

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 357

Figure 14.3 Flowchart for Revising a Process Analysis



Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 358



Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 359

Students Write

Eric Michalski wrote the following essay in response to an assignment that asked him to explain a process that he had mastered. As you read the essay, consider if the steps described in the essay clearly explain the process of making chili.

Feed Your Friends . . . and Their Friends . . . and Their Friends: Chili for Fifty

Eric Michalski

Cooking up chili for a large crowd is only a tad more difficult than whipping up a fractionally smaller batch. It's quite useful being the person who can feed a full hotel floor/campsite/election office/family reunion on a trip to the grocery store and a few hours' time.

If this recipe is followed accurately, it'll result in a deeply flavorful mud-brown sludge that tastes much better than it looks.

When you're feeding a crowd, though, things do get complicated. The key is following a strict sequence. It's like learning a dance—you've got to follow the steps until you know it well enough to freestyle. All ingredients require some type of processing, which has to be done at a specific time to build the right flavor and texture while preserving the integrity of the individual components. Order is important, even though "precision" and "chili" don't share too many sentences.

To start off, you'll need a huge pot with a lid. Mine's a 32-quart monstrosity you could boil a cow's head in. (Don't ask how I know.) Cooking the chili in several smaller pots results in different kinds of chili—great, but not what we're looking for here. Beg, borrow, or rent a good large pot and lid for this one. Also essential are a knife, a cutting board, a cool drink (never cook without refreshment), and something for stirring the chili. A wooden spoon works great, as does a silicone spatula. Just don't use anything that'll melt in bubbling chili. A slotted spoon is stupid because you need to be able to taste; a regular spoon will get you a hand burn before you get a taste. If you plan on moving the chili pot, which you shouldn't, potholders are useful.

This recipe can be done on a hot plate if you have a gigantic one and a separate burner for sautéing, but I tested it on a four-burner gas stove. A slow cooker would work in a pinch, but as noted below, certain ingredients need to be browned in a pan separate from the main pot. You could even do it on a propane burner if you used a wok for the protein first.

Once you've assembled your tools, cover the bottom of your pot with extra virgin olive oil and put it on medium heat. Leave it uncovered while chopping four large white or yellow onions, one head of elephant garlic and two heads (not cloves) of regular garlic. By the time you're done with the alliums, your oil is ready for you. Toss in the onions and garlic, spread until more or less even, and then cover.

READING

Title: Michalski identifies the process to be explained.

1

Introduction: Michalski explains the value of learning to make chili. His thesis statement reveals his attitude toward the topic.

2

As he often does throughout the essay, Michalski uses a transition to keep readers on track and a topic sentence to preview a paragraph's content. Here he also uses a figure of speech to warn that following the steps in order is crucial.

3

In paragraphs 3 and 4, Michalski describes the equipment necessary to carry out the process. He also warns against using certain equipment or moving the pot and suggests alternatives for stirring and heating. Notice that throughout the rest of the essay, each paragraph is devoted to one step or to some other particular aspect of the process.

4

Another transitional phrase leads into the actual process. Michalski explains how two steps (heating oil and chopping onions and garlic) can be done simultaneously and clarifies to avoid misunderstanding.

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 360

A transitional sentence introduces the next step: cooking the sausage. Michalski uses sensory details and adds two cautionary notes at the end.

Michalski offers detailed information about the next step (preparing and cooking the cubed chuck) and anticipates the one after that (cooking the ground beef).

Michalski offers his readers alternatives for one of the ingredients.

Another transition leads to the next step: adding the vegetables and spices.

Michalski emphasizes the importance of the next-to-last step: simmering.

For the final step in the process, Michalski shares his special trick to enhance flavor.

Time for the protein! Sausage is first, three pounds of whatever kind you like. Kielbasa is 6 great, maple breakfast sausage not so great, and Italian sausage entirely feasible. Cut the sausage into pieces of roughly equal size—dice size, like all the other protein in this recipe. Sauté the sausage in a separate pan until brown, then spread in a single layer on paper towels to drain. When cooked properly, the sausage will be brown and crisp on the outside and intensely sausagey on the inside. Unlike the chuck to be added next, this meat needs to be fully cooked before it goes in the chili pot. (But don't add any of the meat yet.)

Once the sausage is working and there's a little more oil in the pan, it's time to tend to the 7 other protein. Cut up three pounds of cubed chuck and trim the fat and gristle before coating in a 50=50 mix of fine yellow cornmeal and white flour and browning in the skillet. Open your pound and a half of ground beef (or one of the alternatives mentioned below) and thaw if necessary while your chuck is getting tasty. You want it cooked about halfway—brown inside but pink inside is fine. (This chili will cook for long enough to finish it.)

Sauté the ground beef with cinnamon and black pepper until uniformly brown, then let sit 8 on paper towels. (As a substitute for this part of the protein mix, bison would work fine, but I like a fattier meat because you can always drain fat, but dry meat tastes awful. Venison and even ostrich are a little lean, but can be counterbalanced with sausage or bacon. Ground turkey is fine, and shredded leftover turkey can be your reason for giving thanks when facing a fridgeful of leftovers.)

While the meat drains, add your veggies and spices to the mothership: one large 9 (40.5-ounce) can dark kidney beans, one large can light kidney beans, one small (15-ounce) can mixed diced tomatoes and jalapeños, a pound of diced tomatoes (if fresh, drain them on paper towels after dicing), and a bottle of your favorite Mexican chili-garlic sauce. Let the mixture come to a boil before adding the meat. If you've followed the recipe properly to this point, you'll have a pile of disgusting soaked paper towels in your trash can. Did you really want that stuff in your chili? (Didn't think so.)

The best chilis become that way through their final simmer, which brings all the flavors 10 together. Simmer for at least two hours. Skip or skimp on the simmering, and you might as well have just thrown random flavors into a pot for no reason. In fact, the truly hard-core chili cooks eschew the use of "artificial" thickeners and do the job with simmering alone. Those cooking on a more realistic time line, such as anyone making this recipe for the second time, will appreciate the way cornmeal- and flour-coated beef lends thickening mojo.

Long-cooked chili can also benefit from a special trick only usable with massive batches. 11 When your chili tastes more or less how you want it to, crank the heat up on your stove and slowly stir the top of the chili only. Keep it moving, and occasionally check the bottom with your spoon. Once you've got a decent crust on the bottom, scrape it up into your chili—done with a large enough batch, this will add dense smokiness and dark nuance to your nontraditional bowla'red.

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 361

I hate jalapeños, but if you insist on the most overdone flavor since cheddar you can slice them and serve them on the side. When you're making chili that's going to feed this many people, chances are that some of them are turned off by high levels of spice. Tell your capsaicin-addicted friends to bring their own hot sauce. Those looking to make fiery chili need only don rubber gloves and eye protection, chop ten habañeros, and add them at the very end.

Unless you're feeding enough people to make a serious dent in the contents of the pot right away, storage can be difficult due to the sheer volume of food involved. Work out a deal with the housemate/roommates/parents to use a section of the freezer for about twelve hours. Then ladle the gloppy yumminess into zipper-lock plastic bags. Fill each of the bags halfway and flatten so they freeze as flat squares--this makes reheating very easy. Most important, make sure to freeze what's left immediately after you're stuffed. Chili left out for even minutes can disappear in even the most upstanding homes/dorms.

Chili's a full meal in a bowl--warm, comforting, and filling: it's like a nutritious hug. I make chili because my parents taught me, from as early as I can remember, to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and nurse the sick. My closet is not overflowing with clothing and I have no medical training, so I cook for my friends and girlfriend and bask in their glow.

12 Michalski offers a solution to the problem of level of spice.

13 Michalski offers practical advice on storage.

Conclusion: Michalski reiterates the value of making chili, using a figure of speech.

14

Analyzing the Writer's Technique

1. How successful is the introduction at providing a reason for learning the process?
2. Michalski uses many parentheses, dashes, slashes, and italicized words. What effect do these create?
3. Find three places in the essay where Michalski uses humor, and explain what the effect is in each place.
4. Does Michalski's conclusion bring the essay to a satisfying close? Why or why not?
5. Michalski says that he hates jalapeños. What words reveal the reasons for his opinion?

Thinking Critically about Illustration

1. How does Michalski's use of phrases such as "deeply flavorful mud-brown sludge" (para. 1) and "gloppy yumminess" (13) affect you as a reader? Do they increase or decrease the essay's effectiveness?
2. How would you describe Michalski's tone? How does it differ from the tone you might find in a cookbook or food magazine?
3. What has Michalski omitted from his process analysis, if anything? What additional information or advice might a very inexperienced cook need to prepare chili? Would you need any?

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 362

Reacting to the Essay

1. Discuss other processes in which following the steps in order is especially important.
2. Michalski regards chili as comfort food. Do you agree? What other foods fall into the same category?
3. Michalski cooks chili as an expression of friendship. Write an essay explaining something you do or have done for friends (or a particular friend) to solidify your friendship. Describe the process.

READING A PROCESS ANALYSIS

The following section provides advice for reading a process analysis. Two model essays illustrate the characteristics of process analysis covered in this chapter and provide opportunities to examine, analyze, and react to the writer's ideas. The second essay uses process analysis along with other methods of development.

Working with Text: Reading Process Analysis Essays

Process analysis is a common method of explaining; it is often used in textbooks, including this one, and in other forms of academic writing. To read a process analysis effectively, use the suggestions below.

What to Look For, Highlight, and Annotate

1. Look for and highlight the thesis statement. Try to discover why the writer believes the process is important or useful.
2. For a how-to essay, look for difficulties you might experience in the process or questions you may need to ask about it.
3. Highlight or underline each step or grouping of steps. Using a different colored highlighter or an asterisk (*), mark steps that the author warns are difficult or troublesome.
4. For a complex or especially important process (such as one you need to write about on an essay exam), outline or draw a graphic organizer of the steps. Try explaining each step in your own words without referring to the text.
5. For a how-to essay, imagine yourself carrying out the process as you read.
6. Highlight or use a symbol to mark new terms as they are introduced.
7. Annotate the sections that summarize complex steps.

For more on reading strategies, see Chapter 3.

How to Find Ideas to Write About

For more on discovering ideas for a response paper, see Chapter 4.

Look for ideas to write about *as you read*. Record your ideas and impressions as marginal annotations. Think about why *you* want or need to understand the process.

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 363

Think of situations in which you can use or apply the information. Also try to think of processes similar to the one described in the essay. If you think of metaphors or analogies, make a note of them. Consider how other processes are the same as and different from the one in the essay.

Thinking Critically about Process Analysis

Although most process analyses are straightforward and informative, you should still consider the author's motives for writing and knowledge of the topic. Use the following questions to think critically about the process analyses you read.

What Are the Writer's Motives?

As you read, ask yourself, Why does the writer want me to understand or carry out this process? What is his or her motive? At times, an author may have a hidden motive for explaining a process. For example, a writer opposed to the death penalty may use graphic details about the process of executions to shock readers and persuade them to oppose the death penalty. Even a how-to article on a noncontroversial topic can have a hidden agenda, such as one entitled "How to Lose Ten Pounds" that was written by the owner of a weight-loss clinic.

Is the Writer Knowledgeable and Experienced?

When you read process analyses, always consider whether the writer has sufficient knowledge about or experience with the process. This step is especially important if you intend to perform the task. Following the advice of someone who is not qualified to give it can be a waste of time or even dangerous. For most writers, it is possible to check credentials and determine whether the writer is considered an expert in the field. In addition to checking the writer's credentials, consider whether he or she supports assertions with outside sources, expert opinion, and quotes from authorities.

What Has the Writer Omitted?

Authors address their writing to a particular audience and make assumptions about their readers' knowledge and experience. If they assume that their readers have more knowledge than they actually have, readers may not understand or be unable to carry out the process. In "How to Interview" (pp. 339–42), the writer assumes, for example, that his or her readers are knowledgeable about how to locate research information about the company they are interviewing with. Because this essay was written for a Web site, it seems safe to assume that readers are able to conduct Web searches.

PROCESS ANALYSIS ESSAY

As you read the following essay, notice how the author uses the elements of process analysis discussed in this chapter.

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 364

READING

Dater's Remorse

Cindy Chupack

Cindy Chupack (b. 1965) was born in Oklahoma. She trained as a journalist at Northwestern University because she wanted to make a living as a writer, but she found that journalism did not suit her. After working in advertising, Chupack contributed a personal essay to *New York Woman* magazine that attracted the attention of a television writer who encouraged her to create sitcom scripts. Ultimately, she became a writer and executive produce for the hit HBO show *Sex and the City*.

This selection below appears in a collection of Chupack's writings titled *The Between Boyfriends Book* (2003). As you read, notice the way Chupack builds her humorous analogy between shopping and dating, from her opening description of her telephone-company "suitors" to her conclusion: *Caveat emptor* — "Let the buyer beware."

I never imagined this would happen, but three men are fighting over me. They call me 1
repeatedly. They ply me with gifts. They beg me for a commitment. Yes, they're just
AT&T, MCI, and Sprint salesmen interested in being my long-distance carrier, but what
I'm relishing—aside from the attention—is the sense that I am in complete control.

In fact, just the other day my ex (phone carrier, that is) called to find out what went 2
wrong. Had I been unhappy? What would it take to win me back? Turns out all it took
was two thousand frequent flier miles. I switched, just like that. I didn't worry about
how my current carrier would feel, or how it might affect my Friends and Family. Now if
only I could use that kind of healthy judgment when it comes to my love life.

The unfortunate truth is that while most of us are savvy shoppers, we're not suf- 3
ficiently selective when looking for relationships, and that's why we often suffer from
dater's remorse. Perhaps we should try to apply conventional consumer wisdom to men
as well as merchandise. How satisfying love might be if we always remembered to:

Go with a classic, not a trend. We all know it's unwise to spend a week's salary 4
on vinyl hip-huggers. But when it comes to men, even the most conservative among
us occasionally invests in the human equivalent of a fashion fad. The furthest I ever
strayed from a classic was during college. I wrote a paper about the Guardian Angels,
those street toughs who unofficially patrol innercity neighborhoods, and being a very
thorough student, I ended up dating one. He wore a red beret and entertained me by
demonstrating martial arts moves in my dorm room. I remember telling my concerned
roommate how he was sooo much more interesting than those boring MBA* types
everybody else was dating. Of course, what initially seemed like a fun, impulse buy
turned out to require more of an emotional investment than I was willing to make. It
took me two months to break up with him—two months of getting persistent late-night
calls, angry letters, and unannounced visits to my dorm room door, which I envisioned
him kicking down someday. The good thing about MBAs: They're familiar with the ex-
pression "Cut your losses."

Beware of the phrase "Some assembly required." Anyone who has tried to follow 5
translated-from-Swedish directions for putting together a swivel chair understands that

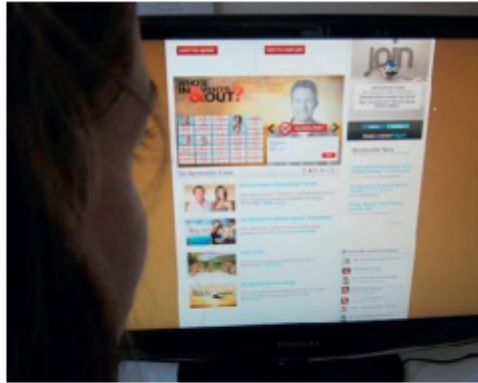
*MBA: Master of Business Administration, an advanced business degree

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 365

when you've got to assemble something yourself, the money you save isn't worth the time you spend. The same goes for men. Many women think that even though a guy is not exactly "together," we can easily straighten him out. The fact is that fixer-uppers are more likely to stay forever flawed, no matter what we do. My friend Jenny fell for a forty-one-year-old bachelor, despite the fact that he spent their first few dates detailing his dysfunctional family and boasting that he went to the same shrink as the Menendez brothers.² "Six weeks later, when he announced he couldn't handle a relationship, it shouldn't have surprised me," says Jenny, who now looks for men requiring a little less duct tape.

Make sure your purchase goes with the other things you own. I once fell in love with a very expensive purple velvet couch, and I seriously considered buying it, even though it would mean getting my cat declawed, and I had signed an agreement when I adopted her that I would never do that. But the couch . . . the couch . . . I visited it a few more times, but I didn't buy, and not just out of sympathy for my cat. I realized that if I owned that couch, I'd have to replace all my comfy, old stuff with new furniture equal in quality and style to the purple couch. Men can be like that, too. You're drawn to them because they're attractively different, but being with them may mean changing your entire life. For example, while dating a long-distance bicyclist, my friend Janet found herself suddenly following his training regimen: bowing out of social events just as the fun began, rising at an hour at which she normally went to bed, and replacing fine dining with intensive carbo-loading. And the only bike she ever rode was the stationary one at the gym.

Check with previous owners. Once beyond age twenty-five, most men would have to be classified as secondhand, and we all know how risky it is to buy used merchandise. Therefore, it's up to you to do some basic consumer research. Find out how many previous owners your selection has had. If he's such a steal, why is he still on the lot? Is it because his exterior is a bit unsightly, or because he's fundamentally a lemon? (Before becoming too critical, bear in mind that you are still on the lot.)



The television show *The Bachelorette* focuses on choosing the "right" mate. What traits would you focus on to decide "who's in and who's out"?

²Menendez brothers: two brothers who were convicted in 1996 of killing their parents

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 366

*Caveat emptor.*³ Following these guidelines won't guarantee a great relationship, but it will help you cut down on the number of times you feel dater's remorse. Obviously looking for a husband is a bit more complicated than choosing a major appliance, but since there are no lifetime guarantees or lemon laws for men, it pays to be a savvy shopper.

³*Caveat emptor*: Latin phrase meaning "Let the buyer beware"

Examining the Reading

1. According to Chupack, what can happen when you date someone who is "the human equivalent of a fashion fad" (para. 4)?
2. Explain the connection between dating and buying furniture. Why does the author advise women to stay away from furniture with "some assembly required" (5)?
3. Explain Chupack's advice "to make sure your purchase goes with other things you own" (6).
4. Explain the meaning of each of the following words as it is used in the reading: *relishing* (1), *classic* (4), *envisioned* (4), *dysfunctional* (5), and *regimen* (6).

Analyzing the Writer's Technique

1. Chupack's thesis involves dating as well as shopping. Identify her thesis, and evaluate the effectiveness of her comparison.
2. What type of organization does Chupack use to order the steps in her process analysis essay? If the essay is not organized chronologically, does the author use any sort of logical progression such as starting with simple steps and progressing to more complex ones? Is her type of organization effective? Why or why not?
3. Evaluate the author's level of detail. Is it detailed enough to be of practical use?
4. Is Chupack's reference to lemon laws a satisfying conclusion? Why or why not?

Reacting to the Reading

1. Discuss some experiences you or a friend have had with dating. How difficult is it to find someone compatible?
2. Chupack advises readers to "go with a classic, not a trend" when choosing dating partners. Brainstorm a list of situations other than dating in which the same advice might apply.
3. Chupack offers advice for women seeking to date men. Discuss what advice might be offered to men seeking to date women.
4. Write a journal entry about a successful relationship that you have now or that you have had in the past. What made this relationship work out so well?

Thinking Critically about Text and Images

1. What assumption does Chupack make about her readers as revealed in the final paragraph?
2. Chupack makes comparisons throughout her essay between date selection and shopping. How legitimate do you think these comparisons are? Are there ways in

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 367

which shopping and dating differ? If so, how? Does the author address these? If so, how?

3. Is Chupack qualified to offer advice on date selection? Explain your answer.
4. What is the connotation of the terms *secondhand* and *used merchandise* (7)?
5. Chupack supports her main points primarily through the use of examples from her personal experience. What other types of supporting evidence would be useful?
6. What does the image from the Web site for the television show *The Bachelorette* suggest about dating? How does it relate to the reading? What does the title of the image suggest about the dating process?

MAKING CONNECTIONS

Interpersonal Relationships

Both "Dater's Remorse" (pp. 364–66) and "How to Interview" (pp. 339–42) discuss, in part, how to deal with others. "Dater's Remorse" discusses how to select the right men to date and "How to Interview" focuses on how to interact with an interviewer.

Analyzing the Readings

1. Evaluate the level of detail in each essay. Which author is more helpful and supportive?
2. Write a journal entry exploring how creating an online profile differs from creating an interview self-image.

Essay Idea

Think of other situations in which you need to be concerned with how to interact with others. Write a process essay explaining the steps in creating a positive interaction with others. For example, you might write about how to interact with an instructor, with the parents of your boyfriend or girlfriend, or with an elderly neighbor or relative.

PROCESS ANALYSIS COMBINED WITH OTHER PATTERNS

As you read the following essay by Anne Lamott, notice how she combines process analysis with other patterns of development.

Shitty First Drafts

Anne Lamott

Anne Lamott has published several nonfiction works, including *Bird by Bird: Instructions on Writing and Life* (1995), from which this essay was taken; *All New People* (1999); *Traveling Mercies: Some Thoughts on Faith* (2000); *Operating Instructions: A Journal of My Son's First Year* (2005); and *Grace (Eventually)* (2008). She is also the author of several novels, including *Hard Laughter* (2002) and *Imperfect Birds* (2010). As you read this essay, notice how

READING

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 368

Lamott leads you through the steps in the writing process while at the same time revealing her attitude toward the task of writing.

Now, practically even better news than that of short assignments is the idea of shitty 1
first drafts. All good writers write them. This is how they end up with good second
drafts and terrific third drafts. People tend to look at successful writers who are get-
ting their books published and maybe even doing well financially and think that they
sit down at their desks every morning feeling like a million dollars, feeling great about
who they are and how much talent they have and what a great story they have to tell;
that they take in a few deep breaths, push back their sleeves, roll their necks a few
times to get all the cricks out, and dive in, typing fully formed passages as fast as a
court reporter. But this is just the fantasy of the uninitiated. I know some very great
writers, writers you love who write beautifully and have made a great deal of money,
and not one of them sits down routinely feeling wildly enthusiastic and confident. Not
one of them writes elegant first drafts. All right, one of them does, but we do not like
her very much. We do not think that she has a rich inner life or that God likes her or can
even stand her. (Although when I mentioned this to my priest friend Tom, he said you
can safely assume you've created God in your own image when it turns out that God
hates all the same people you do.)

Very few writers really know what they are doing until they've done it. Nor do they 2
go about their business feeling dewy and thrilled. They do not type a few stiff warm-up
sentences and then find themselves bounding along like huskies across the snow.
One writer I know tells me that he sits down every morning and says to himself nicely,
"It's not like you don't have a choice, because you do—you can either type, or kill
yourself." We all often feel like we are pulling teeth, even those writers whose prose
ends up being the most natural and fluid. The right words and sentences just do not
come pouring out like ticker tape most of the time. Now, Muriel Spark is said to have
felt that she was taking dictation from God every morning—sitting there, one sup-
poses, plugged into a Dictaphone, typing away, humming. But this is a very hostile and
aggressive position. One might hope for bad things to rain down on a person like this.

For me and most of the other writers I know, writing is not rapturous. In fact, the 3
only way I can get anything written at all is to write really, really shitty first drafts.

The first draft is the child's draft, where you let it all pour out and then let it romp 4
all over the place, knowing that no one is going to see it and that you can shape it
later. You just let this childlike part of you channel whatever voices and visions come
through and onto the page. If one of the characters wants to say, "Well, so what, Mr.
Poopy Pants?" you let her. No one is going to see it. If the kid wants to get into really
sentimental, weepy, emotional territory, you let him. Just get it all down on paper
because there may be something great in those six crazy pages that you would never
have gotten to by more rational, grown-up means. There may be something in the very
last line of the very last paragraph on page six that you just love, that is so beautiful
or wild that you now know what you're supposed to be writing about, more or less, or
in what direction you might go—but there was no way to get to this without first get-
ting through the first five and a half pages.

I used to write food reviews for *California* magazine before it folded. (My writing 5
food reviews had nothing to do with the magazine folding, although every single re-
view did cause a couple of canceled subscriptions. Some readers took umbrage at

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 369

my comparing mounds of vegetable puree with various ex-presidents' brains.) These reviews always took two days to write. First I'd go to a restaurant several times with a few opinionated, articulate friends in tow. I'd sit there writing down everything anyone said that was at all interesting or funny. Then on the following Monday I'd sit down at my desk with my notes and try to write the review. Even after I'd been doing this for years, panic would set in. I'd try to write a lead, but instead I'd write a couple of dreadful sentences, XX them out, try again, XX everything out, and then feel despair and worry settle on my chest like an x-ray apron. It's over, I'd think calmly. I'm not going to be able to get the magic to work this time. I'm ruined. I'm through. I'm toast. Maybe, I'd think, I can get my old job back as a clerk-typist. But probably not. I'd get up and study my teeth in the mirror for a while. Then I'd stop, remember to breathe, make a few phone calls, hit the kitchen and chow down. Eventually I'd go back and sit down at my desk, and sigh for the next ten minutes. Finally I would pick up my one-inch picture frame, stare into it as if for the answer, and every time the answer would come: all I had to do was to write a really shitty first draft of, say, the opening paragraph. And no one was going to see it.

So I'd start writing without reining myself in. It was almost just typing, just making 6 my fingers move. And the writing would be terrible. I'd write a lead paragraph that was a whole page, even though the entire review could only be three pages long, and then I'd start writing up descriptions of the food, one dish at a time, bird by bird, and the critics would be sitting on my shoulders, commenting like cartoon characters. They'd be pretending to snore, or rolling their eyes at my overwrought descriptions, no matter how hard I tried to tone those descriptions down, no matter how conscious I was of what a friend said to me gently in my early days of restaurant reviewing. "Annie," she said, "it is just a piece of *chicken*. It is just a bit of *cake*."

But because by then I had been writing for so long, I would eventually let myself trust 7 the process—sort of, more or less. I'd write a first draft that was maybe twice as long as it should be, with a self-indulgent and boring beginning, stupefying descriptions of the meal, lots of quotes from my black-humored friends that made them sound more like the Manson girls than food lovers, and no ending to speak of. The whole thing would be so long and incoherent and hideous that for the rest of the day I'd obsess about getting creamed by a car before I could write a decent second draft. I'd worry that people would read what I'd written and believe that the accident had really been a suicide, that I had panicked because my talent was waning and my mind was shot.

The next day, I'd sit down, go through it all with a colored pen, take out everything 8 I possibly could, find a new lead somewhere on the second page, figure out a kicky place to end it, and then write a second draft. It always turned out fine, sometimes even funny and weird and helpful. I'd go over it one more time and mail it in.

Then, a month later, when it was time for another review, the whole process would 9 start again, complete with the fears that people would find my first draft before I could rewrite it.

Almost all good writing begins with terrible first efforts. You need to start some- 10 where. Start by getting something—anything—down on paper. A friend of mine says that the first draft is the down draft—you just get it down. The second draft is the up draft—you fix it up. You try to say what you have to say more accurately. And the third draft is the dental draft, where you check every tooth, to see if it's loose or cramped or decayed, or even, God help us, healthy.

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 370

Examining the Reading

1. Why does Lamott believe writers must use the process she describes?
2. How does Lamott view writing? How might she describe it as a job?
3. How does Lamott's process benefit her? Why do you think she developed it?
4. According to Lamott, what is the hardest part in her process? What does she do to get through it?
5. Explain the meaning of each of the following words as it is used in the reading: *uninitiated* (para. 1), *rapturous* (3), *umbrage* (5), *overwrought* (6), and *kicky* (8).

Analyzing the Writer's Technique

1. Identify Lamott's thesis statement. What background information does she provide to support it?
2. In paragraph 1 and again in paragraph 6, Lamott begins with three short sentences followed by a much longer sentence. What effect does this sequence create?
3. Explain how Lamott's use of exaggeration supports her purpose in writing the essay.
4. Who is Lamott's audience? Does her advice apply to others outside this group?
5. What methods of development, in addition to process, does Lamott use in this essay? What does each add to your understanding of Lamott's explanation of the writing process?

Visualizing the Reading

Lamott uses examples and details to explain the steps in the process of writing. List the steps in the process and an example or detail for each. The first one has been done for you. Add additional boxes as necessary.

| Step | Example or Detail |
|----------------|--|
| Begin writing. | Channel voices and visions; write anything and everything; cross most of it out as you go. |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

Thinking Critically about Process Analysis

1. How would you describe Lamott's tone? Was it supportive to you as a student of writing? How could Lamott have made the essay more user-friendly or reader-friendly?

Highlight (orange) - 14 Process Analysis: Explaining How Something Works or Is Done > Page 371

- How does her tone work with her message to writers? What kind of unspoken, underlying rule is she setting up for writers to follow by using this tone?
- Lamott often uses descriptive, visual language to make her point. Identify at least two phrases that do this. Why are they effective?
- What evidence could Lamott have included to give her essay additional weight?

Reacting to the Reading

- Do you believe that all writers produce “shitty first drafts”? Why or why not? What evidence supports your position?
- How does this essay make you feel about your own writing? Describe how you can use the advice in this essay the next time you need to do a writing assignment—or why you would not follow it.
- Can you apply this advice to other tasks, projects, and obstacles in your life? Write an essay explaining how to apply this advice elsewhere.

Applying Your Skills: Additional Essay Assignments

Write a process analysis essay on one of the following topics. Depending on the topic you choose, you may need to conduct library or Internet research.

For more on locating and documenting sources, see Part 5.

To Express Your Ideas

- How children manage their parents
- How to relax and do nothing
- How to find enough time for your children

To Inform Your Reader

- How to avoid or speed up red-tape procedures
- How a particular type of sports equipment protects an athlete
- How to remain calm while giving a speech

To Persuade Your Reader

- How important it is to vote in a presidential election
- How important it is to select the right courses in order to graduate on time
- How important it is to exercise every day

Cases Using Process Analysis

- In your communication course, you are studying friendship development and the strategies that people use to meet others. Write an essay describing the strategies people use to meet new people and develop friendships.
- You are employed by a toy manufacturer and have been asked to write a brochure that encourages children to use toys safely. Prepare a brochure that describes at least three steps children can follow to avoid injury.