

## WRITING A PROCESS ESSAY

Process essays are basically concerned with how something works or how to make something. These kinds of compositions are generally organized in simple sequential order. Here are five techniques that are especially useful in organizing compositions dealing with processes:

1. **Specify** in as few words as possible the **major divisions or steps** you will discuss.
2. Use **topic headings** to define and limit sections of your paper.
3. Use a **combination** of 1 and 2: Open with a list of main ideas and repeat them as topic headings.
4. Use a **vivid image** to help the reader see your subject.
5. Use a **series of questions** to control brief passages.

### Sample Outline for a Process Essay

#### A. Introduction

- a. Arouse interest. This may mean naming the subject you are writing about, showing that it is important, and putting it into context.
- b. State the main idea or purpose of the paper. If this is clear from your title, this step is optional.
- c. Give some clues as to the main divisions of the paper. (optional)

#### B. Take the major divisions of the paper in an appropriate and logical order. It will probably be sequential, but it could follow some other pattern. Make the movement from one division to another clear. Use topic headings, questions or transitional devices.

#### C. Conclusion

#### D. Summarize the main divisions. (optional)

#### E. Provide interesting, satisfying closure. (ending).

Transitions which serve as bridges between ideas, may be placed in five categories:

1. Time signals – first, then, next, later
2. Place signals – on the left, nearby, in the centre, beside
3. Contrast signals – however, but, unfortunately, on the contrary, on the other hand
4. Plus signals – and, in addition, moreover, besides
5. Result signals – consequently, therefore, hence, thus

## Sample Process Essay

### *Learning to water ski*

*Specify the  
major  
division*

Learning to water-ski can be quite difficult, but it also can be very rewarding. If you have the **determination and perseverance to master the fundamentals**, you'll move to the great thrill of skipping back and forth across the frothy wake, lifting one ski in salute to the spectators, and perhaps even building a pyramid at thirty kilometers an hour.

*Arouse im*

*Topic heading*

The first thing is **learning to put the skis on correctly**. Sometimes just getting into the rubber shoes fastened to the skis is pretty difficult. They wobble back and forth, jump out of the water (because of their buoyancy), and point the beginner in the wrong direction. It's a real problem trying to hold the animals down, getting them stuck in the soft sand, and falling over backward during the process.

*transitions  
underlined*

*Topic heading*

After you finally get your skis in place, **you must be able to hold the skis upright until the boat can bring the ski rope to you**. When the wooden handle drifts anywhere within grasp, you lurch desperately, lose your balance and nine times out of ten must go back to Step One. Finally you get to the point where you have your skis pointed almost in the right direction, your feet almost in the shoes, and the tow rope marginally in your grasp. Now you're ready to make your first attempt at actually skiing.

*Topic heading*

*Topic heading*

Gritting your teeth, tensing your leg muscles, and waiting for the sudden shock, you yell to the driver, "Hit it!" As the boat accelerates, you relax your arms and **let it pull you partially upright**. Then, gently you pull on the rope, and up you go to the beautiful, confident, soaring position for the briefest moment before tumbling backward.

*Vivid imag*

*Effective  
closure*

**You repeat the foregoing steps with varying results** and often ludicrous variations for perhaps a whole day. One variation is called the plough. For some reason or other, with the plough, the skier, unable to rise from the water, ploughs a spectacular wake behind the boat. Another variation is the header, in which the sudden lurch forward of the boat throws the beginning skier head forward in a graceful, shimmering arc before the inevitable splashdown.

Finally **you master the skill, manage to stand upright, and shift a little to either side**. Then you stabilize, begin to relax, and even pull on the rope, and turn your skis to control your direction –

across the wake and back, and still standing. Now you're on the road to many hours of fun and excitement. You feel the satisfaction of having joined a small and select group. You can water-ski.

Source: West, Bailey, Wood, Developing Writing Skills, Prentice Hall Canada Inc., 1981