

Cañada College
WRITING IV class
PROCESS ESSAYS

Text: *Writing Academic English*, Chapter 5 (pages 81-93)

Rules for Writers; **see sections on imperatives**:

- *understood subject in an imperative sentence*: p. 544 (bottom of the page);
- and **sections on gerunds**:
- *gerund phrases*, defined p. 559;
- *gerunds following preposition*: pp. 266-67;
- *gerunds following verbs and nouns*, pp. 239-42 + exercise 28-4 on p. 242

What is a process essay?

A process essay describes HOW TO DO something. A recipe is a description for how to make a dish, but it is not an essay.

For this essay, you do not need to do any research. (However, if you want to, learn to do something new, and then write about that.)

Like your other essays this semester, your essay will have three parts: an introduction (with a thesis statement), supporting details in 3 paragraphs, and a conclusion.

What is a thesis statement??

You know what a **topic sentence** is: it is usually the first or second sentence of a paragraph, and tells the reader the *topic* (or *subject*) of the paragraph.

Example:

When we think of getting a pet, we do not usually consider getting a rat. **Rats are excellent pets, however, for various reasons.** They are very sociable, and love to play. They are also surprisingly affectionate with humans, too.

A **thesis statement** is usually at the end of the first paragraph, and tells the reader the content of the essay.

Example:

When you see a large black bird flying from tree to tree, do you wonder what it is saying? Did you know that crows are social and highly intelligent birds? Research into this bird show that they have developed many different ways to ensure their continuing survival: in their careful social order, their attentive raising of their young, and defensive skills.

The following (supporting) paragraphs might then describe the huge flocks of hundreds of birds congregating to establish and re-establish order in crow society; that they are careful parents who stay with their young and teach them important foraging skills; and that they are able to distinguish individuals by their faces. <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/26/science/26crow.html>

Elements of a process essay:

1. Who is your audience? What do you ASSUME they already know? What do you need to define or explain in detail?
2. What are the different steps in the process? In what order are they done?
3. What transition words can you use?
4. Do you have a “working title”? The easiest is to be clear: “how to...”
5. Use imperatives
6. Give it to someone else to proofread it. Does it make sense? Have you forgotten anything?
7. Did you give examples?
8. Are your instructions thorough? (Is your paper too short?)
9. Do you have an introduction? A thesis statement? A conclusion?

Other things to remember:

- Do not write a “recipe” (how to make tamales or pumpkin pie).
- Keep your “voice” formal (avoid informal language).
- Keep it in ONE verb tense. (For this process essay, you will probably use the imperative, the simple present tense and/or gerunds.)
- Watch punctuation, spelling, and grammar. Use “spell check” and “grammar check” on your computer.

What can you write about?

Use your imagination! What do you know how to do? Or: what do you WANT to know how to do?

Students have used the following topics to write their process essays. In their essays, they explained how to:

- conserve water
- identify birds
- write an instruction manual
- teach someone something (what *you* need to know in order to teach someone how to do something)
- learn a language
- be a good student
- be a bad student
- help children with their homework
- cheat on a test
- be a good parent
- be a bad parent
- raise a spoiled child
- use a search engine
- cut electricity costs
- conserve gas in your car
- recycle
- be a good citizen
- buy a new car
- change the oil in your car
- frame a picture
- become a wise human
- install a door
- write an essay
- clean an apartment
- prepare for a disaster
- get a date
- make a good impression on a date
- celebrate Christmas in Mexico
- vote intelligently
- transplant a tree
- install lighting in your garden
- reduce stress
- take a good photo
- get a scholarship
- find information in the library
- get a driver's license
- feed a baby with a bottle
- have good relationships with your colleagues
- integrate into a new culture; how to understand a new culture
- give a good haircut
- what to do before, during and after an earthquake
- maintain a good relationship with your neighbors
- end terrorism
- always be happy at your place of work
- maintain a good relationship with a person from a different culture

- continue to be attractive to your partner/spouse;
- people who lost loved ones
- analyze an internet site

If you want more practice, or more information about process essays, here are some websites to help you write process essays and samples of process essays:

- <http://www.bestessaytips.com/> : How to Avoid Plagiarism

To look at the structure of a process essay:

<http://www.deil.uiuc.edu/eslservice/units/firstaid/ProcessEssayInfo.htm>

http://www.bestessaytips.com/process_essay.php

<http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/process.html> 123helpme.com/view.asp?id=21619 (LEO = Literacy Education Online. This article is "What to consider when writing a process essay")

- See sample essay, "Kool-Aid, Oh yeah!"

Here is a funny essay on how NOT to write an essay: <http://123helpme.com/>