

Composition

Second Year

Second Semester

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Model Process Essays:

Read the following process essays. Observe the paragraphing, find the thesis, and see if there is a central idea and if that idea is carried out in the process. Try to find explanations, examples, warnings, and definitions. Note if the process description is complete.

DON'T LET ANOTHER FREDERICK CATCH YOU NAPPING

[1] I'm sure that everyone that lived in New Orleans in the late summer of 1963 remembers Hurricane Betsy. You were caught with your guard down, weren't you? Well, don't let it happen again. If you had prepared for it, the loss and disaster wouldn't have been that great. Many people are killed in hurricanes because they don't take the necessary precautions. After reading this, I hope that next time you will be protected against hurricanes.

[2] First, you'll need to get some things if you don't already have them. You should begin getting these things together when you hear the first warning. These necessities should already be kept on hand at all times, but if you don't have them, here is what you'll need. You'll need a sufficient supply of food that is not perishable if not kept refrigerated. Some canned goods with a balanced amount of nutrition are usually the best thing. Then you'll need some masking tape, boards (plywood and two by fours), candles, matches, one or two kerosene lamps, and most of all you'll need a radio that runs on batteries, and some extra batteries. Now you should be all set.

[3] To start getting ready, you begin with the most important things first. You should start doing this when the hurricane is about two hundred miles away and you know for certain that it is headed your way. First, bring in all objects from the porch and yard that strong winds could lift and send crashing through the window. Next, tape your windows with the masking tape in a criss-cross pattern. This will prevent windows from breaking into pieces. Then board the larger ones and nail a two-by-four across the board. Finally, prepare a place that would be the safest for your family. The basement would be fine if you have one. If you don't, the biggest room in the house would be the best place. In preparing your retreat grounds, be sure to bring blankets, pillows, the *radio*, and everything else you will need. After you have finished, go back and check over everything you have done. Check to see if windows are taped and boarded properly. You don't want the strong hurricane winds to tear the boards away and smash your windows in. Children could easily injure themselves on broken glass. Then check to see if you have forgotten anything else. When positively sure that everything is in order, quickly return to your shelter.

[4] Finally, be sure that everything that you'll need immediately is at your closest convenience. The less moving around you do, the better. Make certain that food is close at hand. If you have any children, make sure that they are close to you covered with blankets so that they are well protected. Being the animal lover that I am, I save this part for this time purposely. Be sure that your pets that you love dearly are close to you also. If it is not possible for them to be close to you, make sure that they are well protected wherever they may be. Finally, keep your radio close at hand as well to inform you of when and where exactly the hurricane is going to hit. That is one of the most important things you will have to do. Make sure you know where the storm is every minute.

[5] Provided that you have read my instructions, you should be well prepared and protected against a hurricane. These instructions do not apply to the more severe hurricanes like Camille and Frederick. They are only for the medium to almost severe ones. For severe hurricanes like the ones I have just mentioned,

gather as many provisions as you need and head for the nearest shelter (school or building). You should evacuate under these conditions because your life is nothing to play with.

—Antoine Barbarin

EXERCISE 9 - 7

Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper.

1. What is the thesis? The central idea?
2. Does the author establish a need for this process? If so, where?
3. Look at the paragraph divisions. Why does he divide up the steps as he does?
4. What is the controlling idea for paragraph 2?
5. Is there a topic sentence for each paragraph? If not, is it implied?
6. Why should the children be covered with blankets?
7. Why should you tape the windows in criss-cross pattern?
8. Is this essay unified? Coherent?
9. Are the steps clearly explained? Is the process complete?
10. Who is the audience?
11. Is this essay a directional or informational process explanation?
12. What verb tenses are used in this essay? Underline them in the essay.
13. Outline this essay.

WRITING ASSIGNMENT 9 - 1

Using the notes started in Exercise 9-1, write the first draft of this process essay.

Now let us look at a different kind of process essay. Try to determine what kind of process paper this is. Also, take special note of the verb tenses used. Some vocabulary you may need before reading the selection* includes *propellant, chlorinated, hydrocarbon, butane, propane, isobutane, vinyl chloride, nitrogen, gaseous, dissolve, valve, siphon, vaporize, nozzle, mist*.

AEROSOLS

[1] At one time or another, most of us have probably used an aerosol can. With just a push of the button, we easily and quickly apply just the right amount of furniture polish, bathtub cleanser, or underarm deodorant. It is obvious to us that the aerosol can is more convenient than the old-fashioned jars of liquid polish or cans of powdered cleanser, which can spill or be applied

too thickly. At the same time, however, most of us probably do not know how the aerosol can works. We accept its ease and convenience without realizing that the aerosol can is quite a complex container.

[2] An aerosol is not a simple cleanser or polish; it is a colloidal system. That means it consists of finely divided liquid or solid particles, called a product, dispersed in and surrounded by a gas. The most commonly used gases, or propellants, are chlorinated hydrocarbons, butane, propane, isobutane, vinyl chloride, and nitrogen. Nitrogen is used particularly for products when the taste or smell of the propellant is not desired in the product, for example, in toothpaste or whipped cream.

[3] To complicate things further, the propellant, or gas, is present in either a liquid or a gaseous state. If the propellant is liquid, it is mixed with the product in the form of a solution. An example of this type of aerosol is hair spray. The spray or lacquer is usually dissolved in alcohol and then completely mixed with the propellant. If the propellant is present in a gaseous state, the container usually is about half filled with the product and half filled with a propellant such as nitrogen. The propellant gas forms a separate layer over the product. Aerosol toothpaste is a good example of this type of aerosol. The contents of the can, then, are either a product-propellant solution or a layer of product topped by a layer of propellant. In both cases, the propellant gas is not simply put in a jar but is forced into the can under high pressure, about 90–120 pounds per square inch.

[4] The releasing mechanism for an aerosol can is also complicated. All aerosol cans are fitted with a valve and a siphon tube, which allow for the release of the product. The valve is either a spray valve or a foam valve, depending on the contents of the can. The valve is force-fitted into the neck of the dispenser under high pressure (about $\frac{3}{4}$ tons), so that a strong, gas-tight seal is formed. This prevents the propellant in the can from escaping. The valve is connected to a siphon tube, which hangs down inside the can to the bottom of the can. When the valve button is pressed, the propellant vaporizes immediately, and its pressure forces the liquid through the siphon tube and out the nozzle. The liquid comes out of the can in the form of a mist or foam.

[5] What appears to be a simple push of a button, then, is really a complex accomplishment of modern physics and chemistry. The insect repellant that sprays a fine mist neatly and quickly was not simply poured into a bottle; it was packaged very carefully, with specific and complicated equipment. The next time we pick up a familiar aerosol can and wonder how it works, we should remember that the ease and convenience it gives us is the result of someone or something else doing a lot of work.

EXERCISE 9 - 8

Answer the following questions about "Aerosols" on a separate sheet of paper.

1. What kind of process is being analyzed?
2. What is the central idea about how an aerosol can works?

3. What is the topic of paragraph 2?
 4. What is hair spray an example of? Is this example useful in explaining that type of aerosol?
 5. What is the controlling idea about the releasing mechanism?
 6. What do you think the writer's purpose is for writing this?
 7. Does the conclusion logically follow?
 8. What verb tense is used frequently? Is it active or passive?
 9. Make an outline of this essay.
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Here is another example of this type of process essay, originally printed in a popular science magazine. If you are not familiar with the following words, check their meaning in a dictionary, or chemistry book: *crystal, silicon, photovoltaic, lattice, electron, dopant, boron, phosphorous*.

HOW DO SOLAR CELLS MAKE POWER?

While often criticized for their expense and inefficiency, solar cells are unique among power generators in producing electricity indefinitely without wearing out. One solar cell, made from a single crystal of the element silicon, typically weighs about six grams and has a four-inch diameter. It is within this tiny package that the direct conversion of light to energy—the photovoltaic process—occurs.

A single silicon crystal is composed of trillions of atoms that are lined up neatly in a lattice structure. Each is connected to the next by four electrons orbiting its shell. Added to this tidy crystal structure are small amounts of dopants, boron and phosphorous. At the back of the cell, boron atoms bond with silicon atoms. Since boron has only three electrons, a vacancy—or instability—in each bond is created.

The other dopant, phosphorous, takes up just a fraction of an inch at the cell's surface. Since phosphorous atoms have five outer electrons, one is left over after each atom bonds with a neighboring silicon atom. Many of these extra electrons flow toward the holes in the boron-silicon lattice.

As the vacancies fill up with these electrons in the boron layer, an electrical field—a region of negative and positive charges—is built up between the phosphorous and boron. It is created because the electrons carry a negative charge to the boron and leave behind a positive charge in the phosphorous when they move to fill in the "holes."

When sunlight strikes the solar cell, trillions of energy particles called photons bombard the silicon and boron atoms, knocking their electrons loose. Many of the electrons are then swept into the electrical field. In the field, each electron picks up an energy potential. As they become energized, the electrons quickly penetrate the phosphorous layer and then travel through a wire, on the outside of the cell, to a light bulb. A typical cell generates half a volt. After passing through the bulb, the electron stream returns, via a wire in the back of the cell, to the boron layer to be used again. In this way, solar cells never run out of electricity.

—*Science Digest*, July 1984, p. 80.

EXERCISE 9 - 9

Answer the following questions about the previous essay on a separate piece of paper.

1. What is the process being analyzed? What type of process is it?
 2. What is the controlling idea of the essay? Where is it stated?
 3. What is the function of the dopants in the process?
 4. What is the function of sunlight in the process?
 5. What verb tense is used throughout? Why?
 6. Make an outline of the essay.
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