

Composition

Second Year

Second Semester

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The Process Analysis Essay

COMPOSITION SKILLS

Introductory Paragraphs: The Dramatic Entrance

The two types of introductions that you have been writing, the Funnel and the Turnabout, are good approaches to beginning essays. However, as your writing skills improve, you should strive not only for sentence variety, but for variety in essay openings as well. A dramatic, humorous, or otherwise interesting opening will generate interest in the reader. It is important, after all, to capture the reader's attention. The type of introduction that serves this purpose can be called the "Dramatic Entrance."

There are various ways to make a Dramatic Entrance. One way is to describe a scene that introduces your reader to the subject of your essay. Note how the writer opens an article on new ways couples are conquering the problem of infertility:

A group of women sit quietly chatting, their heads bowed over needlepoint and knitting, in the gracious parlor at Bourn Hall. The mansion's carved stone mantelpieces, rich wood paneling and crystal chandeliers give it an air of grandeur, a reflection of the days when it was the seat of the Earl De La Warr. In the well-kept gardens behind the house, Indian women in brilliant saris float on the arms of their husbands. The verdant meadows of Cambridgeshire lie serenely in the distance. To the casual observer, this stately home could be an elegant British country hotel. For the women and their husbands, however, it is a last resort.

Each has come to the Bourn Hall clinic to make a final stand against a cruel and unyielding enemy: infertility. . . .

—Claudia Wallis, "The New Origins of Life," *Time*, 46, Sept. 10, 1984.

For process papers, it is often useful to begin with a description of a scene that establishes the need for a process explanation. Observe how one student uses a description to set up a process paper:

The rain pours down as if running from a faucet, lightning streaks across the dark restless sky, and thunder pounds the roof and walls of the house. All of a sudden the wind kicks up. Trees sway madly back and forth; loose objects are picked up and thrown all around. The house creaks and moans with every gust of wind. Windows are broken by pieces of shingle from a neighbor's roof or by loose objects picked up by the wind. Power lines snap like thread. The unprepared house and its occupants are in grave danger as the awesome hurricane approaches. Had they prepared for the hurricane, they might not be in such danger. Indeed, careful preparation before a hurricane is essential to life and property.

—Donald Landry

EXERCISE 9 - 10

Answer the following questions about Donald Landry's introductory paragraph.

1. How does the writer organize this description? Is it organized chronologically, spatially, or both? Why?
2. What is the process that will be explained?
3. Does the introduction establish a need for the process?

EXERCISE 9 - 11

Study the following process topics. Select one and write an introduction that is a dramatic entrance.

1. How to fix a flat tire.
2. What to do in case of an accident.
3. How to make a cake (or some other food item).
4. How something is made (you choose).
5. How something works.
6. The life cycle of an insect.
7. How to repair something.
8. How to prepare for a natural disaster (a flood, storm, or the like).

WRITING ASSIGNMENT 9 - 2

In Exercise 9-11 you were asked to write a dramatic introduction. Now complete the essay.

Coherence

Participial Phrases

In the last chapter it was noted that adjective clauses can sometimes be reduced to participial phrases:

The man *who is riding* the bicycle is my brother.
The man *riding the bicycle* is my brother.

Reducing the adjective clause to a phrase helps to cut out unnecessary words, making the writing more precise and coherent. In this chapter, participial phrases reduced from adverbial clauses of time to achieve coherence in process writing will be discussed.

Since process essays are organized chronologically, like narrations, many of the transitional devices discussed in Chapter 2 will be used: sequence markers (*first, next, after that, and so forth*) and adverbial clauses of time. To achieve even more coherence in chronologically developed essays, use participial phrases to indicate the sequence of actions between clauses. Participial phrases not only make writing more coherent, they also add variety in sentence structure, thus improving the writing.

Adverbial clauses of time are used to clarify the time relationship between the action in one clause and the action in another. Adverbial clauses of time are used when you combine two independent clauses, making one subordinate—dependent. Adverbial clauses of time can be reduced to participial phrases when the subject of the adverbial clause is the same as the subject of the independent clause. Study the following examples:

First I went to the store. Then I went home. (TWO INDEPENDENT CLAUSES)

After I went to the store, I went home. (ADVERBIAL CLAUSE + INDEPENDENT CLAUSE)

After going to the store, I went home. (PARTICIPIAL PHRASE + INDEPENDENT CLAUSE)

Having gone to the store, I went home. (PARTICIPIAL PHRASE + INDEPENDENT CLAUSE)

The three most common types of participial phrases that can be used to reduce adverbial clauses of time to participial phrases include the following: the present participle (verb + *ing*), the perfect participle (*having* verb + *ed*), and the passive perfect participle (*having been* verb + *ed*). The type of participial phrase used depends on the sequence of actions in the clauses and the verb tenses. Study the following examples of uses of participial phrases reduced from adverbial clauses of time.

The Present Participle (Verb + ing). This participle can be used to indicate that the action in the participle takes place before, after, or at the same time as the action in the main clause. *After, before, and while* can appear before the participial phrase to clarify the time relationship:

Before John went to the store, he went to the bank.

Before *going* to the store, John went to the bank.

After he goes to the bank, he goes to the store.

After *going* to the bank, he goes to the store.

While John was going to the store, he saw an automobile accident.

While *going* to the store, John saw an automobile accident.

When John arrived at the bank, he saw a hold-up in progress.

Arriving at the bank, John saw a hold-up in progress.

After he goes to the service station, he will go home.
After going to the service station, he will go home.

The Perfect Participle (Having Verb + ed). This participle is used to introduce phrases in which the action occurs before the action in the main clause. It is not necessary to introduce the phrase with the adverbial *after*. Notice also that cause is sometimes implied in these phrases.

After John made a withdrawal at the bank, he went home.
Having made a withdrawal at the bank, John went home.

After John finishes with his chores, he will feel good.
Having finished with his chores, John will feel good.

The Passive Perfect Participle (Having Been Verb ed). This participle is used when the original clause was in the passive voice. It indicates that the action in the participial phrase precedes the action in the main clause. Again, note that it can also indicate cause.

After the candidate was nominated for the office, he took out a loan.
Having been nominated for the office, the candidate took out a loan.

The students were scared away after they were warned about cheating.
Having been warned about cheating, the students were scared away.

After he was given the chance to reform, the young man robbed a bank anyway.
Having been given a chance to reform, the young man robbed a bank anyway.

Sometimes these clauses can be further reduced by leaving off *having been* and starting the clause with the past participle. (These are often called *absolute constructions*.) Compare these sentences with those preceding:

Nominated for the office, the candidate took out a loan.

Warned about cheating, the students were scared away.

Given a chance to reform, the young man robbed a bank anyway.

Finally, note that if the subject of the sentence first appears in the adverbial clause, it is transferred to the main clause when the adverbial clause is reduced.

The monument was built in 1881. It honored the soldiers.
Built in 1881, *the monument* honored the soldiers.

EXERCISE 9 - 1 2

Reduce the adverbial clauses to participial phrases and rewrite the sentences on the blanks. Remember to put the subject of the sentence in the main clause. The first one is done.

1. Before the female monarch butterfly lays her eggs, it finds a milkweed plant.

Before laying her eggs, the female monarch butterfly finds a milkweed plant.

2. After the young monarch caterpillar is hatched, it eats the milkweed.

3. While the caterpillar eats the plant, it continues to grow.

4. As the caterpillar grows constantly, it sheds its skin several times.

5. After the caterpillar has been nourished by the milkweed for about three weeks, it spins a chrysalis.

6. After the green chrysalis has been spun, it is attached to a green leaf.

7. After the caterpillar has spent a week inside the chrysalis, an exciting transformation takes place.

8. When the caterpillar emerges from the chrysalis, it is no longer a caterpillar, but a beautiful monarch butterfly.

9. After the butterfly has been born, it begins to search for flowers in order to sip their nectar.

10. After the life cycle of the monarch butterfly has been completed, it will begin again.

EXERCISE 9 - 13

Study the following sets of sentences. Combine them in two ways, first using adverbial clauses of time and then using participial phrases. The first one is done for you.

1. You (are going to) begin to paint a room. You need to make adequate preparation.

Before you begin to paint a room, you need to make adequate preparation.

Before beginning to paint a room, you need to make adequate preparation.

2. First, you should go to a paint store and pick up a brochure with sample colors in it. Then you should take the brochure into the room you are going to paint and study it.

3. You should consider factors like the furniture in the room, the amount of light, and the size of the room. You should decide on the best color.

4. You have decided on the best color. Then go back to the paint store and buy as much paint as you need.

5. You are buying the paint. Do not forget to buy paint thinner, a roller and tray, brushes, drop cloths, and a step ladder.

6. You have finished buying the supplies. Ask the paint dealer to mix the paint on the machine.

7. You have bought all the supplies. You should prepare the room by removing from it as much as possible and covering the rest of the furniture and the floor with the drop cloths.

8. You have made preparation. You can begin to paint.

9. Set up the step ladder with the tray of paint. Paint the large areas of the walls with the roller.

10. You have finished painting the walls. Paint the corners and edges with the paint brushes.

11. The walls have been painted. The walls need to dry for twelve to twenty-four hours.

12. You are cleaning up. Do not forget to pour the remaining paint back into the can and cover the can tightly.

13. You have put the paint away. Clean the brushes, first in paint thinner and then in warm soapy water.
