



Process Essay

A Process Essay tells someone how to make something or explains the steps to complete a task.

Two fundamental principles must be observed:

- 1) All necessary steps or reasons must be given.
- 2) The explanation should be written in a systematic order, structured by a time sequence.

For example, you have not adequately told someone how to bake your favorite cake if you have forgotten to mention that two eggs are added to the batter. Similarly, an automobile manufacturer's directions on how to change a tire would be incomplete unless the manufacturer included a reminder to block the automobile from rolling. If the process is to be analyzed completely, all possible steps, details, and timeframes must be presented in the order they normally occur.

If you are reading the owner's manual as you change your tire, a suggestion to block the car from rolling would not be very helpful if it occurs in the last sentence of the directions. Nor would you find very helpful the notation to add two eggs to the batter if that reminder was made after you were told to bake the cake at 375 degrees for 45 minutes.

When you write your paragraphs:

- Each new step or activity is a new layer of development and becomes one of your primary topic sentences.
- You may wish to add more sentences following each of these topic sentences to explain the process or steps in more detail or to define a term.

The following paragraph explains, in a rather light tone, the process through which one father went while building a sand pile for his children. Notice the orderly, systematic development of details:

Building a sand pile can sometimes be exciting business. In order to get ours ready this summer, my wife and children started preparing last September, all four knowing by now that I am hesitant to undertake labor of even the most tender sort. So they mentioned the project often. During the Christmas holidays, they persuaded me to inquire about the price of sand. At Easter, they encouraged me to find siding boards; and early in June, they hinted that summer might be over before they got their sand pile. Circumstances and conscience permitting no further delay, I borrowed a shovel the first week in June, a wheelbarrow the second week, bought a small pick the third week, and in the fourth week, got under way when my oldest daughter asked if she could go visit a friend across town who had a sand pile. Not liking this kind of talk I firmly resolved to build the whole sand pile in one day. We had agreed to dig about twelve inches down in the arranged plot, board the sides, and then pile in the sand. I started digging at eight in the morning. At nine I thought perhaps a little water might soften the soil for digging, and having wet it down, thought I had better wait until it dried to just the right consistency. However, as soon as I went inside, the children decided it was already the right consistency—for them to wrestle in! After I had picked the children up out of the mud and helped them clean up—after all, the mud was my doing—I started digging again.

This paragraph is an engaging statement of how the father tried to build their sand pile—even though he was unsuccessful. He details his steps in careful order, and he adds detail to make his paragraph interesting.