

Process Analysis Paragraphs

GOAL: To learn how to write a process analysis paragraph

LANGUAGE FOCUS: Transition words and chronological order

What did you do to get ready for class today? Think about what you did first, then second, and so on. Perhaps you woke up and took a shower. After that, maybe you got dressed and combed your hair. What did you do next? You completed a process to prepare yourself to come to class.

The world is full of processes. At times, you are required to describe how to do something or how something works or happens. You can often use a process analysis paragraph to convey the information.

WHAT IS A PROCESS ANALYSIS PARAGRAPH?

In a process analysis paragraph, you divide a process into separate steps. Then you list or explain the steps in chronological, or time, order. Special time words or phrases allow you to tell the reader when a particular step occurs. The process analysis paragraph ends with a specific result—something that happens at the end of the process.

A process analysis paragraph

- explains a sequence or process
- presents facts and details in chronological order
- uses time words or phrases
- ends with a specified result

The best way to learn what a process analysis paragraph looks like is to read and study several examples. The three paragraphs that follow are about different topics, but each is an example of a process analysis paragraph.

Activity 1

Studying Example Process Analysis Paragraphs

Read and study these example paragraphs. Answer the questions.

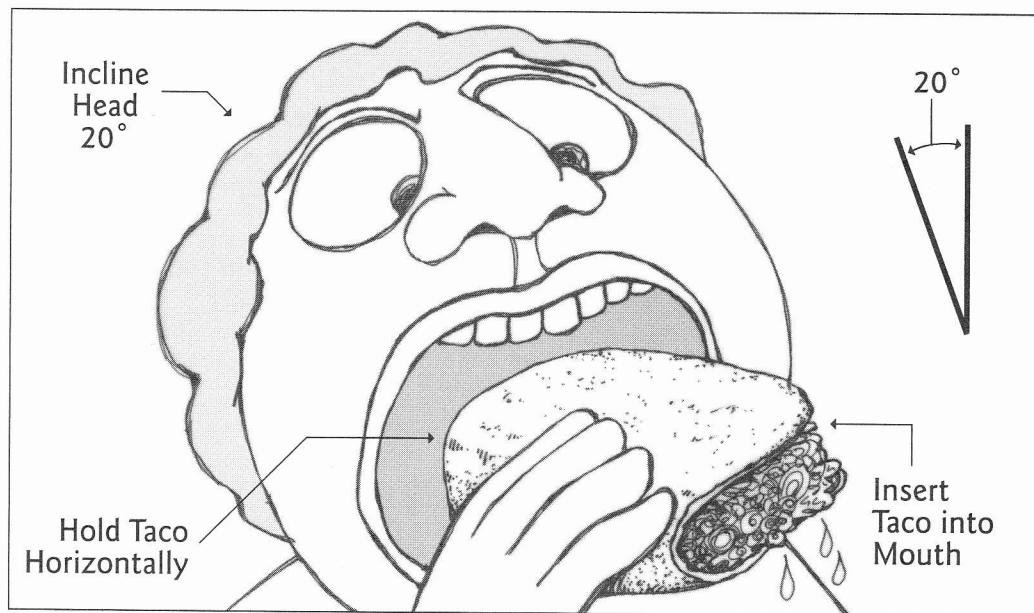
Paragraph 49

The topic of this paragraph is a popular Mexican dish. People have to be careful when they eat this food because it can be messy.

Before you read the paragraph, discuss these questions with your classmates.

1. What are some Mexican food dishes? Do you know the ingredients? If so, what are they?
2. Are any of these foods messy when you eat them? If so, what makes them messy?
3. Name a food that you ate that was very messy. Why was this particular food messy?

Now read the paragraph.



EXAMPLE PARAGRAPH

Eating a Messy Food

Eating a juicy taco is not easy—it requires following specific directions. First, you must be sure you are wearing clothes that you do not mind getting dirty. Eating a taco while you are wearing an expensive silk blouse is not a smart idea. The next thing that you should do is to decide if you want to eat the taco alone or in front of others. Eating a taco in front of someone you do not know very well, such as a new date, can be embarrassing. The last step is to plan your attack! It is a good idea to pick up the taco gently and

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carefully keep it in a horizontal position. As you raise the taco, slowly turn your head toward it and position your head at a twenty-degree angle. The last step is to put the corner of the taco in your mouth and bite. By following these simple directions, eating a taco can be a less messy experience.

messy: not neat

taco: a Mexican dish consisting of a corn tortilla wrapped around a mixture of ground beef, lettuce, tomato, cheese, and sauce

specific: exact

silk: an expensive kind of cloth made from thread produced by silkworms

embarrassing: causing a self-conscious or uncomfortable feeling

horizontal: across, from side to side (opposite: vertical)

angle: where two lines meet

1. What is the topic sentence of this paragraph?

2. This paragraph discusses three things about eating tacos. What are they?

a. *Do not wear expensive clothes because you might spill something on them.*

b. _____

c. _____

3. The writer's tone in this paragraph is
- serious
 - angry
 - humorous

Is there anything that should be added?

Paragraph 50

This paragraph is about the steps involved in applying to an American university.

Before you read the paragraph, discuss these questions with your classmates.

1. What are the steps in applying to a university?
2. What are the steps in applying to a community college?
3. Have you ever applied to a school online? How does it compare with a paper application?

Now read the paragraph.

Applying to an American University

EXAMPLE PARAGRAPH

Although the process for applying to an American university is not complicated, it is important to follow each step. The first step is to choose several schools that you are interested in attending. Next, write to these schools to ask for information, catalogues, and applications. You may also want to visit the schools' websites. After you have researched several schools, narrow your list to three to five. Then mail all the required forms and documents only to your final list of three to five schools. If the school of your choice requires you to take a standardized test such as the SAT, ACT or TOEFL, be sure to do so early. In addition, ask various school officials and teachers to write letters of recommendation for you if the university requires them. Finally, almost all schools have an application fee. This should be sent in the form of a check or money order. One last piece of advice is to start early because thousands of high school students are all applying at the same time.

complicated: difficult, complex

catalogues: information booklets

websites: locations of information on the World Wide Web (www)

researched: investigated

narrow: limit; reduce

SAT: Scholastic Aptitude Test

ACT: American College Test

TOEFL: Test of English as a Foreign Language

fee: a required payment

1. What is the topic sentence of this paragraph?

2. What is the author's main suggestion for a successful application process?

3. Does the paragraph explain the difference between the ACT, the SAT, and the TOEFL? Why or why not?

4. According to the information in this paragraph, how many steps are there? ____ Which of the steps has two parts? Write them here.

5. The writer's tone in this paragraph is

- a. serious
- b. angry
- c. humorous

Paragraph 51

This paragraph is about another kind of food, but it tells how to make the food instead of how to eat it. It describes how to make a Turkish beverage.

Before you read the paragraph, discuss these questions with your classmates.

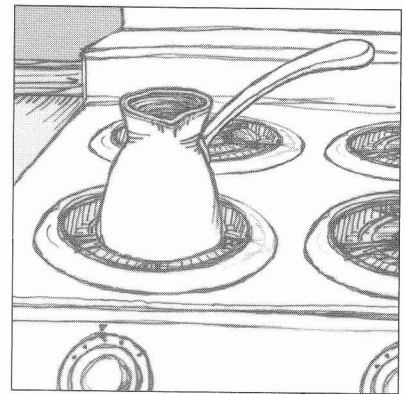
1. What are some of the most popular beverages? Are they served hot or cold?
Are they easy or difficult to prepare?
2. Have you ever visited Turkey? What information do you know about this country?
3. Can you name any popular beverages that come from Turkey?

Now read the paragraph.

EXAMPLE PARAGRAPH

A Unique Treat

Turkish coffee is not easy to make, but the result is worth it. First, you need a special coffeepot called a *jezve*. This is a long-handled, open brass or copper pot. First, pour three small cups of water into the pot. Heat the water until it boils. Then remove the pot from the heat. Add three teaspoons of coffee and three teaspoons of sugar to the water. Gently stir the mixture and return it to the heat until you can see foam on the top. When the foam appears, take the *jezve* from the heat and hit it lightly with a spoon to make the foam go down. Next, reheat the coffee and tap the pot two more times, making sure to remove it from the heat each time the foam forms. Before you serve the coffee, give everyone a small glass of cold water to drink with their hot, thick coffee.



unique: different from all others

result: the product of an action

brass: a gold-colored metal

copper: a reddish-gold metal

pour: let something flow from one container to another

boils: bubbles rapidly because of heat

remove: take away

stir: mix

foam: liquid with a lot of tiny air bubbles in it

1. List the first five steps in making Turkish coffee.

a. Get the special pot.

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

2. The process of making Turkish coffee includes more than ten small steps. Good writers do not always write one sentence for each small step. Instead, they combine some steps in longer sentences. Write a sentence from the paragraph that has more than one step in it.

3. Combine these two steps in one sentence: *First, pour three small cups of water into the pot. Heat the water until it boils.*

4. The author states that Turkish coffee is difficult to make. Find three examples from the paragraph that support this idea.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____



Building Better Sentences

Practice 13

Correct and varied sentence structure is essential to the quality of your sentences and paragraphs. For further practice with the sentences and paragraphs in this part of the unit, go to Practice 13 on page 240 in Appendix 5.

ORGANIZING A PROCESS ANALYSIS PARAGRAPH

The order of steps in a process is important to the success of a process analysis paragraph.



WRITER'S NOTE: Use Index Cards to Help You Organize

It is important that all the steps in your process analysis paragraph be in the correct order. A simple way for you to organize the steps is to write each one on a 3-by-5 index card. This organization method will allow you to arrange and rearrange them. It will also help point out any steps that may be missing.



LANGUAGE FOCUS: Transition Words and Chronological Order

A process analysis paragraph is usually arranged in *chronological* (time) order. In other words, the steps in the process are listed in the order that they occur in time. The three paragraphs in Activity 1 each describe how to do or make something. The writers use chronological order to show the reader when the steps in the process occur.

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Writers use *time phrases*, *time clauses*, and *time words* to show time order in a process. These are also called *transition words* because they mark the transition from one step to the next.

1. Study the time/transition words in the following list. In the right column are examples of how they are used in the paragraphs in Activity 1.

Time/transition words	Examples
Then	Then remove the water . . .
First, (Second, Third, etc.)	First, you must be sure . . .
Next, (The next step/thing)	The next thing you should do is decide . . .
The last step (Finally,)	The last step is to insert the corner . . .
Before	Before you serve the coffee . . .
After	After the foam forms . . .

2. Now turn back to paragraph 50 and circle all the transition words that you can find. Notice that some time phrases and words are followed by a comma when they appear at the beginning of a sentence. Time clauses (*After you have researched several schools,*) are always followed by a comma when they appear at the beginning of a sentence.

Activity 2

Sequencing Sentences

The following sentences make up a paragraph. Number them from 1 to 8 to indicate the best order. Then underline all the time words or phrases.

- a. ____ Hit the ball into the small box on the opposite side of the net.
- b. ____ After you hit the ball, continue swinging your racket down and across the front of your body.
- c. ____ Just before the ball reaches its peak, begin to swing your racket forward as high as you can reach.



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- d. ____ First, toss the ball with your left hand about three feet in the air. The best position for the ball is just to the right of your head.
- e. ____ At the same time, move your racket behind your shoulder with your right hand so that your elbow is pointed at the sky.
- f. ____ After you have completed the serve, your racket should be near your left knee.
- g. ____ Many people think serving in tennis is difficult, but the following steps show that it is quite easy.
- h. ____ If you are left-handed, you should substitute the words *left* and *right* in the preceding directions.

Activity 3**Sequencing Information in Paragraph Form**

Copy the sentences from Activity 2 in paragraph form. The result will be a process analysis paragraph. Give the paragraph an original title.

Paragraph 52

Activity 4**Analyzing and Understanding a Paragraph**

The paragraph in Activity 3 is a process analysis paragraph. You may want to read it again or refer to it as you complete the answers to these questions.

1. What is the general topic of the paragraph in Activity 3?

2. What is the topic sentence?

3. The main purpose of this paragraph is to explain how to serve a tennis ball. However, the author also expresses an opinion in the topic sentence. Read the topic sentence again. What is that opinion?

4. Look at this sentence from the paragraph: "The best position for the ball is just to the right of your head." Unlike the other sentences, this is not a step. What is the purpose of this sentence?

**WRITER'S NOTE: Define Technical Terms**

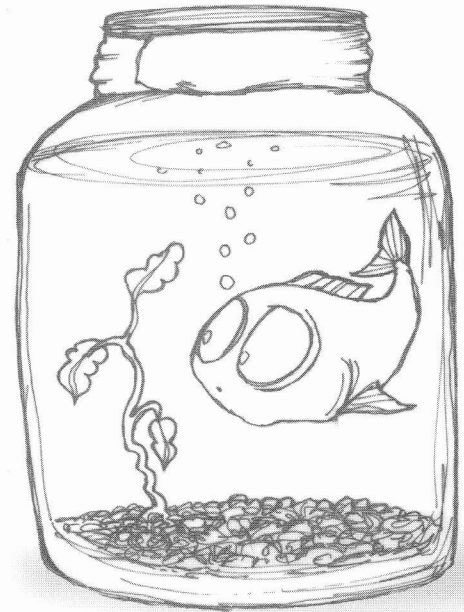
Consider your readers when you write a process analysis paragraph. Ask yourself this question: *How much do the readers already know about my subject?* If they do not have much information about your topic, you will need to use simple, clear terms to describe your steps. In your rough draft, underline all the technical terms you use. This will remind you to rephrase them or write a simple definition when you use them.

Activity 5**Commas and Time Expressions**

Transitional words, phrases, and clauses can show chronological order. Most transitional words and clauses are followed by a comma. (Refer to page 116 for more information if you need help.)

The following sentences make up a paragraph. Number them from 1 to 10 to indicate the best order. In addition, add commas where necessary. Hint: There are five mistakes.

- a. ____ First put the water and the plants in the jar.
- b. ____ One week later check the fish.
- c. ____ The fact that the fish is still alive shows that oxygen was added. If you look carefully at a plant stem when it is in sunlight, you can see the tiny bubbles of oxygen escaping from the plant.
- d. ____ When you do this, be sure to leave about an inch of empty space.
- e. ____ Keep the jar in a cool place indoors, but be sure that it receives some direct sunlight for a few hours each day.
- f. ____ When you are sure that the water in the jar is at room temperature add the fish.
- g. ____ Here is a simple science experiment that proves that plants produce oxygen.
- h. ____ For this experiment, you will need a clean quart jar with a tight lid, some tape, a goldfish, some water, and a few green plants.
- i. ____ Put the lid on as tightly as you can.
- j. ____ After that, wrap the lid with several layers of tape so that you are sure no air can pass through it.

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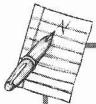
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Activity 6

Writing a Paragraph with Time Words

The sentences in Activity 5 explain the steps of a simple science experiment. After you have added commas and arranged the sentences in the correct order, write the completed process analysis paragraph on the lines below. Create a title for the paragraph.

Paragraph 53



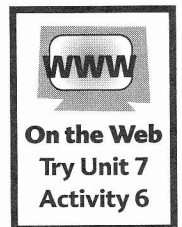
WRITER'S NOTE: Check Possessive Adjectives

When you write a sentence, you sometimes use possessive adjectives to refer to nouns or pronouns that have come before. Check to see if these possessive adjectives refer correctly to the noun or pronoun that they represent. Be careful with singular and plural usage.

Incorrect: One of the parent penguins keeps the egg on one of their feet at all times.

Correct: One of the parent penguins keeps the egg on one of its feet at all times.

If you have trouble with possessive adjective reference, circle all the possessive adjectives in your rough draft. Underline the nouns or pronouns to which they refer. Check for correctness. You may also want to ask a reader to check your draft for correct possessive adjective reference.



**Building Better Sentences****Practice 14**

Correct and varied sentence structure is essential to the quality of your sentences and paragraphs. For further practice with the sentences and paragraphs in this part of the unit, go to Practice 14 on page 241 in Appendix 5.

Activity 7**Original Writing Practice**

Write a process analysis paragraph. Follow these guidelines:

- Choose a topic.
- Write some notes about the steps in the process.
- Write a topic sentence with controlling ideas.
- Write supporting sentences that give the steps in chronological order. Use transition words to make sure the steps are in the correct order.

If you need help, study the example process analysis paragraphs in this unit. Be sure to refer to the seven steps in the writing process in Appendix 1 on pages 198–206.



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Activity 8**Peer Editing**

Work with a partner and exchange paragraphs from Activity 7. Then use Peer Editing Sheet 7 on page 261 to help you comment on your partner's paper. It is important to offer positive comments that will help the writer.

Activity 9**Additional Writing Assignments**

Here are some ideas for process analysis paragraphs. When you write your paragraph, follow the guidelines in Activity 7.

1. What do you need to do to get a driver's license?
2. What are the steps in writing a good paragraph?
3. What steps does a successful job applicant follow?
4. How would you propose to your boyfriend or girlfriend?
5. Describe how to use a search engine to explore a topic on the World Wide Web.