

The Process Paragraph

What Is a Process Paragraph?


When you explain how to do something (such as how to assemble a bicycle) or how something happens (such as how a glacier moves), you use a process to talk about the steps or events. A **process paragraph** is a group of sentences that tells this sequence.

A process paragraph consists of a series of connected steps. The steps must be logical and are often chronological in order. You can use time words and transition expressions to make the sequence of events or actions clear. Process writing is especially important when you want to explain the steps necessary to complete a task. Process paragraphs usually demonstrate how to do something.

You are probably familiar with a common kind of process writing: a recipe. For the result to be a success, the steps in a recipe must be clear, in the correct order, and concise. In academic settings, process writing is commonly used in science classes and labs, information technology courses, and many other disciplines.

PRACTICE i

POLYGRAPH TESTING

Many people know the terms *polygraph* and *lie detector test*, but many are not familiar with how  test actually works. The test uses a process that analyzes the **physiological** reactions in a person's body while he or she answers questions. First, a **device** called a pneumograph is attached to a person's chest to record breathing patterns. Any abnormalities in **respiratory** patterns are recorded during an official interview. Next, a machine similar to those used in doctors' offices is attached to the person's upper arm to measure blood pressure. During this part of the polygraph test, the **pulse** and changes in blood pressure and heartbeat are recorded. Finally, skin responses are used as part of the lie detection examination. Usually, the **tips** of a person's fingers are attached to **electrodes**. An abnormal amount of sweating is an indicator that the person may be lying. After the **preceding** steps have been followed, polygraph experts analyze the results. From the data, the experts may conclude that the person is telling the truth, or they may decide that the person is most likely lying.

Vocabulary :

physiological:

relating to the physical processes of an organism

device: a machine **respiratory:**

breathing

pulse: rhythmic beats caused by the contractions of the heart

tip: the point or end of an object

electrode: a device

used to transmit electric current

preceding:

previous, former

Questions :

1. *What is the topic sentence of this paragraph?*
2. *Reread the body of the paragraph and look for the three parts of the polygraph test process. What are they?*
2. *Find five transition expressions in the paragraph that show time or the passage of time. Write them here.*
4. *In process paragraphs, the topic sentence and the concluding sentence usually have a different relationship than in the other kinds of paragraphs you have studied. The concluding sentence is often about the result of the process and does not necessarily reflect the topic sentence. Reread and underline the concluding sentence. What is the final result of the polygraph process?*
5. *Where would you insert this sentence in the paragraph? (Make a *5 in the paragraph between the two sentences.)*

This portion of the polygraph test that analyzes blood pressure is often shown in movies and television shows.

6. *Where would you insert this sentence in the paragraph? (Make a *6 in the paragraph between the two sentences.)*

These electrodes record the amount of perspiration that a person develops while he or she is answering questions.

Practice II.

DNA THE EASY WAY

Believe it or not, the process of completing a DNA test is not very difficult. First of all, human cells must be collected. The cells can be collected from a person's **cheek** using a **swab**. The next step is to send this cell sample to a laboratory, where scientists **extract** the DNA from the swab and create many samples from it. Then the samples are put into a gel mixture, and are subjected to an electric current. A DNA **probe** can then be used, which attaches itself to the sample. Each person produces a unique location of DNA attachment, and this is how the identification works. Ultimately, scientists develop the film of this unique DNA **strand**. This type of DNA test becomes more **reliable** as more probes are used to test the strand. DNA testing has become very popular, so it is now available on the Internet. Ordinary people can now order in-home DNA tests and get their results in just a few days.

QUESTIONS

1. *What is the topic sentence of this paragraph?*
2. *The paragraph tells how simple DNA testing is done. Fill in the missing information about the test (the steps) from the paragraph*

Step 1: Collect the sample

Step 2:

Step 3: Extract the DNA

Step 4: Create many samples

Step 5:

Step 6: Add electric current

Step 7:

Step 8: Analyze the probe's location

Step 9:

3. *In "Polygraph Testing" paragraph earlier, you located transition words that show a time relationship. Two of them were first and finally. What two transition words or phrases in "DNA the Easy Way" can you find that have similar meanings?*

first = finally =

4. *Reread the last two sentences in the paragraph. What surprising information is given in these sentences? With what idea do they conclude the paragraph?*
5. *Where would you insert this sentence in the paragraph? (Make a *5 in the paragraph between the two sentences.)*

This electric current separates the smaller DNA samples from the larger ones.

6. *Where would you insert this sentence in the paragraph? (Make a *6 in the paragraph between the two sentences.)*

The key to using DNA testing is analyzing where this probe attaches itself.

Transition●Expressions

In process writing, transition words and expressions are needed specifically to make the steps in the process clear. These transition expressions help the ideas or steps in the process flow from one to the next so that the reader can follow them logically and easily. Without the appropriate transition expressions, the paragraph is just a list of steps.

First

Function: signals the first step

Use: *First* is an adverb and is usually followed by a subject and a verb. However, *first* can also come in the middle or at the end of the sentence. In many cases, the imperative verb form (command form) comes after the word *first* to give directions.

Example: First, apply for the job.

Next

Function: signals the step after the previous step or action

Use: *Next* is an adverb. It can come at the beginning or at the end of a sentence. Just as you can with *first*, you can follow *next* with a subject and a verb or use the imperative form.

Example: Next, schedule an interview.

When *next* comes at the end of a sentence, no comma is necessary.

Example: Emilio went for an interview next.

Then

Function: signals the step after the previous step or action

Use: *Then* is an adverb. The most common position for *then* is at the beginning of a sentence, followed by the subject and verb.

Example: Then Emilio waited for an offer.

A more formal position of *then* is directly after the subject and before the verb.

Example: Emilio then waited for an offer.

Punctuation Note: No comma is necessary with *then*.

Finally

Function: signals the last step in the process or action

Use: *Finally* is an adverb. It is used at the beginning of a sentence to signal the last, or final, step of a process.

Example: Finally, send the company a thank-you note for the interview.

Finally can appear in the middle and at the end of the sentence. In these cases, it means “at last” and does not signal the last step in a process.

Example: Emilio finally made an appointment for an interview.

Punctuation Note: When *finally* comes at the beginning of a sentence, it is followed by a comma.

Do not confuse the transition words *finally* and *in conclusion*. The adverb *finally* is not used to signal the end of the paragraph. It is used to signal the final step (reason, example) in a sequence.

Example: *First*, weigh the patient on the scale. *Next*, take the patient’s temperature. *Then* take his or her blood pressure. *Finally* (NOT *in conclusion*), tell the patient to wait for the doctor.

Practice

Read the paragraph. Fill in each blank with first, next, then, or finally. Some transitions may fit into more than one blank. Add correct punctuation where necessary.

It is easy to make a telephone call if you follow these simple directions. To make the call, _____ you must know the telephone number you are dialing. _____ pick up the phone and listen for the dial tone. _____ you can start dialing the telephone number. If the person answers the phone, begin speaking. If an answering machine clicks on, wait for the beep and record your message. _____ hang up the phone when you have finished your call.

Production Activity

Choose a topic of your own and write a process paragraph.