# Process Analysis

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## WHAT IS PROCESS ANALYSIS?

Perhaps you've noticed the dogged determination of small children when they're learning how to do something new. Whether trying to tie their shoelaces or tell time, little children struggle along, creating knotted tangles, confusing the hour with the minute hand. But they don't give up. Mastering such basic skills makes them feel less dependent on the adults of the world—all of whom seem to know how to do everything. Actually, none of us is born knowing how to do very much. We spend a good deal of our lives learning—everything from speaking our first word to balancing our first bank statement. Indeed, the milestones in our lives are often linked to the processes we have mastered: how to cross the street alone; how to drive a car; how to make a speech without being paralyzed by fear.

**Process analysis,** a technique that explains the steps or sequence involved in doing something, satisfies our need to learn as well as our curiosity about how the world works. All the self-help books flooding the market today (*Managing Stress, How to Make a Million in Real Estate, Ten Days to a Perfect Body*) are examples of process analysis. The instructions on the federal tax form and the recipes in a

cookbook are also process analyses. Several television classics, now seen in reruns, capitalize on our desire to learn how things happen: *The Wild Kingdom* shows how animals survive in faraway lands, and *Mission: Impossible* has great fun detailing elaborate plans for preventing the triumph of evil. Process analysis can be more than merely interesting or entertaining, though; it can be of critical importance. Consider a waiter hurriedly skimming the "Choking Aid" instructions posted on a restaurant wall or an air-traffic controller following emergency procedures in an effort to prevent a midair collision. In these last examples, the consequences could be fatal if the process analyses are slipshod, inaccurate, or confusing.

Undoubtedly, all of us have experienced less dramatic effects of poorly written process analyses. Perhaps you've tried to assemble a bicycle and spent hours sorting through a stack of parts, only to end up with one or two extra pieces never mentioned in the instructions. Or maybe you were baffled when putting up a set of wall shelves because the instructions used unfamiliar terms like *mitered cleat, wing nut,* and *dowel pin.* No wonder many people stay clear of anything that actually admits "assembly required."

## How Process Analysis Fits Your Purpose and Audience

You will use process analysis in two types of writing situations: (1) when you want to give step-by-step instructions to readers showing how they can do something, or (2) when you want readers to understand how something happens even though they won't actually follow the steps outlined. The first kind of process analysis is **directional;** the second is **informational.**

When you look at the cooking instructions on a package of frozen vegetables or follow guidelines for completing a job application, you're reading directional process analysis. A serious essay explaining how to select a college and a humorous essay telling readers how to get on the good side of a professor are also examples of directional process analysis. Using a variety of tones, informational process analyses can range over equally diverse subjects; they can describe mechanical, scientific, historical, sociological, artistic, or psychological processes: for example, how the core of a nuclear power plant melts down; how television became so important in political campaigns; how abstract painters use color; how to survive a blind date.

Process analysis, both directional and informational, is often appropriate in *problem-solving situations.* In such cases, you say, "Here's the problem and here's what should be done to solve the problem." Indeed, college assignments frequently take the form of problem-solving process analyses. Consider these examples:

> Because many colleges and universities have changed the eligibility requirements for financial aid, fewer students can depend on loans or scholarships. How can students cope with the increasing costs of obtaining a higher education?

Over the years, there have been many reports citing the abuse of small children in day-care centers. What can parents do to guard against the mistreatment of their children?

Community officials have been accused of mismanaging recent unrest over the public housing ordinance. Describe the steps the officials took, indicating why you think their strategy was unwise. Then explain how you think the situation should have been handled.

Note that the last assignment asks students to explain what's wrong with the current approach before they present their own step-by-step solution. Problem-solving process analyses are often organized in this way. You may also have noticed that none of the assignments explicitly requires an essay response using process analysis. However, the wording of the assignments—*"Describe the steps," "What* can parents *do," "How* can students *cope"*—indicates that process analysis would be an appropriate strategy for developing the responses.

Assignments don't always signal the use of process analysis so clearly. But during the prewriting stage, as you generate material to support your thesis, you'll often realize that you can best achieve your purpose by developing the essay—or part of it—using process analysis.

Sometimes process analysis will be the primary strategy for organizing an essay; other times it will be used to help make a point in an essay organized around another pattern of development. Let's take a look at process analysis as a supporting strategy.

Assume that you're writing a *causal analysis* examining the impact of television commercials on people's buying behavior. To help readers see that commercials create a need where none existed before, you might describe the various stages in an advertising campaign to pitch a new, completely frivolous product. In an essay *defining* a good boss, you could convey the point that effective managers must be skilled at settling disputes by explaining the steps your boss took to resolve a heated disagreement between two employees. If you write an *argumentation-persuasion* paper urging the funding of programs to ease the plight of the homeless, you would have to dramatize for readers the tragedy of these people's lives. To achieve your purpose, you could devote part of the paper to an explanation of how the typical street person goes about finding a place to sleep and getting food to eat.

At this point, you have a good sense of the way writers use process analysis to achieve their purpose and to connect with their readers. Now take a moment to look closely at the photograph of the brand-new mall at the beginning of this chapter. Imagine you're writing an article, accompanied by the photo, for a local newspaper. Your purpose is to suggest to local store owners, who are losing business to the new mall, ways they might attract more customers to the area's downtown shopping district. Jot down some ideas you might include in a *process analysis* explaining the steps the business owners should take.

## PREWRITING STRATEGIES

The following checklist shows how you can apply to process analysis some of the prewriting strategies discussed in Chapter 2.

### PROCESS ANALYSIS: A PREWRITING CHECKLIST

*Choose a Process to Analyze*

- ☐ What processes do you know well and feel you can explain clearly (for example, how to jog without injury, how lobbyists influence legislators)?
- ☐ What processes have you wondered about (how to meditate; how the greenhouse effect works)?
- ☐ What process needs changing if a current problem is to be solved?

*Determine Your Purpose, Audience, Tone, and Point of View*

- ☐ What is the central purpose of your process analysis? Do you want to inform readers so that they will acquire a new skill (how to buy a used car)? Do you want readers to gain a better understanding of a complex process (how young children develop a conscience)? Do you want to persuade readers to accept your point of view about a process, perhaps even urge them to adopt a particular course of action ("If you disagree with the proposed plan for reorganizing academic advisement, you should take the following steps to register your protest with college officials")?
- ☐ What audience are you writing for? What will they need to know to understand the process? What will they not need to know?
- ☐ What point of view will you adopt when addressing the audience?
- ☐ What tone do you want to project? Do you want to come across as serious, humorous, sarcastic, ironic, objective, impassioned?

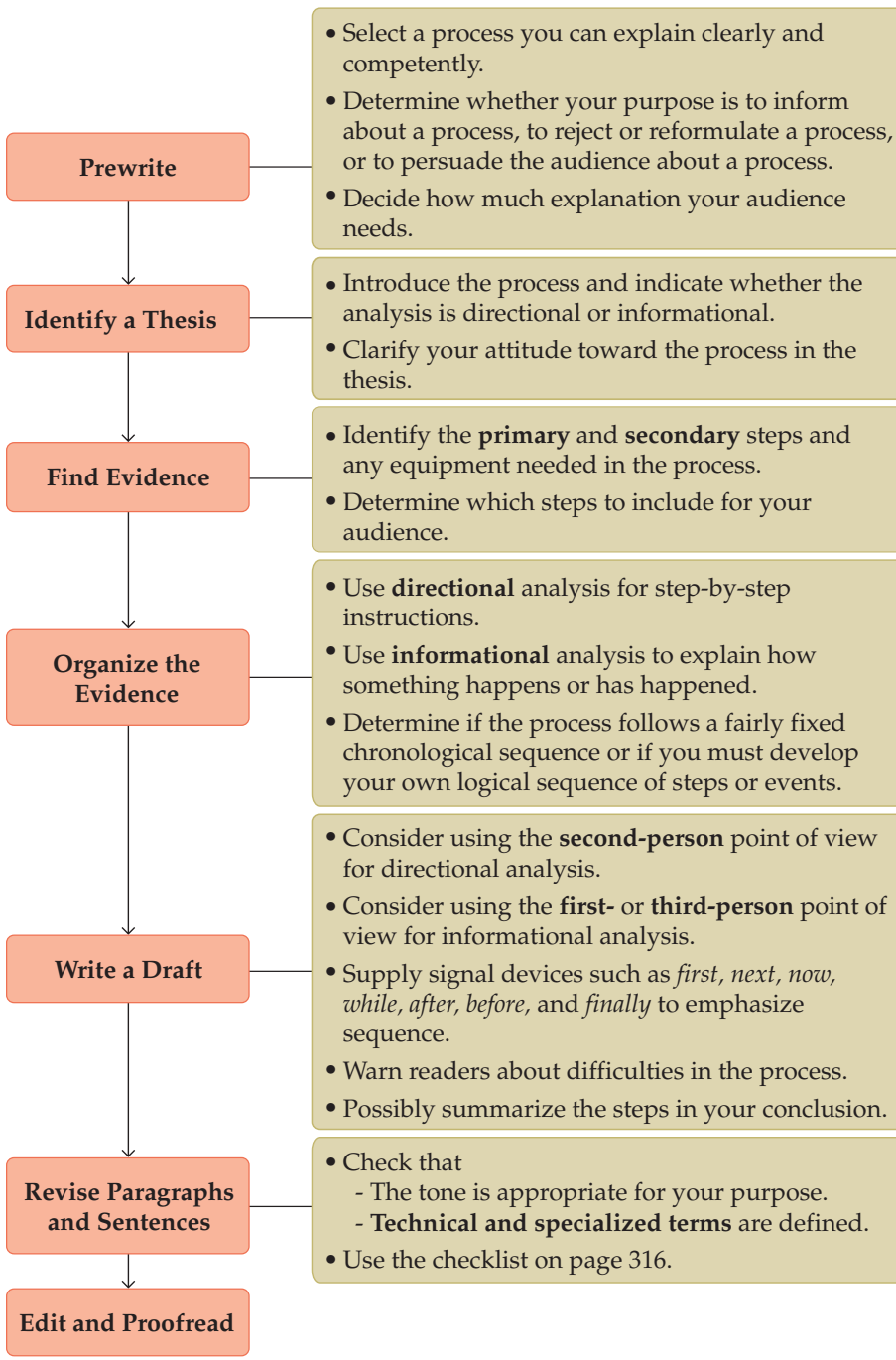
*Use Prewriting to Generate the Stages of the Process*

- ☐ How could brainstorming or mapping help you identify primary and secondary steps in the process?
- ☐ How could brainstorming or mapping help you identify the ingredients or materials that the reader will need?

## STRATEGIES FOR USING PROCESS ANALYSIS IN AN ESSAY

After prewriting, you're ready to draft your essay. Figure 14.1 and the suggestions that follow will be helpful whether you use process analysis as a dominant or supportive pattern of development.

**FIGURE 14.1**
## Development Diagram: Writing a Process Analysis Essay



1. **Formulate a thesis that clarifies your attitude toward the process.** Like the thesis in any other paper, the thesis in a process analysis should do more than announce your subject ("Here's how the college's work-study program operates"). It should also state or imply your attitude toward the process: "Enrolling in the college's work-study program has become unnecessarily complicated. The procedure could be simplified if the college adopted the helpful guidelines prepared by the Student Senate."

2. **Keep your audience in mind when deciding what to cover.** Only after you gauge how much your readers already know (or don't know) about the process can you determine how much explanation to provide. Suppose you've been asked to write an article informing students of the best way to use the university computer center. The article will be published in a newsletter for computer science majors. You would seriously misjudge your audience—and probably put them to sleep—if you explained in detail how to transfer material from disk to disk or how to delete information from a file. However, an article on the same topic prepared for a general audience—your composition class, for instance—would probably require such detailed instructions. The audience's level of knowledge also determines whether you should define technical terms. The computer science majors wouldn't need terms such as *modem, interface,* and *byte* defined, whereas students in your composition class would likely require easy-to-understand explanations. Indeed, with any general audience, you should use as little specialized language as possible.

   To determine how much explanation is needed, put yourself in your readers' shoes. Don't assume readers will know something just because you do. Ask questions like these about your audience: "Will my readers need some background about the process before I describe it in depth?" and "If my essay is directional, should I specify near the beginning the ingredients, materials, and equipment needed to perform the process?" (For more help in analyzing your audience, see the checklist on page 310.)

3. **Focusing on your purpose, thesis, and audience, explain the process—one step at a time.** After using prewriting techniques to identify primary and secondary steps and needed equipment, you're ready to organize your raw material into an easy-to-follow sequence. At times your purpose will be to explain a process with a *fairly fixed chronological sequence:* how to make a pizza, how to pot a plant, how to change a tire. In such cases, you should include all necessary steps in the correct chronological order. However, if a strict chronological ordering of steps means that a particularly important part of the sequence gets buried in the middle, the sequence probably should be juggled so that the crucial step receives the attention it deserves.

   Other times your goal will be to describe a process having *no commonly accepted sequence.* For example, in an essay explaining how to discipline a child or how to pull yourself out of a blue mood, you will have to come up with your own definition of the key steps and then arrange those steps in some logical order. You may also use process analysis to *reject* or *reformulate* a

traditional sequence. In this case, you would propose a more logical series of steps: "Our system for electing congressional representatives is inefficient and undemocratic; it should be reformed in the following ways."

Whether the essay describes a generally agreed-on process or one that is not commonly accepted, you must provide all the details needed to explain the process. Your readers should be able to understand, even visualize, the process. There should be no fuzzy patches or confusing cuts from one step to another. Don't, however, go into obsessive detail about minor stages or steps. If you dwell for several hundred words on how to butter the pan, your readers will never stay with you long enough to learn how to make the omelet.

It's not unusual, especially in less defined sequences, for some steps in a process to occur simultaneously and to overlap. When this happens, you should present the steps in the most logical order, being sure to tell your readers that several steps are not perfectly distinct and may merge. For example, in an essay explaining how a species becomes extinct, you would have to indicate that overpopulation of hardy strains and destruction of endangered breeds are often simultaneous events. You would also need to clarify that the depletion of food sources both precedes and follows the demise of a species.

4. **Sort out the directional and informational aspects of the process analysis.** As you may have discovered when prewriting, directional and informational process analyses are not always distinct. In fact, they may be complementary: You may need to provide background information about a process before outlining its steps. For example, in a paper describing a step-by-step approach for losing weight, you might first need to explain how the body burns calories. Or, in a paper on gardening, you could provide some theory about the way organic fertilizers work before detailing a plan for growing vegetables. Although both approaches may be appropriate in a paper, one generally predominates.

   The kind of process analysis chosen has implications for the way you will relate to your reader. When the process analysis is *directional,* the reader is addressed in the *second person:* "You should first rinse the residue from the radiator by . . . " or "Wrap the injured person in a blanket and then . . . " (In the second example, the pronoun *you* is implied.)

   If the process analysis has an *informational* purpose, you won't address the reader directly but will choose from a number of other options. For example, you might use the *first person.* In a humorous essay explaining how not to prepare for finals, you could cite your own disastrous study habits: "Filled with good intentions, I sit on my bed, pick up a pencil, open my notebook, and promptly fall asleep." The *third-person singular or plural* can also be used in informational process essays: "The door-to-door salesperson walks up the front walk, heart pounding, more than a bit nervous, but also challenged by the prospect of striking a deal," or "The new recruits next underwent a series of important balance tests in what was called the 'horror chamber.'" Whether you use the first, second, or third person, avoid shifting point of view midstream.

You might have noticed that in the third-person examples, the present tense ("walks up") is used in one sentence, the past tense ("underwent") in the other. The past tense is appropriate for events already completed, whereas the present tense is used for habitual or ongoing actions. ("A dominant male goose usually flies at the head of the V-wedge during migration.") The present tense is also effective when you want to lend a sense of dramatic immediacy to a process, even if the steps were performed in the past. ("The surgeon gently separates the facial skin and muscle from the underlying bony skull.") As with point of view, be on guard against changing tenses in the middle of your explanation.

5. **Provide readers with the help they need to follow the sequence.** As you move through the steps of a process analysis, don't forget to *warn readers about difficulties* they might encounter. For example, in a paper on the artistry involved in butterflying a shrimp, you might write something like this:

> Next, make a shallow cut with your sharpened knife along the convex curve of the shrimp's intestinal tract. The tract, usually a faint black line along the outside curve of the shrimp, is faintly visible beneath the translucent flesh. But some shrimp have a thick orange, blue, or gray line instead of a thin black one. In all cases, be careful not to slice too deeply, or you will end up with two shrimp halves instead of one butterflied shrimp.

You have told readers what to look for, citing the exceptions, and have warned them against making too deep a cut. Anticipating spots where communication might break down is a key part of writing an effective process analysis.

*Transitional words and phrases* are also critical in helping readers understand the order of the steps being described. Time signals like *first, next, now, while, after, before,* and *finally* provide readers with a clear sense of the sequence. Entire sentences can also be used to link parts of the process, reminding your audience of what has already been discussed and indicating what will now be explained: "Once the panel of experts finishes its evaluation of the exam questions, randomly selected items are field-tested in schools throughout the country."

6. **Select and maintain an appropriate tone.** When writing a process analysis essay, be sure your tone is consistent with your purpose, your attitude toward your subject, and the effect you want to have on readers. When explaining how fraternities and sororities recruit new members, do you want to use an objective, nonjudgmental tone, or do you want to project an angry, even accusatory tone? To decide, take into account readers' attitudes toward your subject. Does your audience have a financial or emotional investment in the process being described? Does your own interest in the process coincide or conflict with that of your audience? Awareness of your readers' stance can be

crucial. Consider another example: Assume you're writing a letter to the director of the student health center proposing a new system to replace the currently chaotic one. You'd do well to be tactful in your criticisms. Offend your reader, and your cause is lost. If, however, the letter is slated for the college newspaper and directed primarily to other students, you could adopt a more pointed, even sarcastic tone. Readers, you would assume, will probably share your view and favor change.

Once you settle on the essay's tone, maintain it throughout. If you're writing a light piece on the way computers are taking over our lives, you wouldn't include a grim, step-by-step analysis of the way confidential computerized medical records may become public.

7. **Open and close the process analysis effectively.** A paper developed primarily through process analysis should have a strong beginning. The introduction should state the process to be described and imply whether the essay has an informational or directional intent.

   If you suspect readers are indifferent to your subject, use the introduction to motivate them, telling them how important the subject is:

> Do you enjoy the salad bars found in many restaurants? If you do, you probably have noticed that the vegetables are always crisp and fresh--no matter how many hours they have been exposed to the air. What are the restaurants doing to make the vegetables look so inviting? There's a simple answer. Many restaurants dip and spray the vegetables with potent chemicals to make them look appetizing.

   If you think your audience may be intimidated by your subject (perhaps because it's complex or relatively obscure), the introduction is the perfect spot to reassure them that the process being described is not beyond their grasp:

> Studies show that many people prefer to accept a defective product rather than deal with the uncomfortable process of making a complaint. But once a few easy-to-learn basics are mastered, anyone can register a complaint that gets results.

   Most process analysis essays don't end as soon as the last step in the sequence is explained. Instead, they usually include some brief final comments that round out the piece and bring it to a satisfying close. This final section of the essay may summarize the main steps in the process—not by repeating the steps verbatim but by rephrasing and condensing them in several concise sentences. The conclusion can also be an effective spot to underscore the significance of the process, recalling what may have been said in the introduction about the subject's importance. Or the essay can end by echoing the note of reassurance that may have been included at the start.

## REVISION STRATEGIES

Once you have a draft of the essay, you're ready to revise. The following checklist will help you and those giving you feedback apply to process analysis some of the revision techniques discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

### PROCESS ANALYSIS: A REVISION/PEER REVIEW CHECKLIST

*Revise Overall Meaning and Structure*

- ☐ What purpose does the process analysis serve—to inform, to persuade, or to do both?
- ☐ Is the process analysis primarily *directional* or *informational*? How can you tell?
- ☐ Where does the process seem confusing? Where have steps been left out? Which steps need simplifying?
- ☐ What is the essay's tone? Is the tone appropriate for the essay's purpose and readers? Where are there distracting shifts in tone?

*Revise Paragraph Development*

- ☐ Does the introduction specify the process to be described? Does it provide an overview? Should it?
- ☐ Which paragraphs are difficult to follow? Have any steps or materials been omitted or explained in too much or too little detail? Which paragraphs should warn readers about potential trouble spots or overlapping steps?
- ☐ Where are additional time signals (*after, before, next*) needed to clarify the sequence within and between paragraphs? Where does overreliance on time signals make the sequence awkward and mechanical?
- ☐ Which paragraph describes the most crucial step in the sequence? How has the step been highlighted?
- ☐ How could the conclusion be more effective?

*Revise Sentences and Words*

- ☐ What technical or specialized terms appear in the essay? Have they been sufficiently explained? Where could simpler, less technical language be used?
- ☐ Are there any places where the essay's point of view awkwardly shifts? How could this problem be corrected?
- ☐ Does the essay use correct verb tenses—the past tense for completed events, the present tense for habitual or ongoing actions?
- ☐ Where does the essay use the passive voice ("The hole is dug")? Would the active voice ("You dig the hole") be more effective?

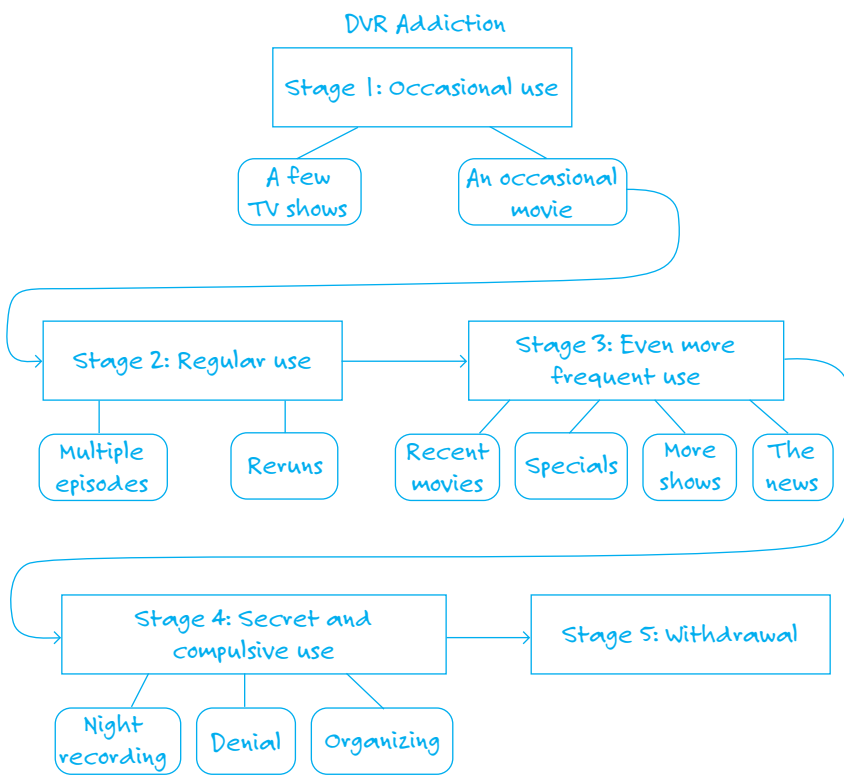
# STUDENT ESSAY: FROM PREWRITING THROUGH REVISION

The student essay that follows was written by Robert Barry in response to this assignment:

> In "Black Talk and Pop Culture," Leslie Savan describes how the language of African-Americans has infiltrated, if not dominated, the language of the general population. Think of something that is relatively new in our culture and show, step-by-step, how it has worked its way into everyday life. Your essay, either serious or light in tone, might focus on a form of entertainment, a pastime, an invention, or the like.

Before writing his essay, Robert used the prewriting strategy of *mapping* to generate material for the subject he decided to write on: DVR addiction. Then, with his map as a foundation, he prepared a topic outline that organized and developed his thoughts more fully. Both the map and the outline are reprinted here.

**Mapping**



**Outline**

Thesis: Without realizing it, a person can turn into a compulsive recorder. This movement from innocent hobby to full-blown addiction occurs in several stages.

I. Stage One: Occasional use
   A. TV show reruns
      1. Seinfeld
      2. The Simpsons
   B. An occasional movie

II. Stage Two: More frequent use
   A. Many episodes of Seinfeld and The Sopranos
   B. Episodes of Heroes, The Simpsons, and Grey's Anatomy

III. Stage Three: Much more frequent use
   A. Recording of news shows
   B. Recording of recent movies--add examples
   C. Not enough time to watch recorded shows

IV. Stage Four: Secret and compulsive use
   A. Reaction to family's concern
      1. Denial
      2. Sneaking downstairs to record at night
   B. Obsessive organization of recording schedule

V. Stage Five: Withdrawal
   A. Forced withdrawal at college
   B. Success at last

After looking at Robert's map and outline, read his paper, "Becoming a Recordoholic," noting the similarities and differences among his map, outline, and final essay. You'll see that Robert dropped one idea (recording news shows), expanded other points (his obsessive organization by means of a secret calendar), and added some completely new details (his near backsliding during withdrawal). Note, too, that the analogy between DVR addiction and alcoholism doesn't appear in either the map or the outline. The analogy didn't occur to Robert until he began writing his first draft. Despite these differences, the map and outline depict essentially the same five stages in DVR addiction as the essay. Finally, as you read the essay, consider how well it applies the principles of process analysis discussed in this chapter. (The commentary that follows the paper will help you look at Robert's essay more closely and will give you some sense of how he went about revising.)

Becoming a Recordoholic

by Robert Barry

1 As a technological breakthrough, the DVR(Digital Video Recorder) has been an enormous success--almost as popular as television itself. Not only can you watch TV while you record other programs but you can pause and rewind live TV. Better yet, you can program the DVR to record a roster of programs--even entire seasons--with a simple push of a button. No consumer warning labels are attached to this ingenious invention,DVRs but there should be. DVRs can be dangerous. Barely aware of what is happening, a person can turn into a compulsive recorder. The descent from innocent hobby to full-blown addiction takes place in several stages.

Introduction

Start of two-sentence thesis

2 In the first innocent stage, the unsuspecting person buys a DVR for occasional use. I was at this stage when I asked my parents if they would buy me a DVR as a birthday gift. With the DVR, I could record reruns of Seinfeld and new episodes of The Simpsons while watching Grey's Anatomy. The DVR was perfect. I hooked it up to the TV in my bedroom; recorded the antics of Jerry, Elaine, George, and Kramer and the adventures of my favorite cartoon family, while watching the residents of Seattle Grace save lives and make utter fools of themselves. Occasionally,I'd DVR a movie, which my friends and I watched over the weekend. I recorded only a few shows, and once I watched those shows, l'd delete then from the DVR. In these early days, my use of the DVR was the equivalent of light social drinking.

Topic sentence

First stage in process (DVR addiction)

Beginning of analogy to alcoholism

3 In the second phase on the road to recordoholism, an individual uses the DVR more frequently and begins to stockpile recordings rather than watch them. My troubles began in July when my family and I went to the shore for two weeks of vacation. I set my DVR to record all five episodes of Seinfeld and The Sopranos, and two episodes each of Heroes, The Simpsons, and Grey's Anatomy, while I was at the beach working on my tan. Even I, an TV viewer, avid didn't have time to sit and watch all those shows. The DVR continued to record these programs, but there weren't enough hours in the day to watch everything and do my schoolwork, so the programs piled up in my DVR queue. How did I

Topic sentence

Second stage in process

resolve this problem? Very easily. I set my DVR to record episodes of Seinfeld three days a week, rather then five. However, with this notion that I had such control with my DVR, I began to realize that there were probably other shows out there that I could record and watch whereever I desired. I could DVR classics like Law & Order and Buffy the Vampire Slayer. Very quickly, I accumulated six Seinfelds, four Law & Orders, and three Buffys. Then a friend--who shall go nameless--told me that only 144 episodes of Buffy were ever made. Excited by the thought that I could acquire as impressive a collection of episodes as a Hollywood executive, I continued recording Buffy, even recording shows while I watched them. Clearly, my once innocent hobby was getting out of control. I was now using the DVR on a regular basis--the equivalent of several stiff drinks a day.

Continuation of analogy

Topic sentence

Third stage in process

In the third stage of recordoholism, the amount of recording increases significantly, leading to an even more irrational stockpiling of programs in the DVR queue. The catalyst that propelled me into this third stage was my parents' decision to get a premium movie package added to their cable. Selfless guy that I am, I volunteered to move my DVR in to the living room, where the connection was located. Now I could record all the most recent movies and specials. I began to record a couple of other shows every day. I also went movie-crazy and taped Gangs of New York, Barbershop 2, and The Godfather I, II, and III. I taped an HBO comedy special with Chris Rock and an MTV concert featuring Radiohead. Where did I get time to watch all these shows? I didn't. Using the DVR was more satisfying than watching. Reason and common sense were abandoned. Getting things on the DVR had become an obsession, and I was setting the DVR to record programs all the time. 4

Continuation of analogy

Topic sentence

Fourth stage in process

In the fourth stage, recordoholism creeps into other parts of the addict's life, influencing behavior in strange ways. Secrecy becomes commonplace. One day, my mother came into my room and asked about a recent test I had taken. What she didn't know was that the night before the exam, I had checked my DVR recording list and found that I had run out of storage space. For three hours after everyone went to bed, I watched episodes of The Sopranos so I could delete them and record a movie on Showtime. I was so tired the next morning that I wound up getting a bad grade 5

on my Biology exam. "Robert," my mother exclaimed, "isn't this getting a bit out of hand?" I assured her it was just a hobby, but I continued to sneak downstairs in the middle of the night to watch recorded shows, removing any trace of my presence from the living room when I was finished. Also, denial is not unusual during this stage of DVR addiction. At the dinner table, when my younger sister commented, "Robert records all the time," I laughingly told everyone--including myself--that the recording was no big deal. I was getting bored with it and was going to stop any day, I assured my family. Obsessive behavior also characterizes the fourth stage of recordoholism. Each week, I pulled out the TV magazine from the Sunday paper and went through it carefully, circling in red all the shows I wanted to record. Another sign of addiction was the secret calender I kept in my desk drawer. With more diligence than I ever had for any term paper, I would log in each program I recorded and plan for the coming week's recording schedule.

Continuation of analogy

6 In the final stage of an addiction, the individual either succumbs completely to the addiction or is able to break away from the habit. I broke my addiction, and I broke it cold turkey. This total withdrawal occurred when I went off to college. There was no point in taking my DVR to school because TVs were not allowed in the freshman dorms. Even though there were many things to occupy my time during the school week, cold sweats overcame me whenever I thought about everything on TV I was not recording. I even considered calling home and asking members of my family to record things for me, but I knew they would think I was crazy. At the beginning of the semester, I also had to resist the overwhelming desire to travel the three hours home every weekend so I could get my fix. But after a while, the urgent need to record subsided. Now, months later, as I write this, I feel detached and sober.

Topic sentence

Continuation of analogy

Final stage in process

7 I have no illusions, though. I know that once a recordoholic, always a recordoholic. Soon I will return home for the holidays, which, as everyone knows, can be a time for excess eating--and recording. But I will cope with the pressure. I will take each day one at a time. I plan to watch what I'm able to, and no more. And if I feel myself succumbing to the temptations of recording, I will pick up the telephone and dial the recordoholics' hot line: 1-800-DVR-STOP. I will win the battle.

Conclusion

Final references to analogy

## Commentary

### Purpose, Thesis, and Tone

Robert's essay is an example of *informational process analysis;* his purpose is to describe—rather than teach—the process of becoming a "recordoholic." The title, with its coined term *recordoholic,* tips us off that the essay is going to be entertaining. And the introductory paragraph clearly establishes the essay's playful, mock-serious tone. The tone established, Robert briefly defines the term *recordoholic* as a "compulsive recorder" and then moves to the essay's *thesis:* "Barely aware of what is happening, a person can turn into a compulsive recorder. The descent from innocent hobby to full-blown addiction takes place in several stages."

Throughout the essay, Robert sustains the introduction's humor by mocking his own motivations and poking fun at his quirks: "Selfless guy that I am, I volunteered to move my DVR" (paragraph 4), and "Working more diligently than I ever had for any term paper, I would log in each program I recorded and plan for the coming week's recording Schedule" (5). Robert probably uses a bit of *dramatic license* when reporting some of his obsessive behavior, and we, as readers, understand that he's exaggerating for comic effect. Most likely he didn't break out in a cold sweat at the thought of the TV shows he was unable to record. Nevertheless, this tinkering with the truth is legitimate because it allows Robert to create material that fits the essay's lightly satiric tone.

### Organization and Topic Sentences

To meet the requirements of the assignment, Robert needed to provide a *step-by-step* explanation of a process. And because he invented the term *recordoholism,* Robert also needed to invent the stages in the progression of his addiction. During his prewriting, Robert discovered five stages in his recordoholism. Presented *chronologically,* these stages provide the organizing focus for his paper. Specifically, each supporting paragraph is devoted to one stage, with the *topic sentence* for each paragraph indicating the stage's distinctive characteristics.

### Transitions

Although Robert's essay is playful, it is nonetheless a process analysis and so must have an easy-to-follow structure. Keeping this in mind, Robert wisely includes *transitions* to signal what happened at each stage of his recordoholism: "*However* with this notion that I had such control" (paragraph 3); "*Now,* I could record all the most recent movies and specials." (4); "*One day,* my mother came into my room" (5); and "*But after a while,* the urgent need to record subsided" (6). In addition to such transitions, Robert uses crisp questions to move from idea to idea within a paragraph: "How did I resolve this problem? Very easily. I set my DVR to record episodes of *Seinfeld* three days a week, rather than five" (3), and "Where did I get time to watch all these shows? I didn't" (4).

### Combining Patterns of Development

Even though Robert's essay is a process analysis, it contains elements of other patterns of development. For example, his paper is unified by an *analogy*—a

sustained *comparison* between Robert's recording addiction and the obviously more serious addiction to alcohol. Handled incorrectly, the analogy could have been offensive, but Robert makes the comparison work to his advantage. The analogy is stated specifically in several spots: "In these early days, my use of the DVRwas the equivalent of light social drinking" (2); "I was now using the DVR on a regular basis—the equivalent of several stiff drinks a day" (3). Finally, he generates numerous lively details or *examples* to illustrate the different stages in his addiction.

### Two Unnecessary Sentences

Perhaps you noticed that Robert runs into a minor problem at the end of the fourth paragraph. Starting with the sentence, "Reason and common sense were abandoned," he begins to ramble and repeat himself. The paragraph's last two sentences fail to add anything substantial. Take a moment to read paragraph 4 aloud, omitting the last two sentences. Note how much sharper the new conclusion is: "Where did I get time to watch all these tapes? I didn't. using the DVR was more satisfying than watching." This new ending says all that needs to be said.

### Revising the First Draft

When it was time to revise, Robert—in spite of his apprehension—showed his paper to his roommate and asked him to read it out loud. Robert knew this strategy would provide a more objective point of view on his work. His roommate, at first an unwilling recruit, nonetheless laughed as he read the essay aloud. That was just the response Robert wanted. But when his roommate got to the conclusion, Robert heard that the closing paragraph was flat and anticlimactic. His roommate agreed, so the two of them brainstormed ways to make the conclusion livelier and more in spirit with the rest of the essay.

Reprinted here is Robert's original conclusion. The handwritten notes, numbered in order of importance, represent both Robert's ideas for revision and those of his roommate.

**Original Version of the Conclusion**

I have no illusions, though, that I am over my recordoholism. Soon I will be returning home for the holidays, which can be a time for excess recording. All I can do is watch what I'm able to and not use the DVR. After that, I will hope for the best.

③ Shorten first sentence.

① Get back to analogy.

② Boring. Add humor.

As you can see, Robert and his roommate decided that the best approach would be to reinforce the playful, mock-serious tone that characterized earlier parts of the essay. Robert thus made three major changes to his conclusion. First, he tightened the first sentence of the paragraph ("I have no illusions, though, that I am over my recordoholism"), making it crisper and more dramatic: "I have no illusions, though." Second, he added a few sentences to sustain the light, self-deprecating tone he had used earlier: "I know that once a recordoholic, always a recordoholic"; "But I will cope with the pressure"; "I will win the battle." Third, and perhaps most important, he returned to the alcoholism analogy: "I will take

each day one at a time. . . . And if I feel myself succumbing to the temptations of recording, I will pick up the telephone and dial the recordoholics' hotline . . . "

These weren't the only changes Robert made while reworking his paper, but they help illustrate how sensitive he was to the effect he wanted to achieve. Certainly, the recasting of the conclusion was critical to the overall success of this amusing essay.

## ACTIVITIES: PROCESS ANALYSIS

### Prewriting Activities

1. Imagine you're writing two essays: One defines the term *comparison shopping;* the other contrasts two different teaching styles. Jot down ways you might use process analysis in each essay.

2. Look at the essay topics that follow. Assuming that your readers will be students in your composition class, which topics would lend themselves to directional process analysis, informational process analysis, or a blend of both? Explain your responses.

   a. Going on a job interview
   b. Using a computer in the college library
   c. Cleaning up oil spills
   d. Negotiating personal conflicts
   e. Curing a cold
   f. Growing vegetables organically

3. For *one* of the following essay topics, decide—given the audience indicated in parentheses—what your purpose, tone, and point of view might be. Then use brainstorming, questioning, mapping, or another prewriting technique to identify the steps you'd include in a process analysis for that audience. After reviewing the material generated, delete, add, and combine points as needed. Then organize the material in the most logical sequence.

   a. How to write effective essays (*college students*)
   b. How to get along with parents (*high school students*)
   c. How the college administration handled a controversial campus issue (*alumni*)
   d. How to deal with a bully (*elementary school children*)
   e. How a specific ceremony is performed in your religion (*an adult unfamiliar with the practice*)
   f. How malls encourage spending sprees (*general public*)

4. Select *one* of the essay topics that follow and determine what your purpose, tone, and point of view would be for each audience indicated in parentheses. Then use prewriting to identify the points you'd cover for each audience.

Finally, organize the raw material, noting the differences in emphasis and sequence for each group of readers.

a. How to buy a car (*young people who have just gotten a driver's license; established professionals*)
b. How children acquire their values (*first-time parents; elementary school teachers*)
c. How to manage money (*grade-school children; college students*)
d. How loans or scholarships are awarded to incoming students on your campus (*high school graduates applying for financial aid; high school guidance counselors*)
e. How arguments can strengthen relationships (*preteen children; young adults*)
f. How to relax (*college students; parents with young children*)

**5.** For *one* of the following process topics, identify an appropriate audience, purpose, tone, and point of view. Then use prewriting to generate raw material showing that there's a problem with the way the process is performed. After organizing that material, use prewriting once again—this time to identify how the process *should* be performed. Sequence this new material in a logical order.

a. How students select a college or a major
b. How local television news covers national events
c. How a specific group of people mismanage their finances
d. How your campus or your community is handling a difficult situation

## Revising Activities

**6.** The following paragraph is from an essay making the point that over-the-phone sales can be a challenging career. The paragraph, written as a process analysis, describes the steps involved in making a sales call. Revise the paragraph, deleting any material that undermines the paragraph's unity, organizing the steps in a logical sequence, and supplying transitions where needed. Also be sure to correct any inappropriate shifts in person. Finally, do some brainstorming—individually or in a group—to generate details to bolster underdeveloped steps in the sequence.

Establishing rapport with potential customers is the most challenging part of phone sales. The longer you can keep customers on the phone, the more you can get a sense of their needs. And the more you know about customers, the more successful the salesperson is bound to be. Your opening comments are critical. After setting the right tone, you gently introduce your product. There are a number of ways you can move gracefully from your opening remarks to the actual selling phase of the call. Remember: Don't try to sell the

customer at the beginning. Instead, try in a friendly way to keep the prospective customer on the phone. Maintaining such a connection is easier than you think because many people have an almost desperate need to talk. Their lives are isolated and lonely--a sad fact of contemporary life. Once you shift to the distinctly selling phase of the call, you should present the advantages of the product, especially the advantages of price and convenience. Mentioning installment payments is often effective. If the customer says that he or she isn't interested, the salesperson should try to determine--in a genial way--why the person is reluctant to buy. Don't, however, push aggressively for reasons or try to steamroll the person into thinking his or her reservations are invalid. Once the person agrees to buy, try to encourage credit card payment, rather than check or money order. The salesperson can explain that credit card payment means the customer will receive the product sooner. End the call as you began--in an easy, personable way.

**7.** Reprinted here is a paragraph from the first draft of a humorous essay advising shy college students how to get through a typical day. Written as a process analysis, the paragraph outlines techniques for surviving class. Revise the paragraph, deleting digressions that disrupt the paragraph's unity, eliminating unnecessary repetition, and sequencing the steps in the proper order. Also correct inappropriate shifts in person and add transitions where needed. Feel free to add any telling details.

Simply attending class can be stressful for shy people. Several strategies, though, can lessen the trauma. Shy students should time their arrival to coincide with that of most other class members--about two minutes before the class is scheduled to begin. If you arrive too early, you may be seen sitting alone or, even worse, may actually be forced to talk with another early arrival. If you arrive late, all eyes will be upon you. Before heading to class, the shy student should dress in the least conspicuous manner possible--say, in the blue jeans, sweatshirt, and sneakers that 99.9 percent of your classmates wear. That way you won't stand out from everyone else. Take a seat near the back of the room. Don't, however, sit at the very back since professors often take sadistic pleasure in calling on students back there, assuming they chose

those seats because they didn't want to be called on. A friend of mine who is far from shy uses just the opposite ploy. In an attempt to get in good with her professors, she sits in the front row and, incredibly enough, volunteers to participate. However, since shy people don't want to call attention to themselves, they should stifle any urge to sneeze or cough. You run the risk of having people look at you or offer you a tissue or cough drop. And of course, never, ever volunteer to answer. Such a display of intelligence is sure to focus all eyes on you. In other words, make yourself as inconspicuous as possible. How, you might wonder, can you be inconspicuous if you're blessed (or cursed) with great looks? Well, . . . have you ever considered earning your degree through the mail?

## PROFESSIONAL SELECTIONS: PROCESS ANALYSIS

### CLIFFORD STOLL

An astronomer at the University of California at Berkeley, Clifford Stoll (1950– ) is also a lecturer, commentator on MSNBC, and occasional visiting teacher of astronomy in elementary, middle, and high schools. He is the best-selling author of *The Cuckoo's Egg: Tracking a Spy Through the Maze of Computer Espionage* (1990) and *Silicon Snake Oil: Second Thoughts on the Information Superhighway* (1995), both of which address the complications of the computer age. As he reveals in the preface of *High-Tech Heretic: Reflections of a Computer Contrarian* (1999), despite having programmed and used computers since the mid-sixties, Stoll seeks to inject "a few notes of skepticism into the utopian dreams of a digital wonderland." According to his website, he is a "stay-at-home daddy" who lives with his family in the San Francisco Bay Area. The following essay appears as a chapter in *High-Tech Heretic*.

Please note the essay structure diagram that appears following this selection (Figure 14.2 on page 330).

### Pre-Reading Journal Entry

Over the past several years, the Internet has become increasingly popular as an educational resource. What do you think are the merits and the drawbacks of including the Internet as part of school assignments? Is your response affected by the age of the students in question? Record in your journal the pros and cons of requiring students—at the elementary, high school, and college levels, respectively—to access the Net as part of their studies.

## CYBERSCHOOL

Welcome to the classroom of the future! Complete with electronic links to the world, it'll revolutionize education. Students will interact with information infrastructures and knowledge processors to learn group work and telework, whatever that means. You'll be enriched, empowered, and enabled by the digital classroom; immersed in an optimal learning environment. Yee-ha! 1

Worried that things rarely turn out as promised? Well, let me present a pessimal[1] view of the schoolroom of the future. 2

Suppose you're a harried school board member. Voters complain about high taxes. Teachers' unions strike for higher wages and smaller classes. Parents worry about plummeting scores on standardized tests. Newspapers criticize backward teaching methods, outdated textbooks, and security problems. Unruly students cut classes and rarely pay attention. Instructors teach topics which aren't in the curriculum or, worse, inject their own opinions into subject matter. 3

Sound like a tough call? Naw—it's easy to solve all these problems, placate the taxpayers, and get re-elected. High technology! 4

First, the school district buys a computer for every student. Sure, this'll set back the budget—maybe a few hundred dollars per student. Quantity discounts and corporate support should keep the price down, and classroom savings will more than offset the cost of the equipment. 5

Next buy a pile of CD-ROMs for the students, each preprogrammed with fun edutainment[2] programs. The educational games will exactly cover the curriculum . . . for every paragraph in the syllabus, the game will have an interactive aspect. As students climb to more advanced levels, the game naturally becomes more challenging and rewarding. But always fun. 6

Every student will work at her own pace. The youngest will watch happy cartoon characters and exciting animations. The kid that likes horses will listen to messages from a chatty pony; the child that dreams of fire engines will hear from Fred the Firefighter. High schoolers get multimedia images of film stars and rock and roll celebrities. With access to interactive video sessions, chat rooms, and e-mail, students can collaborate with each other. It's the ultimate in individualized, child-centered instruction. 7

Naturally, the edu-games will be programmed so that students become adept at standardized tests. No reason to teach anything that's not on the ACT, PSAT, or SAT exams. And the students will have fun because all this information will be built into games like Myst, Dungeon, or Doom. They'll master the games, and automatically learn the material. 8

Meanwhile, the computers will keep score, like pinball machines. They'll send e-mail to parents and administrators . . . scores that will become part of each kid's permanent record. No more subjectivity in grading: The principal will know instantly how each child's doing. And if a student gets confused or falls behind, automated help will be just a mouse click away. 9

We'll update crowded classrooms, too. Replace desks with individual cubicles, comfortable chairs, and multimedia monitors. With no outside interruptions, kids' 10

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[1]The opposite of optimal?

[2]A term, coined by Stoll, combining the words *education* and *entertainment* (editors' note).

attention will be directed into the approved creative learning experiences, built into the software. Well compartmentalized, students will hardly ever see each other . . . neatly ending classroom discipline problems.

11 Naturally, teachers are an unnecessary appendix at this cyberschool. No need for 'em when there's a fun, multimedia system at each student's fingertips. Should students have a question, they can turn to the latest on-line encyclopedia, enter an electronic chat room, or send e-mail to a professional educator. Those laid-off teachers can be retrained as data entry clerks.

12 As librarians and teachers become irrelevant, they'll be replaced by a cadre of instructional specialists, consultants, and professional hall monitors. Any discipline problems could be handled by trained security guards, who'd monitor the cubicles via remote video links.

13 Effect? With no more wasted time on student-teacher interactions or off-topic discussions, education will become more efficient. Since the computers' content would be directed at maximizing test performance, standardized test scores will zoom.

14 Eliminating teachers and luxuries such as art lessons and field trips will save enough to recoup the cost of those fancy computers. With little effort, this electronic education could even become a profit center. Merely sell advertising space in the edutainment programs. Corporate sponsors, eager to market their messages to impressionable minds, would pay school systems to plug their products within the coursework.

15 Concerned that such a system might be dehumanizing? Not to worry. Interactive chat sessions will encourage a sense of community and enhance kids' social skills. Should a student have questions, the Internet will put her in instant touch with a trained support mentor. When necessary, real-time instructors will appear on the distance learning displays, available to interact via two-way video.

16 The Cyberschool will showcase technology and train students for the upcoming electronic workplace. As local employment prospects change, the school board will issue updates to the curriculum over its interactive website. And the school board will monitor what each student learns—without idiosyncratic teachers to raise unpopular topics or challenge accepted beliefs.

17 Advanced students can sign up for on-line extracurricular activities—perhaps joining the Virtual Compassion Corps. There, students will be paired up across racial, gender, and class lines. Our children would offer foreigners advice and even arrange interviews with prospective employers. In this way, students will perform community service and mentor others, while displaying their cultural awareness over the network. All without ever having to shake hands with a real person, travel to a distant country, or (gasp!) face the real problems of another culture.[3] Simple, safe, and sterile.

18 Should parents worry about Johnny's progress, they need only log in over the Internet to see their son's latest test scores. In addition, they'll receive e-mailed reports summarizing their child's work. And at any time, they can click on an icon to see live images of their young scholar, automatically uploaded by a school video camera.

19 Yep, just sign up for the future: the parent-pleasin', tax-savin', teacher-firin', interactive-educatin', child-centerin' Cyberschool. No stuffy classrooms. No more teacher

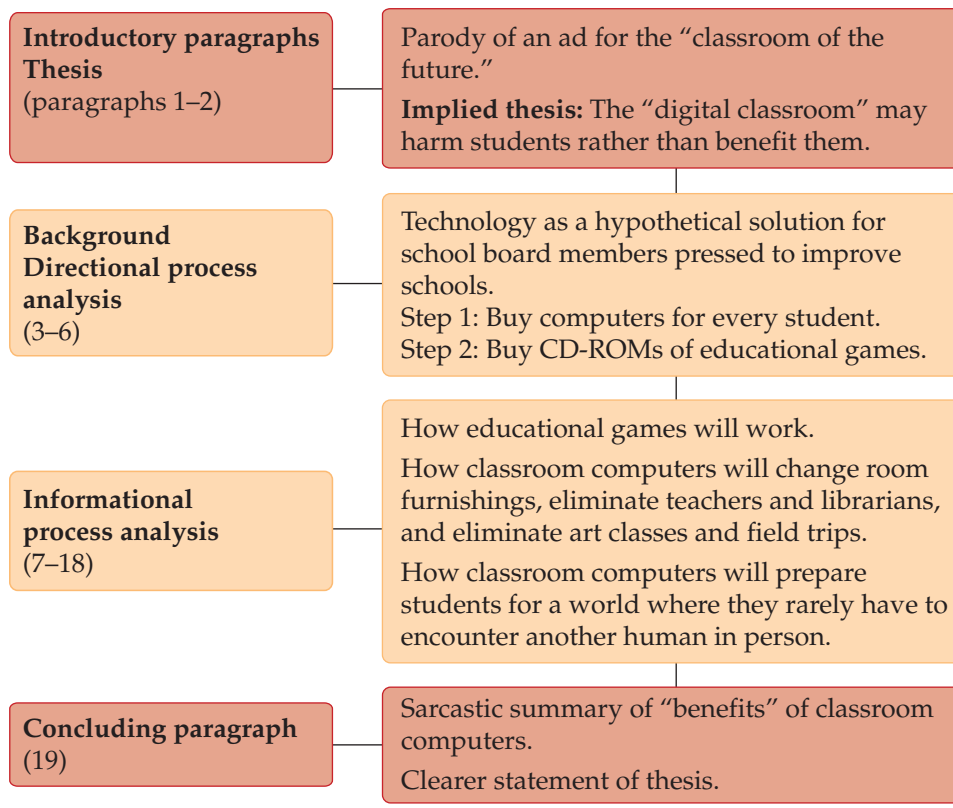
[3]An actual proposal from the director of MIT's Laboratory for Computer Science, Michael Dertouzos.

strikes. No outdated textbooks. No expensive clarinet lessons. No boring homework. No learning. Coming soon to a school district near you.[4]

[4]Idea for a computer game: Cyberschool Superintendent. Players score by saving money. They could eliminate teachers, close libraries, or blow up music studios. Competitors advance by wiring schools, adding computers, and plugging in multimedia systems. Evil monsters might appear in the form of teachers, scholars, and librarians who insist that you read a book. Bonus points, labeled Pilot Project Grants, would be awarded for writing vapid press releases.

**FIGURE 14.2**

**Essay Structure Diagram: "Cyberschool" by Clifford Stoll**




## Questions for Close Reading

1. What is the selection's thesis? Locate the sentence(s) in which Stoll states his main idea. If he doesn't state the thesis explicitly, express it in your own words.
2. What process does Stoll describe in the essay? What are the basic steps of this process? What is Stoll's underlying attitude toward these measures?

3. What specific group of people does Stoll imagine as being especially in favor of the "cyberschool"? According to Stoll, how do these individuals justify using computers to teach children?
4. What role does Stoll indicate teachers will play in the "cyberschool"? What attitude does he convey about this role? Explain.
5. Refer to your dictionary as needed to define the following words used in the selection: *infrastructures* (paragraph 1), *optimal* (1), *harried* (3), *placate* (4), *adept* (8), *standardized* (8), *cubicles* (10), *compartmentalized* (10), *cadre* (12), *recoup* (14), and *idiosyncratic* (16).

## Questions About the Writer's Craft

1. **The pattern.** Is Stoll's process analysis primarily *directional* or primarily *informational*? Explain. To what extent does Stoll try to persuade readers that the process he describes should be followed?
2. Focusing on his word choices, how would you characterize Stoll's tone in his essay? In your opinion, does his tone enhance or detract from the point he's trying to make? Explain.
3. **Other patterns.** Underlying Stoll's process analysis is an *argument* against a particular form of education. To write an effective argument, writers need to establish their own credibility. Based on what you learned about Stoll in his biography (page 327), what makes him appear qualified to write about his subject?
4. **Other patterns.** In his persona of pro-cyberschool spokesman, Stoll addresses opposition to the idea of the cyberschool in paragraph 15. How does Stoll represent and rebut the *arguments* against the cyberschool? Are his arguments effective, in your opinion?

## Writing Assignments Using Process-Analysis as a Pattern of Development

1. In his essay, Stoll offers a cynical recipe for creating an "optimal learning environment." Write an essay in which you present a process analysis of concrete ways the school you currently attend or one you have attended in the past could realistically be improved. You might, for instance, discuss physical improvements such as updating the equipment in the computer lab, or less tangible measures such as cultivating a more interactive classroom environment. Brainstorm on your own or with others to generate specific ideas to include in your process. Reading David Brooks's "Psst! Human Capital" (page 301) may help you zero in on qualities and skills that should be cultivated in students.
2. In his essay, Stoll ironically suggests a course of action that he implies should not be taken in order to improve children's education. Taking a similarly

ironic stance, write an essay *mis*guiding readers on how to "improve" some other significant institution or serious condition. For instance, you might discuss ways to increase the efficiency of a particular government agency, how to even out inequities between classes or races of people, how to protect the environment, and so on—all the while presenting steps that would work to the contrary. Like Stoll, you should ultimately reveal your true position in the concluding paragraph, preferably in a subtle way.

## Writing Assignments Combining Patterns of Development

**3.** According to Stoll, computers serve as a distraction to students rather than a legitimate learning tool. What are other kinds of distractions students face? Write an essay in which you *classify* the different types of distractions that can make learning difficult. You may adopt a serious tone and address categories such as, for example, problems at home and pressure from peers. Or you might adopt a humorous tone and discuss distractions that include interest in the opposite sex and the temptation of computer games. Provide vivid *examples* to illustrate each of the categories you create. For additional viewpoints about the pressures to which students are subject, read Kay S. Hymowitz's "Tweens: Ten Going on Sixteen" (page 245), Buzz Bissinger's "Innocents Afield" (page 407), and Mary Sherry's "In Praise of the 'F' Word" (page 502).

**4.** With the increasing popularity of the Internet, the future of traditional printed materials—such as books, magazines, and newspapers—has come into question. Write an essay in which you *compare* and *contrast* using printed materials with using the Internet in order to perform research. Be sure to provide at least one extended example or a few briefer examples to *illustrate* the differences and/or similarities you're pointing out. Your best source of information might be a "hands-on" approach: to research a topic using both methods in order to see for yourself what the differences are. By the end of your essay, make clear to your reader which of the two methods you find preferable, and why.

## Writing Assignment Using a Journal Entry as a Starting Point

**5.** In an indirect way, Stoll argues against the wholesale computerization of the classroom. Write an essay in which you argue that the Internet in specific should *or* should not play a significant role in the education of *one* particular age group of students (elementary, high school, or college). In formulating your argument, refer to the material you generated in your pre-reading journal entry. For additional perspectives on this issue, you might consider doing some research on this topic in the library and/or on the Internet. In writing your essay, you should acknowledge and rebut opposing points of view.

## DIANE COLE

Diane Cole (1952– ), a former contributing editor of *Psychology Today*, has written articles for numerous publications, including *The Wall Street Journal, Newsweek, Ms.*, and *Mademoiselle*. Cole has also written several books, among them *Hunting the Head Hunters: A Woman's Guide* (1988), *After Great Pain: Coping with Loss and Change* (1996), and *After Great Pain: A New Life Emerges 7*(2002). In 1997, she coauthored the book *Is It You or Is It Me?* about problems in romantic relationships. The following selection, which first appeared in *The New York Times* in 1989, was underwritten by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith as part of its ongoing campaign against prejudice.

### Pre-Reading Journal Entry

Many of us—at some point—have encountered, either in jokes or more serious contexts, offensive language directed at a person or people solely because of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference, or other such characteristic. In your journal, write about one or more such experiences. For each incident, answer the following: Who was involved? What happened? How did the parties, including yourself, respond?

## DON'T JUST STAND THERE

1 It was my office farewell party, and colleagues at the job I was about to leave were wishing me well. My mood was one of ebullience tinged with regret, and it was in this spirit that I spoke to the office neighbor to whom I had waved hello every morning for the past two years. He smiled broadly as he launched into a long, rambling story, pausing only after he delivered the punch line. It was a very long pause because, although he laughed, I did not: This joke was unmistakably anti-Semitic.

2 I froze. Everyone in the office knew I was Jewish; what could he have possibly meant? Shaken and hurt, not knowing what else to do, I turned in stunned silence to the next well-wisher. Later, still angry, I wondered, what else should I—could I—have done?

3 Prejudice can make its presence felt in any setting, but hearing its nasty voice in this way can be particularly unnerving. We do not know what to do and often we feel another form of paralysis as well: We think, "Nothing I say or do will change this person's attitude, so why bother?"

4 But left unchecked, racial slurs and offensive ethnic jokes "can poison the atmosphere," says Michael McQuillan, adviser for racial/ethnic affairs for the Brooklyn borough president's office. "Hearing these remarks conditions us to accept them; and if we accept these, we can become accepting of other acts."

5 Speaking up may not magically change a biased attitude, but it can change a person's behavior by putting a strong message across. And the more messages there are, the more likely a person is to change that behavior, says Arnold Kahn, professor of psychology at James Madison University, Harrisonburg, Virginia, who makes this analogy: "You can't keep people from smoking in *their* house, but you can ask them not to smoke in *your* house."

At the same time, "Even if the other party ignores or discounts what you say, people always reflect on how others perceive them. Speaking up always counts," says LeNorman Strong, director of campus life at George Washington University, Washington, D.C. 6

Finally, learning to respond effectively also helps people feel better about themselves, asserts Cherie Brown, executive director of the National Coalition Building Institute, a Boston-based training organization. "We've found that, when people felt they could at least in this small way make a difference, that made them more eager to take on other activities on a larger scale," she says. Although there is no "cookbook approach" to confronting such remarks—every situation is different, experts stress—these are some effective strategies. 7

> When the "joke" turns on who you are—as a member of an ethnic or religious group, a person of color, a woman, a gay or lesbian, an elderly person, or someone with a physical handicap—shocked paralysis is often the first response. Then, wounded and vulnerable, on some level you want to strike back. 8

Lashing out or responding in kind is seldom the most effective response, however. "That can give you momentary satisfaction, but you also feel as if you've lowered yourself to that other person's level," Mr. McQuillan explains. Such a response may further label you in the speaker's mind as thin-skinned, someone not to be taken seriously. Or it may up the ante, making the speaker, and then you, reach for new insults—or physical blows. 9

"If you don't laugh at the joke, or fight, or respond in kind to the slur," says Mr. McQuillan, "that will take the person by surprise, and that can give you more control over the situation." Therefore, in situations like the one in which I found myself—a private conversation in which I knew the person making the remark—he suggests voicing your anger calmly but pointedly: "I don't know if you realize what that sounded like to me. If that's what you meant, it really hurt me." 10

State how *you* feel, rather than making an abstract statement like, "Not everyone who hears that joke might find it funny." Counsels Mr. Strong: "Personalize the sense of 'this is how I feel when you say this.' That makes it very concrete"—and harder to dismiss. 11

Make sure you heard the words and their intent correctly by repeating or rephrasing the statement: "This is what I heard you say. Is that what you meant?" It's important to give the other person the benefit of the doubt because, in fact, he may *not* have realized that the comment was offensive and, if you had not spoken up, would have had no idea of its impact on you. 12

For instance, Professor Kahn relates that he used to include in his exams multiple-choice questions that occasionally contained "incorrect funny answers." After one exam, a student came up to him in private and said, "I don't think you intended this, but I found a number of those jokes offensive to me as a woman." She explained why. "What she said made immediate sense to me," he says. "I apologized at the next class, and I never did it again." 13

But what if the speaker dismisses your objection, saying, "Oh, you're just being sensitive. Can't you take a joke?" In that case, you might say, "I'm not so sure about that, let's talk about that a little more." The key, Mr. Strong says, is to continue the dialogue, hear the other person's concerns, and point out your own. "There are times when you're just going to have to admit defeat and end it," he adds, "but I have to feel that I did the best I could." 14

15 When the offending remark is made in the presence of others—at a staff meeting, for example—it can be even more distressing than an insult made privately.

16 "You have two options," says William Newlin, director of field services for the Community Relations division of the New York City Commission on Human Rights. "You can respond immediately at the meeting, or you can delay your response until afterward in private. But a response has to come."

17 Some remarks or actions may be so outrageous that they cannot go unnoted at the moment, regardless of the speaker or the setting. But in general, psychologists say, shaming a person in public may have the opposite effect of the one you want: The speaker will deny his offense all the more strongly in order to save face. Further, few people enjoy being put on the spot, and if the remark really was not intended to be offensive, publicly embarrassing the person who made it may cause an unnecessary rift or further misunderstanding. Finally, most people just don't react as well or thoughtfully under a public spotlight as they would in private.

18 Keeping that in mind, an excellent alternative is to take the offender aside afterward: "Could we talk for a minute in private?" Then use the strategies suggested above for calmly stating how you feel, giving the speaker the benefit of the doubt, and proceeding from there.

19 At a large meeting or public talk, you might consider passing the speaker a note, says David Wertheimer, executive director of the New York City Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence Project: You could write, "You may not realize it, but your remarks were offensive because . . . "

20 "Think of your role as that of an educator," suggests James M. Jones, Ph.D., executive director for public interest at the American Psychological Association. "You have to be controlled."

21 Regardless of the setting or situation, speaking up always raises the risk of rocking the boat. If the person who made the offending remark is your boss, there may be an even bigger risk to consider: How will this affect my job? Several things can help minimize the risk, however. First, know what other resources you may have at work, suggests Caryl Stern, director of the A World of Difference–New York City campaign: Does your personnel office handle discrimination complaints? Are other grievance procedures in place?

22 You won't necessarily need to use any of these procedures, Ms. Stern stresses. In fact, she advises, "It's usually better to try a one-on-one approach first." But simply knowing a formal system exists can make you feel secure enough to set up that meeting.

23 You can also raise the issue with other colleagues who heard the remark: Did they feel the same way you did? The more support you have, the less alone you will feel. Your point will also carry more validity and be more difficult to shrug off. Finally, give your boss credit—and the benefit of the doubt: "I know you've worked hard for the company's affirmative action programs, so I'm sure you didn't realize what those remarks sounded like to me as well as the others at the meeting last week. . . . "

27 If, even after this discussion, the problem persists, go back for another meeting, Ms. Stern advises. And if that, too, fails, you'll know what other options are available to you.

28 It's a spirited dinner party, and everyone's having a good time, until one guest starts reciting a racist joke. Everyone at the table is white, including you. The others are still laughing, as you wonder what to say or do.

No one likes being seen as a party-pooper, but before deciding that you'd prefer not to take on this role, you might remember that the person who told the offensive joke has already ruined your good time. 29

If it's a group that you feel comfortable in—a family gathering, for instance—you will feel freer to speak up. Still, shaming the person by shouting "You're wrong!" or "That's not funny!" probably won't get your point across as effectively as other strategies. "If you interrupt people to condemn them, it just makes it harder," says Cherie Brown. She suggests trying instead to get at the resentments that lie beneath the joke by asking open-ended questions: "Grandpa, I know you always treat everyone with such respect. Why do people in our family talk that way about black people?" The key, Ms. Brown says, "is to listen to them first, so they will be more likely to listen to you." 30

If you don't know your fellow guests well, before speaking up you could turn discreetly to your neighbors (or excuse yourself to help the host or hostess in the kitchen) to get a reading on how they felt, and whether or not you'll find support for speaking up. The less alone you feel, the more comfortable you'll be speaking up: "I know you probably didn't mean anything by that joke, Jim, but it really offended me. . . . " It's important to say that *you* were offended—not state how the group that is the butt of the joke would feel. "Otherwise," LeNorman Strong says, "you risk coming off as a goody two-shoes." 24

If you yourself are the host, you can exercise more control; you are, after all, the one who sets the rules and the tone of behavior in your home. Once, when Professor Kahn's party guests began singing offensive, racist songs, for instance, he kicked them all out, saying, "You don't sing songs like that in my house!" And, he adds, "they never did again." 25

At school one day, a friend comes over and says, "Who do you think you are, hanging out with Joe? If you can be friends with those people, I'm through with you!" 26

Peer pressure can weigh heavily on kids. They feel vulnerable and, because they are kids, they aren't as able to control the urge to fight. "But if you learn to handle these situations as kids, you'll be better able to handle them as an adult," William Newlin points out. 31

Begin by redefining to yourself what a friend is and examining what friendship means, advises Amy Lee, a human relations specialist at Panel of Americans, an intergroup-relations training and educational organization. If that person from a different group fits your requirement for a friend, ask, "Why shouldn't I be friends with Joe? We have a lot in common." Try to get more information about whatever stereotypes or resentments lie beneath your friend's statement. Ms. Lee suggests: "What makes you think they're so different from us? Where did you get that information?" She explains: "People are learning these stereotypes from somewhere, and they cannot be blamed for that. So examine where these ideas came from." Then talk about how your own experience rebuts them. 32

Kids, like adults, should also be aware of other resources to back them up: Does the school offer special programs for fighting prejudice? How supportive will the principal, the teachers, or other students be? If the school atmosphere is volatile, experts warn, make sure that taking a stand at that moment won't put you in physical danger. If that is the case, it's better to look for other alternatives. 33

34 These can include programs or organizations that bring kids from different backgrounds together. "When kids work together across race lines, that is how you break down the barriers and see that the stereotypes are not true," says Laurie Meadoff, president of CityKids Foundation, a nonprofit group whose programs attempt to do just that. Such programs can also provide what Cherie Brown calls a "safe place" to express the anger and pain that slurs and other offenses cause, whether the bigotry is directed against you or others.

35 In learning to speak up, everyone will develop a different style and a slightly different message to get across, experts agree. But it would be hard to do better than these two messages suggested by teenagers at CityKids: "Everyone on the face of the earth has the same intestines," said one. Another added, "Cross over the bridge. There's a lot of love on the streets."

## Questions for Close Reading

1. What is the selection's thesis? Locate the sentence(s) in which Cole states her main idea. If she doesn't state the thesis explicitly, express it in your own words.
2. Why does Cole believe it is better to speak up against prejudice rather than to keep silent or ignore it?
3. Although Cole acknowledges that there is no "cookbook approach" for dealing with offensive comments, she nevertheless presents some general steps that can be followed. What are these general steps? Cole also describes more specific steps that can be taken in particular situations. What are the situations and the steps to be taken?
4. According to Cole's sources, what types of comments and responses are *not* useful in dealing with prejudicial jokes and remarks?
5. Refer to your dictionary as needed to define the following words used in the selection: *ebullience* (paragraph 1), *anti-Semitic* (1), *slurs* (4), *discounts* (6), *lashing* (9), *ante* (9), *abstract* (11), *personalize* (11), *rift* (17), *grievance* (21), and *volatile* (33).

## Questions About the Writer's Craft

1. **The pattern.** Does Cole's process analysis have a primarily informative or persuasive purpose? How do you know? Where does the author suggest her purpose? How does her use of the second-person "you" reinforce that purpose?
2. **Other patterns.** What *examples* does Cole provide to *illustrate* the process she's explaining? Why do you think she provides so many examples?
3. Cole uses quotations extensively in the essay. Why do you suppose she quotes so many people? What effect do you think Cole hopes the quotations will have on her readers?

4. What purpose do the essay's three sections set off with smaller type serve? Why might Cole have chosen to set off these sections? Which one of the three sections seems to address a different audience than the other two? Taking into account why this essay was written and where it was published (see the biographical note), do you think Cole is justified in shifting her essay's focus in this way? Why or why not? Is the shift effective? Explain.

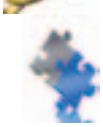
## Writing Assignments Using Process Analysis as a Pattern of Development

1. Cole describes a process for handling offensive *comments,* but there are many times when we wonder whether to protest someone's objectionable *behavior.* Write an essay explaining a process for dealing with one such behavior. You might describe a process for confronting a friend who forgets to repay loans, a teacher who grades unfairly, or a boss who treats employees rudely. Like Cole, tell readers what they should do if a step in the process doesn't yield the hoped-for results. For additional accounts about how to deal with others' problematic behavior, read Brent Staples's "Black Men and Public Space" (page 412) and Susan Jacoby's "Common Decency" (page 512).

2. In paragraph 27, Cole describes a family gathering during which a grandchild confronts a grandfather as one adult to another. However, dealing with older relatives in such a forthright manner can be difficult, especially when the older adults don't perceive the grown-up child as a mature individual. Write an essay describing the process by which a grown child can confront such relatives and request that they treat the "child" like an adult. Use examples from your own family and from friends' families when explaining how to deal—and not deal—with such relatives.

## Writing Assignments Combining Patterns of Development

3. Cole writes about one type of behavior that most of us find obnoxious. But, as we all know, there are many types of obnoxious or annoying people. Focusing on a specific setting (a library, a highway, a store, a classroom), write a light-spirited essay in which you *categorize* the kinds of obnoxious people you typically encounter there. Be sure to provide vivid *descriptions* of the behavior that makes these people so unpleasant.



4. When confronted by offensive language and behavior, people should—Cole argues—take a stand. Write an essay constructing your personal *definition* of *assertiveness. Illustrate* your definition by providing specific *examples* of what it is and what it isn't. To gain additional insight into assertiveness, or the lack thereof, read Audre Lorde's "The Fourth of July" (page 208), and Charmie Gholson's "Charity Display?" (page 220).

## Writing Assignment Using a Journal Entry as a Starting Point

**5.** Cole conveys the short-term discomfort and long-term damage that offensive language can inflict on recipients. Write an essay narrating an incident—that you witnessed or participated in—of hurtful speech directed at an individual or group because of race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual preference. Review your pre-reading journal entry, selecting the *one* occasion that is the most compelling and/or thought-provoking. As you narrate the incident, be sure to use dialog and descriptive language to convey what was said and done and how people reacted. End your essay by reflecting on what you now, in retrospect, realize about the incident and whether you think it could have been handled differently by those involved. Also, consider reading Audre Lorde's "The Fourth of July" (page 208), Toni Morrison's "A Slow Walk of Trees" (page 364), Brent Staples's "Black Men and Public Space" (page 412) and Roberto Rodriguez's "The Border on Our Backs" (page 517) for accounts of how painful racial and ethnic misconceptions can be.

## DAVID SHIPLEY

David Shipley, a journalist, is the deputy editor of *The New York Times*'s op-ed page, on which opinion pieces by *New York Times* columnists and other journalists, as well as private citizens, are published. He was born in Portland, Oregon, in 1963 and graduated with a degree in English from Williams College in 1985. Shipley won a Thomas J. Watson Fellowship for 1985–1986, which allowed him to spend a year traveling to do independent study. From 1993 to 1995 he was executive editor of *The New Republic*, and from 1995 to 1997 he was a special assistant and senior speechwriter for President Bill Clinton. Shipley joined *The New York Times* in 1998 and was deputy editor of the Sunday *New York Times Magazine*'s millennium issues, senior editor of the magazine, and enterprise editor of the national desk before moving to his present position as op-ed editor. With coauthor Will Schwalbe, Shipley is writing a book about e-mail entitled *Send*. This essay, originally entitled "What We Talk About When We Talk About Editing," appeared in *The New York Times* on July 31, 2005.

## Pre-Reading Journal Entry

People often seek advice and help from others to help them do a job or improve their performance. For example, if you were writing your résumé, you might ask a friend to edit and proofread it. Or if you were trying out for a sports team, you might ask a coach for feedback and advice. Think of some occasions in the past when you asked others for help with your work or gave help to someone else when asked. What was the task? What was your goal in helping or being helped? Did the assistance actually improve the end product, or was it useless? Use your journal to answer these questions.

## TALK ABOUT EDITING

. . . Not surprisingly, readers have lots of questions about the editing that goes on [on the *New York Times* op-ed page]. What kind of changes do we suggest—and why? What kind of changes do we insist on—and why? When do we stay out of the way? And the hardy perennial: do we edit articles to make them adhere to a particular point of view? I thought I'd try to provide a few answers. 1

Just like *Times* news articles and editorials, Op-Ed essays are edited. Before something appears in our pages, you can bet that questions have been asked, arguments have been clarified, cuts have been suggested—as have additions—and factual, typographical and grammatical errors have been caught. (We hope.) 2

Our most important rule, however, is that nothing is published on the Op-Ed page unless it has been approved by its author. Articles go to press only after the person under whose name the article appears has explicitly O.K.'d the editing. 3

While it's important to know that we edit, it's also important to know how we edit. The best way to explain this is to take a walk through the process. 4

Say you send us an article by regular mail, e-mail, fax or, this summer at least, owl post[1]—and it's accepted. You'll be told that we'll contact you once your article is scheduled for publication. That could be days, weeks or even months away. 5

When your article does move into the on-deck circle, you'll be sent a contract, and one of the several editors here will get to work. 6

Here are the clear-cut things the editor will do: 7

- Correct grammatical and typographical errors. 8
- Make sure that the article conforms to *The New York Times Manual of Style and Usage*. Courtesy titles, for example, will miraculously appear if they weren't there before; expletives will be deleted; some words will be capitalized, others lowercased. 9
- See to it that the article fits our allotted space. With staff columnists, advertisements and illustrations, there's a limit to the number of words we can squeeze onto the page. 10
- Fact-check the article. While it is the author's responsibility to ensure that everything written for us is accurate, we still check facts—names, dates, places, quotations. 11

We also check assertions. If news articles—from *The Times* and other publications—are at odds with a point or an example in an essay, we need to resolve whatever discrepancy exists. 12

For instance, an Op-Ed article critical of newly aggressive police tactics in Town X can't flatly say the police have no reason to change their strategy if there have been news reports that violence in the town is rising. This doesn't mean the writer can't still argue that there are other ways to deal with Town X's crime problem—he just can't say that the force's decision to change came out of the blue. 13

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[1]In J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter books, mail is delivered each morning to Hogwarts, Harry's school, by owls (editors' note).

14 How would we resolve the Town X issue? Well, we'd discuss it with the writer—generally by telephone or e-mail—and we'd try to find a solution that preserves the writer's argument while also adhering to the facts.

15 Now to some people, this may sound surprising, as if we're putting words in people's mouths. But there's a crucial distinction to be made between changing a writer's argument—and suggesting language that will help a writer make his point more effectively.

16 Besides grammar and accuracy, we're also concerned about readability. Our editors try to approach articles as average readers who know nothing about the subject. They may ask if a point is clear, if a writer needs transitional language to bridge the gap between two seemingly separate points, if a leap of logic has been made without sufficient explanation.

17 To make a piece as clear and accessible as possible, the editor may add a transition, cut a section that goes off point or move a paragraph. If a description is highly technical, the editor may suggest language that lay readers will understand. If it isn't clear what a writer is trying to say, the editor may take a guess, based on what he knows from the author, and suggest more precise language. (There are also times when we do precious little.)

18 The editor will then send the edited version of the article to the writer. The changes will often be highlighted to make it easy for the author to see what's been done. (I tend to mark edits I've made with an //ok?//.) If a proposed revision is significant, the editor will often write a few sentences to describe the reasoning behind the suggestion.

19 Every change is a suggestion, not a demand. If a solution offered by an editor doesn't work for a writer, the two work together to find an answer to the problem. Editing is not bullying.

20 Of course, it's not always warm and cuddly, either. The people who write for Op-Ed have a responsibility to be forthright and specific in their arguments. There's no room on the page for articles that are opaque or written in code.

21 What our editors expressly do not do is change a point of view. If you've written an article on why New York's street fairs should be abolished, we will not ask you to change your mind and endorse them. We're going to help you make the best case you can. If you followed this page carefully in the run-up to the Iraq war, for example, you saw arguments both for and against the invasion—all made with equal force.

22 Editing is a human enterprise. Like writing, it is by nature subjective. Sometimes an editor will think a writer is saying something that she isn't. But our editing process gives writer and editor plenty of time to sort out any misunderstandings before the article goes to press. And if a mistake gets through, we do our best to correct it as quickly as possible.

23 The Op-Ed page is a venue for people with a wide range of perspectives, experiences and talents. Some of the people who appear in this space have written a lot; others haven't. If we published only people who needed no editing, we'd wind up relying on only a very narrow range of professional writers, and the page would be much the worse for it.

24 So what's the agenda? A lively page of clashing opinions, one where as many people as possible have the opportunity to make the best arguments they can.

25 And just so you know, this article has been edited. Changes have been suggested—and gratefully accepted. Well, most of them.

## Questions for Close Reading

1. What is the selection's thesis? Locate the sentence(s) in which Shipley states his main idea. If he doesn't state his thesis explicity, express it in your own words.
2. What tasks are involved in editing an op-ed piece for *The New York Times*? Of these, which does Shipley seem to think need the most explanation?
3. In paragraphs 18 through 22, Shipley describes the relationship between the editor and writer of an op-ed piece. What is the nature of this relationship?
4. In paragraph 22, Shipley says that "Editing is a human enterprise." What does he mean by this?
5. Refer to your dictionary as needed to define the following words used in the selection: *hardy* (paragraph 1), *perennial* (1), *on-deck circle* (6), *expletives* (9), *assertions* (12), *adhering* (14), *readability* (16), and *venue* (23).

## Questions About the Writer's Craft

1. **The pattern.** Who is the audience for Shipley's essay? Why would this audience be interested in this topic? What type of process analysis does Shipley use?
2. **Other patterns.** Shipley *divides* the editing process into three main types of tasks and covers each type in its own section. Identify the main editing tasks and the paragraph(s) that introduce each type. Why does he break down the process this way rather than deal with the editing process as a whole?
3. In paragraphs 13 and 14, Shipley uses an example to clarify what he means by checking "assertions." Why does he provide an example here? Is the example effective?
4. Shipley concludes this essay with some mild humor. What is the joke? What does this use of humor contribute to the point he has been making in his essay?

## Writing Assignments Using Process Analysis as a Pattern of Development

1. Shipley describes the process involved in editing opinion pieces, or arguments, that appear in a newspaper with national circulation. However, many other types of works are edited. For example, news articles, news broadcasts, documentaries, movies, commercials, advertisements, novels, and comic strips are all edited. Select one of these media and do research on the tasks

involved in editing it. Write an essay in which you *analyze* the editing *process* and explain why it is important.

2. Before a piece can be edited, it must be written. Examine the process involved in producing an essay from the writer's rather than the editor's point of view. What process do you use when you write an essay in your English course? Write an essay in which you analyze your own writing process. Your tone might be serious or humorous as you lay out your process. Consider concluding your essay by evaluating how effective your process is and what you might do differently in the future.

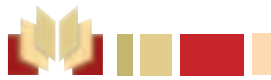
## Writing Assignments Combining Patterns of Development

3. Op-ed pieces are usually arguments about current issues; in contrast, news articles are more objective, describing or narrating events. From *The New York Times* or your local newspaper, select one op-ed page essay and one news article on a related topic, if possible. *Compare* and *contrast* the two pieces, analyzing their purpose and content. What patterns of development are used in each piece? Give *examples* to support your analysis.

4. A process analysis essay describes a general procedure, such as how to make chili, whereas a narrative presents a specific story, for example, a story about the time you dropped a pot of chili right before your guests arrived for dinner. Write an essay in which you blend a *process analysis* with a *specific narrative.* You can emphasize either the process analysis or the narrative, whichever seems more effective. Your essay can be humorous, serious, fantastical, or ironic.

## Writing Assignment Using a Journal Entry as a Starting Point

5. Review your pre-reading journal entry and select one of the occasions on which you helped someone or were helped to perform a task. First, identify the steps in the process and any missteps or problems. Second, decide whether the process lends itself to an informative or a directional process analysis, or some combination of the two. Finally, write an essay in which you describe the process. To add interest to your essay, you might want to use humor, describe interpersonal conflicts, give examples, or focus on problem areas. Be sure—perhaps in your conclusion—to indicate whether the assistance you gave or received was effective in getting the task done. For a tongue-in-cheek "guide" to performing a task—taking schools into the "computer age"—read Clifford Stoll's "Cyberschool" (page 328).



# ADDITIONAL WRITING TOPICS: PROCESS ANALYSIS

## General Assignments

Develop one of the following topics through process analysis. Explain the process one step at a time, organizing the steps chronologically. If there's no agreed-on sequence, design your own series of steps. Use transitions to ease the audience through the steps in the process. You may use any tone you want, from serious to light.

### Directional: How to Do Something

1. How to improve a course you have taken
2. How to drive defensively
3. How to get away with _____
4. How to improve the place where you work or study
5. How to relax
6. How to show appreciation to others
7. How to get through school despite personal problems
8. How to look fashionable on a limited budget
9. How to be a responsible pet owner
10. How to meet more people

### Informational: How Something Happens

1. How a student becomes burned out
2. How a library's card catalog or computerized catalog organizes books
3. How a dead thing decays (or some other natural process)
4. How the college registration process works
5. How *homo sapiens* choose a mate
6. How a VCR (or some other machine) works
7. How a bad habit develops
8. How people fall into debt
9. How someone becomes an Internet addict/junkie
10. How a child develops a love of reading

## Assignments with a Specific Purpose, Audience, and Point of View

### On Campus

1. As an experienced campus tour guide for prospective students, you've been asked by your school's Admissions Office to write a pamphlet explaining to new tour guides how to conduct a tour of your school's campus. When explaining the process, keep in mind that tour guides need to portray the school in its best light.
2. You write an "advice to the lovelorn" column for the campus newspaper. A correspondent writes saying that he or she wants to break up with a steady girlfriend/boyfriend but doesn't know how to do it without hurting the person. Give the writer guidance on how to end a meaningful relationship with a minimal amount of pain.

### At Home or in the Community

3. To help a sixteen-year-old friend learn how to drive, explain a specific driving maneuver one step at a time. You might, for example, describe how to make a three-point turn, parallel park, or handle a skid. Remember, your friend lacks self-confidence and experience.
4. Your best friend plans to move into his or her own apartment but doesn't know the first thing about how to choose one. Explain the process of selecting an apartment—where to look, what to investigate, what questions to ask before signing a lease.

### On the Job

5. As a staff writer for a consumer magazine, you've been asked to write an article on how to shop for a certain product. Give specific steps explaining how to save money, buy a quality product, and the like.
6. An author of books for elementary school children, you want to show children how to do something—take care of a pet, get along with siblings, keep a room clean. Explain the process in terms a child would understand yet not find condescending.