**Process Explanation**

A process explanation may comprise an entire essay, or it may be an element that helps develop a longer essay. Explaining a process can be quite simple if you compare it to a recipe in a cookbook. The explanation shows your reader, step by step, how to go through a process to achieve a certain result. However, if you have ever followed the vague cooking instructions of a friend, you know what can happen to that final result! When your friend says “Season to taste,” or “cool it until it’s ready,” you have to know precisely what he or she means. “A dash of nutmeg” might mean a pinch to one person and a handful to someone else. In contrast, note how exact professionally written cookbooks are—they let the anxious cook know how much a “dash” is to the centimeter.

Similarly, when you are writing about a process, think of your reader as being that completely inexperienced cook. Don’t forget steps that may seem obvious to you. Don’t use terminology that is vague rather than specific. Don’t assume knowledge on the part of the reader.

**Strategies to consider:**

1. Think about the purpose for writing about the process. For example, consider the subject of the paper is “How to have a Romantic Evening at Home.” The purpose of the process is that most of us, at one time or another, would be anxious to have such helpful information.
2. Outline the order of process. The order of process might be topical: the lighting, the music, the food and drink, the conversation and, hopefully, romance. The order to process explanation may also be sequential. Often, as in explaining how to prepare a recipe, you must present each step in the exact order that it must be done (for example, measuring, mixing, putting in a pan).
3. Clearly explain each topic or step in the process.
4. Explain why each topic or step in your process is important. “Candles placed strategically around a room provide both pleasant illumination and an aura of romantic possibility.”

**Assignment**

1. Revise one of your essays, adding a process explanation as an element that develops that essay.