

## **PROJECT #4: PROCEDURAL INSTRUCTIONS**

Write a set of instructions for performing a task with which you are very familiar. Write the instructions for readers who have never performed the task before, but who may have rudimentary knowledge of the topic area. In order to avoid undertaking a task that is overly complex (or overly simple), you must obtain my approval for the task by writing a brief proposal in memo format describing the task and the intended audience.

You must choose a task carefully. First, you must choose a task at an appropriate level of difficulty. Some tasks are too easy to need detailed instructions and others are so complex that they can only be described with a full-scale manual. The restrictions on task selection are spelled out in more detail below:

The task may involve a device: assembling it, operating it, or fixing it. Or the task may involve some process. You may choose the task from a hobby, a previous (or present) job, or some skill you've acquired in school.

The device or process should have discrete parts that are fairly easy to name and refer to. Avoid non-componential tasks: tying a tie, serving a tennis ball, or driving a stick shift, etc.

The task should take *no less than 10 and no more than 20 minutes* to perform.

The task should be one that *can conveniently be performed on campus or at your workplace*. You should have the necessary materials at hand while you are writing the instructions; it should be possible to find appropriate readers to carry out your instructions and carrying out the instructions should not be time consuming, dangerous, or expensive.

NOTE: You may choose a task for which a set of instructions is already available and revise the instructions. In this case, you must discuss the existing instructions in your proposal memo to convince me that you are taking on a challenging revision task. Either you must argue that the existing instructions are seriously inadequate, or you must plan to revise the instructions for a significantly different audience (e.g., 6th graders).

### **Requirements for the plan**

You must submit a memo for my approval that answers the following questions:

- 1.) What device or process are your instructions for?
- 2.) What qualifications do you have that make you a good writer of instructions for this particular task?
- 3.) What kind of readers will you write for? What do you assume they already know about the task? When and why do you expect them to use these instructions?
- 4.) Why are the instructions necessary for this task?
- 5.) Where will you get visual aids for your instructions?
- 6.) If you are revising a set of instructions, answer the following questions: What's wrong with the existing instructions? How will your instructions differ significantly from the existing set? Please attach a copy of at least one page to illustrate your claims.

## **Requirements for the instructions**

**Writing Process:** In order to create a really good set of instructions, you may need to gather more information about the task. Carry out the task yourself as self-consciously as possible. To find more information or to locate existing instructions to revise, look in the library, the Web, etc. Talk to other people who know how to perform the task and ask them to comment on the existing instructions or on common mistakes that anxious readers always make.

**Content and Format:** In general, your instructions should begin clearly by stating what the instructions are for, who should use them, and why. There should be an overview of the procedure. The steps should represent a logical division of actions. The steps should be clearly expressed (as imperative actions and results) and clearly laid out. The instructions should help the reader to check that the procedure was completed successfully and direct the reader to more information, as appropriate. We will discuss all of these points in more detail in class.

**Completeness, Accuracy, and Clarity:** The instructions should contain sufficient information expressed at the appropriate level of detail and with appropriate terminology for your reader to carry them out successfully without additional instruction.

**Audience Address:** As described above, you must specify what kind of readers should be using these instructions and what you expect them to know. You should address your audience directly (i.e., using second person) and use a tone appropriate to the rhetorical situation.

**Visual design:** The instructions should employ visual as well as verbal communication. You must include at least 3 significant illustrations or graphic aids, but you may rely much more heavily than this if visual aids are the most effective means of expression (note: if you make use of pictures or graphics from other sources, be sure to acknowledge the source). In addition, your instructions should use visual cues for increased accessibility, such as headings, numbering, white space and typeface.

**This assignment constitutes 20% of your overall grade.**