

WRTG 393 students,

The second writing assignment will be a **technical description for a non-specialized audience**. You will explain to a non-technical audience how something works.

You will choose an object or a process with which you are familiar. You will describe this object or process to an audience that has little or no background of the subject.

Keep in mind that you are not writing instructions on how to do something. You wrote instructions for writing assignment #1. If you describe a process, you cannot describe a process that involves direct human action.

For writing assignment #2, if you describe a process, you will describe an activity that takes place. You will describe how a phenomenon happens or how a mechanism works. For example, you could describe how the heart pumps blood in the human body. But you could not give instructions on how to take someone's blood.

Your description will include pictures. The description will use visual detail in both words and images.

Examples include the following:

- You are an auto mechanic. You could write a description of how spark plugs work to an audience of non-mechanics. *You would not write a set of instructions on how to install spark plugs. You would describe how spark plugs work.*
- You work in technical support at a computer store. You could write a description of how a graphics card works to an audience that is not familiar with computers. *You would not write a set of instructions on how to install a graphics card. You would describe how graphics cards work.*
- You are a member of a gaming community. You will describe how the game operates to an audience of non-gamers. *You would not write a set of instructions on how to play the game. You would describe how the game works.*
- You are in a branch of the military. You could write a description of how a function of your unit operates to a non-military audience. *You would not write a set of instructions on how to do something in the military unit. You would describe how a function or process in the military unit operates.*
- You might describe a piece of equipment that you included in your set of instructions for writing assignment #1. For example, assume that you wrote a set of instructions for writing assignment #1 on how to change oil in a car. In that set of instructions, perhaps you listed a hydraulic jack as a piece of equipment. For writing assignment #2, you could write a description of how a hydraulic jack works in lifting up a car. *You would not write a set of instructions on how to jack up a car. You would describe how the jack works.*

Overall, chapter 20 from Markel, "Writing Descriptions," should be read thoroughly as you begin this assignment. Different types of descriptions call for different strategies. The chapter

from Markel is an excellent resource in guiding your approach. The chapter is available in eReserves in our class. On page 549, Markel provides an excellent distinction between writing instructions and describing a process. Please become familiar with that section of Markel's chapter as you consider your topic for this assignment.

Your descriptions should answer the following questions:

- What is the object or process? How is it defined?
- What does the object or process do?
- What does the object or process look like?
- What is the object made of? (if you are describing an object and not a process)
- How does the object or process work?
- Why should the reader be interested in your object or process?

Strategies to Consider for this Assignment:

Your description should follow one of these styles of organization

- Spatial –
 - This style might be used when you want readers to describe an object or process according to its physical layout. For example, in describing a flatscreen television set, you might start at the top and work your way to the bottom.
- Functions in order of importance –
 - This style would be used if you want to highlight the most important functions first, the next most important functions second, etc. For example, in describing a flatscreen television set, you might start with the pixels, which make up the picture, and then proceed to describe other functions.
- Chronological –
 - This style would be used if you want to describe the object or process according to time. For example, in describing a flatscreen television set, you might start with what happens first (the user turns the television on), what happens second (the pixels respond), what happens third, etc.

Helpful Resources

- “Writing Descriptions,” chapter from M. Markel in eReserves
- [David McMurrey's Technical Description: What does it look like?](#)
- [Scribd description of a computer mouse](#)

Length:

500-800 words

Due Date:

Your instructor will notify you of the due date.