The Process Essay

This type of essay is used to explain a complex process in terms of simpler processes or steps. More often than not, this involves providing step-by-step instructions to the reader so that he or she has enough information to complete an unfamiliar task. In any case, clear organization and adequate detail are essential to this pattern.

Purpose: to inform readers about a particular process, often providing step-by-step instructions
Perspective: third-person (he, she, it, one, they...), second-person (you)
Organization: chronological, in the order the steps naturally or logically occur

Typical Structure:
1. Introduction:
   a. Attention-getter to get readers interested in the process
   b. Necessary background information
   c. Overall description of the process
   d. Potential benefits for the reader
   e. Thesis: point to be made about the process
2. Body (each paragraph):
   a. Topic sentence: one major step to be explained
   b. Ordered individual sub-steps with transitions
   c. Supporting details
   d. Transition to the next major step
3. Conclusion:
   a. Concise summary of the main point emphasized
   b. Summary of the process's major steps
   c. Overall significance of this analysis of the process
   d. Advice on when to use the process

Notes:
• Identify your audience and keep them in mind throughout the essay. You don't want your readers to get bored by unnecessary details, but you certainly don't want them getting lost either.
• Communicate a clear purpose. How will the reader benefit from this essay?
• For how-to essays, addressing your reader directly is appropriate, but strictly informative essays should generally be kept in the third person.
• Use plenty of transition words such as first, next, and finally.