

Writing assignment I

An important part of any science class is effective writing. Scientists communicate ideas, facts, opinions, data, methods, results, and conclusions by writing. The journals written by Darwin on the Beagle, the notebooks of Leonardo Da Vinci, articles from Scientific America, and specific scientific journals like Journal of Organic Chemistry allow scientists from different times, places, and cultures to share new discoveries and learn from old ones. These writings are based on a premise, a thought, observation, or idea that needs to be explored. We call this a "purpose". All scientists have a purpose to their work. They also have a procedure, a method if you will, about how they will set up the study. The method needs to be detailed enough so that another person can pick it up and read it without outside interpretation.

In this writing assignment, you will give written instructions to someone who has never been exposed to the marvels of modern living (think space alien, like ET. or visitor from the past, like Anne Boleyn, or a fictional character, like Winnie the Pooh. Think about your "character", ET, for example. He may have been in a space ship, but does he recognize the use of cars, does he know why we wear clothes, or the concept of clothing. Food will be odd to him. He might be nocturnal; he may never have seen a TV let alone a VCR. You will pick a simple, mundane task and explain to your character in detail how to be successful in this process. Your character has a rudimentary knowledge of our monetary system, measurement, American culture, English, and commerce.

Minimum guidelines: The assignment must be typed, and in a 12 pt font (I only changed the size and the font of the example.) The spelling and grammar must be checked. The assignment is written in Standard English. The writer (you) uses short well-worded sentences that clearly express the point of the assignment. You need to avoid using long, poorly worded, flowery sentences that don't help your explanation. The assignment should be no less than ~300 words to no more than 600; this one was 609 words long. I single-spaced it to save paper.

Example: how to put gas in your car

[Assume that we are driving the car, and I noticed that the gas gauge is close to empty]. The gas gauge is close to empty. The gas gauge measures the level of gas in the car; without gas, the car does not go. We need to go to a gas station to fill up on more gas. The gas station has pumping stations that suck gas from a reservoir underground into your car.

First pull up to the gas pump and turn off the car. You need to make sure that you have pulled in front of the correct pump. The gas tank in my car is in the front right side of the car. We want the pump to be to the right side of the car. Pull up to the gas pump and turn off the car. Depress the break and clutch, put the car in first gear and engage the hand brake. Unbuckle your seat belt, remove the key from the ignition, and keep the key in your hand. Lean over and flick the switch that opens the gas tank cover to the car. It is located under the dash on the passenger side of the car.

Open the car door and stand up. Retrieve your purse from the back seat and commence to hunting for your wallet. Once you find your wallet, look for the appropriate gas card. This one will do; it's a Master Card. Take it out of the wallet. Put the wallet in the purse, the purse in the car and close the car door. Walk over to the area of the car where the gas tank is located. The cover

of the gas area is open, and you should see a cylinder with a top on it. This is the gas tank lid. Unscrew it by pressing down and turning right, clockwise.

Now we have to pay for the gas and fill the tank. Take the gas card and insert it into the slot provided for cards. The card needs to be held in a vertical position. Make sure that the black magnetic strip is pointing in the correct direction. You want it up and facing towards your left. Push the card in and remove it quickly. The computer will ask for your 5-digit zip code. Put that in using the keypad and press enter. Look at the pump. It gives you several options for gas. I use the cheapest gas, which is 87 octanes; it's an old car. Press the button for the 87 octanes.

Pick up the pump handle and insert the nozzle (the metallic cylindrical part) into the open gas tank. Press the nozzle firmly into this gas tank while squeezing the handle of the nozzle up. The gas should start flowing into the gas tank. The gas will continue flowing into the tank until the tank is full; when this happens, you will hear a click and the gas will stop flowing automatically. When this happens, remove the nozzle, and replace it on the pump. Replace the gas tank lid on the tank, remembering to press in and turn counterclockwise to lock it on. Snap the lid of the tank cover closed. Turn to the pump, find the button that says "NO", and press it. When you press the "NO" button, you don't get a receipt. Walk around the car. Open the driver side door and sit back down in the car. Open the purse, find the wallet and put the card away. Put the wallet back in the purse. Put the key back in the ignition, close the door, and prepare to drive away. [Driving away is a whole other process that is not part of this purpose.]

Example 2: How to cook zucchini in my house.

I love zucchini; sometimes it too watery when it is cooked. I have tried many methods of sautéing zucchini, some of them are really long and taste awful, but one method seems to work the best. I slice the zucchini, salt it, and let it rest, then sauté it in good olive oil and butter. Here is how I make zucchini at my house. First, I go to pick the zucchini. I like zucchini that is about the size of my hand (6 in long) and about two fingers wide (1 inch in diameter). Zucchini should be dark green and have no blemishes or bruises on the outside. The skin should be tender to the touch and when you rub two zucchini together, they should make a faint squeaky noise. You will need about 1-2 pounds of zucchini for this recipe, which will feed 4 with some left over for a frittata (another story) or 6 good vegetable eaters. This equates to about 2 zucchini per person.

In the kitchen, you will need the following items: Kosher salt, a cookie pan with a rim, a 12 inch non-stick skillet a colander, a wet towel, a clean towel or paper towels, a cutting board, a sharp knife, five cloves of garlic, 1 tablespoon of butter and 1 tablespoon of good olive oil. I also use thyme, and pepper for the final seasoning.

Put the cookie pan on the kitchen table. The cookie pan is a flat, rectangular piece of metal, about 13 inches long and 9 inches wide. The rim on the cookie pan is about 1 inch high. The rim will prevent any liquid from leaking out onto the floor. Next, put a damp towel on the kitchen counter. Over that, place the cutting board. The cutting board is a flat piece of wood about 9 inches long, 12 inches wide, and 1 inch high. Rinse your zucchini in the colander and bring the colander over to the counter near you cutting board. Take one zucchini and look at it carefully, there are two ends, one with a stem and one with a rounded part. Using your knife (see how to use a knife) cut the two ends off with about 0.25 cm of flesh attached to the cut end. Cut the zucchini in half short ways. Now, you have two cylinders. Cut these cylinders in half along the longest part of the cylinder. This is a lengthwise cut. You should have four pieces of zucchini. Cut the halves into thirds creating long strips. Lay these out on the cookie pan and sprinkle with kosher salt. Wait for about

1-2 hours before proceeding. While the zucchini is resting, prepare the garlic and the thyme so that is ready when you need it.

I like fresh thyme, which I grow in my garden. However, sometimes I don't have fresh available, and I must use dried thyme. Dried thyme is more pungent and I need less of it. If you have fresh thyme, you need to strip the small leaves from the stems because the stems are not good food. You need about 1 tablespoon of fresh thyme leaves or about 1 teaspoon of dried thyme leaves.

Garlic is a pungent bulb that adds wonderful flavor to many foods. Choose bulbs that are heavy and firm. The cloves are the individual sections of the garlic. You need about five cloves of garlic, enough to fit in your cupped hand. The cloves have a papery cover on them, which is unpleasant to eat and must be removed. Looking at the clove, you will see there is a root end and a pointed end; cut the root end off, and peel off the covering. Chop the garlic into very small bits or use a garlic press to smoosh the garlic into a paste.

Once the liquid has leached out of the zucchini, put all the cut pieces into the colander and rinse well with water. Use paper towels or a clean cloth towel pat off the extra moisture from the zucchini slices. Meanwhile, heat the oil and butter in a sauté pan. Put the garlic in the hot pan. Immediately add the zucchini and cook the zucchini for about 5 min. Add the thyme and pepper. Remove from the pan, and put on a plate. In our house, we dust it lightly with grated cheese.

[illegible]

Examples: you need to run your idea by me if you are not sure. If you think it is too easy, you are probably not thinking the exercise through or you need to choose another topic that meets the requirements.

1. How to tie your shoes
2. How to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich
3. How to make (emphasis on make) a cup of coffee with cream and sugar
4. How to make a tuna sandwich
5. How to do a load of wash
6. How to change a diaper.
7. How to program a VCR
8. How to fold a paper airplane
9. How to wash a car.
10. How to give yourself a manicure
11. How to fry an egg
12. How to sew on a button
13. How to make Pillsbury biscuits, or better yet, biscuits by scratch.
14. How to roast a chicken
15. How to do the dishes
16. How to grill a chicken or burger
17. How to make an ice cream sundae
18. How to make pickles
19. How to make something you like to eat, but remember, you have to describe the steps in prose, not submit a recipe.
20. How to make something you like to use.
21. How to change a tire
22. How to jump start a battery
23. Create a map of how you get to school and describe the various places of interest along the way.
24. Take the character to your favorite restaurant, order all your favorite foods, and describe what they are and why you like them.
25. Explain the difference between fish you eat, and fish that are pets.
26. Explain how to take a bath or shower
27. Explain how and why you brush your teeth.