Explaining a Process

California student Luke Sunukjian wrote the following essay (an explanation of a process) to show readers how to enter the “green room.”

Entering the “Green Room”

Learning how to surf is really pretty easy; it’s actually doing it that presents a challenge. For instance, it’s very important to learn how to get “tubed” (to place yourself under the curl of the wave) before going surfing. Major consequences await those who try to get tubed improperly. You may get caught too far behind the wave’s lip or get sucked to the top of the wave. Or you may be thrown down the wave’s face, knocked unconscious, or worse. Do not let this dangerous situation stop you from learning how to get tubed. There is nothing to fear if you follow my explanation of how to enter the “green room,” the curling part of the wave.

Before you enter the green room, you must first learn how to stand up on your board. To get to your feet, put your hands on the rails (sides) of the board and push your body up as though you are doing a push-up. Then swing your feet underneath your body. You are now ready to place yourself on the correct part of the wave.

As you get to your feet, you will be dropping down the wave’s face (the front of the water rolling toward shore) and will need to prepare for the bottom turn. Your feet should be spread apart near the tail (back) of the board, facing perpendicular to the direction in which you are moving. Put your weight on your back foot to avoid sinking the nose into the water. After dropping past the bottom of the wave, lean toward the face of the wave while continuing to put pressure on the tail of the board. This action will turn the board toward the face of the wave and accelerate you alongside the wave.

At this point you are slightly ahead of the barreling part of the wave, and you need to “stall,” or slow yourself, to get into the tube. There are three methods of stalling used in different situations. If you are slightly ahead of the tube, you can drag your inside hand along the water to stall. If you are a couple of feet in front of the barrel, apply all your weight to your back foot and sink the tail into the water. This is known as a “tail stall” for obvious reasons, and its purpose is to decrease your board speed. If you are moving faster than the wave is breaking, you need to do what is called a “wrap-around.” To accomplish this maneuver, lean back away from the wave while applying pressure on the tail. This shifts your forward momentum away from the wave and slows you down. When the wave comes, turn toward the wave and place yourself in the barrel.
While surfing in the barrel, your body position is key. Duck your head (unless the wave is over ten feet) and lean toward the face of the wave so the lip does not crash on your body. You want the breaking part of the wave to completely cover you without the water touching your body. Be careful not to get too close to the face of it because the wave will pull the board upward, causing you to be hurled off. To avoid this scenario, position your board a foot’s distance away from the wave’s face.

The final step in completing a tube ride is coming out of the tube, and there are two ways to do this. You can increase your board speed to move faster than the wave is breaking. Or you can have the wave “spit” you out. The latter option refers to the barreling wave creating so much air pressure inside the tube that some of the air is forced out. The air being spit out of the barrel hits your back, forcing you out of the wave.

Once you complete your first tube ride, you will be hooked, and will come back again and again, always in search of the perfect table, always looking for that twenty-foot wave with a curl that looks like a giant hollow cylinder. Nothing you ever do in life will match the thrill of entering and exiting the perfect “green room.”

Reading for Better Writing

1. The writer appeals to fear to introduce his topic and get the reader’s attention. Explain why the appeal is or is not effective.

2. To explain how to enter the “green room,” the writer breaks the process into six steps. What transitions move the reader into and out of each step?

3. List the traits of an explanation of a process. Explain why this essay does or does not exemplify these traits.