For Process Descriptions

From Markel & Selber’s Table 20.1, “Questions to Answer in Introducing a Description”

Instructions: Review your rough draft for the information in each of these questions. Copy the information from your draft and paste it in as your answer. If the information is missing from your draft, you can add it, make a note that you need to add it, or explain why it is not necessary for your technical description.

* **What is the process?** You might start with a sentence definition.
* **What is the function of the process?** Unless the function is obvious, state it: “The main purpose of performing a census is to obtain current population figures, which government agencies use to revise legislative districts and determine revenue sharing.”
* **Where and when does the process take place?** “Each year the stream is stocked with hatchery fish in the first week of March.” Omit these facts only if your readers already know them.
* **Who or what performs the process?** If there is any doubt about who or what performs the process, state that information.
* **How does the process work?** “The four-treatment lawn-spray plan is based on the theory that the most effective way to promote a healthy lawn is to apply different treatments at crucial times during the growing season. The first two treatments — in spring and early summer — consist of ….”
* **What are the principal steps in the process?** Name the steps in the order in which you will describe them. The principal steps in changing an automobile tire, for instance, are jacking up the car, replacing the old tire with the new one, and lowering the car back to the ground. Changing a tire also includes secondary steps, such as placing chocks against the tires to prevent the car from moving once it is jacked up. Explain or refer to these secondary steps at the appropriate points in the description.