

How to...

Teach instruction and explanation text

All non-fiction writing is based on just six main formats: recount, information, explanation, instruction, persuasion and discussion. In your supporting role, you will help pupils develop strategies to write in these six formats. This publication focuses on instruction and explanation texts.

Strategies for preparing to write an instruction/explanation text

	Strategy	Why use it?
1	Show a good example of a real instruction/explanation text, e.g. a recipe/science explanation text.	Many pupils do not have a clear idea of instruction/explanation writing. They need examples to build on.
2	Identify the typical features of the example instruction/explanation text.	To link reading to writing, so that pupils know where they need to include bullet points, labelled diagrams etc.
3	Look at how these features fit within a text-type skeleton.	Helps pupils model their own text and helps pupils develop the strategy for themselves for when they have no adult support.
4	Keep emphasising what is typical of instruction/explanation writing rather than what is special in this case.	The aim is to teach the features of instruction/explanation writing, not just one individual instruction/explanation context.

Many pupils will be familiar with text-type skeletons. If not, they should be introduced to them systematically as they work through the six formats.

Purpose of writing

Instruction	Explanation
<p>Instruction audience: <i>whoever will carry out these instructions.</i></p> <p>Answering questions such as: <i>How do you do this? How do you make this?</i></p>	<p>Explanation audience: <i>someone who does not understand why or how something works/happens (worked/happened).</i></p> <p>Answering questions such as: <i>Why does this work? How does this happen? Why did this happen? How did this happen?</i></p>

Typical features

Instruction	Explanation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A series of steps in logical time order: what you need to do first, second etc. • Can start with a list of ingredients/apparatus etc. • Can use bullet points/numbers. • Often uses imperatives to start each step in the instructions: <i>mix, stir, cut, connect, measure</i> etc. • Often a new line for each new instruction. • Adverbs used to add precision: <i>slowly, carefully, accurately.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed to show link between <i>cause</i> and <i>effect</i>. • Emphasis on clarity of explanation – can it be clearly understood? • Emphasis on logic of explanation – is the explanation convincing? • Explains one stage of process, before moving on to next stage, usually in time order. • Can have more than one cause for one effect, or more than one effect from one cause.

<p>Typical connectives</p> <p>Alternatively Apart from As long as Despite Eventually Finally First/second/third However If Meanwhile Unless Until Whenever</p>	<p>Typical connectives</p> <p>As a consequence As a result As illustrated by As shown by Because Consequently Eventually For example For instance If Then In order to In the case of So So that Such as Therefore To</p>
<p>Useful nouns</p> <p>These will vary according to the context. They will include the ingredients/apparatus etc. (e.g. <i>fruit, ice, cream, liquidiser, lid</i> in the example below).</p> <p>It is very helpful to pupils if they have a list of the key words – ensure they understand each key word. Make sure you have a variety of fun activities to help them understand the key words.</p>	<p>Useful nouns</p> <p>These will vary according to the context. They will often be subject specific words (e.g. <i>blood, heart, oxygen, muscles, organs</i> in the example below).</p> <p>It is very helpful to pupils if they have a list of the key words – ensure they understand each key word. Make sure you have a variety of fun activities to help them understand the key words.</p>
<p>Example extract from instruction text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Place the fruit in a liquidiser • Whizz for 30 seconds • Add ice and cream • Place lid back tightly... 	<p>Example extract from explanation text</p> <p>The blood returning to the heart from the body is low in oxygen because the muscles and other organs use oxygen taken from the blood.</p>

Once pupils are clear about the text-type and the overall structure, they need to hear the typical language patterns appropriate to the text they are about to say or write. The best way to achieve this is for them to say these themselves or to hear other pupils/adults saying them.

Once the particular context in this subject and this topic is clear, get the pupils to choose from the speech bubbles one that they are relatively confident about, and ask them to say out loud a full sentence appropriate for the given context.

They may well need support in this process, but having a list of key words/ connectives/sentence starters is a sound foundation for making pupils more independent.

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