

Non-Fiction Toolkit Focus: Instruction Texts

Instructional language is a familiar part of school and family life from an early age. 'Sit down', 'get your coat on', 'clean your teeth' etc., are common speech patterns, usually internalised before children begin school. The basic organisation of an instruction text is straightforward. The paradigm is a simple recipe with an introduction, some sequenced steps and a conclusion – mostly written with 'bossy' verbs. It is an important and challenging task to get this work effectively started with young children. However, a rather simplistic conception of instructional writing has led some believe that it has only limited potential for older children – what's the point of carrying on writing recipes? They are wrong. Instructional forms of learning and writing should play a vital part in developing logical understanding especially in maths, science and technology where processes and procedures are at the heart of understanding these subjects. Also, instructional texts, more than most other text-types frequently depend on graphics: pictures, symbols, diagrams, flowcharts etc. to make processes clear, and this should be an additional challenge. The Y5/6 guidance underlines this, showing how instructional writing, should become progressively more complex. By the end of Y4, if the foundations have been well laid, instructional writing should become significant asset to children's learning.

Year R,	Year 1, 2	Year 3, 4	Year 5, 6
<p>Based on a real experience, discuss and list what is needed to tell someone how to do something and what steps need to be taken e.g. <i>a class cooking activity, cleaning my teeth, How to get to another part of the school to another etc.</i></p> <p>Make a map to show a process getting the steps in the right order</p> <p>Use the map to learn and retell instructions with a few simple steps, with appropriate actions emphasising use of language features:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A title which should explain what is to be done e.g. <i>Getting to the hall from Red Class; Making peppermint Creams</i> • Numbers, numerical or time connectives e.g. <i>1,2,3; first second; then, next, after that</i> etc. as for recounts. • Short, clear direct sentences • Imperative (bossy) language e.g. <i>Put the flour in the bowl, then add some water, mix them together</i> etc. <p>Use shared writing to invent and retell new instructions by changing the map. These can be imagined and creative to practice and learn the structures above e.g. <i>How to get to the moon; How to make baby bear happy; How to make soup for a giant</i> etc.</p>	<p>Building on N/YR work:</p> <p>Expand the range and scale of instructions using exemplar texts, building in language features from N/YR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • title • sequential connectives • short clear sentences • imperative language <p>e.g. <i>recipes, directions to get somewhere, simple instructions for games, how to make a scary mask, how to grow butter beans.</i></p> <p>Use shared writing to invent and new instructions by changing the map; these can be inventive and creative to practice and learn the structures above e.g. <i>How to get to the moon; How to make baby bear happy; How to make soup for a giant</i> etc., leading to independent writing based on the structure with new invented content</p> <p>Extend range of connectives used to include: number <i>first second, firstly, secondly</i> etc. co-ordinating conjunctions <i>and, but</i>, so time connectives <i>before, after, when, finally</i>; linking words <i>who, which, that</i>, etc.</p> <p>Use a range of prepositions appropriately to indicate place, position and time accurately <i>in front of, behind, beside, while</i> etc.</p> <p>Use appropriate punctuation: commas for lists, bullet points, new lines to frame the sequence for readers</p> <p>Keep sentences short by choosing precise nouns and verbs (words and phrases) <i>whisk, select, twist, arrange, the red door by the entrance, the top shelf, a cold dark cupboard</i> etc.</p> <p>Use adverbs and adjectives sparingly and only to add precision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>stir carefully, press hard, at the top step after three go's</i> . . etc. • comparatives and superlatives: <i>green-er, green-est;</i> • adjectives of degree: <i>boiling-warm-tepid; quarter-half-three quarters; dark-pale-light</i> etc. <p>Use diagrams, arrows, pictures etc. alongside text, where it helps to make instructions clear.</p>	<p>Building on Y1/2 work:</p> <p>Expand the range and scale of instructions e.g. <i>recipes, directions to get somewhere, simple instructions for games, how to make a scary mask</i> etc. using exemplar texts, building in and extending language features from Y1/2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an interesting title –to grab reader’s attention • extended range of connectives • short clear sentences • imperative language • precise nouns and verbs • sparing use of adverbs ad adjectives for brevity and precision • varied sentence order and openings for emphasis and effect e.g. <i>Carefully, place them on the board before</i> • diagrams etc. alongside text to clarify meaning <p>Include introductions to interest or hook the reader e.g. <i>These simple directions will help you to. . . Have you ever wondered how to. . .? Have you ever been bored by. . . Well this game will give you hours of fun. . .</i></p> <p>And conclusions to wrap up and summarise e.g. <i>Follow these directions carefully and you will never need to. . .; These simple instructions should enable anyone to. . .</i></p> <p>Use appropriate punctuation: commas for lists, colons and bullets, for points and sub-points, new lines and paragraphs etc. to frame the sequence for readers.</p> <p>Use a range of add-on and drop-in phrases/clauses to advise and warn e.g. <i>Without spilling it, transfer the powder to. . .; the next player, who should have taken a card already. . .; First climb up the beanstalk, taking care not to. . .</i></p> <p>Through shared writing and invention, practice and use the tools above to create imagined instructions and directions which practice using the structures so they become transferrable e.g. <i>How to tame a house goblin. . . The popular new game Crunket: How to play it. . . How to cross a river with no bridge, without getting wet. . .</i></p> <p>Apply instructional writing to work in other curricular areas e.g. <i>how to play mathematical games or do calculations, how to find something on the internet, how to assemble a model, what to do in an emergency</i> etc.</p>	<p>Building on Y3/4 work:</p> <p>Other subjects in the curriculum should provide rich content for instruction writing which can be taken to challenging levels with older children. This form of writing is common in e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maths: e.g. directions for playing games, solving problems, doing calculations, constructing shapes and designs etc. . . . • Science: e.g. writing up processes and procedures: <i>How to build an electrical circuit with a switch. . ., measuring time using the sun. . .</i> • Geography: <i>calculating the height of trees. . .</i> • PHSE e.g. steps to take in dealing with hostile behaviour; Safety First instructions in case of emergencies. . . . • Design and technology e.g. rules for safe handling of tools and materials; directions for constructing, assembling programming. . . • Etc. <p>Increase the complexity of topics and steps to include to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • explanations e.g.: who the instructions are intended for; to introduce technical language; to guide readers on how to use the instructions; to describe/define outcomes e.g. what counts as winning, what a product should look or taste like, how it should behave; etc. • multiple prior or parallel steps e.g. <i>Before this can be done, the ends should be tied off so that . . . While the glue is setting, cut the wires to fit round . . .</i> • Options e.g. <i>at this point you can either (a). . .or (b). . .; . . .any player may roll the dice but only the player with. . .etc.</i> • Advice e.g. <i>Before you take the wrapping away. . ., You may need another pair of hands to help you do this. . ., although this could be done without drawing the lines. . .</i> <p>Decide whether it will help to use symbols, diagrams, pictures, flow charts etc. to support the text.</p> <p>Vary the tone and formality e.g. to make instructions to sound:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • authoritarian with uncompromising imperatives e.g. <i>Leave the building quietly, Do not leave the area until. . .</i>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• or more friendly and reasonable by using modal verbs <i>may, might, should, could, would</i> etc. and phrases like <i>provided that...</i>, <i>so long as...</i> etc.• speak to a general audience e.g. <i>These regulations are intended for the use of...</i>,• or to an individual e.g. <i>To get the best results, take a few minutes t...</i> <p>When you have finished, check carefully to ensure your instructions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• make sense and are free of ambiguity and contradiction,• effectively sequenced to achieve their objective,• can be understood by others.
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