



Non-Fiction Writing Progression - Explanation

Explanatory texts generally go beyond simple 'description' in that they include information about causes, motives or reasons. Explanations and reports are sometimes confused when children are asked to 'explain' and they actually provide a report, e.g. what they did (or what happened) but not how and why. Like all text types, explanatory texts vary widely and are often found combined with other text types.

Purpose: To explain how something works, e.g. a refrigerator, including the processes involved in natural and social phenomena, e.g. the water cycle or how bees make honey, or why/how something happened.	Examples of text types: -Explaining inventions such as the steam train, the causes of historic events such as WW2 -Explaining phenomena such as the water cycle or how a volcano erupts in geography -Explaining religious traditions and practices in RE -Recoding a science experiment	
Audience: -Someone who wants to understand a process or event	Generic Structure: -A general statement to introduce the topic being explained. E.g. <i>In the winter some animals hibernate.</i> -The steps or phases in a process are explained logically, in chronological order or cyclically. E.g. <i>When the nights get longer ... because the temperature begins to drop ... so the hedgehog looks for a safe place to hide.</i> These steps continue until the explanation is complete. -Diagrams may be used to aid the explanation.	
Knowledge for the writer: -The title tells the reader what is being explained, perhaps using why or how. -Images or other features can be used to help the reader, e.g. <i>diagrams, photographs, a flow chart, a textbox, captions, a list or a glossary.</i> -The first paragraph introduces what will be explained. -Check that in each step, necessary information about how and why things happen as they do is included. -Add a few interesting details. -Specialised vocabulary may require a glossary. -Interest the reader by talking directly to them. -Explanatory texts can be adapted or combined with other text types to make them work effectively for the audience and purpose.		
Genre progression	Language features	Textual features
EYFS (Orally and in simple sentences)		
-Listen to and talk about selected non-fiction to develop a deep familiarity with new knowledge and vocabulary -Talk about why things happen and how simple things work -Understand simple questions about 'who', 'what' 'where' and 'why' -Listen to someone explain a simple process and ask questions about what has been heard -Give an oral explanation eg <i>how they made a model</i> -Articulate instructions in well-formed oral sentences -Orally connect one idea or action to another using a range of connectives -Learn and use new vocabulary that is not in everyday use but occurs frequently in books and other contexts -Internalise language features of instructional texts by joining in with communal re-tellings		
Year 1 (Orally and in simple sentences)		
-Read captions, pictures and diagrams on wall displays and in simple books that explain a process -Draw pictures to illustrate a process and use the picture to explain the process orally -Sequence pictures that explain how or why something happens, adding a caption or sentence.	-Use simple present tense -Join words and clauses with 'and' -Use capital letters and full stops to demarcate sentences - Question marks are used to denote questions e.g. <i>Why does it get dark at night?</i>	(See generic structure) -Steps for the process are sequenced in order
Year 2 build on previous year's learning and...		
-After carrying out a practical activity e.g. <i>experiment, investigation, construction task</i> contribute to creating a flowchart to explain the process, guided by the teacher -Following an oral explanation of the process, explain the same process orally also using visual prompts to support -Read, with help, flowcharts or diagrams explaining other processes and then read others independently. -Following other practical tasks, produce a simple flowchart or diagram independently -Write simple sentences including some explanation	-Written in simple present tense e.g. <i>Hedgehogs wake up again in the spring...</i> -Use the present progressive tense e.g. <i>Animals are hibernating ...</i> -Include subordination (using because), e.g. <i>This happens because...</i> , to support the explanation -Use expanded noun phrases to describe and specify - Commas are used to separate items in a list	-There is a simple sequential order
Year 3 build on previous year's learning and...		
-Create diagrams such as flow charts to summarise or make notes of the stages of a process e.g. <i>in science, D&T or geography</i> , ensuring items are clearly sequenced. -Explain processes orally, using these notes, ensuring relevant details are included and	-Consistent use of simple present tense and the present progressive -Use of present perfect instead of the simple past -Express time, place and cause using conjunctions (then, next, soon, because)	-The title clearly states what is being written about -Questions can be used to form titles e.g.

<p>accounts ended effectively</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Analyse simple explanations and identify organisational devices which make them easier to follow, <i>e.g. lists, numbers, bulleted points, diagrams with arrows, keys</i> -Begin to write simple explanations which follow clear steps, supported by an adult -Begin organising steps into paragraphs 	<p>adverbs or prepositions (before, during, in, around) <i>e.g. Chocolate melts because</i> ...</p>	<p><i>How do hedgehogs survive the winter?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Headings and subheading can be used to guide the reader -The steps are beginning to be organised as paragraphs
<p>Year 4 build on previous year's learning and...</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Read and analyse more complicated explanatory texts to identify key features -Distinguish between explanatory texts, reports and recounts, whilst recognising that an information book might contain examples of all these forms of text or a combination of these forms -Orally summarise processes in flowcharts or diagrams as appropriate -Develop the writing of explanations, using paragraphs, connectives and the other key language and structural features appropriate to explanatory writing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Precise and considered use of present tense in all its forms (simple, perfect, progressive) is used -There is a varied use of conjunctions of time <i>e.g. first, after,</i> -Use a wider range of causal conjunctions and adverbs <i>e.g. because, as a result, consequently</i> -Use fronted adverbials <i>e.g. Inside the pyramid, ...</i> Ensure a comma is used after the fronted adverbial -Cohesion can be created, and repetition avoided through the use of nouns and pronouns <i>e.g. Many mammals...they feed their young...</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -An introduction gives useful background information -There is a sequential explanation, organised into paragraphs -Diagrams and other illustrations are used to help the reader -Subheadings are used where appropriate
<p>Year 5 build on previous year's learning and...</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Read and analyse a range of explanatory texts, investigating and noting features of impersonal style -Research/ try out the process to be explained to ensure clarity of understanding -Begin to plan, compose, edit and refine explanatory texts, using reading as a source, focusing on clarity, conciseness and impersonal style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Include technical vocabulary -Begin to use a range of sequential, causal or logical conjunctions, adverbials and prepositions <i>e.g. This proves that ... So it's clear ... Therefore ...</i> -The use of subordinating conjunctions <i>e.g. when, before, after, while, so, because...</i> enables multi-clause sentences to be formed. -Relative clauses can be used to add further information <i>e.g. Hedgehogs, which are mammals...</i> -Commas are used to clarify meaning or avoid ambiguity. -Indicate degrees of possibility using adverbs <i>e.g. perhaps, surely...</i> Sometimes modal verbs can be used to express degrees of possibility <i>e.g. might, should, will...</i> -Brackets, dashes and commas can be used to add extra information inside parenthesis <i>e.g. oxygen (a gas found in air)</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The writing and illustrations are organised effectively to explain the process to the reader -Unfamiliar vocabulary is defined in a glossary -Layout devices such as headings, subheadings, columns, bullets etc can be used to present information clearly
<p>Year 6 build on previous year's learning and...</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Draw on knowledge of different non-fiction text types to combine text types when needed -Choose the appropriate form of writing and style to suit a specific purpose and audience -Plan, compose, edit and refine explanatory texts, using reading as a source, focusing on clarity, conciseness and impersonal style 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Include the use of the passive voice <i>eg gases are carried...</i> -Use the subjunctive form, if required, <i>eg if a volcano were to erupt now, it would</i> -Use technical vocabulary with precision <i>eg magma,</i> -Use a range of sequential, causal or logical conjunctions, adverbials and prepositions <i>e.g. This proves that ... So it's clear ... Therefore ...</i> -Degrees of formality and informality can be adapted to suit the form of the discussion, so an informal tone can sometimes be appropriate <i>e.g. You'll be surprised to know that ... Have you ever thought about the way that ...?</i> And a formal, authoritative tone can also be adopted <i>e.g. oxygen is constantly replaced in the bloodstream...</i> -Use of the semi-colon, colon and dash to mark the boundary between independent clauses. <i>E.g. "Active volcanoes may erupt with some regularity; dormant volcanoes will normally lie silent for hundreds of years."</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Explanations are combined with other text types, as appropriate, to engage and inform the reader