

Progression in Explanation

Purpose: to explain the processes involved in natural and social phenomena, or to explain how something works.

Explanation text is generally one in which a process is being explained, not just described. An explanation generally answers 'how' or 'why' questions and includes causes, motives or reasons. The verb 'explained', however, is often loosely used to mean 'report', for example, 'explain what you did' generally means 'tell me or describe what you did' and may not have any reasons attached to it. The verb 'explain' is also used in place of 'define' so dictionary definitions are sometimes inaccurately categorised as explanation texts. (However, children's dictionaries are often a hybrid between a dictionary and an encyclopaedia so could reasonably be consulted for an explanation.)

Text structure:

- a general statement to introduce the topic, for example, *'In the autumn some birds migrate.'*
- a series of logical steps explaining how or why something occurs, for example *'because hours of daylight shorten...'*
- steps continue until the final state is produced or the explanation is complete

Language features:

- written in simple present tense, for example, *many birds fly south*
- use connectives that signal time, for example, *then, next, several months later,*
- use causal connectives, for example *because, so, this causes, consequently, as a result of this*

Explanation texts should begin with a title which shows what the writer is to write about: often using 'How' or 'Why..?' in the title can help to orient the reader effectively. Diagrams or illustrations can be used to help to explain the process clearly and explanation texts can also provide an opportunity for the writer to include a glossary with the writing in order to explain specialist vocabulary or terminology.

Before writing an explanation, it is important to familiarise pupils with each step in the process and it is very helpful to allow them to record the process pictorially (using a Sue Palmer 'flow chart' skeleton). They can then practice explaining the process orally, using causal language to connect each step and create a text which 'flows' in a logical order.

	Progression in explanation texts	Writing targets (related to key learning from English PoS)
FS2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about why things happen and how things work; ask questions and speculate. • Listen to someone explain a process and ask questions. • Give oral explanations (e.g. their or another's reasons for making a decision; why and how they chose to make a particular construction model.) 	<p>I attempt to write captions or short sentences in meaningful context. (Write key words, captions or a sentence and use these to explain what they saw happen or for example why they put a particular piece onto a model. Begin to use words to explain links between events - so that, because, when.) NB As this text requires subordination, many children will explain orally, rather than in writing.</p> <p>I can leave a finger space between each word in my sentence.</p> <p>I can write sentences and read them back accurately.</p> <p>(I put the tube on the box so that it looked like the funnel of my boat.)</p>
Y1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read captions, pictures and diagrams on wall displays and in simple books that explain a process. Draw pictures (onto the explanation skeleton flow chart) to illustrate a process and use their picture to explain the process orally or with the help of written sentences. 	<p>Use the explanation 'flow chart' skeleton to draw and sequence pictures which explain a process. Write key words and sentences to accompany the pictures. (The chocolate gets warm and then it starts to melt.)</p> <p>I can put words together to make a sentence.</p> <p>I can join 2 sentences using 'and'.</p> <p>I can separate the words in my sentences using finger spaces.</p> <p>I can use a capital letter to start a sentence.</p> <p>I can use a full stop to end a sentence.</p>
Y2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After carrying out a practical activity, (e.g. experiment, investigation, construction task) contribute to creating a flowchart or cyclical diagram to explain the process. After seeing 	<p>I can begin to talk about models of the text I intend to write and explain some of the structure and language features of the text. (Opening to state what the</p>

	<p>and hearing an oral explanation of the process, explain the same process orally also using flowchart, language and gestures appropriately.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read, with help, flowcharts or cyclical diagrams explaining other processes and then read others independently. • Following other practical tasks, and after seeing teacher modelling of the process of planning using a flowchart, produce a simple flowchart or cyclical diagram independently. • Write sentences to accompany the diagram. 	<p>text will explain; in sequential order; present tense verbs; words to sequence each step then, next, so that, because, finally)</p> <p>I can write for different purposes, including to <i>explain</i> real events.</p> <p>I can use the present tense correctly and check that I have kept to the same tense.</p> <p>I can use different sentence types correctly - statement, question.</p> <p>(Do you want to know how a tadpole turns into a frog? Back legs begin to grow next.)</p> <p>I can almost always use capital letters and full stops correctly.</p> <p>I can use question marks correctly where they are needed in my writing.</p> <p>I can use coordinating conjunctions (and, or) to link ideas in my writing.</p> <p>I sometimes use subordinating conjunctions (when, because, so) to connect ideas in my writing.</p> <p>(The tadpole has to stay in the water because it still has gills. First the back legs develop and then the lungs begin to grow.)</p>
Y3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create diagrams such as flow charts to summarise or make notes of stages in a process (e.g. in science, D&T or geography), ensuring items are clearly sequenced. 	<p>Y3:</p> <p>I can compose sentences which develop ideas in a logical sequence.</p> <p>I am starting to use paragraphs to organise my writing.</p> <p>I can suggest improvements to my writing using what I know about the organisation and grammar of the text type.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain processes orally, using these notes, ensuring relevant details are included and accounts ended effectively. • Write key words to sequence events in the process onto the plan. <p>Y4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and analyse explanatory texts to identify key features. Distinguish between explanatory texts, reports and recounts while recognising that an information book might contain examples of all these forms of text or a combination of these forms. • Orally summarise processes carried out in the classroom and on screen in flowcharts or cyclical diagrams as appropriate. • Contribute to the shared writing of an explanation where the teacher models the use of paragraphs, connectives and the other key language and structural features appropriate to explanatory writing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – purpose: to explain a process or to answer a question – structure: introduction, followed by sequential explanation, organised into paragraphs 	<p>I can use adverbials and prepositions to express time.</p> <p>I always use full stops and capital letters accurately to demarcate sentences.</p> <p>I can use sentences with more than one clause by using a range of subordinating conjunctions.</p> <p>I can use adverbials and prepositions to express time and cause and effect. (Plants begin life as a seed. If the seed has warmth and water, it begins to grow. As soon as the tiny shoot is tall enough, it produces leaves at the top.)</p> <p>Y4:</p> <p>I can discuss models of the text I intend to write and explain the purpose, structure, grammatical features and use of vocabulary in the text.</p> <p>I can compose sentences using a range of structures appropriate to the text type I am writing.</p> <p>I can orally rehearse my sentences to make sure I link ideas logically in my writing. (Have you ever wondered how plants grow? Then read on to find out more as this leaflet will explain...)</p> <p>I use paragraphs to organise my writing, grouping the content of a text effectively.</p> <p>I can use headings, sub-headings and appropriate connecting devices to organise my non-narrative writing. (<u>Photosynthesis</u> Photosynthesis is the name we use to explain how plants use sunlight and water to make energy.)</p>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – language features: usually present tense; use of connectives of time and cause and effect; presentation: use of diagrams and other illustrations, paragraphing, connectives, subheadings, numbering. <p>After oral rehearsal, using notes on a plan, write explanatory texts independently from the flowchart or other diagrammatic plan, using the conventions modelled in shared writing.</p>	
Y5/6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and analyse a range of explanatory texts, investigating and noting features of impersonal style: complex sentences; use of passive voice; technical vocabulary; use of words/phrases to make sequential, causal or logical connections. • Engage in teacher demonstration of how to research and plan a page for a reference book on one aspect of a class topic using shared note-making and writing of the page, using an impersonal style, hypothetical language (if...then, might, when the...) and causal and temporal connections (while, during, after, because, as a result, due to, only when, so) as appropriate. 	<p>Y5:</p> <p>I can use the organisation, grammatical features and vocabulary appropriate for a range of text types.</p> <p>I can adapt my writing to suit the audience and the purpose of the text.</p> <p>I can ensure the consistent and correct use of tense throughout a piece of writing.</p> <p>I can organise my writing into well-structured cohesive paragraphs which create flow.</p> <p>I can use more sophisticated conjunctions to build cohesion across a text.</p> <p>I can use relative clauses beginning with who or which.</p> <p>I can edit my writing to maintain a formal voice where required.</p> <p>I can use brackets, dashes or commas to indicate parenthesis.</p> <p>(As soon as the tiny shoot is tall enough, it produces leaves at the top which are the factory of the plant where sunshine is used to create food. As a result</p>

	<p>In shared writing and independently plan, compose, edit and refine explanatory texts, using reading as a source, focusing on clarity, conciseness and impersonal style.</p> <p>Y6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose the appropriate form of writing and style to suit a specific purpose and audience drawing on knowledge of different non-fiction text types. Use the language conventions and grammatical features of explanation texts, as appropriate (see Y5 for detail). 	<p>of this production of food and the energy which it creates - a process known as photosynthesis - the plant grows even taller.)</p> <p>Y6:</p> <p>I use grammatical structures and choose vocabulary appropriate to the audience, purpose and degree of formality to make meaning clear.</p> <p>I can choose the appropriate form and register for the audience and purpose of the writing.</p> <p>I sustain and develop ideas logically... using a wide range of devices to build cohesion within and across paragraphs.</p> <p>I can use a range of organisational and presentational devices to structure texts and to guide the reader.</p> <p>I can use semi-colons, colons or dashes to mark the boundary between independent clauses.</p> <p>I can maintain an impersonal voice in order to convey information using a formal register.</p> <p>I can use connecting adverbials or pronouns to link ideas, guide the reader and improve cohesion within and between paragraphs.</p> <p>(Owing to the effects of climate change, the rivers and streams which enabled farmers to water their crops and feed their animals begin to dry out. This results in migration: families have no choice but to leave their land and move elsewhere in search of water.)</p> <p>I can use the passive voice to present information with a different emphasis. (The arid land, its soil cracked and dry, is abandoned by the farmers.)</p>
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