

Instruction texts

Purpose: to enable the reader to ensure something is done correctly and/or achieve a desired outcome. The process is usually given in the order it needs to be completed, often as a series of sequenced steps.

Suggested contexts: recipes, rules for games, assembly instructions

Like most genres, there are different types of instructions and there can be overlap with other text types. They can be visual only or a combination of words and images. Instructions are often a text type children will be exposed to across the curriculum.

Generic Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start by defining desired goal/outcome (eg How to bake a Victoria sponge). • List materials or equipment needed. • Provide simple, clear instructions. Keep to the order in which steps need to be completed to achieve goal. • Consider sequencing methods such as bullet points or numbering. • Diagrams/illustrations can be important and may even replace words in some instances. (Diagram A shows you how to slot the pieces together.)
Language Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imperative verbs. (Cut the card. Add the sugar.) • May also include negative commands. EG 'Do not...' • Additional advice and detail to help readers avoid common mistakes. (Adverbials are useful.) • Usually impersonal style. • Time conjunctions to order steps.
Knowledge for the Writer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the title to show what instructions are about. • Make sure you understand what needs to be done, in what order. • Decide how formal or informal your text will be. ('Cook for 20 minutes' versus 'Pop the cake in the over for around 20 minutes') • Present your text clearly. (Consider bullet points, numbering etc to help your reader keep track.) • Use short clear sentences. • Consider complexity of technical language and additional detail depending on age of reader. • Appeal directly to reader's interest and enthusiasm. ('You will love this delicious, healthy meal.' 'Why not try a brand new board game this weekend?') • Include a final, evaluative statement to end the instructions. ('Your cupcakes are now ready to enjoy!' 'Have fun playing this game with friends and family!') • Re-read your text as if you have no idea how to achieve the outcome desired. Is it clear?
Key Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking and listening before reading and writing. • Teacher modelling, scribing and shared writing before children's independent attempt. • Increased understanding by the children of the form and features of instructions and then increasing ability to adapt writing to audience and purpose. • Increasing complexity, length and challenge of task and/or adding additional features (eg diagrams). • Increasing ability to evaluate texts (their own and others). • Careful planning of where and how the genre could best be covered in the curriculum, and which year groups.

Reception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to instructions involving two steps or more • Give own oral instructions when playing • Write simple sentences following a practical activity (eg how to feed the class gerbil) • Uses imperative verbs when talking and writing
Year 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to and follow a long detailed instruction or a longer series of instructions • Plan and give clear single oral instructions • Routinely read and follow labelled classroom instructions, and short series of instructions in shared contexts • Contribute to class instructions with teacher scribing • Write simple consecutive instructions independently
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral rehearsal of sentence structure • Joining words and clauses including 'and' and 'because' • First person • Sequencing sentences to form short passages • Word spaces, capital letters and full stops in sentences • Introduction to exclamation marks and question marks • Capital letters for names and the pronoun 'I'
Year 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to and follow a series of more complex instructions • Read and follow simple instructions in the form of eg recipes, plans, constructions with diagrams • Analyse some instruction texts and start to note features • Write extended instructions independently including list of ingredients/materials and sequential steps and direct imperative language
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statements, commands, exclamations and questions (inc rhetorical) as sentence types. • Titles to show what instructions are about and use of negative commands • Expanded noun phrases to describe and specify – experiment with providing extra detail about materials etc ('Large spoon', 'Sharp scissors') • Coordinating (and, or, but) and subordinating (when, if, that, because) conjunctions • Subject/verb agreements • Correct choice of present tense • Capital letters, full stops, question marks, exclamation marks to demarcate sentences • Commas in a list • Apostrophes for singular possession • Formation of nouns by compounding • Generate synonyms for overused imperative verbs
Year 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and follow increasingly complex instructions • Research a particular area (eg rules for a game) and work in small groups to prepare oral instructions. Try these out and evaluate effectiveness. • Write clear instructions and use simple devices to aid the reader
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of prepositions to clarify position • Use of adverbs and conjunctions to express time and cause • Introduce paragraphs as a way to group related information – eg instructions that split into clear sections

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Headings and subheadings to organise and present information • Consolidation of ks1 punctuation • Subordinate clauses and conjunctions • Use of 'a' or 'an' according to whether the next word starts with a vowel • Nouns using prefixes (super, anti, auto)
Year 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read and compare examples of instructions and evaluate effectiveness • Analyse more complex instructions and consider devices to make them clearer (diagrams, lists, numbered points etc) • Independently, write clear instructions and use a range of devices to aid the reader
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepositions and adverbs to express time, cause, place • Subordinate clauses to express time, cause (EG When the cake is cooked, ...) • Use of conjunction 'If' to include complex sentences offering additional information: 'If the mixture separates...') • Consider impact of order of clauses (EG 'When the biscuits are firm to the touch, remove from the oven' versus 'Remove biscuits from the oven when they are firm to the touch') • Noun phrases with added adjectives and prepositions – discuss necessary detail versus detail that adds unnecessary complexity • Paragraphs to organise ideas around a theme – (introduction, equipment needed, method, additional advice etc) • Appropriate choice of pronoun or noun within and across sentences to aid cohesion • Headlines and subheadings • Use of articles (a, an, the) • Formality levels to suit the text and audience • Standard form of English verb inflections • Commas after fronted adverbials • Apostrophes for plural possession
Year 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In group work, give clear oral instructions to achieve completion of a task and follow instructions of increasing complexity • Evaluate sets of instructions for purpose, organisation, layout, clarity and usefulness • Write out sets of extended instructions (using suitable form and features) and test them out on other people • Include diagrams to extend clarity and understanding
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relative clauses beginning who, which, where, when, whose, that • Preposition phrases, subordinate clauses, noun phrases to indicate time, place, manner or frequency • Explore use of long, complex, information dense sentences versus shorter simple sentences. (Both have a place in instructions.) • Personal versus impersonal writing and when each is appropriate • Long sentences with lots of information versus shorter sentences to summarise or add interest. (Both are needed!) • Devices, such as time conjunctions, to build cohesion within a paragraph and link ideas across paragraphs (Then, After, Firstly etc) • Brackets, dashes and commas to indicate parenthesis • Examine successful sentence construction in effective instructions • Note when complex sentences could be made simpler for clarity and practice this skill • Verb prefixes 'dis', 'de', 'mis', 'over', 're'
Year 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In group work, give clear oral instructions to achieve completion of a complex task and follow instructions of increasing complexity • Identify sets of instructions which are for more complex procedures or are combined with other text types and compare in terms of audience, purpose and form

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Write out sets of extended instructions (using the most appropriate form and features) and test them out on other people, revising and trying again if required• Choose appropriate form of writing and style for range of audiences and purposes• Interweave use of diagrams, sometimes taking place of text (eg Diagram A shows you how to connect the wires)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Difference between formal and informal vocabulary and structure• Precise use of preposition phrases, noun phrases and subordinate clauses to indicate time, place, manner, frequency• Wider range of cohesive devices to link ideas across paragraphs such as repetition of nouns for clarity in instructions rather than use of pronouns• Wide range of layouts for structure eg headings and subheadings, columns and captions, bullet points and tables – and evaluate effectiveness of these• Use of colon, semi colon or dash to mark boundaries between clauses• Colons to introduce lists and semi colons within lists