Explanation Writing

SPCA Education

Informed by *First Steps Writing Resource Book, Education Department of Western Australia 1997*

Real-life examples of
explanation texts

What are some real-life examples of explanation writing?

- Science text book

- Science experiment

- Technical manual

- Question and answer leaflets

- Encyclopaedia entry

- Parts of non-fiction books

Structure of an explanation

How should an explanation be structured?

- **General statement** to introduce the topic to the reader

  e.g. Animals have needs just like we do to ensure their well-being.

- **Organise the writing and illustrations** into a series of logical steps explaining how or why something occurs

  e.g. My holistic health model illustrates the dimensions of animal well-being…

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Explanation structure continued

- **Steps continue until the final state** is produced or the explanation is complete.

- Try to **end by relating the subject** to the reader.

- If you use specialised terminology a glossary may be needed.

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Features of an explanation

What are the features of an explanation?

- **Present tense**

  e.g. We must always ensure that our animals have access to fresh, clean, drinking water.

- **Connectives that signal time**

  e.g. then, next, after, before

- **Causal connectives**

  e.g. because, so, this causes

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Writer's knowledge

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- Decide whether diagrams, charts, illustrations or a flow chart would help to explain.

- Use a title that indicates what you are writing about.

- Use **how** or **why** in the title.

- Try to make the title intrigue (interest) the reader.

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Writer's knowledge

- **Interest the reader with exclamation**

  e.g. SPCA help over 35,000 sick, injured abused or abandoned animals in New Zealand every year!

- **Use questions**

  e.g. Did you know that...?

- **Draw the reader in**

  e.g. As simple as it may seem…; Not many people know that...

- Finally, re-read your explanation, pretending you know nothing about the subject – **is it clear?**

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