

WRITING 13

EXPLANATORY WRITING

EXPLAIN HOW AND WHY THINGS HAPPEN.

INFORM. CLARIFY. EXPLAIN.



WHAT IS EXPLANATORY WRITING?

Explanatory writing gives clear, factual information about a topic. It explains how something works, why it happens or how to do something. It uses facts, definitions, examples and logical steps to help the reader understand the topic.

PURPOSE

- To explain a process
- To describe how something works
- To give reasons
- To provide clear information

KEY FEATURES

- CLEAR STRUCTURE**
Organised in a logical order with an introduction, steps/ explanation and conclusion.
- FACTUAL INFORMATION**
Uses facts, data and research to explain accurately.
- SEQUENCING**
Explains steps or stages in the correct order.
- CAUSE AND EFFECT**
Explains why something happens and what happens as a result.
- EXAMPLES & DETAILS**
Uses examples, evidence and technical terms to support understanding.
- OBJECTIVE TONE**
Written in a formal, neutral and informative way.

EXAMPLE EXTRACT (ANNOTATED)

HOW VOLCANOES ERUPT

Volcanoes are natural openings in the Earth's crust through which molten rock, gases and ash escape.

Deep inside the Earth, rocks are melted by extreme heat from the core. This molten rock is called magma.

Magma is less dense than the rocks around it, so it rises towards the surface. As it rises, it collects in magma chambers beneath the volcano.

Pressure builds up as more magma, gases and steam accumulate. When the pressure becomes too great, the magma is forced up the volcano's vent.

When the magma reaches the surface, it erupts. Lava, ash, rocks and gases are released. The type of eruption depends on the magma's composition and the amount of gas.

In conclusion, volcanic eruptions are caused by the movement of magma and the build-up of pressure inside the Earth. While they can be dangerous, volcanoes also create new land and fertile soil.

EXPLANATORY TEXT STRUCTURE

- TITLE**
Gives the topic.
- INTRODUCTION**
Defines the topic and tells what will be explained.
- EXPLANATION / STEPS**
Explains how or why in a logical order.
- CAUSES & EFFECTS**
Explains reasons and the results.
- EXAMPLES / DETAILS**
Provides examples, facts or extra details.
- CONCLUSION**
Summarises the main points and gives a final thought.

LANGUAGE FEATURES

- Technical vocabulary:**
Uses precise terms related to the topic.
- Connectives:** first, next, then, after that, finally, as a result, because, therefore, consequently.
- Passive voice:** The experiment was carried out... The mixture is heated...
- Present tense:** Water boils at 100°C. Light travels in a straight line.
- Objective tone:** Avoids personal opinions and emotional language.

USEFUL EXPLANATORY STARTERS

INTRODUCING THE TOPIC

- This text explains ...
- The process of ... is ...
- Many people wonder how ...

SEQUENCING / STEPS

- To begin with, ...
- Next, ...
- After that, ...
- Then, ...
- Finally, ...

CAUSE AND EFFECT

- This causes ...
- As a result, ...
- Consequently, ...
- Therefore, ...

ADDING DETAILS

- For example, ...
- Such as ...
- In other words, ...
- This means that ...

CONCLUDING

- In conclusion, ...
- To sum up, ...
- Overall, ...

EXPLANATORY WRITING CHECKLIST

- ✓ I have a clear and informative title.
- ✓ I have introduced the topic and explained what will be covered.
- ✓ I have explained the information in a logical order.
- ✓ I have used sequence words and connectives.
- ✓ I have explained causes and effects.
- ✓ I have used facts, examples and details.
- ✓ I have used technical vocabulary accurately.
- ✓ I have written in the present tense.
- ✓ I have used a formal and objective tone.
- ✓ I have written a clear conclusion.
- ✓ I have checked my spelling and punctuation.

EXPLANATORY WRITING: STRONG vs WEAK

WEAK

- Information is not in order.
- Uses "I think" and opinions.
- Not enough facts or details.
- Steps are confusing or missing.
- Poor use of connectives.
- No conclusion.

Example (Weak):

Volcanoes are interesting. I think they are amazing and scary. Lava comes out. It is hot and destroys things. Some people live near them. That is all.

STRONG

- Information is organised clearly.
- Uses facts and technical terms.
- Explains steps in sequence.
- Shows cause and effect.
- Uses a range of connectives.
- Ends with a clear conclusion.

Example (Strong):

Volcanoes form when magma rises to the surface. Pressure builds up, causing an eruption. Lava, ash and gases are released. While dangerous, volcanoes create new land and fertile soil.

COMMON MISTAKES

- ✗ Using personal opinions.
- ✗ Not organising information in order.
- ✗ Not explaining causes or effects.
- ✗ Using informal or vague language.
- ✗ Repeating the same words too often.
- ✗ Not using examples or details.
- ✗ Poor spelling and punctuation.



TYPES OF EXPLANATORY WRITING

- How-to / Process**
Explains how to do something step by step.
Example: How to make paper.
- Scientific Explanation**
Explains how or why natural phenomena occur.
Example: How rain is formed.
- Technical / Instructions**
Explains how a machine or system works.
Example: How a bicycle works.
- Cause and Effect Explanation**
Explains why something happens and what the results are.
Example: Why earthquakes occur.

EXPLANATORY WRITING TASK IDEAS

- How the water cycle works
- How electricity is generated
- How a smartphone works
- The process of photosynthesis
- How to reduce plastic pollution
- Why seasons occur
- How vaccines work
- The life cycle of a butterfly

TOP TIP

PLAN BEFORE YOU WRITE!



A clear explanation shows you understand your topic and helps your reader learn it too!



EXPLAIN IT CLEARLY. SUPPORT IT WITH FACTS. HELP OTHERS UNDERSTAND.

