

Procedure Texts

Structure and features of procedure texts

PURPOSE

The main purpose of a procedure is to direct, inform or explain. A procedure explains how to do something.

TYPES OF PROCEDURE

Procedures must serve a purpose and must be appropriate for an audience such as a child or adult. Procedures may be spoken, written or visual, and can take place face to face, on the telephone or on the radio. These may involve physical activity, mental thought or emotional behaviour.

There are different types of procedure texts serving different purposes. Procedures can instruct how to do a particular activity, for example science experiments, stage directions, road safety rules, following an itinerary and recipes. Procedures can help people by teaching them what is appropriate behaviour, for example how to succeed. Procedures normally take the form of directions or instructions.

Directions depend on someone with the knowledge having the skills to pass them on accurately, and will direct someone to a place. Instructions will methodically explain how to make or do something, how something works or how it is used. Examples would be instruction manuals or operating instructions.

Procedural texts communicate the rules, processes or stages for all the above activities. In addition, procedures can be part of a mixed text type such as a report on an experiment and can be

found in letters, games, pamphlets, newspapers, magazines, television and on signs and maps where they carry the meaning of the text.

STRUCTURE OF PROCEDURE TEXTS

In procedure texts the focus is on systematically explaining a logical sequence of actions or steps. First you do this, then you do that. Each event or step must be clearly and explicitly written so that the reader can carry out the same activity. For example the text may include the sequence of actions to be followed to reach a required location. Texts are usually written in the present tense and in general terms. This enables any person to use them.

These texts are often accompanied by diagrams, graphs, charts and pictures which need: to be read; the technical language understood; and the syntax, which is often more formal, abstract and less predictable than that found in narratives, deciphered.

Teachers should select texts for students to read that are clearly organised, with headings and subheadings that indicate different content. These texts need to be examined to see if there is sufficient contextual support for the technical vocabulary to support the reader. Teachers need to provide scaffolding strategies in order to assist students to access information and meaning in the texts.

Each type of procedure text will have a standard format according to its purpose. Directions, rules and spoken procedures may have a structure that is slightly different from one explaining how to make something. Written steps can consist of a map with steps that are coded and use arrows, symbols or compass points. Alternatively the steps can be written in note form with illustrations, diagrams, cartoons, flow charts and photos clarifying the meaning. Other text types, for example descriptions and explanations, can be found within these texts.

The structure usually consists of three stages:

- 1 An introductory statement that gives the heading, the goal or the aim of the activity and states what the procedure is aiming to achieve. Sometimes the goal is indicated in the main heading for example, 'Building a Model of a Dinosaur'. This may be aided by a diagram or map.
- 2 The listing of materials or equipment to be used for the procedure.
- 3 The method or sequence of steps written in the order in which they should be completed.

Procedures focus on people and things in general terms, referring to the reader in general terms as you. They provide specific descriptions of things, such as amounts of ingredients or size and shape of equipment. Specific information is included about how, when and where actions are to be carried out, for example quickly, until cooked through (how), after the top has dried (when), in a large dish (where).

Here are a few variations of the above:

- Recipes generally are divided into ingredients and method.
- Instructions for games usually include how to play, rules of the game, method of scoring and number of players.
- Scientific experiments usually have the purpose of the experiment, equipment, procedure, observations and conclusion.

Each stage plays a role in explaining what we need or what precisely we have to do next. Each step is ordered and sometimes numbered. Some procedures have an optional stage that explains reasons for steps and will offer alternative methods. The text may include comments, or warnings about dangerous aspects and consequences, or describe enjoyable aspects of the task. Hints or warnings can be added at different points, for example 'Take care when picking up the sharp point'.

LANGUAGE FEATURES OF PROCEDURE TEXTS

- Nouns or noun groups are used in the listed material or equipment.
e.g. screws, nuts, bolts, screwdriver, wood.
- Often the name of an item is omitted instead of being constantly repeated and an ellipsis is used. The person following the instructions may not be referred to or may be referred to in a general way as one or you. There is little use of personal pronouns.
- Conjunctions are used to show chronological order.
e.g. before, while, then, after, when.
- Action verbs start most sentences.
e.g. take, put, link.
- Short statements or commands are used.
e.g. Pick them up.
- Adjectives add details relating to size, shape, colour and amount.
e.g. Place the red cube there.
- Words related to direction and specific location are found.
e.g. left, north, Jamison Street.
- Present tense is generally used.
- Vocabulary ranges from technical to everyday language according to the target audience.
- Emphasis is often given to important information by underlining it or writing in bold.
- Adverbs, prepositions and adverbial phrases add detailed information about how, where and when.
- Clear, simple, precise but detailed language is used.

Sample Annotated Text

TEXT ORGANISATION



nap trap!

LANGUAGE FEATURES



Goal or aim

Here is a magic trick to trap your friends!

Clear, precise but detailed language

Materials or equipment

You'll need:

a crisp, **new** banknote or a piece of paper about the same size

Referred to in general terms, e.g. your

Chronological steps

Let's do it:

1 First, **hold** the end of the note or paper in one hand.

2 **Then let it hang straight down.**

3 Now **bring** your other hand up to the middle of the note.

4 **Position your thumb** and index finger on each side of the note but don't touch it yet!

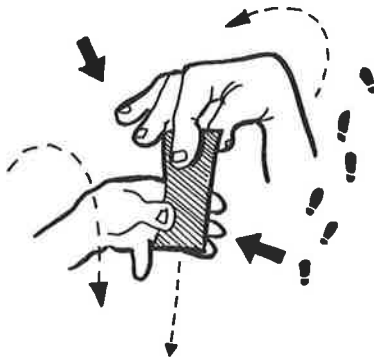


Use of present tense, e.g. hold, catch

Use of action verbs, e.g. hold, bring

Use of short statements, e.g. Then let it hang straight down

Diagrams



5 **Let the note fall** then **catch** it between your thumb and index finger.

Use of commands, e.g. position your thumb, let the note fall

6 Now ask your friends to try to catch the note as you let it fall. They won't be able to!

Use of conjunctions, e.g. after, before

7 **After** they have tried **a few times**, offer to help by telling them when you are going to let go. Say something like, 'One, two, three, drop!' They still won't be able to catch the magic note!

Use of adverbial phrases, e.g. a few times

Use of adjectives, e.g. person's, new

Explanation

How it works:

The note will always slip through the **other person's** fingers **before** their brain has time to send a message to the fingers to catch it.

Use of causal connections, e.g. before



Outcomes Checklist Procedure Texts

At the end of the units on procedure texts, students will have worked towards achieving the following National Level 3 (NSW Stage 2) outcomes.

SPEAKING AND LISTENING	BLM	DATE & COMMENTS
NA 3.1 NSW 2.1 Communicates and interacts for specific purposes with students in the classroom and in the school community using a small range of text types.	49, 58, 59	
NA 3.4 NSW 2.2 Interacts effectively and reflects on own skills and how others use communicating skills and listening strategies.	38, 39, 42, 45	
NA 3.2 NSW 2.3 Recognises that certain types of spoken texts are associated with particular audiences and purposes.	37, 43, 49, 52, 59	
NA 3.3 NSW 2.4 Uses common spoken language structures and features appropriately for expressing and interpreting ideas and information.	37, 47, 52, 58	
READING AND VIEWING		
NA 3.5 NSW 2.5 Reads a wide range of written and visual texts and interprets and discusses relationships between ideas, information and events.	44, 54	
NA 3.8a NSW 2.6 Efficiently integrates a range of skills and strategies for interpreting printed and visual texts.	42, 60	
NA 3.8b With teacher guidance, uses several strategies for identifying resources and finding information in texts.	44, 47	
NA 3.7 NSW 2.8 Identifies, discusses and uses the grammatical features and the structures of a range of text types to create meaning.	37, 38, 42, 47, 53, 54	
WRITING		
NA 3.12a NSW 2.9 Uses strategies to plan, review, proofread and publish own writing with awareness of audience and written language features.	37, 39, 40, 43, 50, 55	
NA 3.11 NSW 2.10 2.14 Able to produce a clear text using correct sentence structure, most grammatical features and punctuation conventions of the text type.	39, 40, 43, 48, 50, 55, 59, 60	
NA 3.12b NSW 2.11 Consistently makes informed attempts at spelling.	38, 44, 48	
NA 3.10 NSW 2.13 Recognises and discusses how own texts are adjusted to relate to different readers and how they develop the subject matter for particular purposes and audiences.	42, 48, 52, 53, 58	
NA 3.9 Experiments with interrelating ideas and information when writing about familiar topics within a small range of text types.	39, 40, 49, 50, 55, 60	
NSW 2.12 Writes using consistent shape, size, slope and formation. Demonstrates basic desktop skills on the computer.	40, 45	

Background Lessons

Session 1

Oral instructions

Have pairs of students sit back to back. Each student has sixteen coloured cubes in their hands. Student A creates a shape using the cubes and then directs student B to create the same shape using clear and easy to follow instructions. Student B should not see student A's shape. Student A should not turn around nor make any facial or bodily indications to assist A. When student B has completed building the shape the two end products should be compared to see if any misinterpretations occurred. Swap over roles and ask student B to create a shape.

Session 2

The structure of a procedure

Before asking students to write their own procedures it is important that they, as a class, are exposed to a number of procedures so that discussion can take place as to the format and content. Model the writing of a number of procedure texts and ask students to identify what the purpose and audience for each one is.

Supply students with a title and ask them to predict ten words they are likely to find in the procedure. They can continue by orally describing the chronological stages for that procedure.

Create a text sequencing game by taking an instructional text and cutting it into segments. Ask students working in groups to put it together again, explaining why they have chosen a particular sequence. An alternative activity involves giving students a series of numbered stages of a procedure text. Ask them to replace the numbers with time

connectives to sequence the steps, for example first, afterwards.

With students jointly construct a procedure using this time to develop their knowledge of the many purposes and forms of procedures. Students should suggest ideas for the steps to the teacher who should model the writing of the instructions in a clear, precise way focusing on the language features and grammar used.

The following questions will encourage students to discuss the structure of procedure texts.

- What was the author's intent in writing the text?
- Who is the audience for these instructions?
- Can larger chunks of the process be written for the audience or must each stage be written in great detail?
- What would the writer need to know before starting to write the text?
- Was the information organised in logical steps?
- Are words used that indicate action, sequence and direction?
- Are technical terms being used? Is the procedure written in present tense? Are the significant features of a recipe and directions used?
- What other formats have been used?

Session 3

Language features

To ensure full understanding of language features it is important that the concepts are reinforced. Stress that procedure texts are written in general terms to enable anyone to carry out the process being explained. Play a game with students while a procedure text is read out aloud. Focus on an aspect, for example action verbs, adjectives or adverbs. Encourage students to respond either by shouting out, clapping or putting their hands up each time they hear, for example, an action word. They should be ready to name the word each time.

Continue this activity by reading out the verbs and asking students to add an appropriate adverb as the text is read, for example:

Stir—as it comes to the boil.

Hold—as you move.

Session 4

Other ideas

These activities can be used to reinforce understanding of the structure and the type of vocabulary suitable for a procedure.

- Give students a flow chart and ask them to describe the steps in an oral presentation.
- Give students jumbled instructions to be arranged in a logical sequence.
- Write up instructions for a procedure but use this as a cloze activity leaving out focus words to be added by students working individually or in pairs.
- Ask students to compile procedure texts based on different areas of the curriculum. These may be for science experiments, a first aid procedure, a craft activity, a game that they play during their PE lesson, games they play in the playground or how to do a mathematics problem.
- Students must make something, for example an origami figure or a craft, and then write up precise instructions using simple diagrams to clarify instructions.

Session 5

Focus on an audience

Give students incomplete instructions and ask them to complete them by continuing to write in the same style and directing to the same audience, for example instructing a young child to set the table for dinner.

Ask students to write instructions they would use with a young child and then ask them to rewrite them for the local shopkeeper, their grandparent or a teacher. Discuss what changes would be appropriate to be made for each audience and ensure that sufficient information is given to the more advanced group. Alternatively the students can be divided into groups and asked to write instructions on the same topic for different audiences; for example what to take to camp instructions can be written separately for children and for their parents.

Session 6

Maps and directions

Share a set of directions with students where the text is covered and only the map remains. The map may be of their classroom, school, shopping area or some imaginary area based on a book they have read. Students have to write their own directions based on the map. Ask students, either working independently or with a partner, to describe the way to move from one point to another.

Give students two copies of a map and ask them to add any features they wish to one of the maps, keeping the other as a clean copy; for example they may add mountains, a swamp, desert or hidden treasure. On a separate sheet of paper they should write instructions to assist the reader to reach the objects. This may involve use of compass directions, measurements and paces, and can serve as a good integration with mathematics. The instructions should be given to a second child who should follow them to reach the objects that they mark on the clean copy of the same map. Students should check the original copy to see if they have marked the correct areas and followed the directions to reach the objects on their maps. Remind students that they should give enough instructions so that they can replicate what appeared on the original page.

Session 7

Create a board game

Allow students to make a board game, or any other type of game, and write the accompanying instructions. You can suggest that they use the following headings or ask them to divide it up in a way they find suitable. Possible suggestions include the number of players, equipment needed, how to play and scoring.



Procedure Outline

INTRODUCTION

Who is your audience? (Who are you writing directions or instructions for?) What is the aim, goal or purpose?

EQUIPMENT/MATERIAL

Have you listed or described all the materials that you need?

SERIES OF EVENTS

Are you using action verbs? Are your directions well sequenced and easy to follow? Are you writing in present tense? Are you using connectives in place of numbers for each action or event? Do you begin each sentence with a command word? Are you using diagrams or headings to organise your work?

EVALUATION

Is anything further needed? Do you want to end by writing a comment?

Procedure Scaffold

Introductory statement giving the aim or goal

This may be a title or an introductory paragraph.

Material needed for completing the procedure

This can take the form of a list, or a paragraph, or may be omitted from some procedures.

Action plan

This is a sequence of steps in the correct order. The sequence can be numbered as first, second, third etc. or the words *now*, *next* and *after this* can be used. Steps generally begin with a command, for example *fold* or *cross*.

Step 1 _____

Step 2 _____

Step 3 _____

Step 4 _____

Step 5 _____

Evaluation _____

Any further action to be taken? _____

DIAGRAM

Procedure Skills Checklist

Name:				
Class:	Date/Level	Date/Level	Date/Level	Date/Level
PURPOSE				
Demonstrates understanding of the purpose of procedures.				
STRUCTURE				
Writes an opening statement, goal or aim.				
Lists required materials or equipment.				
Orders a series of steps chronologically.				
Uses diagrams and headings to clarify instructions.				
Recognises different types of procedure texts.				
TEXT ORGANISATION				
Plans for procedure writing.				
Writes a clear sequence of events.				
Varies the amount of detail and content depending on the target audience.				
Writes each step on a new line.				
Uses visual representations to clarify directions or instructions.				
LANGUAGE FEATURES				
Uses clear, precise, but detailed language.				
Uses nouns and noun groups.				
Uses action verbs to start sentences.				
Uses adjectives to add details.				
Uses adverbs and adverbial phrases to tell <i>how, where</i> and <i>when</i> .				
Uses present tense consistently.				
Uses conjunctions for time sequences.				
<p>LEVEL CODES 1 Consistently evident 2 Sometimes evident 3 Not evident</p>				

Procedure Writing Interview

Name:
Class:
Date:

Self-assessment e.g. What content do you like writing in procedures? Is there anything you find difficult to write about? How do you rate yourself as a writer?

Range and preferences e.g. Do you prefer instructions to directions? What type of audience do you find it easiest to write for? Is it easier to use everyday language or technical language? What strategies do you use to make your writing clear and interesting?

Skills e.g. How do you plan your procedures? How do you ensure that you have sufficient knowledge or background material before writing? How do you edit your work? Are your ideas more important than accurate spelling and correct sentence structure? How do you check your spelling if you are unsure of a word?

Current projects e.g. What are you writing now? Which parts are you happy with and which do you think need more thought? What would you like to write?