English
Supporting learning card

Forms of writing: Information report

What is an information report?

Information reports are factual texts that present information in a clear and succinct way. They generally describe and classify an entire class of thing, either natural or created. Their purpose is to advise or inform about something and they can be written or oral.

Types of information reports

Information reports have a logical sequence and can be used for a variety of purposes in a broad range of social contexts. Examples of information reports include:

• newspaper, magazine, progress and government reports

• factual books, such as reference books, textbooks and encyclopaedias

• television documentaries

• local information texts about government services and issues.

Some reports are written for beginners and some are for people with expert knowledge who are familiar with specialist technical language.

Structure of an information report

An information report usually has:

• an **opening generalisation** that locates and classifies

• a **description** – a series of facts about various aspects of the subject or topic, organised into paragraphs

• a **summarising comment** in the form of a general statement about the topic.

Reports may contain headings, subheadings, a table of contents, an index, a glossary, labels and captions, photographs and diagrams to make the information clearer and more accessible for the user.

Language features

The language used in an information report:

• focuses on generalised participants and groups of things rather than specific participants

• uses simple present tense
  e.g. 'are', 'eat', 'grow'

• may include time words (e.g. 'first', 'next') to link the text

• uses 'being' and 'having' processes (types of verbs, e.g. 'is', 'are', 'have') and may have some material processes (action verbs) when describing behaviour (breathe, climb, hunt)

• is factual and descriptive

• is defining, classifying and comparing ('similar to', 'belongs to', 'more than')

• may be technical

• is formal and objective and does not generally give the writer's opinion.

Supporting the development of report writing

- **Oral sharing** – encourage the student to informally describe and classify familiar items. This may require some questioning to support the student, e.g. 'What is it?', 'What does it eat?', 'Where does it live?'. 'Show and tell', 'What am I?' and sorting, pattern making, grouping and classifying activities may be useful.

- **Direct modelling** – present examples of information texts, including multimodal texts, for immersion and exploration and model ways to talk about features of reports:
  - talk about the purpose of the text and what the author needed to know
  - model how to find information
  - discuss the information in or purpose of each part/paragraph
  - attach labels to the parts/paragraphs, e.g. 'What is it?', 'Where does it live?', and 'What can it do?'
  - compare information and narrative texts
  - discuss features, such as layout of the text, table of contents, headings and photographs.

- **Reconstruct text** by reforming an information report from jumbled sentences or paragraphs.

- **Jointly construct** a report, working together and encouraging the student to contribute information and ideas and make suggestions about the structure and language used.

- **Independently construct** an information report – guide the student to choose a topic, write a draft (referring to models, if necessary), review/proofread and make changes (as necessary).

- **Evaluate** the effectiveness of the writing – check the structure and language features of the information report and ask others to give feedback.