

# Explanation Toolkit



Y1/2:

Y3/4: as in Y1/2 & ...

Y5/6: as in Y3/4 & ...

## To explain something:

The following tools may be used to fuel discussion around key topics explored by the class. Whilst explanation may not have a transcriptional focus in Y1, it is important that children are building confidence in some key phrasing for explanation.

- **Introduce the reader to the subject using a simple *Why* sentence:** *There are many reasons why dragons are afraid of mice.*
- **Use descriptive detail to make the explanation clear (single or multiple adjectives):** *Mice have a strong, disgusting smell.*
- **Tell the reader why using causal conjunctions:** *because/so/this means that/etc.*
- **Add more information by introducing your points with 'adding on' openers (fronted adverbials):** *Also, ... As well as ...*
- **Present and sequence the explanation in small chunks so that the reader can process each point using time openers (fronted adverbials):** *Firstly, ... Secondly, ...*

- **Introduce the reader to the subject using a simple *why* or *how* sentence:** *This explanation will clearly show how the prince to frog potion works.*
- **Show cause and effect through a wider variety of causal conjunctions:** *If... then..., As a result, ... Consequently, ... Therefore, ... this means that, ... this will lead to/result in ...*
- **Make your explanation link the ideas through causal conjunctions:** *Pressing the red button on the top of the machine will result in the engine igniting.*
- **Add more information by introducing your points with more sophisticated 'adding on' openers (fronted adverbials):** *Additionally, ... Moreover, ... Furthermore, In addition, ...*
- **Explain the sequence through time openers (fronted adverbials):** *Later on, ..., Months afterwards, ..., Subsequently, ...*
- **Engage the reader by asking them rhetorical questions:** *Do you wonder how the Prince to frog potion works?*

- **Consider your audience and vary your tone and formality for a desired effect:**
  - Formal: *The purpose of this experiment is to discover ...*
  - Informal: *Let's find out why ...*
- **Explain hypothetical outcomes using degrees of possibility (modal verbs):** *could, should, might, may, etc.*
- **Explain the impact on different stakeholders, varying the reasons accordingly:** *The closing of zoos will clearly impact conservation since ...*

# Explanation – structure



Y1/2:

Y3/4: as in Y1/2 & ...

Y5/6: as in Y3/4 & ...

## To structure explanation writing:

- Use a title to tell the reader what you are explaining: *Why dragons are afraid of mice.*
- Introduction**
- Introduce what will be explained to the reader.
- Main body**
- Make a series of key points that explain why something happens: *Firstly, mice can hypnotise dragons.*
- Conclusion**
- Write a statement to round it off: *So that is why you never see photographs of dragons and mice together.*

- Write a title that captures the nature of the text: *How the Prince to frog potion works*
- Introduction**
- Make sure your opening introduces the subject and grabs the reader’s attention: *All princes ooze arrogance and revel in their own beauty. The Prince Transformation Potion destroys these dislikeable attributes. When this happens, they turn into an everyday frog.*
- Main body**
- Use sub-headings or topic sentences to organise and introduce key points to be explained: *As the potion is digested, it is pumped around the bloodstream until the skin begins to take on a greenish hue.*
  - Help your reader understand by organising information into paragraphs.
  - Use fact boxes, diagrams, flowcharts, images or underlining to illustrate what is being explained or make it stand out.
- Conclusion**
- Write a conclusion that sums up the explanation: *The final part of the process strips away the dislikeable attributes: self-adoration, smarminess and good looks, resulting in a wart-covered amphibian.*

- Manipulate the organisation of your writing to suit the audience: an experiment write up, a manual, a guide, a letter, a historical document, etc.
- Consider how you may feature other non-fiction purposes, such as elements of persuasion: *Do you suffer from a grumpy teacher? If so, then use the 'Teacher-Pleaser' machine and soon your teacher will become the jolliest person in school.*
- Relate the explanation to the reader: *If you treat the 'Tidy Your Bedroom' machine with care, it will last for years. Make sure that the spring is not over-used as it runs the risk of breaking. This will mean that you will have to tidy your own mess!*
- Help the reader understand technical terms by including a glossary.