

Informative Writing

What Is Informative Writing?

According to the Australian Curriculum:

“ [Informative texts] include texts that are culturally important in society and are valued for their informative content, as a store of knowledge and for their value as part of everyday life. These texts include explanations and descriptions of natural phenomena, recounts of events, instructions and directions, rules and laws and news bulletins.

(ACARA, 2010 to present)

We have covered a wide variety of informative texts in this manual. Some are much more common than others, and you'll find a selected list on the next page.

In reality, text definitions are not set in stone – a blog post, for example, can be either informative or persuasive. Furthermore, the format in which a text is published (e.g. newspaper, digital news report, tweet, web page, radio show) does not determine whether a text is informative, the intention to **inform** does.

“ Texts can be classified as belonging to one of three types: imaginative, informative or persuasive, although it is acknowledged that these distinctions are neither static nor watertight and particular texts can belong to more than one category.

(ACARA, 2010 to present)

The good news is that everything you already know about teaching effective writing still applies.

Informative writing ...

- provides information and knowledge
- contains facts that are accurate and true
- seeks to be clear and precise – to be understood without confusion
- structures and groups facts and information in a way that enhances meaning (this means Step 1: Plan for Success is essential)
- can be an information report, factual recount, description or explanation
- is not confined to specific forms (print, online) and can be multimodal (such as a documentary film).



Types of Informative Writing

The variety of informative texts, and the many ways they can be presented (including multimodal forms), is very extensive. You'll see examples of many different types of informative texts throughout this manual in the writing samples and Action Activities.

Here's a list of the most common types of informative texts:

Information reports

Giving factual information about people, animals, things or phenomena

- animal reports (e.g. 'Facts about spiders')
- documentaries (e.g. David Attenborough documentaries)
- geography or science reports (e.g. 'What is erosion?')
- investigative news reports (e.g. from ABC's *Behind the News*)
- comparative reports (e.g. 'Similarities and differences between soccer and rugby')

Factual recounts

Retelling events in the order in which they happened

- biographies (e.g. 'My life so far')
- excursion reports (e.g. 'The Year 6 trip to Canberra')
- historical recounts (e.g. 'Daily life on the First Fleet')
- news reports (print, digital, audio or video news)
- sport reports (e.g. 'Friday's football win')

Factual descriptions

Describing a place or thing using facts

- documentary film and radio scripts (e.g. *The Story of India*, *Life on Earth*)
- mockumentary, comic scripts (e.g. *Kenny*, *Best in Show*, *The Office*)
- landscape descriptions (e.g. 'Western grasslands of Australia')
- travel articles/guides (but not travel reviews, as they express personal opinions)

Explanations

Explaining how or why something happens

- explanations of why something happens (e.g. 'Why we have seasons')
- explanations of how things or processes work (e.g. 'How a dishwasher works', 'Our school frog bog plan')
- explanations of a concept or topic (e.g. 'The wool industry in Australia')

Seven Steps and Informative Writing

All kinds of informative texts rely on the Seven Steps techniques. Here are some examples:

EXAMPLE	STEP
A science report needs to be well structured for clarity.	Step 1 Plan for Success
An informative report has to sizzle at the start to make the reader want to know more.	Step 2 Sizzling Starts
Tension is crucial in documentary film making to draw the audience in and make them care about the topic.	Step 3 Tightening Tension
News reports in print and audio rely on quotations from observers and experts.	Step 4 Dynamic Dialogue
Historical recounts paint a word picture to help the reader visualise what it was like to live in that time.	Step 5 Show, Don't Tell
Printed news articles are ruthlessly edited for clarity and length.	Step 6 Ban the Boring
Biographies need to end with impact to leave a lasting impression on the reader.	Step 7 Endings with Impact

Curriculum Matrix

The curriculum matrix below lists the Australian Curriculum content descriptions covered by each Step and directs you to the relevant Action Activity (AA) in the manual. The activities in this manual are designed for Year 3–6 students but they can easily be adapted for younger or older students.

Year 3

LANGUAGE	STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5	STEP 6	STEP 7
Language for interaction							
Understand that successful cooperation with others depends on shared use of social conventions, including turn-taking patterns, and forms of address that vary according to the degree of formality in social situations (ACELA1476)	All Action Activities, pp 40–2	All Action Activities, pp 62–4	All Action Activities, pp 75–7	All Action Activities, pp 88–90	All Action Activities, pp 105–7	All Action Activities, pp 118–20	All Action Activities, pp 131–3
Examine how evaluative language can be varied to be more or less forceful (ACELA1477)			AA1, p 75 AA4, p 76 AA5, p 77	AA2, p 88	AA1, p 105 AA2, p 105 AA3, p 106	AA1, p 118 AA4, p 119 AA5, p 120 AA6, p 120	
Text structure and organisation							
Understand how different types of texts vary in use of language choices, depending on their purpose and context (for example, tense and types of sentences) (ACELA1478)	AA4, p 41 AA5, p 42 AA6, p 42	All Action Activities, pp 62–4	All Action Activities, pp 75–7	All Action Activities, pp 88–90	All Action Activities, pp 105–7	All Action Activities, pp 118–20	All Action Activities, pp 131–3
Understand that paragraphs are a key organisational feature of written texts (ACELA1479)		AA1, p 62 AA3, p 63 AA5, p 64 AA6, p 64	AA1, p 75 AA2, p 75 AA5, p 77 AA6, p 77	AA1, p 88 AA4, p 89 AA5, p 90 AA6, p 90	AA1, p 105 AA3, p 106 AA5, p 107 AA6, p 107	AA1, p 118 AA3, p 119 AA4, p 119 AA5, p 120 AA6, p 120	AA3, p 132 AA4, p 132 AA5, p 133 AA6, p 133
Identify the features of online texts that enhance navigation (ACELA1790)		AA1, p 62					AA3, p 132
Expressing and developing ideas							
Identify the effect on audiences of techniques, for example shot size, vertical camera angle and layout in picture books, advertisements and film segments (ACELA1483)		AA6, p 64	AA3, p 76 AA4, p 76 AA5, p 77		AA2, p 105 AA4, p 106 AA6, p 107	AA2, p 118 AA3, p 119	
Learn extended and technical vocabulary and ways of expressing opinion including modal verbs and adverbs (ACELA1484)	AA1, p 40 AA2, p 40 AA4, p 41	AA1, p 62 AA3, p 63 AA4, p 63 AA5, p 64	AA1, p 75 AA2, p 75 AA5, p 77 AA6, p 77	AA1, p 88 AA2, p 88 AA3, p 89 AA4, p 89 AA6, p 90	AA1, p 105 AA3, p 106 AA5, p 107 AA6, p 107	AA1, p 118 AA2, p 118 AA4, p 119 AA5, p 120 AA6, p 120	AA2, p 131 AA3, p 132 AA4, p 132 AA5, p 133

Seven Steps Across the Curriculum

The activities in this manual can also be tied into inquiry topics across the curriculum. The table below lists the learning areas that are covered and directs you to the relevant Action Activity (AA). For more information on how to use the Seven Steps to bring inquiry topics to life, come to Workshop Two: Putting It All Together (see the back page of this manual for further information).

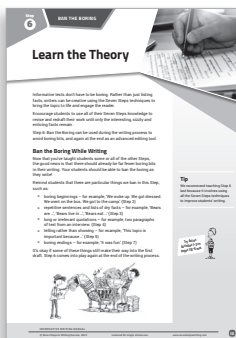
LEARNING AREA/SUBJECT	STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4	STEP 5	STEP 6	STEP 7
Humanities and Social Sciences							
History	AA2, p 40 AA3, p 41 AA6, p 42	AA2, p 62 AA4, p 63		AA3, p 89 AA6, p 90	AA1, p 105 AA4, p 106 AA6, p 107		AA5, p 133 AA6, p 133
Geography	AA2, p 40 AA3, p 41 AA4, p 41	AA2, p 62 AA4, p 63 AA6, p 64	AA1, p 75 AA3, p 76 AA4, p 76 AA5, p 77 AA6, p 77	AA2, p 88 AA3, p 89 AA5, p 90 AA6, p 90	AA1, p 105 AA2, p 105 AA4, p 106	AA1, p 118 AA2, p 118 AA3, p 119	AA4, p 132 AA5, p 133 AA6, p 133
Civics and Citizenship	AA2, p 40 AA3, p 41	AA4, p 63		AA2, p 88 AA3, p 89 AA6, p 90	AA4, p 106	AA3, p 119	AA5, p 133 AA6, p 133
Economics and Business	AA2, p 40 AA3, p 41	AA4, p 63		AA2, p 88 AA3, p 89 AA6, p 90	AA1, p 105 AA4, p 106		AA5, p 133 AA6, p 133
Science							
Science Understanding	AA2, p 40 AA3, p 41 AA4, p 41	AA4, p 63 AA6, p 64	AA1, p 75 AA3, p 76 AA4, p 76 AA5, p 77 AA6, p 77	AA3, p 89 AA5, p 90 AA6, p 90	AA1, p 105 AA2, p 105	AA1, p 118 AA2, p 118	AA4, p 132 AA5, p 133 AA6, p 133
Science as a Human Endeavour	AA1, p 40 AA2, p 40 AA3, p 41	AA4, p 63 AA5, p 64		AA1, p 88 AA3, p 89 AA6, p 90	AA1, p 105		AA5, p 133 AA6, p 133
Technologies							
Design and Technologies Knowledge and Understanding	AA2, p 40 AA3, p 41	AA4, p 63		AA3, p 89 AA6, p 90	AA1, p 105		AA2, p 131 AA5, p 133 AA6, p 133
Digital Technologies Knowledge and Understanding	AA2, p 40 AA3, p 41	AA4, p 63 AA5, p 64		AA3, p 89 AA6, p 90	AA5, p 107		AA5, p 133 AA6, p 133

Implementation

How This Manual Works

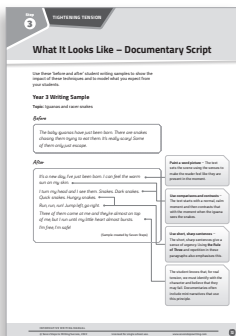
This manual assumes you will introduce one Step at a time, but you don't have to do them in order from 1 to 7. Check out the implementation advice on pages 27–8 for more on this.

Each of the core chapters in this manual (one per Step) is laid out in the same way for ease of use.



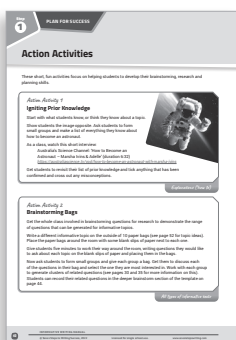
Learn the Theory

The key techniques that underpin each Step are covered at the start of each chapter.



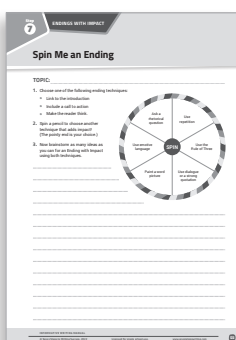
What It Looks Like

Use these 'before and after' writing samples to show the impact of the Seven Steps techniques and to model what you expect from students. These samples have been directly transcribed and left unedited.



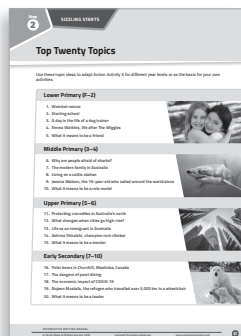
Action Activities

These short, fun activities are designed to help students consolidate their understanding of each Step by practising the techniques. In the first few activities, students analyse examples of the Step in action; in subsequent activities, they create short texts of their own. For each Action Activity, we have recommended relevant types of informative texts (see page 7).



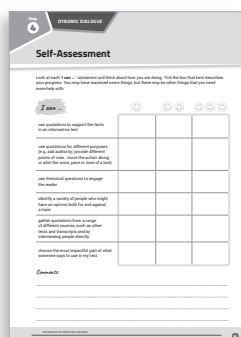
Templates

The templates are used to scaffold students' learning and can be found towards the back of each chapter. Templates are referenced in the relevant Action Activities.



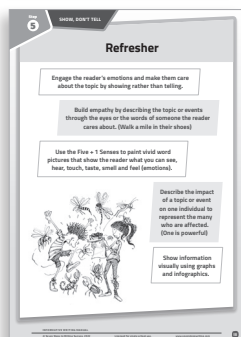
Top Twenty Topics

Use these topic ideas to adapt activities for different year levels, to change the focus of topic-based activities when you repeat or extend them, or as the basis for creating your own activities.



Self-Assessment

Students can use these self-assessment rubrics to evaluate their own progress, and teachers can use them as the basis for conferencing with students.



Refresher

The key points for each Step are set out on a poster to refresh students' memories.

Putting it all together

Now for writing a whole informative text – that is, playing the tennis match! When students are ready – or at least familiar with Steps 1, 2, 3 and 7 – review the ‘Putting It All Together’ chapter on pages 139–65.

Working collaboratively leads to better learning outcomes, so it is best to create full texts as a group first. Students scaffold each other by writing a small part of a complete text, and they learn from the ideas and creativity of everyone in the group.

This chapter includes templates to guide students through the complex process of writing a complete text. Once students have mastered the process collaboratively with the use of templates, gradually reduce the scaffolds until they can write independently with creativity and confidence.

There is also a marking rubric (pages 156–7) and graded writing samples (pages 160–5) that you can use to assess how students are progressing with the Seven Steps and to assist with reporting.

Eight-Week Starter Plan

How do you start applying the Seven Steps techniques to informative writing? Here is a sample plan for the first eight weeks to help you implement the core Steps (Steps 1, 2, 3 and 7).

Feel free to change this plan to suit the needs of your students. For beginner writers, you may want to spend more time on each Step. For advanced writers, you might consider covering one or two Steps a week.

TIMELINE	TOPIC	KEY POINT	WHAT TO REVIEW	ACTIVITIES
Week 1	Introduction	Chunk large tasks – the tennis analogy	Introduction, pp 1–28 The Five Secrets, p 3	
	Step 2: Sizzling Starts	Sizzling Starts aim to engage the reader immediately	Learn the Theory, pp 57–9 What It Looks Like, pp 60–1	Do Action Activity 1, p 62
Week 2	Step 2: Sizzling Starts	Use fascinating facts and Sizzling Starts techniques to craft a great introduction	Read Sizzling Starts from a range of informative texts	Do Action Activities 2–6, pp 62–4 Students complete the self-assessment, p 68
Week 3	Step 3: Tightening Tension	Build momentum to maintain the reader's interest	Learn the Theory, pp 71–2 What It Looks Like, pp 73–4	Do Action Activities 1–3, pp 75–6
Week 4	Step 3: Tightening Tension	Build to a high point just before the ending	Identify the crescendo in documentaries, such as David Attenborough's wildlife films	Do Action Activities 4–6, pp 76–7 Students complete the self-assessment, p 80
Week 5	Step 7: Endings with Impact	A great conclusion wraps up the text and packs a powerful punch	Learn the Theory, pp 127–8 What It Looks Like, pp 129–30 Look at good and bad endings in a range of informative texts	Do Action Activities 1–3, pp 131–2
Week 6	Step 7: Endings with Impact	Combine different techniques for maximum impact	Look at examples of the ending techniques in action	Do Action Activities 4–6, pp 132–3 Students complete the self-assessment, p 137
Week 7	Step 1: Plan for Success	Brainstorm questions for more effective research	Learn the Theory, Part 1: Brainstorming and Researching, pp 29–30 What It Looks Like, Part 1: Brainstorming and Researching, pp 34–7	Do Action Activities 1–2, p 40 Students complete the self-assessment for Part 1, p 53
Week 8	Step 1: Plan for Success	Use the 'Informative Writing Graph' for planning	Learn the Theory, Part 2: Selecting and Ordering Facts, pp 31–3 What It Looks Like, Part 2: Selecting and Ordering Facts, pp 38–9	Do Action Activities 3–5, pp 41–2 Students complete the self-assessment for Part 2, p 54

Additional informative writing resources are available on *Teacher Hub*. Log in to your account at <https://teacherhub.sevenstepswriting.com> or visit the Seven Steps website to learn more and sign up.