

TEXT DECONSTRUCTION & CONSTRUCTION: INFORMATIVE/EXPLANATORY

(CCSS Text Type)

Informative/Explanatory Texts: Informative/explanatory texts examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately. This kind of writing serves one or more closely related purposes: to increase readers' knowledge of a subject, to help readers better understand a procedure or process, or to provide readers with an enhanced comprehension of a concept. (CCSS)

Examples of subgenres: literary analyses, scientific and historical reports, rhetorical précis, manuals, resumes.

Typical Organizational Structure of Informative/Explanatory Texts

STAGE 1: INTRODUCTION OF ISSUE/TOPIC

Purpose/Function: The writer INTRODUCES the issue or topic

Some common ways writers introduce the issue/topic:

- Provide background information on the issue/topic (i.e., facts, statistics, historical info...)
- Include an anecdote (a brief story that connects to the issue/topic)
- State directly the central/main idea of the text
- Include a question(s) that will be addressed in later sections of the text

STAGE 2: DEVELOPMENT OF IDEAS

Purpose/Function: The writer DEVELOPS ideas related to the issue or topic

NOTE: This part is often divided into multiple sections/paragraphs and may include headings or subheadings.

Some common ways writers develop the issue/topic:

- State main idea(s)
 - NOTE:
 - Main ideas may or may not be directly stated in the text
 - Main ideas are supported by details/evidence
 - Sometimes headings or subheadings announce main ideas
 - Pictures, graphs, diagrams and other visual materials often highlight main ideas
- Include evidence/details to support and develop the main idea(s)
 - Examples of different types of evidence:
 - Statistics
 - Facts
 - Research studies/experiments
 - Personal experiences (of the author or others)
 - Observations
 - Other readings (articles, reports, ...)
 - Testimonials (expert opinions)
- Explain and/or elaborate on the main idea(s) or evidence

STAGE 3: CONCLUSION

Purpose/Function: The writer provides a concluding statement or section

NOTE: Not all informative/explanatory texts have a conclusion

Some common ways writers conclude an informative/explanatory writing piece:

- Summarize the main idea(s)
- State the importance of the issue/topic
- Discuss the possible implications of this issue/topic
- State the need for further research on this topic

Typical Language Features of Informative/Explanatory Texts

Verb Tense/s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present or past tense, depending on the focus • Note: Passive voice may be used
Cohesive Devices (Connectors)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transitions (or signal words/phrases) to link ideas within and between paragraphs • Language frames connected to key language functions (i.e., language for: expressing cause and effect, comparing/contrasting information, sequencing ideas/events, defining or describing something or someone). NOTE: See <i>Signal Words/Phrases Chart</i>.
Attributive Tags	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short phrases that indicate that an idea or information in the author's writing comes from somewhere else (i.e., Lucas reports that...; According to CNN News, ..., As Jensen explains ...) <p>NOTE: Use of attributive tags helps to avoid plagiarism and can strengthen the writer's argument and/or authority of his/her evidence.</p>
Precise Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Precise verbs and verb phrases (e.g. states that, pertains to, illustrates, informs)
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domain-specific words/phrases (e.g., words related to the issue or topic) • General academic vocabulary (e.g., influence, characteristic, issue, evidence- words from Academic Word List)
Sentence Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compound and complex sentences

IMPORTANT NOTE: There are many subgenres under this broad text type of informative/explanatory writing. It is important for the teacher to analyze the specific organizational structure and language features of the subgenres their students will be reading and writing in their particular content area class in order to support students' comprehension and writing in these subgenres. Furthermore, it is important to note that skilled writers may use a blend of the CCSS Text Types to accomplish their purposes.