# Exposition Texts

# Structure and features of exposition texts

#### **PURPOSE**

An exposition persuades a reader or listener by presenting one side of an argument. By taking a point of view and justifying it, we aim to convince others to see only that side of an issue. Some expositions speculate as to what might be and persuade others as to what should be.

#### Types of exposition

Exposition texts vary according to whether they analyse, interpret or evaluate the environment surrounding us. They may also inform or persuade and explain how and why.

In an expository text the audience is being persuaded to a particular point of view. This may be persuading someone to act in a certain way or justifying an action. Exposition texts can be personal and emotive in tone and selectively explain and analyse events, issues and phenomena. The writer wants the reader to empathise with the emotions and reasons and to support the action. Students need to develop the ability to recognise that something is one-sided or biased and presents only one point of view, especially if they are being convinced to behave in a certain way, to buy something or to do something.

It is important that for the text to be persuasive the tenor must be at the appropriate level for the audience. Generally an impersonal style is used and the passive voice creates an authoritative tone. Conjunctions give the text coherence, while the vocabulary, which can be metaphorical, describes feelings and attitudes. The modality expresses the writer's attitude and reflects whether the discussion is open or authoritative and definite.

Responding to persuasive writing helps develop a student's critical thinking and clarity of expression. It encourages students to question, research and respond to an argument in a clear and logical way.

There are different types of exposition texts:

- Expository writing can change the attitude people have or their point of view, by expressing an argument about a specific issue. This persuasive writing appears as newspaper editorials, political or campaign speeches, print, visual and oral media, information texts in books, letters to the editor, legal defences or sermons. Hopefully as students develop their skills they will become aware that facts can be interpreted in different ways and that a variety of opinions on an issue may be valid.
- Persuasive writing can promote and sell goods, services and activities; for example in advertisements and posters persuasive language convinces people to do or believe particular things. It has a positive emphasis or bias and is directed at a specific audience. Media advertisements are generally eye catching with catchy slogans and tunes. This draws people in and makes them identify with the messages and images portrayed. At times other texts are adopted, e.g. procedures, explanations and descriptions. An example is: *Ten steps to a beautiful new body*.
- Expository writing can plead a case, for example *Don't pollute our rivers*.

Persuasive expositions differ from discussions where the writer explores all sides of an issue and comes to a decision based on available evidence. Persuasive expositions have a point of view that is supported by logical arguments and evidence. The writer selects and omits information to support a position. Strong research skills and accurate note making are needed to write a persuasive exposition if issues relate to areas with which students have had no experience. Surveys and interviews about issues

can be used to gather information while current materials gathered from newspapers, news and radio broadcasts form an invaluable resource. Students will need to check the validity of their sources of information and list a bibliography.

# Structure of exposition texts

Exposition texts generally begin with an introductory statement of position giving the author's opinion or point of view. This previews the argument that will follow. The next section has a series of logical arguments that convince the audience why this position has been taken. A conclusion ties it all together by reinforcing or summarising the author's point of view.

#### STATEMENT OF POSITION

Encourage students to start with a clear and forceful statement of position. This is often supported by some background information about the issue in question. The stand taken by the writer may preview in summary form the arguments to be presented. Students need to focus on developing a strong statement of position. They can ask themselves the following questions:

- Who am I trying to persuade?
- What am I trying to persuade them to think or do?
- What type of arguments will best catch their attention?
- Is the statement hard hitting and does it clearly state the position?

#### ARGUMENT STAGE

A number of points are generally made in the argument stage. The number of arguments is flexible and varies in each exposition. Arguments need to be logically developed and supported, and justified with reasons, examples, expert evidence and statistical information.

Frequently each argument begins with background information, followed by points that relate back to the statement of position and justify or elaborate on the statement. For arguments to be as effective as possible they should include supporting facts, examples, tables, visual images, quotes or evidence so that they appear convincing. Vague terms such as the general public, or a large group, should be used carefully, as the accuracy of these observations needs to be assessed.

The arguments are ordered according to whether the writer believes they are persuasive or weaker arguments. The writer may wish to start with the strongest argument, linking the others. An alternative way is to start with the weaker and build with each argument to the strongest, or they may wish to intersperse the strong arguments with those that are weaker.

It is important that each elaboration consists of a number of sentences. Each paragraph should be carefully structured with the topic sentence in each paragraph relating to the main idea and at times the preceding paragraph. Most paragraphs have one main idea that is argued and elaborated and forms part of the whole exposition.

An important language feature is the use of connectives and conjunctions as they show the relationship between parts of the text. These conjunctions can link ideas, contrast concepts, sequence thoughts, add to ideas and connect cause and effect. Examples of these words are firstly, finally, in addition, because, as a result of, on the other hand.

# REINFORCEMENT OF THE STATEMENT OF POSITION

This is where the argument is emphasised. The summing up of the position in the light of the argument that has been presented reinforces the statement of position and often calls for some type of action on the part of the audience.

In order to persuade their audience in oral presentations, students need to focus on reinforcing their statement of position and emphasising their main points by varying their voice, tone, volume, pace, body language and gesture. Students' arguments should be logically developed and supported and justified with evidence. They should not be simply emotive and intuitive. Students can take different stands on the same issue while listeners listen for key points on which to question the speakers. The audience can focus on the evidence that has been presented and assess its accuracy. Tables and diagrams may be used with great impact in spoken expositions.

In written expositions students should be exposed to community issues and encouraged to write letters expressing their support or concern. Nominalisation is a feature of these texts, as is the use of extended noun phrases. This text is generally not written in first person, but rather in generic terms describing citizens or Australians or citing authorities and is certain in tone, e.g. This *must* stop. Passive voice can be used so that the authority is not identified and so that the tone is both formal and strong, e.g. The opinion has been stated. The vocabulary is often technical and can include abstract terms while synonyms are often used to avoid repetition and to maintain interest.

When reading expositions students should be able to identify vague and unsupported claims and misleading or incomplete statistics and evaluate how effectively language is being used to position the reader. Journalists, politicians and lawyers develop the above skills when they work objectively with language.

# Language features of exposition texts

- Word chains of synonyms and antonyms and word families of general nouns such as land, regenerate and natural resources are used.
- Conjunctions create cohesion and express cause and effect, e.g. because, therefore, so.
- Abstract nouns, such as happiness and fear, and technical words, such as species and genus, are used. The issue becomes more

- scientific from the voice of the expert.
- Action (jump), saying (beg), mental (challenge), thinking (hope), modal (must) and relating verbs (it *is* vital) are used.
- Reasons for actions or choices are shown through the use of connectives, e.g. however, similarly, mainly, therefore, so, because, the first reason.
- Emotive words are used to involve the audience.
  e.g. The overuse of our resources will destroy the land.
- Evaluative language adding the voice of authority is found.
   e.g. It is most important that all people...
- The personal pronoun I is often removed. The author speaks persuasively of people, places and things already in the text, e.g. she, them, Australians, citizens.
- Reported speech is used when referring to what the majority of people have said on the issue to indicate the support of others for the issue.
- Generally, the text is written in the present tense but may change to past tense for recounted events or historical evidence. It may be written in the future tense if predictions are being made.
- A moderate to high degree of modality or certainty is found in the words selected, for example often, nearly, most, generally, might, could. This depends on whether the writer wants to feel authoritative and definite or open to discussion.
- Complex sentences are found.
   e.g. When the game finished, Jack caught the bus.
- Nominalisation is used when nouns are made from verbs.
  - e.g. regenerate—regeneration
- The beginning focus of clauses is changed from active to passive.
  - e.g. We must recycle... Recycling has been ...; I am afraid... Fear has been expressed that...
- New information at the end of one sentence is often picked up as the focus of the following one.

# Sample Annotated Text





ear Editor

Language FEATURES



Written in present tense, e.g. are, have

Author speaks
– persuasively,
e.g. we, human
beings, our

Use of word
families of
general nouns,
e.g. environment,
irreplaceable
rainforests,
polluted land
and water

Use of passive
voice to keep
focus, e.g. It
saddens me to
think...

Use of emotive language, e.g. — destroyed, annihilated

\_\_\_\_ Use of nominalisation, e.g. destruction

High degree of modality, e.g. must, can

Use of action verbs, e.g. are polluting

conjunctions to show cause and effect, e.g. that,

Use of complex sentences

Use of technical language, e.g. toxic waste, food chain, sewage

- Use of saying verbs, e.g. urge

Use of evaluative language, e.g. to take responsibility

Use of modality in conclusion, e.g. can

Satement of position

Background information

Argument 1 Background Point Elaboration

Argument 2 Background Point Elaboration

Reinforcement of statement of position

Greenpeace Australia News Locked Bag 199 ANNANDALE NSW 2038

Dear Lynette

The Editor

When are human beings going to accept responsibility for the environment and for the survival of animal species?

It saddens me to think that in our short time on this planet we have annihilated thousands of animal species, punctured a hole in the ozone layer, destroyed vast areas of irreplaceable rainforests and polluted land and water—to name just a few of our crimes.

The continual **destruction** of animal habitats to make way for spreading urban populations or increased farming lands for growing food concerns me greatly. People are encroaching on animals' territory **and** soon animals will no longer have the space they need. People **must** work now to protect animal habitats.

People are polluting the earth to such an extent that many waterways are not fit for swimming. Non-recyclable rubbish is growing at an incredible rate. People dump toxic waste at sea or bury it in the desert. Pumping sewage into our oceans causes the death of fish as well as animals further up the food chain such as whales. Rubbish such as plastic kills innocent creatures such as seals, birds and turtles.

I **urge** all people **to take responsibility** for this earth we share with other creatures and which we hold in trust for our children and our children's children. **We can** do it if we work together.

Eric, Manly

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# Outcomes Checklist Exposition Texts

At the end of the units on exposition texts, students will have worked towards achieving the following National Level 4 (NSW Stage 3) outcomes.

SPEAKING AND LISTENING	BLM	DATE & COMMENTS
NA 4.2 NSW 3.3 Considers aspects of context, purpose and audience when speaking and listening and discusses ways in which spoken language differs from written.	61, 68, 69, 78, 85, 88, 89	
NA 4.3 NSW 3.4 Controls and evaluates structures and features of spoken language. Interprets meaning and develops and presents ideas and information in familiar surroundings.	68, 69, 84, 85, 89	
NA 4.4 NSW 3.2 Interacts in different sized groups using effective communication skills and strategies and listening attentively.	67, 78, 84, 89	
READING AND VIEWING		
NA 4.5 NSW 3.5 Reads an extensive range of texts with fairly complex structures and features, justifying own interpretation of ideas, information and events in the response to themes and issues.	62, 66, 73	
NA 4.6 NSW 3.7 Analyses and explains techniques to position the reader and to interpret experiences differently in texts.	66, 79, 83, 88	
NA 4.7 NSW 3.8 Identifies the structures of different texts and with assistance discusses the grammatical structures and features that shape readers' and listeners' understanding of texts.	60, 66, 73, 79, 83	
NA 4.8a NSW 3.6 Selects a range of strategies appropriate for the texts being read.	62, 83	
NA 4.8b Working with peers, is able to find information and resources for specific purposes.	59, 61, 82	
WRITING		
NA 4.9 NSW 3.9 Writes well structured literary and factual texts using challenging topics, ideas and issues for a variety of purposes and audiences.	63, 69, 74, 75, 78, 80, 91	
NA 4.10 NSW 3.13 Evaluates writing in terms of effectiveness of presentation of subject matter and adjusts to focus on context, purpose and audience.	59, 60, 63, 67, 68, 70, 73, 74, 75, 91	
NA 4.11 NSW 3.14 Discusses and evaluates how texts have been constructed to achieve their purpose and shape readers' and viewers' understandings using grammatical features and structures.	59, 63, 66, 67, 69, 70, 75, 80, 90, 91	
NA 4.12a NSW 3.10 Uses a range of strategies to plan, edit and proofread own writing.	70, 73, 74, 75	
NA 4.12b NSW 3.11 Uses a range of strategies to spell unfamiliar words.	67, 70, 90	
NSW 3.12 Writes using a fluent and legible style.	60	

# Background Lessons

Students can write expositions based on issues arising in all Key Learning Areas. Some of the issues may relate to content with which students have had no experience. Teachers should support students by providing scaffolds to assist with the gathering of information through surveys and interviews with relevant people about issues. Current newspapers, news and radio broadcasts should be accessed too.

### Session 1 Oral activities

In pairs, ask students to prepare an interview with one person stating one side of the argument while the other person attempts to make the first change his or her mind. A possible topic could be building a freeway through the land lying next to the school that is close to homes. Encourage students to use emotive language and supportive evidence.

Brainstorm with students the different ways people communicate their feelings about events. They may write letters to the newspaper, letters to politicians, attend protest rallies or call talkback radio. Give students, working in groups, an emotive issue and ask them to present a role play of the situation. Highlight bias and emotive language in their presentations and discuss the role these words played in communicating the message.

Encourage students to research material so they can deliver an effective argument on this issue. The comments of experts or supportive evidence add the voice of authority. Remind students to move from the personal voice to the impersonal and to use medium to high modality (might, should). Challenge them to present a point of view contrary to their own. Discuss situations where this may happen (a debate) and the techniques used by spokespeople

to overcome this. Focus on appropriate use of gesture, eye contact, expression and movement in order to emphasise a point. Encourage students to use visual texts such as pictures and diagrams to support and clarify their expositions. A possible topic could be 'The motor car is a mistake'.

### Session 2 Language activities

At this stage students should be focusing on these language features in their expositions. The features are the use of emotive language, changing from a personal to an impersonal voice, using high modality, conjunctions and nominalisation.

#### EMOTIVE LANGUAGE

Words like woman and child are neutral words as no feelings arise about them. Other words, for example burglar, hero and baby, make us respond by feeling angry, pleased, frightened or contemptuous. Ask students to use emotive words to describe the following people: a policeman describing a wanted man; a pupil complaining to his parents about his teacher; a politician passionately explaining his policies to the electorate.

Follow this with an activity where students rewrite each neutral sentence as a more powerful one:

It was a good day; The kitten was sweet; It was a bad idea.

#### THE USE OF HIGH MODALITY

Remind students of the different levels of modality and work with them to develop word banks of the different levels.

For example words that show **low modality** are may, possible; words showing **medium modality** are will, probably; while **high modality** is shown by must and certainly.

e.g. It might make you afraid becomes It will make you afraid as low modality changes to high.

Read sentences to students, asking them to place the modality, and then give students sentences to rewrite in a stronger or weaker modality.

#### IMPERSONAL VOICE

In expositions students should change their writing from a personal to a more impersonal voice.

e.g. I think the school needs more playground equipment. (Personal) The school needs more playground equipment. (Impersonal)

Ask students to rewrite these sentences in an impersonal voice using high modality:

I think we might regenerate the bush; Perhaps we might buy some new school desks; A number of people fear that the trip is too dangerous.

#### CONJUNCTIONS

Give students a number of simple sentences and encourage them to use conjunctions to link arguments in each paragraph more effectively as this will lead to a more cohesive text.

e.g. It is understood that the danger will pass because the water has subsided.

#### Nominalisation

Nominalisation features in expositions of more mature writers and is essential for dealing with abstract knowledge. It assists students to change from a purely speech oriented form of action based writing to one which is noun based. Students write more effectively and in a more authoritarian tone when using nominalisation, which is a process of forming a noun from a verb.

e.g. I **removed** the rock from the path.

→ The **removal** of the rock from the path was essential.

I have a need to **play.** 

→ **Recreation** is important for a child's growth and development.

I am **building** a tower.

→ The tower's **construction** will affect the daily life of many people.

Give the students a passage in which to underline the action verbs. Ask them to rewrite the passage using the features discussed above.

### Session 3 Have your say

View a number of documentaries on various topics. Ask students to focus on whether the writer uses bias and visual images in the emotive text and whether exaggeration or omission of facts are used to influence the audience. Encourage students to focus on the use of technical terms in the text and to look at what amount and type of support is given to the reader to help understand the terms. Discuss with students if there is a presumption that the reader will understand the content.

Ask students, as a group, to express their opinions about an event occurring at school, for example food to be available in the tuckshop. Ask them to give reasons that support their suggestions. Before the modelling of the writing of an exposition begins, encourage students to focus on who they are trying to persuade and the most effective way to persuade their audience. Discuss with them the different points of view and who is involved.

Model for students the writing of an exposition supplying background information, expressing a point of view and ensuring that each time a point is made, it is elaborated. Focus on writing an authoritarian, impersonal point of view, e.g. Most adults agree...The general feeling is...We could report...It is normally carried through... Include the language features discussed above.

## Session 4 Looking at the media

Advertisements create a need, entertain, inform and make money. A large amount of money and research is involved in campaigns to persuade people to buy a certain product. The advertiser selects a target group and the advertisement is designed to appeal to members of that group, and fills either an imaginary need created by the advertiser or a genuine need. It often manipulates the audience to aspire to a certain lifestyle.

Advertisements generally follow this format. They have a headline, the name of the product/service, a description of the product/service, the price of the product/service and the availability of the product/service.

Words are used that relate to the product, such as softer and luxurious. The words selected form the image and focus on the selling point of quantity, quality but value for your money. Emotive, factual, poetic, symbolic, colloquial, technical and created words and puns can be used. Spelling can be phonic and punctuation varies or may be left off. Slogans are often created which involve the repetition of words and use of ellipsis, e.g. would be an ideal gift for any child. Comparatives are used without any means of comparison. They do not say what they are faster than, smoother or bigger than.

An imperative form with high modality and certainty is used for commands leading to immediate action as it involves the reader. 'You must buy now. The offer is for a short period.' 'We know you love the product.' Questions may also be used to involve the reader. 'Is it true you want to change the way you look?'

View a series of radio, television or magazine advertisements with students. Discuss the communication of these messages to the audience. Discuss the stated opinion and the reasons or arguments. In pairs ask students to sort the letters and articles according to the point of view of the writer (found in the statement of position). Ask students to find any conflicting information, persuasive language such as emotive words, and the use of modality by the writer.

With students, compile a list of all the techniques used in advertisements. The list may include the above techniques with the addition of the following: repetition of words and phrases; use of slogans and catchy phrases; using questions to provoke thought; appealing

emotively to the audience; quoting authorities; the audience's need to act on the offer with immediacy; excessive use of adjectives; repeating rhythms; creating a problem which the product can solve; stereotyping; focusing on one aspect of the product being sold.

Encourage students to attempt some of these activities:

- Write their own radio, television, or printed advertisements to sell products.
- Select advertisements from the property section of the newspaper in order to remove all emotive words, leaving only the information. Ask students to think about why certain words were selected and discuss how abbreviations and graphics have been used.
- Ask students to create a new and exciting imaginary product and decide on a target audience (elderly people, adults, children or teenagers). Their advertisement should persuade their audience and influence sales of the product. The persuasive technique would have to be different for each audience. Cartoons and exciting activities would appeal to the young, whereas teenagers would need to know something is in vogue and used by their peers. Adults would need to know that a product is healthy and good value for money.

# Session 5 Point of view

Ask students to read the 'Letters to the Editor' section of the newspaper and collect letters that put forward a point of view. Encourage students to highlight these sections in the letters and to select a few letters and record the issue, opinions and elaboration in each, for example:

- Background information/Issue: Inadequate playground equipment.
- **Point:** The only equipment is a slide suitable for students to the age of eight.
- **Elaboration:** The students, having sat all morning, have a need to run around, and no balls, hoops, bats, climbing frames are available.

Ask students to write letters following this format. Encourage them to continue with further points and elaboration and to end with a repetition of the issue.

Dear Sir or Madam, (Issue or background information)				
Argument 1 (Point)				
(Elaboration)				
Argument 2 (Point)				
(Elaboration)				
(Reinforcement of statement of position)				

To provide practice in presenting a point of view, ask students to write responses to issues that arise at school or in their homes. Ask them to devise a questionnaire to determine the majority view. For example 'Should pound animals be used for medical experiments in order to save human lives?'. Students working in groups of three could write three texts, each with the same basic content but directed at different audiences: parents, children and veterinarians.

## Session 6 Writing an editorial

The writer takes a stand on an issue, supports it and tries to persuade readers to that point of view. The editorial written in response to current news on an issue is very important in shaping and reflecting public opinion. The writer assumes that people reading the editorial are informed about the event and he or she wants to reinforce the views of those that agree with the editorial viewpoint, and change the minds of those who do not. The structure can be changed according to its purpose, e.g. an editorial may supply background information and give evidence.

Generally we, not I, is used so that the reader is included, and extended noun phrases and nominalisation are found. Some rhetorical questions and exclamations are found and the modality ranges from must to perhaps. An assertive and authoritative tone is used and longer sentences and longer paragraphs are found here than in the rest of the newspaper.

Ask students to write an editorial on an issue that has been reported in the newspaper recently, ensuring they include the features mentioned above, e.g. the advantages of progress outweigh the disadvantages.

### Session 7 Visual texts

Ask students to construct a visual text to support a written exposition using photographs, graphs, diagrams and tables. A possible topic could be 'Junk food should not be allowed in our school tuckshop'. A photograph can be used to show greasy, fatty foodstuffs, a line graph can show the incidence of obesity in young people, a cross-section can show fatty arteries, a bar graph can show the proportion of boys and girls that are overweight and a diagram can show the food pyramid.

# Exposition Planning Frame

Statement of position and argument  Have you planned your exposition? Have you clearly stated a problem in your introduction? Have you established your point of view? Does your research support your arguments? What audience are you writing for? Are you writing in present tense?
Points and elaboration
Is each point supported by elaboration that adds details? Do expert opinions support the arguments? Are quotes used? Do cause and effect connect ideas? Are truthful facts and figures used? Is emotive and evaluative language used? Are words selected for the degree of certainty?
Can the line of argument be easily understood? Are the arguments supported by expert opinions? Are connectives such as so, like, causes, brings about found? Do words such as the advantages ofmy point of viewthere are many reasons forit would seem thatand my opinion isappear in the text?
Reinforcement of position
Is the stand clearly summarised? Is the position reinforced? Do you call on the audience to take action?

Name	Date	BLM 54
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# **Exposition Scaffold**

The author presents a point of view of the argument. A question or emotional statement can be used to gain audience attention.  Series of arguments to convince the audience Each paragraph begins with a topic sentence that introduces a new argument.  Details follow, supporting the argument.  Emotive words persuade the audience into believing the author.
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Details follow, supporting the argument.
Emotive words persuade the audience into beneving the author.
Conclusion to sum up the arguments
Γhe author restates his or her point of view.
A summary of the above facts can be included here.

# Exposition Skills Checklist

Class:	Date/Level	Date/Level	Date/Level	Date/Level
PURPOSE				
Understands and focuses on the purpose				
of an exposition.				
STRUCTURE				
Clearly states a problem in the introduction.				
Writes a strong statement of position.				
Supports the opening statement with background information.				
Formulates an argument, selecting facts to support and elaborate a point of view.				
Uses a variety of strategies to persuade				
the audience and reinforce the position.				
Identifies different forms of persuasive writing.				
TEXT ORGANISATION				
Understands the function of each stage.				
Develops a well-sequenced plan.				
Organises each point and its elaboration into appropriate paragraphs.				
Sequences points from most effective to least effective.				
Can locate and research relevant information.				
Able to detect contradictory evidence.				
LANGUAGE FEATURES				
Aware of the needs of the audience.				
Uses connectives and conjunctions to link ideas, contrast concepts, sequence thoughts and connect cause and effect.				
Differentiates between fact and opinion.				
Uses emotive words.				
Uses degree of certainty or modality in words selected.				
Uses evaluative language.				
Uses abstract and technical words appropriately.				
Uses reported speech to refer to expert comments and research.				
Writes in the present tense and changes to past or future when appropriate.				
Uses nominalisation to write with authority in passive voice.				

# **Exposition Writing Interview**

Name	Class	Date
<b>Self-assessment</b> e.g. What content do yo difficult to write? How do you rate yours with persuasive arguments?		
Range and preferences e.g. What type of find it easy to write using emotive language clear and interesting?	•	•
<b>Skills</b> e.g. How do you plan your exposition subject of the text clear in the introduction points are made in the text? Is the arguments add weight to arguments? Are cause and effigures truthfully? In the reinforcement of edit your work?	on? Do you make your point of ent supported with expert opi effect used to connect ideas? A	of view clear? How many nions? Are quotes used to are you using facts and
Current projects e.g. What are you writ	ing now? What would you lik	te to write?

# Research Grid

Questions	1	2	3
Interviewees'	Response	Response	Response
names			