

Chapter 3

Writing to Inform and Explain

In the last chapter we looked at story writing and this is certainly a very important writing skill. But there are other writing styles, too, and in this chapter we are going to be looking at some of those other ways of writing. The styles we will be looking at are **writing to inform** and **writing to explain**.



We'll start with **writing to inform**.

1) WRITING TO INFORM



I'm sure you know what it means to inform someone about something. But before I give you my definition, you tell me what you think it means if you are **INFORMING** someone about something? If it helps you to explain what writing to inform means, give an example.



Well I don't know what you put, but I think that when you are **informing** someone about something, you are providing someone with **INFORMATION** which is the same as giving them **FACTS**, isn't it? If someone asks you for **information**, they want to know the facts **WITHOUT ANY WAFFLE!** If you were in Paris, for example, looking at the Eiffel Tower, and someone came up to you and had their back to the tower and asked you where it was, which would be the most **informative** answer?

- a) The Eiffel Tower is so beautiful. It is like a symbol of Paris.
- b) How they built it was they got about a million tons of steel girders, started to pile them on top of each other and just kept going.
- c) Turn round, look up and you can't miss it!

I think it's pretty easy to see which answer is doing the best job of **INFORMING** someone about the Eiffel Tower. It's obviously (c).

So when you are using words to **INFORM** someone about something, you need to keep it really plain and simple. This can be difficult if you are one of those people who likes to go into lots of detail, but it is important to know when to use plain and simple language when you are trying to convey information.

In one sense you could say that this is the most boring way of writing, but when someone wants **information** they're not worried about getting bored! Let's think about the times when you might want to give information without any frills. I have given a few examples below, but you see if you can think of three more.

1) Tourist Information



Have you ever been on holiday and wanted some **information** about the opening times of local theme parks or the whereabouts of good restaurants? This would be a good example of where **INFORMATION** is important.

2) Road Signs



Here's another example: if you're driving along in a great big lorry and a narrow bridge is coming up, you don't want to know how pretty it is, do you? You just want **INFORMATION** about how narrow it is!

3) Children Welcome



I'm sure you already know how important this information is. There's nothing worse than going out for a bite to eat with your family and finding out as you sit down for your meal that children aren't welcome! You need to be **INFORMED** about this before you go into the restaurant!

Now it's your turn to think about occasions when you need to give **INFORMATION** about something.

4)

5)

6)

How did you get on? Here are a few scenarios that you might have put down to give examples of occasions when **INFORMATION** is more important than going into a long rambling description.

- Telling your parent, or your doctor, when you don't feel well.
- Telling someone where they can find something they have lost.
- Telling someone the time.
- Writing a shopping list.

Of course in each of the above examples, you would probably say a few other friendly things to the person who wants to know the time or has lost their watch. But the **FOCUS** of what you would be saying would be to **GIVE INFORMATION**. I'm now going to show you what happens when you forget that you are supposed to be **informing** someone about something!



Let's imagine someone has asked you how to boil an egg. The correct answer (at least for soft-boiled eggs) would be:

Fill a pan with water and put it on the stove. When the water boils, carefully lower an egg into the pan. When it has boiled for 3 minutes take the egg out of the pan with a spoon. Enjoy!

This is very **informative**, isn't it? It uses plain and simple language, and it tells you much more about egg boiling than the following paragraph, which shows you what happens when someone has forgotten about how to inform!