

Writing Instructions

Instructional writing takes many forms. Some of the forms are really quite simple. Things like writing a recipe or giving explanations of step by step processes can be really quite straightforward. However, writing a tutorial on how to use a particular piece of software, or how to rollerblade can be much more complicated. We will look at both.

Recipe Style.

These sorts of instructions follow a very clear pattern.

1. Identify all of the things the person will need to complete the task. This checklist needs to be organised in a logical way so that the user can collect them and tick them off to ensure they have all they need to complete the task.
2. Plan out the instructions, perhaps even go through the task yourself to make sure you have explained everything that needs to be done.
3. Consider the level of knowledge your reader will have on the matter. If they are already well informed you need not be worried about using special terminology. If they are just beginners then it may be necessary to explain some of the terms first.

When you write you should structure the language in this particular way.

- Begin with the verb or the word indicating the action that needs to take place.
- Then be quite clear about the object or thing being acted upon.
- Towards the end you might give an indication of what it might look like at this stage to reassure the user.
- If there is more than one step to be done at the same time, make it clear that these two or more things need to be done at the same time by using words such as “while doing **a**, begin doing **b**” and so on.



Here is an example.

- Place the piece of 200mm square plywood onto the top of the frame so that there is no overhang then nail it down.
- Using the hand sander, remove all burrs and rough edges.
- Clean down the whole box with a lightly damp cloth to remove dust particles.
- Paint the finished box with either a clear varnish or an acrylic paint of your chosen colour

This second example has some different features.

- Beat the egg whites adding the sugar slowly until it has all been combined and the mix forms soft peaks. When it is successfully combined it should not feel gritty when you scrape the bowl.
- Place large spoonfuls of the mix onto the lightly greased tray lined with greaseproof paper.
(You may use a pastry bag to force the meringue into shapes)
This mix should make about 15 meringues
- Decorate with hundreds and thousands if you wish.
- Bake in a cooling oven for 30 minutes.
- When cool place in a dry tin lined with baking paper to keep the meringue dry.

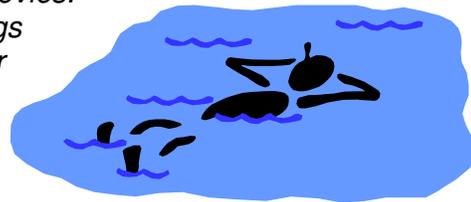
This recipe for meringue uses words such as “cooling oven” and descriptions such as “soft peaks” and “forcing” which may need further explanation. It all depends on how simple the instructions need to be. For this reason you need to be quite sure who your audience is.

Now for you to have a go.

David is 11 years old and a bit forgetful. He and his friends are going to spend the day at the beach followed by a movie. David’s uncle will pick him up at 9.30.

Write the instructions for getting ready for the day.
David’s mother has gone to work. She left a message for him.

*Dear David,
Have a lovely day at the beach with Uncle Ken. Don't forget to slip, slop, slap.
You'll need a change of clothes too for the movies.
That includes deodorant! Keep your wet things
separate in the bag or they'll make your other
clothes wet and smelly. Be good.
Remember to thank your Uncle. Have a
great day. Mum*



It is 9.00. David is about to get ready. Below is a list of things he has been told he must have for the day. Use the blank space to help you organise his preparation.

	Light, long sleeved shirt for sitting on beach
	Deodorant
	Eat breakfast
	Get dressed
	Get in car
	Jeans
	Pick up Charlie and Pak Ho at 9.35
	Meet Uncle Ken in driveway at 9.30
	Shirt for the movies
	Socks
	Water bottle
	Pack the bag
	Plastic bag for storing wet things.
	Comb
	Boogie board and ball
	Shoes
	Go to the movies at 5.00
	Have Charlie and Pak Ho home by 8.00 pm
	Sit on beach
	Money for snacks
	Sunscreen
	Swimming costume (togs, bathers)
	Thank Uncle Ken
	Sportsbag.
	Towel
	Underwear
	Hat