

Non-Fiction Writing

What Is Non-Fiction Writing?

Non-fiction writing is factual writing or writing that's based on real events. It's the opposite of fiction, which describes imaginary people, settings and situations.

Non-fiction writing can take different forms. In year 3, your child will study a selection of non-fiction text types such as instructions, recounts (writing about what happened in the order it happened in), reports (a description of the characteristics of something) and explanations (a technical explanation of how something happens or works).

By year 3, children are expected to be able to plan their non-fiction writing and give it a clear structure. They should use an increasing range of vocabulary and sentence structures to convey information as well as to organise their writing into paragraphs, headings and sub-headings. Children are encouraged to write for a purpose, to consider the intended audience of their writing and to edit and improve their work at the end.

As well as using the resources in this category and the keyword searches to help your child with non-fiction writing, below are a few ideas for games and activities to help your child build up and develop their non-fiction writing skills.

Read, Read, Read!

Sharing books together is the most powerful way for children to learn about language, spelling, grammar and punctuation. Read a range of non-fiction texts with your child, such as biographies, diaries and encyclopedias. Discuss the features of each one and how they differ from fiction texts. What's the same? What's different?

Dictionary Definitions

Encourage your child to become familiar with using a dictionary. Make sure you both have a copy of a dictionary then read out a word you find at random. How long does it take for your child to find your word and read the definition? Repeat three or four times making a note of the words, then see if your child can write a sentence or short paragraph containing all the words you searched for.

Make It!

Make something with your child, such as a sandwich or some cakes. Before you start, discuss the features of instructions, such as the need to write what happens clearly at every step of the way. Encourage your child to write the instructions for whatever you're making then make it using the instructions they've written. How effective were they?

Write a Recount

Encourage your child to keep a diary for a week, writing a paragraph or two about their day and what happened. Discuss the features of the diary entries they have written, such as being in the first person (using 'I' and 'we') and past tense (describing events that have already happened).

Step 1

Language Features of Non-Fiction Writing

Non-fiction writing often requires more formal words and phrases than fiction. By year 3, children should be becoming more aware of their writing's purpose and intended audience. This in turn should have an impact on the type of words they include, e.g. any technical language relevant to the subject, as well as descriptive and factual words and phrases. This resource explores some of the language choices in a biography, which is a great place to start.

Organising Non-Fiction Writing

During grammar lessons in school, your child will be learning how to write different types of sentences, such as compound sentences (two sentences joined together with a conjunction like 'when', 'before' or 'after'). In year 3, they will also be introduced to paragraphs as a way of grouping writing about the same topic together and will start to use headings and sub-headings to help with presentation. In addition, they will begin to use connectives such as 'firstly', 'next' and 'after a while'. This connectives and conjunctions resource can help your child discover new words or recap what they've learnt in school to help their writing flow.

Step 2

Step 3

Planning Non-Fiction Writing

Writing for an audience, and for a purpose, will inform your child's choices of how their writing will look and flow. For example, if they are writing an information leaflet, their writing will be in the form of a non-chronological report or if they are writing a newspaper article, it will be in the form of a recount. This range of posters details the features of different non-fiction texts and can be used as writing templates to help your child organise their thoughts before they write.

Writing and Editing Non-Fiction Writing

By year 3, children should be continuing to build on their self-editing and evaluation skills, carefully checking a piece of work at the end and picking out words and phrases for improvement. The posters from the previous step can help to check this, or you can use our range of non-fiction text checklists to help your child evaluate their writing when they have completed it. This resource gives an overview of the features of a newspaper report.

Step 4

