

Why write instructions or read written instructions?

This sorting activity is designed to help evaluate the worth of written instructions, whether they are necessary.

How?

how to make lemon drizzle cake

A

things we need to know how to do ourselves

C

things we can already do

Q

things that don't interest us very much at this stage, although we might grow very enthusiastic later

B

things we don't need to know how to do ourselves

how to mummify a dead body like the Egyptians

P

things we would be interested in knowing how they are/were done

Y

things we could best learn to do in other ways e.g. someone explaining or showing us, with pictures or watching a video.



X

things we think we could do if we had some written instructions

how to make black pudding

how to fire a musket

how to cross the road

Why write instructions or read written instructions?

First devised for Class 5C at Arkwright School in Nottingham. By the time children reach Year 5 they may have been taught the art/skill of writing instructions since Year 1. It is fortunate that children are better at tolerating repetition than most adults.

Before they start this literacy work for the fifth time, this activity is designed to help them to evaluate the worth of written instructions and whether they are necessary. They need to be empowered to decide when some other method: sign language? pictures? even speaking and listening! might be a more appropriate way of conveying this kind of information. We also wanted to raise the value of instructional language in other curriculum contexts especially history and science. We also think instructions have a place in creative language. Think of Christian Morgenstern's poetic instructions for getting a rich man's camel through the eye of a needle. We have put this poem at the end of the activity which comes from Galgenlieder. We hope that you and your students will come up with their own things to add to the cards and we have left you space to do so. Do email us the most exciting ones! The sorting grids are best enlarged to A3 if groups are bigger than two.

The webaddress for this activity is:

<http://www.collaborativelearning.org/whyinstructions.pdf>

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COLLABORATIVE LEARNING PROJECT

Project Director: Stuart Scott

We support a network of teaching professionals to develop and disseminate accessible talk-for-learning activities in all subject areas and for all ages.

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BRIEF SUMMARY OF BASIC PRINCIPLES BEHIND OUR TEACHING ACTIVITIES:

The project is a teacher network, and a non-profit making educational trust. Our main aim is to develop and disseminate classroom tested examples of effective group strategies that promote talk across all phases and subjects. We hope they will inspire you to develop and use similar strategies in other topics and curriculum areas. We want to encourage you to change them and adapt them to your classroom and students. We run teacher workshops and conferences worldwide but mainly in the UK. The project posts online many activities in all subject areas. An online newsletter is also updated regularly.

*These activities are influenced by current thinking about the role of language in learning. They are designed to help children learn through talk and active learning in small groups. They work best in non selective classes where children in need of language or learning support are integrated. They are well suited for the development of speaking and listening. They provide teachers ideal opportunities for assessment of spoken language.

*They provide scaffolding for differentiation by placing a high value on what children can offer to each other on a particular topic, and also give children the chance to respect each other's views and formulate shared opinions which they can disseminate to peers. By helping them to take ideas and abstract concepts, discuss, paraphrase and move them about physically, they help to develop thinking skills.

*They give children the opportunity to participate in their own words and language in their own time without pressure. Many activities can be tried out in pupils' first languages and afterwards in English. A growing number of activities are available in more than one language, not translated, but mixed, so that you may need more than one language to complete the activity.

*They encourage study skills in context, and should therefore be used with a range of appropriate information books which are preferably within reach in the classroom.

*They are generally work effectively over a wide age range because children can bring their own knowledge to an activity and refer to books at an appropriate level. The activities work like catalysts.

*All project activities were planned and developed by teachers working together, and the main reason they are disseminated is to encourage teachers to work with each other inside and outside the classroom. They have made it possible for mainstream and language and learning support teachers to share an equal role in curriculum delivery. They should be adapted to local conditions. In order to help us keep pace with curriculum changes, please send any new or revised activities back to the project, so that we can add them to our lists of materials.

<http://www.collaborativelearning.org/whyinstructions.pdf>

Why write instructions or read written instructions?

Sometimes written instructions help you to understand how to do something you haven't done before, BUT sometimes there is a better way to learn something rather than reading written instructions.

In addition written instructions explain how people do/have done things. You may not want to do them yourself, but you may be interested in knowing how they do/did it.

Instructions!

This is a sorting activity. There is more than one way to sort the cards. Use the sorting grids.

First sort into your cards into three sets A, B and C:

A: things we need to know how to do ourselves. B: things we don't need to know how to do ourselves. C: things we can already do (and could probably teach someone else!)

Now sort set A into two sets X and Y: X: things we think we could do if we had some written instructions Y: things we could best learn to do in other ways e.g. someone explaining or showing us, with pictures or watching a video.

Now sort set B into two sets P and Q: P: things we would be interested in knowing how they are/were done. Q: things that don't interest us very much at this stage.

(What do you think of these instructions? Could you present them in a better way?)

Sorting Grid 1

A

things we may need to know
how to do ourselves

B

things we don't need to know how
to do ourselves

C

things we can already do

Sorting Grid 2

X

things we think we could do
if we had some written
instructions

Y

things we could best learn to
do in other ways e.g. someone
explaining or showing us, with
pictures or watching a video.

Sorting Grid 3

P

things we would be
interested in knowing how
they are/were done

Q

things that don't interest us very
much at this stage, although we
might grow very enthusiastic
later

Cards for sorting

how to eat peas

how to save your
work on the
computer

how to make black
pudding

how to cross the
road

how Caesar invaded
Britain

how to use a mini
video camera

how to assemble a
piece of flat pack
furniture

how to fire a
musket

how to thread a
needle

how to play
scrabble

how to make lemon
drizzle cake

how to make
toilet paper

how to type

how to ride a
bicycle

how to mummify a
dead body like the
Egyptians

how to iron a
shirt

Cards for sorting

how to decorate
eggs

how to make a
paper Chinese
dragon

Die Probe

Zu einem seltsamen Versuch
erstand ich mir ein Nadelbuch.

Und zu dem Buch ein altes zwar,
doch äußerst kühnes Dromedar.

Ein Reicher auch daneben stand,
zween Säcke Gold in jeder Hand.

Der Reiche ging alsdann herfür
und klopfte an die Himmelstür.

Drauf Petrus sprach: „Geschrieben steht,
daß ein Kamel weit eher geht

durchs Nadelöhr, als Du, du Heid,
durch diese Türe groß und breit!“

Ich, glaubend fest an Gottes Wort,
ermunterte das Tier sofort,

ihm zeigend hinterm Nadelöhr
ein Zuckerhörnchen als Douceur.

Und in der Tat! Das Vieh ging durch,
obzwar sich quetschend wie ein Lurch!

Der Reiche aber sah ganz stier
und sagte nichts als: Wehe mir!

von Christian Morgenstern

How?



The Test

To get this research undertook
I bought a needle and the BOOK,

and with the BOOK an old and hairy
faintly starving dromedary.

N.A.M., to help this thesis,
gave, on loan, a standard Croesus.

When the Croesus, missal-guided
went to Heaven's gate and tried it,

Peter spoke - "The Gospel proves
a camel through a needle moves

Sooner than we may admit
a Rich man." (Christ, J., opus cit).

Testing to confirm the Word,
I loosed our camel, hunger-spurred,

and motivated by a lure
of buns behind the aperture,

The subject, in a single try,
squeezed grunting through the
needle's eye;

a graceless act. The camel crammed
and Croesus muttered, "I'll be
damned."