



Presenting information and instructions clearly in the workplace

There are different ways of giving people information or instructions.

This task has **two** parts.

Part 1

This part will help you to explore and practise ways of giving information clearly.

Part 2

In this part you can try out your skills on test-type questions and check your answers.

Wt/L1.3

tutor notes



Think about how you give someone else instructions at home or at work.

If you had to give others information on how to use a piece of new equipment, you might:

- *tell them how to use it*
- *draw diagrams*
- *write the information using paragraphs*
- *write the information using short instructions or bullet points*
- *use a mix of some or all of the above.*



Build your skills: Information and instructions – Part 1

Take a look at this description of instructional booklets, which gives information laid out in paragraphs:

It needs to . . . explain how the product works or how the product is assembled or installed. It may even have to explain how it links with other products, give the necessary safety warnings, provide maintenance advice and troubleshooting pointers.

And, oh – if that's not enough, it also has to be clear, reliable, well written, well designed and clearly illustrated. It needs to answer questions during its useful lifetime and finally ensure safe disposal of the product many years down the line. It's a tough job being a product instruction booklet!

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If you were to present it differently, you could use short bullet points, like this:

Instructional booklets need to explain how:

- the product works
- the product is assembled
- the product is installed
- the product links to other products.

Instructional booklets need to be:

- clear
- reliable
- well written
- well designed
- clearly illustrated.



Which one do you prefer?

The first piece is more 'personal'; it feels as if the author is talking to you in writing. It has an informal style.

The second piece is 'no frills', more instructional, focusing on the key points. There isn't really a right or wrong way. It depends on who will be reading the information and what you want them to do with it.

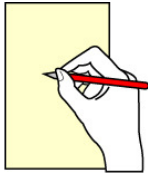
If you want them to follow the instructions easily, the list might work better.

If you were trying to assemble a piece of flat-pack furniture, it might be difficult to read lots of paragraphs to find out what to do.

If you are reading a report, you might not want it all to be in short bullet points or instructional language.

Whether you are giving information in reports, presentations, e-mails, recipes or face-to-face, one of the most important things is that you present this information in a clear and ordered way.

Making sure that your information is clear and logical



Activity 1

Pictures or diagrams can often help make instructions clearer. Take a look at the pictures below. They are part of a set of instructions for how to fit a dust mask.



Even without any written information or instructions, you get quite a good idea of how to fit the mask correctly by following the pictures.



Build your skills: Information and instructions – Part 1

Now look at the written instructions that go with the images. Can you put them in the correct order?

Action	Order
Position the respirator under your chin with the nosepiece up.	
Pull the top strap over your head, resting it high at the back of your head. Pull the bottom strap over your head and position it around the neck, below the ears.	
Cup the respirator in your hand with the nosepiece at your fingertips, allowing the headbands to hang freely below your hand.	
The seal of the respirator on the face should be fit-checked prior to wearing in the work area. a) Cover the front of the respirator with both hands, being careful not to disturb the position of respirator. b) Inhale sharply. A negative pressure should be felt inside the respirator. If any leakage is detected, adjust position of respirator and/or tension of strap. Retest the seal. Repeat the procedure until the respirator is sealed properly.	
Place the fingertips of both hands at the top of the metal nosepiece. Mould the nosepiece to the shape of your nose by pushing inwards while moving your fingertips down both sides of the nosepiece. Pinching the nosepiece using one hand may result in less effective respirator performance.	

Now look in more detail at how the instructions are written. You'll see that they mostly use a simple style of language. This often means using the command form of a verb. This is known as the imperative:

- '**Pull** the top strap over your head' instead of 'the top strap should be pulled over your head'.

Go back over the instructions and highlight all the imperatives/commands you can find.

Did you notice that the imperative often comes at the beginning of the sentence?



Build your skills: Information and instructions – Part 1

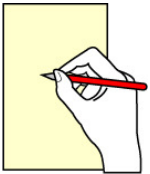
For more practice, look at:

Skillswise: www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/grammar/texttypes/instructions

www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/words/writing/paragraphs/index.shtml

Checklist for writing instructions:

www.sheffield.gov.uk/EasySite/lib/serveDocument.asp?doc=66036&pgid=83257.



Activity 2

How would the respirator instructions work if you presented them in a different way? See if you can turn the instructions into information text using full sentences.

Example:

Instructions using commands

Pull the top strap over your head, resting it high at the back of your head.

Pull the bottom strap over your head and position it around the neck below the ears.

Full sentences

The next stage is to put the mask on your head. To do this you should pull the top strap over your head resting it high at the back of your head.

Look at Part 2 for suggested answers.