

Explanation Texts Cheat Sheet (Grades 4–6)

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| Purpose | <p>To explain how things work or why things happen. Common explanation genres include sequential explanation and causal explanation.</p> | |
| Text Organization and Structure | <p>Identification and description of thing to be explained.</p> | <p>All owls are equipped with special adaptations that make them efficient predators. Keen eyesight allows them to locate quarry even on dim nights. Sensitive, directional hearing helps locate concealed prey. Some species can even hunt in complete darkness using sound alone to guide them to a successful kill. An owl’s flight is silenced by special wing feathers, that muffle the sound of the air rushing over the surface of the wing. This allows owls to hunt by stealth, taking their victims by surprise. It also allows owls to listen for prey movements while still flying.</p> |
| | <p>Causal or sequential explanatory sequence of events.</p> | |
| | <p>Sometimes, but not always, there is a conclusion, which may reinforce the description of the thing that has been explained.</p> | |
| Language Features | <p>Generalized participants versus individuals (“owls eat” and not “an owl ate”).</p> <p>Long noun phrases. (“Spectacled owls have striking masks that are formed by their dark circles of disk feathers surrounded by white plumage around their eyes.”)</p> <p>Simultaneous connectives: as, while, during, etc.</p> <p>Sequential connectives: first, next, finally, before, etc.</p> <p>Causal connectives: when, because, so that, due to, etc.</p> <p>Passive voice that removes agency (the doer) in actions or focuses on a process. (“Old growth forests are cut down to create farmland. Tracking devices are placed on the wings to monitor flight and hunting patterns.”)</p> <p>Nominalization that condenses large amounts of information into a noun or noun phrase. (“Chemical contamination is considered to be one of the most detrimental threats to owl populations.”)</p> <p>Verbs in the timeless present tense.</p> | |