

## Lesson 4

Identify key features of an explanation text.

# Success Criteria

1. Identify features of explanation texts.
2. Use the internet for research about specific questions.
3. Make notes.
4. Present information.

Look carefully at the next pages/slides

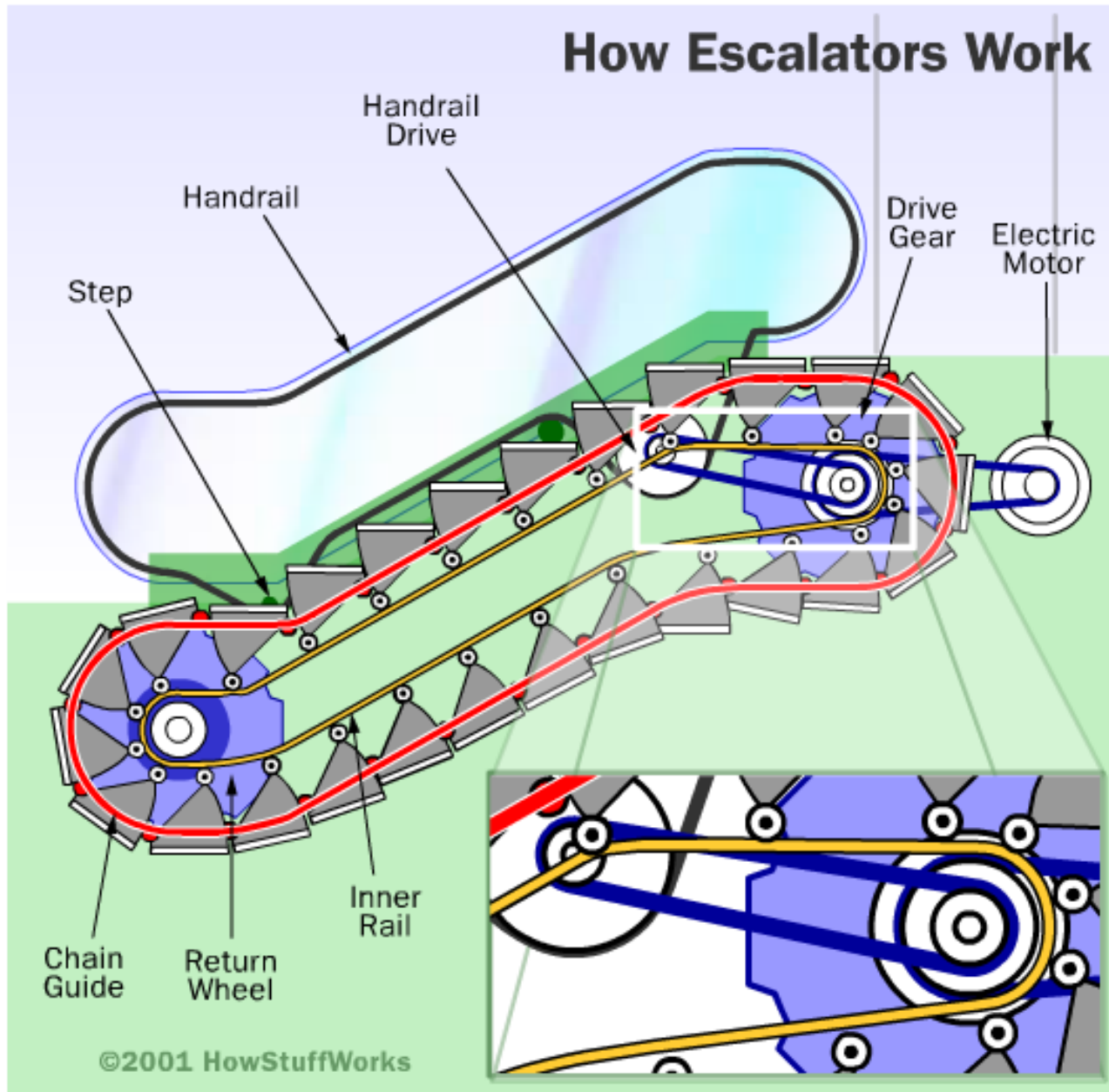
“How Escalators Work”

- What type of text is it?
- What type of language is used?

# How Escalators Work

Escalators are one of the largest machines people use on a regular basis. They are, however, also one of the simplest. In this article, we'll look inside an escalator to find out exactly how these brilliant machines work.

The core of an escalator is a pair of chains, looped around two pairs of gears. An electric motor turns the **drive gears** at the top, which then rotate the chain loops. The motor and chain system are housed inside the **truss**, a metal structure extending between two floors.



Instead of moving a flat surface, as in a conveyor belt, the chain loops move a **series of steps**. Therefore, as the chains move, the steps always stay level. At the top and bottom of the escalator, the steps collapse on each other, creating a flat platform. Consequently, this makes it easier to get on and off the escalator. In the diagram, the internal workings of an escalator can be seen.

Each **step** in the escalator has two sets of wheels, which roll along two separate tracks. The upper set (the wheels near the top of the step) are connected to the rotating chains, and so are pulled by the drive gear at the top of the escalator. The other set of wheels simply glides along its track, following behind the first set.

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Have you noticed that this is an **explanation text**?

It is **different** to an instructional text.

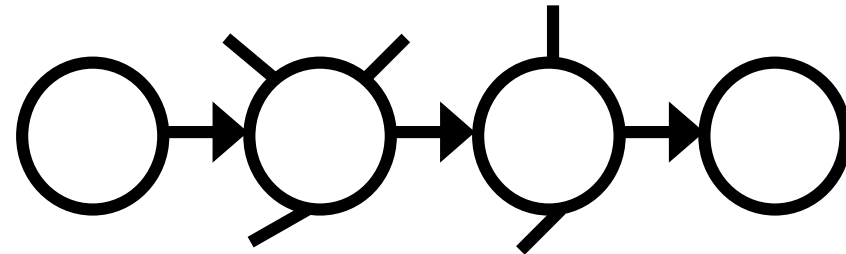
It tell us (or *explains*) how or why something happens (*not* to instruct).

# It is an explanation text

## Key features.

- **Formal** and precise choice of language, typical of this genre (e.g. “surface, internal”) and use of **technical** terms (e.g. “truss”).
- Use of brackets in this text.
- **Diagrams** - diagrams give information in a way that would be difficult with text alone. Sometimes there may be animations to help show and explain too.

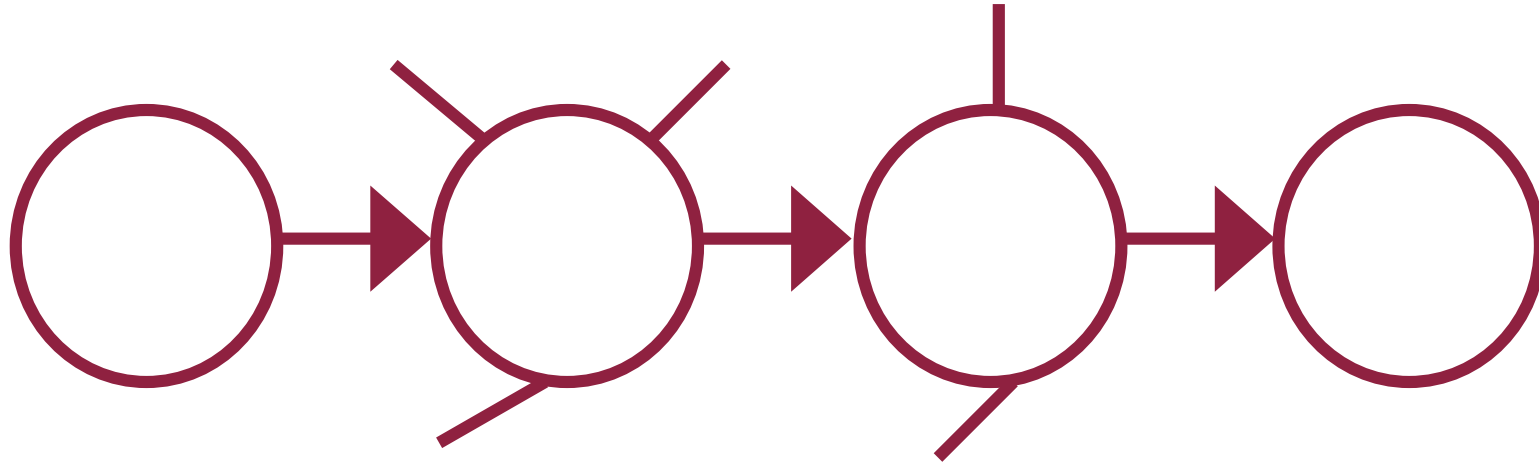
# The advanced explanation book





# Explanation text

tells **how** or **why** a process happens (or how something works).



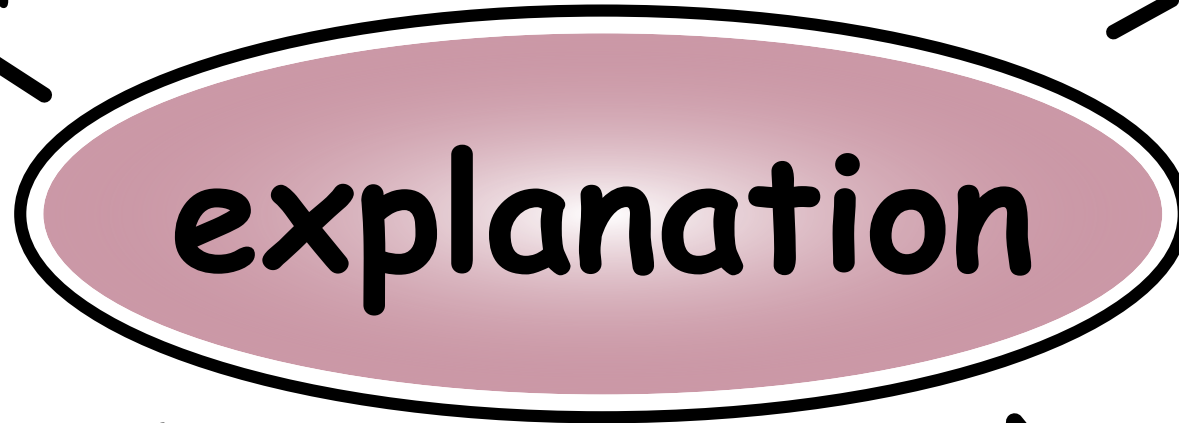
This is **sequential** and deals with **cause and effect**.

These texts are often  
'explanation texts'...

write-up  
of science  
equipment

"question & answer"  
articles and leaflets

encyclopaedia  
entry



science text  
book

technical manual  
(e.g. for car or  
washing machine)

parts of a  
non-fiction  
book  
(e.g. geography,  
biology)

# Explanation text

## Purpose

- to explain a process
- to help the reader understand how or why something happens (or why something is as it is)
- to engage the reader's attention.

The genre of text can also affect the purpose.

## Needs:

- a title telling what's to be explained
- introduction, providing any necessary background
- clear layout (e.g. sections, paragraphs) which helps show the stages in the process
- each paragraph starts with a topic sentence A topic sentence sums up what the paragraph is about.
- maybe labelled picture(s) or diagram(s)
- organisational devices to aid clarity (e.g. bullet points, subheadings)
- closing sentence, to round off the report.

# Audience

## Explanation writing

- think about the audience for the explanation
- how much do you know about them (age, interests, prior knowledge)

Use what you know about your audience to decide

- how much **background detail** is needed
- appropriate level of **formality**.

Think about your audience when you plan the **layout**. How can you make it easy for them to read?

# Explanation language features

- **present tense verbs**  
(unless historical explanations)
- **time connectives** to show  
sequence of events
- **causal language**
- **impersonal language**
- **technical vocabulary**,  
with definitions if  
necessary.

*because*  
if... then...  
*the reason that...*  
*when* *so*  
this results in...  
*this causes...*  
*therefore*

# Impersonal writing

- **third person**
- **passive voice**
- **formal connectives, e.g.**  
*However, Therefore, Furthermore, Consequently*
- **usually formal vocabulary**  
e.g.  
*placed* rather than *put*  
*known as* rather than  
*called*.

*The stick was placed in...*

**This is known as...**

*The motor is operated by...*

**The sides are covered in...**

## TASK:

### Internet based research of explanation texts, note-taking & presenting

- Today's task requires you to answer a question by reading an explanation text, making notes, and presenting information to someone at home.
- Research questions are numbered in order of reading difficulty. (1=easier, 2=medium, 3 = slightly more difficult to explain)

## TASK:

Internet based research of explanation texts, note-taking & presenting. Choose ONE of these to explain!

1. How do hot air balloons work?	2. How do toilet flushes work?	3. How do electric toothbrushes work?
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(1=easier, 2=medium, 3 = slightly more difficult to explain)

Recommended website for research:

<http://www.explainthatstuff.com/>



- **Plenary:** Present your explanation to someone at home, using notes for reference.
- Think about explanation features as you write and read your presentation.