Think About How We Use Procedures Every Day

1. Focus

Introduce Procedural Writing

Talk with students about things you used to do on Saturdays when you were a kid. Mention things like running errands, washing the car, making simple lunches, or making a craft. Use the sample think-aloud below as a model of how to talk to students about the fact that there are steps to most things we do.

Sample think-aloud. Say: When I was a kid, I used to do a lot of chores on Saturdays. I would go out in the car with my mom and do the food shopping for the family. Then we would bring the food in the house and put it away in the cabinets. Then I would do other chores around the house. I was responsible for making the beds and helping my mother with the laundry. I would help her sort the clothes, and after they were clean I would fold them. Often, I would make a simple lunch, such as sandwiches, for myself and my brothers and sisters. If the car needed to be washed, I would help Mom or Dad with that. In warmer weather, I helped in the garden, watering the plants and weeding.

Say: To do many of these chores, I needed to follow a procedure. A procedure is a set of steps that tell you how to do something or make something. For example, I follow a procedure to make the bed. First, I fluff the pillows and place them where they belong. Then, I pull up the sheets tightly. Finally, I lay the blanket on top. I follow the same steps in the same order every time I make a bed. If I wanted to explain to someone else how to make a bed, I could write down the steps to follow. This kind of writing is called procedural writing.

Introduce the Purpose and Audience for Procedural Writing

Ask: What kind of chores have you done in which you needed to follow a procedure? (Allow responses.) Everything from folding clothes to making mac and cheese involves steps that have to be done in a certain order. Sometimes we can read procedures to learn how to do a task. We can also write procedures to tell people how to do something. In procedural writing, you are like a teacher to your readers. You help them learn how to do something you already know how to do.

Say: All kinds of people read procedural texts to learn how to do things. We can learn how to cook a new recipe, grow a plant, put together a kite, or play a game.
2. Rehearse

Practice Telling Procedures Orally

Invite students to work with a partner. Both partners should tell each other about one procedure they know how to do well. Possible procedures include making a sandwich, riding a bike, getting dressed, setting a table, or taking care of a pet. Partners should explain their procedure using clear steps in order. The partner listening to the procedure should be prepared to retell it to the class.

If your class includes English learners or other students who need support, use “Strategies to Support ELs.”

Share Procedures with the Class

Invite volunteer pairs to retell the procedures their partners shared with them. Explain that they do not have to remember the steps word for word, but they should try to remember the general steps that should be followed during the procedure. Use one or more of the following questions to engage students in an open discussion about the topic.

Person telling the procedure
- How easy or hard was it to list your steps in order?
- What words did you use to help your partner listen to the order of the steps?

Listener
- Was it easy or hard to follow the procedure? Why do you think that was?

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: You know how to do a lot of things. Often, you know what steps to follow without even thinking about it. You can use what you know to help others learn new things. In the next several weeks, we will all use our knowledge to help us write procedural texts.

Ask students to write a paragraph or draw picture to describe a procedure they perform every day.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to read aloud their paragraphs. Reinforce the concept that people follow and perform procedures every day of their lives.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning
Meet with beginning ELs one on one. Focus on transitional words that are used in procedural writing, such as first, next, and then. Use pictures that show a procedure and point to each step in the process as you say each transitional word.

Intermediate
Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the “Practice Telling Procedures Orally” activity. Encourage both partners to use simple sentence frames to communicate their procedures to each other.

I know how to ______.
First, I ______.
Then, I ______.

Advanced
Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during partner practice.

All Levels
If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share these English/Spanish cognates to help them understand the lesson focus: order/el orden; procedure/el procedimiento.