Use Command Verbs

1. Focus

Explain Using Command Verbs

Say: Listen as I read aloud two sentences to you: First, unfold the towel and lay it on the ground. You’ll have to find a towel first, and then unfold it, and lay it on the ground.

Ask: Which sentence gave the clearest instructions? (Allow responses.) Why do you think that is?

Explain: When I write a procedural text, such as instructions for how to wash a dog, I use short, direct sentences that tell the reader exactly what to do. This type of sentence is called a command. A command sentence begins with a strong verb that tells the reader what to do. When I read a procedural text, I want the directions to be easy to follow. I don’t want to have to hunt through the words to find out what I’m supposed to do. Today I’m going to show you how to use strong verbs in command sentences in your procedural texts.

Model Using Command Verbs in Sentences

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

Step 2: Brush your dog.
Step 3: Put the dog in the tub. Then put shampoo on the dog.

Modeling Text

Ask students to listen for commands as you read the steps from “How to Wash a Dog” aloud.

After step 2. Say: This sentence begins with a verb that tells me exactly what to do—brush the dog. The verb brush is a direct command. I’m going to underline this word and label it a “command.” Underline and label the identified word.

After step 3. Say: The author tells me to “put the dog in the tub.” This is direct and easy to follow. The author doesn’t add a lot of detail or unnecessary information. The command, or what I’m supposed to do, is the important thing, and it’s right at the beginning of the sentence. In the next sentence, the author uses the word then before the command put. That’s okay! That helps me know that I put shampoo on the dog next. The command verb put is still clear and direct. I’m going to underline these words and label them “commands.” Underline and label the identified words.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:
• Learn the function of commands in procedural text.
• Practice using commands in procedural text.
• Discuss how they can apply this strategy to their independent writing.

Preparation

Materials Needed
• Chart paper and markers
• Interactive whiteboard resources

Advanced Preparation
If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy the modeling text and practice text onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson.
2. Rehearse

Practice Writing with Command Verbs

Display the practice text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

You could make a fruit salad. You can cut the fruit into pieces. But make sure to wash everything first.

Practice Text

Ask students to work with a partner to write one or two commands based on the practice text; for example: Make a fruit salad. Wash the fruit. Cut the fruit into pieces. Remind students to choose strong, direct verbs to begin their command sentences. Each pair should write down their sentences and be prepared to read them to the class and explain how writing commands increased the sentence fluency.

Share Practice Sentences

Bring students together and invite partners to read aloud their sentences and explain how they changed them to use commands. Discuss the choice of verbs and whether these verbs are the best way to make the statement clear and direct. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they draft or revise their procedural texts.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We just learned that it’s important to give clear, easy-to-follow directions when writing procedural texts. We learned that we use a command verb at the beginning of each step in the procedure so that readers know exactly what to do. As you write your procedural texts, remember to begin your steps with strong command verbs.

Encourage students to think about command verbs they can use in their procedural texts. During student conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite two or three students who used command verbs effectively in their procedural steps to read aloud their texts.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

While the rest of the class works on the partner practice activity, work one on one with beginning ELs to practice expressing simple commands orally. For example, stand up from your chair. Say: I stand up. Then address the student. Say: Stand up. Practice with other simple verbs. For example:

I take the book./Take the book.
I raise my hand./Raise your hand.

Intermediate and Advanced

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the partner activity.