Create Command Sentences

1. Focus

Explain Using Command Verbs

Say: Listen as I read aloud two sentences to you:
• First, cut the apple into two halves.
• The first thing you want to do is cut the apple into two halves.

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

Explain: A writer of a procedural text, such as a recipe, uses 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 procedure, I want the directions to be clear, straight to the point, and easy to follow. I don’t want to have to search through the words to find out what I’m supposed to do. Today I’m going to show you how to effectively use strong verbs in command sentences in your procedural text.

Model How Writers Use Command Verbs in Sentences

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

1. Wash the strawberries.
2. Ask an adult to help you cut out the stems.

Modeling Text

Ask students to listen as you read the steps in the recipe aloud and to listen for commands.

After sentence 1. Say: This sentence begins with a verb that tells me exactly what I’m supposed to do with the strawberries—wash them. The verb wash is direct and to the point.

After sentence 2. Say: The author then tells me to ask an adult for help. She is very direct. She doesn’t say something like, “Later, after the red strawberries have been washed, go find an adult and ask for help with cutting the strawberries.” As a reader of procedural text, I don’t have time to read all the extra words. That would make the recipe too hard to follow! The command, or what I’m supposed to do, is the important thing. I rely on the command verb to be clear, strong, and direct.

Objectives

In this mini-lesson, students will:
• Learn the function of command verbs in sentences in procedural text.
• Practice using effective command verbs 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 and practice texts onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson.
2. Rehearse

Practice Writing Command Sentences

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

After you come home from school and have a snack, you could open up your books and do your homework.

Practice Text

Ask students to work with a partner to write one or two commands based on the practice text (for example: Come home from school. Have a snack. Open your books. Complete your homework). Remind them to choose strong, direct verbs to begin their command sentences. All pairs of students 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 the sentences to create commands. Discuss the choice of verbs and whether these verbs are the best choices to make the statement clear and direct. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they write their own procedural texts.

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: We just learned that it’s important to provide clear directions when writing procedural text. One way to do this is to begin each step in your procedure with a clear and effective command verb. As you write your procedures, remember to begin your steps with strong command verbs that tell readers exactly what to do in as few words as possible.

Encourage students to use strong command sentences during independent writing time, as appropriate. During student conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to share examples of command sentences they have written.

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Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning

Model how to use command sentences by expressing simple commands orally, telling students to do simple tasks. For example, say: Pick up the pencil. Raise your hand. Ask students to take turns using command verbs to tell you what to do. Write your simple sentences on chart paper and read them aloud with students as you use gestures to ensure their comprehension.

Intermediate and Advanced

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers to complete the above activity of creating command sentences.