Think About How We Use Procedures Every Day

1. Focus

Introduce Procedural Writing

Display a personal object that you made, such as a painting, drawing, or photograph. Use the sample think-aloud below as a model of how to talk to students about things that students would like to do but do not know how to do.

Sample think-aloud. Say: I want to share with everyone something that I made. It’s a photo of my son. When my son was a baby, I was so excited to take his picture and to get many memories of him while he was still small. But look at the picture I took. It’s blurry and I didn’t even get his whole head in the picture. I was disappointed when I saw it. It didn’t look as great as I remembered my son looking that day. Many people take such great pictures or do such wonderful drawings or paintings. That’s why I decided that I wanted to learn how to take great pictures. So I got a book that taught me the steps to taking good pictures.

Say: There are always things that we wish we could do better. Some of these things we can even learn from each other. After I learned to take good photos by reading a book about it, I taught my friend to do the same thing. I wrote down the steps she needed to go through to take good photos. Procedural writing explains something in order from beginning to end. For the next several weeks, we are going to read, write, and share procedural writing. We will think about how we follow procedures every day, and we will try to choose some of those activities and write down the steps for others to follow.

Introduce the Purpose and Audience for Procedural Writing

Say: What are some things that you have always wanted to know how to do? How do you think you can learn to do these things? (Allow responses.) There are always things in life that we don’t know how to do that we wish we could do. But think about all of the things that you know that you are able to teach others. When you write a procedural text, you are the one giving the help to others. You explain to your audience how to do something.

At some point, most people read how-to, or procedural, texts to learn how to do something. They might need to find out how to cook something, to learn something on the computer, or to put together a toy or even a piece of furniture.
2. Rehearse

Practice Telling Procedures Orally

Invite students to work with a partner. Both students should tell their partner about one procedure they know how to do well. Possible procedures include how to play a game, how to make a treat in the kitchen, or how to sing or play a simple song. 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 volunteers to retell the procedures their partners shared. 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. Use the following questions to engage students in an open discussion about the topic.

Person Telling the Procedure
• Why was it important to tell the steps in order?
• How did you signal to the listener that you were changing to a new step?

Listener
• Was it easy or difficult to understand the way your partner explained the instructions? Why do you think so?
• Did your partner explain a procedure that you already know how to do? Or was this procedure new to you?

3. Independent Writing and Conferring

Say: Think about all of the things that you know that you can teach to others. In the next several weeks, we will all use our knowledge to help us write how-to texts for others to follow. We will get to spread our knowledge to other people by putting directions into writing for others to follow.

Encourage students to write 3 to 4 steps in a procedure during independent writing time.

4. Share

Bring students together. Invite volunteers to read aloud the steps they wrote during independent writing time. Invite them to comment on what they noticed about writing this type of text.

Strategies to Support ELs

Beginning
Meet with beginning ELs one on one. Have them tell through words or gestures something simple they can do, such as making a sandwich or drawing a picture. Repeat their steps using sequence words. Display simple sentence frames and help students use sequential language to describe what they do.

First, I ______.
Next, I ______.
Then, I ______.

Intermediate
During the “Practice Telling Procedures Orally” activity, pair ELs with fluent English speakers. Encourage them both 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 the “Practice Telling Procedures Orally” exercise.

All Levels
If you have students whose first language is Spanish, share this English/Spanish cognate to help them understand the lesson focus: procedure/el procedimiento.