

Non-fiction texts often contain facts and supply information.

# NON-FICTION TEXTS

Non-fiction texts can be divided into two broad categories — information texts and persuasive texts. Each category contains a range of different text types.

## INFORMATION TEXTS

Reports	Procedures	Recounts	Explanations
science reports	recipes	letters	manuals
biographies	directions	diaries/journals	handbooks
documentaries	instructions	autobiographies	how and why texts
news reports	experiments	factual recounts	life cycles

## PERSUASIVE TEXTS

Expositions	Discussions
one-sided arguments	two-sided arguments
letters to the editor	debates
advertisements	book/TV reviews

Not all texts look the same or are structured the same way. Here are some general questions to ask yourself when reading non-fiction texts:

- Why was the text written?
- What do I want to know?
- What does the text 'look like'?
- How does the text 'work'?
- How do the visuals 'work'?
- How do the ideas in the text relate to each other?

(See *Blake's Writer's Guide* for detailed descriptions of the structures and features of non-fiction texts.)

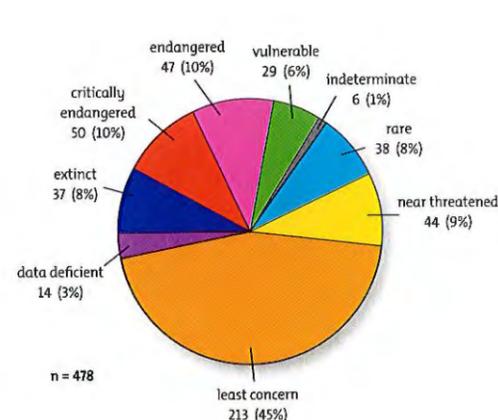
### HOW DO VISUALS HELP ME?

Information texts usually include photos (with captions), pictures, graphs, labelled diagrams, flow charts and so on. They represent shortcuts to meaning.

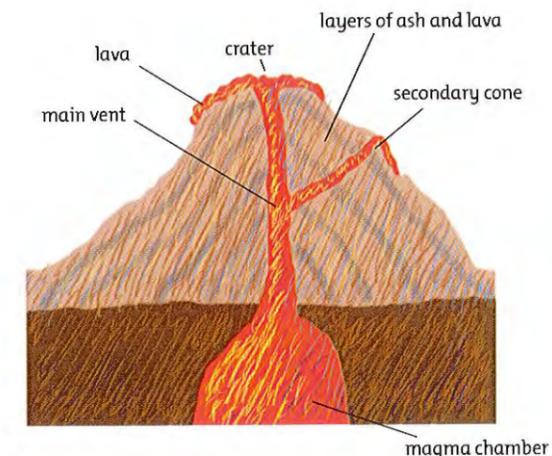
Through these visuals, you can:

- clarify and extend your understanding of the written text
- visualise and memorise information
- build knowledge and vocabulary
- summarise the information.

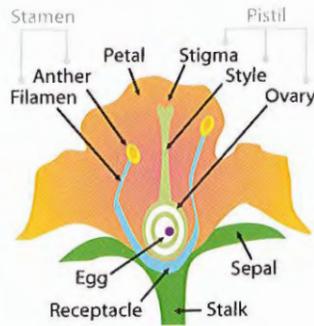
Here are some examples:



**Pie chart** reporting on endangered animals  
Structure: Comparing



**Cross section** explaining how a volcano occurs  
Structure: Cause and effect

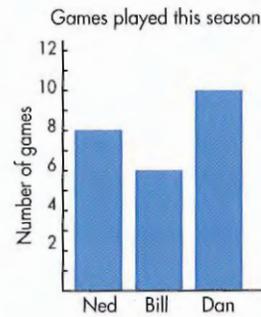


**Cutaway** showing parts of a flower  
*Structure: Listing*

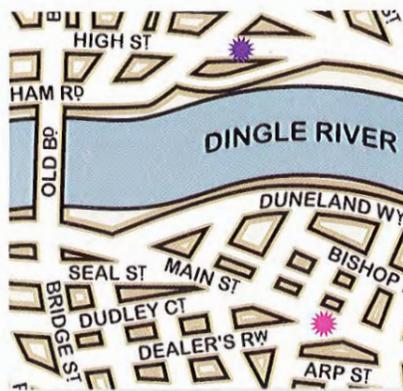


The koala belongs to a special group of mammals called marsupials.

**Photo and caption** reporting on koalas  
*Structure: Listing*

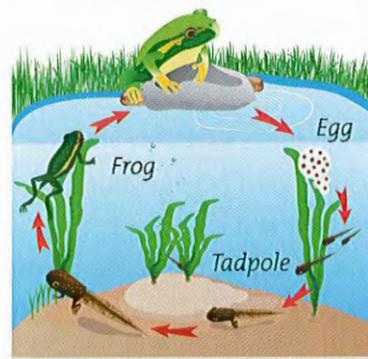


**Bar graph** reporting on school sport  
*Structure: Comparing*



**Street map** showing directions  
*Structure: Listing*

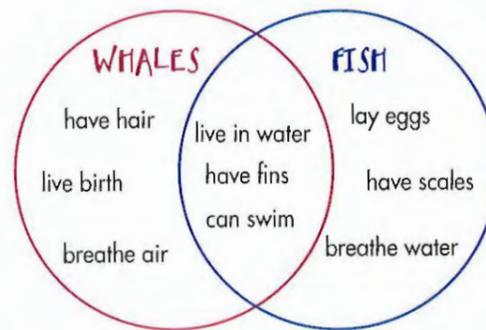
- BEGIN** \*
1. Drive north-west on Main St.
  2. Turn left onto Seal St.
  3. Drive west on Seal St.
  4. Turn right onto Bridge St.
  5. Continue north onto Old Bd. and over the Dingle River.
  6. Turn right onto High St.
  7. Continue driving east until you reach your destination.
- END** \*



**Flow chart** explaining the life cycle of a frog  
*Structure: Cause and effect*

The top ten boys' names in Australia in 2014 and the change from 2013			
1	Harry	6893	no change
2	Oliver	6324	no change
3	Jack	5933	no change
4	Charlie	5302	no change
5	Jacob	4905	up three
6	Thomas	4677	no change
7	Lachlan	4562	down two
8	Riley	4497	up five
9	William	4363	up one
10	James	4305	down three

**Table** listing data comparing favourite names in 2014 and 2013  
*Structure: Listing*



**Venn diagram** comparing and contrasting whales and fish  
*Structure: Compare and contrast*



**Timeline** listing significant events in Australia's history  
*Structure: Listing*

**FACT OR OPINION?**

When you read non-fiction texts, it is important to know whether the author is stating **facts** or just voicing an **opinion**. Facts are true statements about a topic and can be proven. Opinions are what someone thinks about a topic. Someone else may think differently.



Try this

**Read each statement. Is it a fact or an opinion?**

1. Mount Everest is the highest mountain in the world.
2. Ned Kelly was born in Victoria in 1855, the son of Irish parents.
3. A koala is a cuddly Australian bear.
4. Man first walked on the Moon in 1969.
5. Diamonds are a girl's best friend.

**Examples:**

The Great Barrier Reef lies off the east coast of North Queensland. [FACT]

It is the most beautiful marine park in the world [OPINION] and is a perfect tourist destination. [OPINION]

The Holden Company was founded in 1856 as a saddlery manufacturer. [FACT]

It began manufacturing car upholstery in 1908 [FACT] and produced the first all-Australian car in 1948. [FACT]

Holden produced cars that were faster and more economical than other companies. [OPINION]

Most Australians favoured Holden over all other brands. [OPINION]

Today, Holden has to compete in the global market against cheaper, foreign-made cars. [FACT]

**COMPREHENDING INFORMATION TEXTS**

**Information** comes in many forms and from many sources. It can be spoken, written or visual. Most written information is supported by visuals such as photos, maps, diagrams, graphs and so on.

Writers design their texts to help the reader by:

- grouping information (*headings, subheadings*)
- highlighting information (*colours, capital letters, bold type, italics*)
- connecting information (*arrows, numbered or dot point lists*)
- organising information (*columns, paragraphs, lists, tables*)
- cross referencing (*asterisks, footnotes*).

In the school setting, we usually find the information we need in books or short articles, or on websites.

First, you need to know what you want information about and how you want to use it. For example, you may have to write a report on the solar system, ants or the Olympic Games, or explain to the class where rain comes from or the life cycle of a bee. You may want to make origami flowers or construct a model of an energy-efficient house, or you might simply be interested in (or curious about) the topic. Once you have located the resource you need, it's time to get started.

**STRATEGIES**

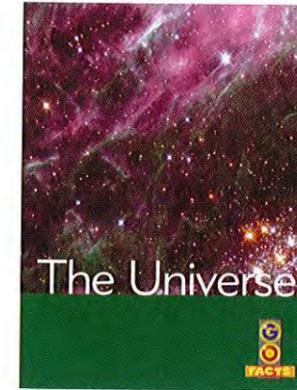
- Skimming and scanning
- Making connections
- Predicting

**HOW DO I GET STARTED?**



**Skimming and scanning**

Skimming and scanning are valuable tools to help you to extract information from a text quickly. **Skimming** involves running your eyes quickly over the text to get an idea of what the text is about. **Scanning** involves looking for specific bits of information — dates, names, key words and so on. You might scan through a sporting list to find your name, through the telephone book to find a plumber or through a TV guide to find a particular program.



Title

4	What Is the Universe?
6	Objects in Space
8	Galaxies
10	Types of Galaxies
12	The Milky Way
14	What Is a Star?
16	Life Cycle of a Star
20	Black Holes
22	Other Life in the Universe?
24	Fate of the Universe
26	Constellations
28	Star Maps
30	Table, Glossary and Index

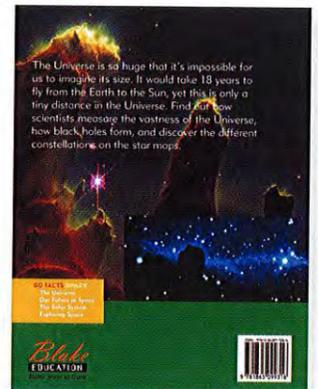
Contents



Glossary



Index



Back cover

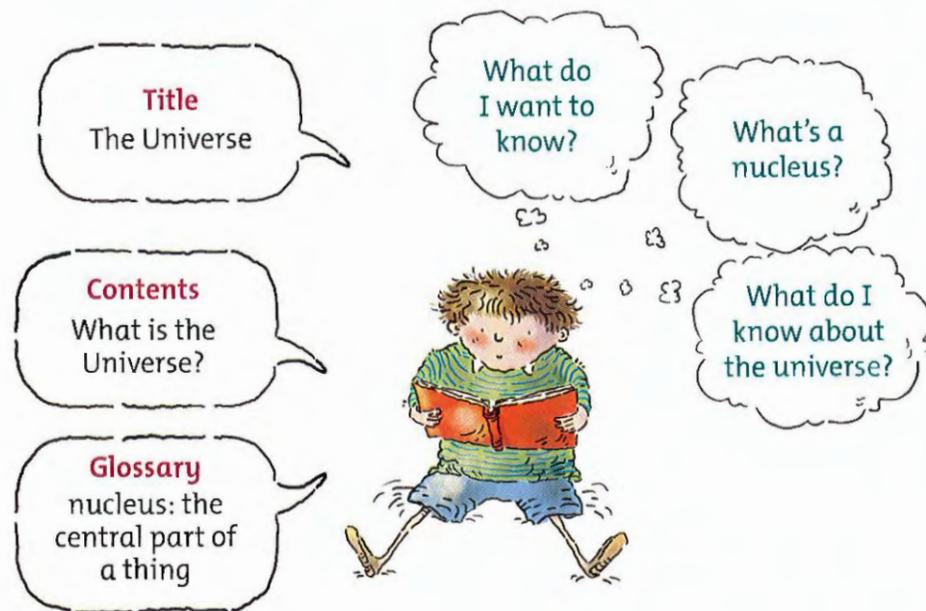
**Making connections**

Begin by reading the **title** (e.g. *Australian Animals, Airships and Hot Air Balloons, Keeping Your Body Healthy, Dinosaurs*). This is usually the BIG main idea and will help you start to **make connections** with what you already know about the topic. Gather further information from the back cover blurb and any pictures or photos.

**Scan** through the **contents** page. The contents page shows you what information is covered and allows you to zero in on a particular topic.

**Skim** through the **glossary**. This is a list of important words and their meanings, usually found at the back of the book. This list is also in alphabetical order. Again, this information helps you focus on what you may already know and what you will find out during your reading. The words in a glossary often appear in bold type in the text. You can refer back to the glossary any time during your reading.

**Scan** the **index** for a more detailed list of the contents of the book. This list is at the back of the book and is in alphabetical order, so information is very easy to find.



When you have located the information you need, scan through the chapter or article. Look for headings or subheadings, dates, proper names, and words in italics or bold type. Look at any photos, captions, pictures or diagrams. Continue to **make connections** with what you already know. Remember, the more knowledge you have about a topic, the easier the text will be to understand.

### Predicting

Read the first sentence of each paragraph. Thinking about what you already know, **predict** what the text is about.

Now go back and read the whole article or chapter.

### HOW DO I FIND THE MAIN IDEAS?

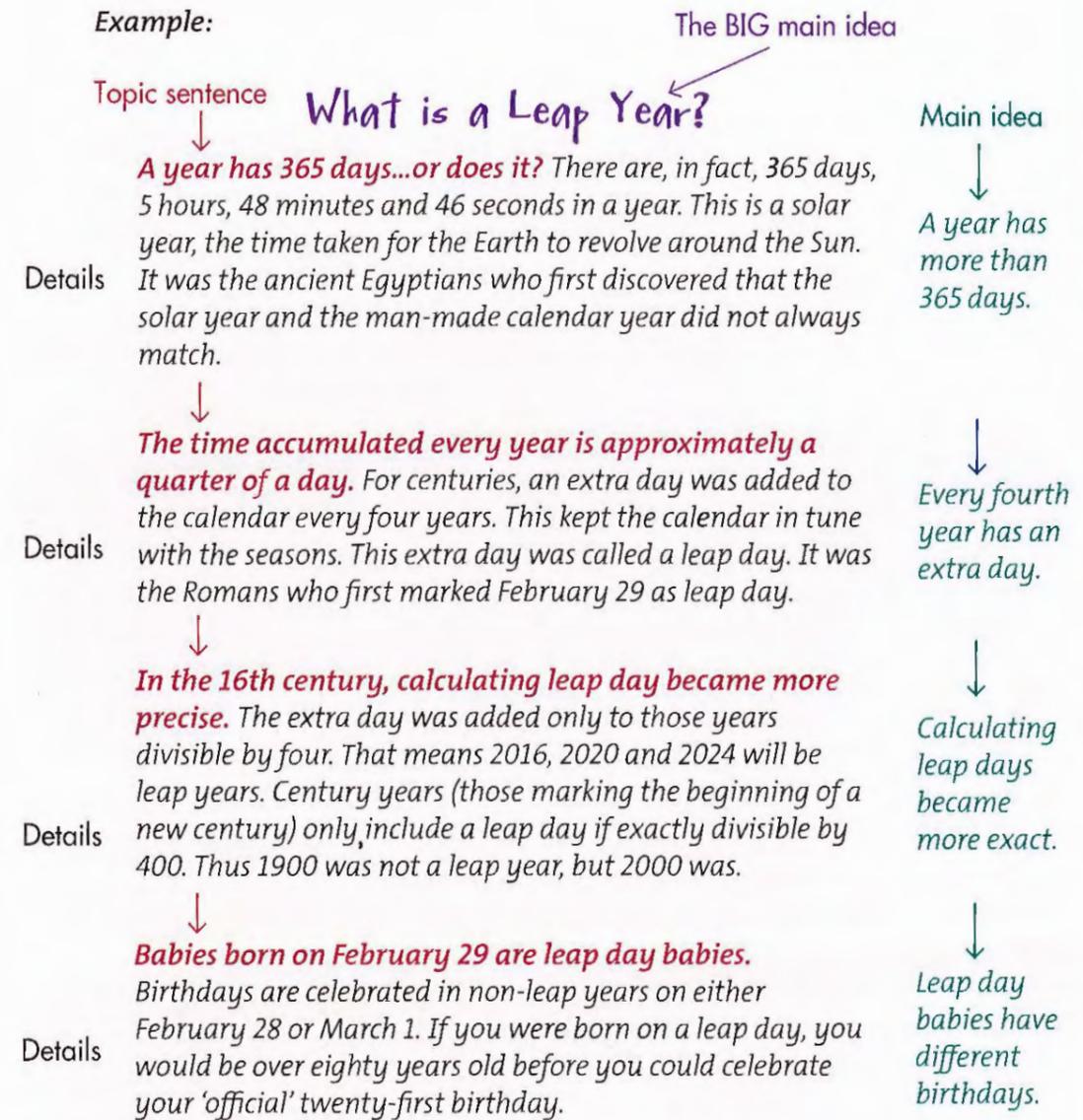
#### Paragraphs

The first BIG **main idea** is the **title** of the book or article.

Most authors write in short segments of text called **paragraphs**. In an information text, a paragraph is constructed around one main idea. The clue is usually in the first sentence, often called the **topic sentence**.

What follows are **details** that give added information about the topic.

Example:



#### Which statement best expresses the main idea of this paragraph?

The careless dumping of rubbish can cause pollution. Flies breeding in rotting rubbish can spread disease. Animals may become sick from eating it or be hurt by sharp objects, wire and broken glass. Poisons used by farmers to control weeds and pests, as well as fertilisers used to boost plant growth, can pollute the soil. Animals eating grass grown on poisoned land can become sick. Toxins can be passed through the food chain and may affect people's health.

1. Farmers use poisons to control pests and weeds.
2. Animals get sick eating rubbish.
3. Waste materials can contaminate the soil.

