

Reading Centre

making a difference

Writing to explain
in Years 7 to 10



Thinking to explain

Often school-based tests and assignments require writing that ***explains***.

This slideshow will examine how to write an explanation in Science.

To ***explain*** in Science means to provide additional information to demonstrate reasoning or use of knowledge.



Image: Pixabay

An example task

Consider the following Science task:

Explain why some sharks have to keep swimming to stay alive and others do not.

The written response should:

- explain the relationship between movement and survival in sharks
- compare and contrast the types of sharks.



Image: Pixabay

What language features are important?

A written explanation will likely include:

- a **topic sentence** to introduce what the explanation is about
- **pronouns** to connect ideas without repeating words, for example, 'this', 'these', 'it' and 'they'
- **words to compare** and **contrast** and to introduce examples
- **synonyms** to avoid repeating words, for example, 'breathe' can be used instead of 'respire'
- **words to describe amount**, for example, 'some', 'few'
- **words to describe degree of obligation**, for example, 'must', 'should', 'could'
- **words to signal conclusion**, for example, 'therefore'.

Sample explanation

Topic sentence

Compare and contrast words

Words to introduce examples

Synonyms

Words about obligation

Pronouns

Words to conclude

Some types of sharks must keep moving to stay alive **whereas** others do not. **For example**, Nurse and Bullhead sharks are able to use buccal muscles to force water in through their mouths and across their gills to **breathe**. **This** mechanism allows them to **respire** whilst inactive. **In contrast** species like the Great White and Mako rely only on ram ventilation which involves swimming fast with **their** mouths open forcing water through their gills. **These** types of sharks **must** **therefore** remain active to breathe.