Purpose of Text

Overhead slides, text sorting activity, worksheets, handouts, links and group teaching ideas. Suitable for levels E1-L2, although not all aims and objectives will apply to every level.

These activities and resources were first used as part of an introductory group teaching session. Worksheets on pages 9-14 could also be used for stand-alone activities, but do remember that…

- The sharing of ideas increases group cohesion – especially at the beginning of a new term or academic year.
- Group sessions give students confidence, and an awareness of their strengths.
- Extra speaking and listening activities / assessments can be worked into group sessions.

Aims / objectives / targets

- Understand these terms: *form, source, purpose, audience.*
- Understand and recognise these purposes of text: *to explain, to describe, to inform, to instruct, to entertain, and to persuade.*
- Understand that…
  text can have more than one purpose
  texts of the same form can have different purposes
  sometimes the purpose is different from the stated purpose.

Available to tutors in Word (DOC) format

If you would like a copy of this document as a DOC file, enabling you to edit and adapt worksheets for other levels, please email us from our site (url above) stating your name and where you teach basic skills.

Follow up ideas (after completing the text sorting activity described on page 3)

1. Ask students to bring in five texts they have come across during the week. Discuss purpose of each as a class (or in pairs). Introduce and discuss the idea of intended audience.
2. Ask each student to bring in a particular type of text. E.g. Entry 1 – instructions, Entry 2 – information, Entry 3 – explanations, Level 1 – entertainment, Level 2 – persuasive and/or descriptive texts. Discuss.
3. Ask all students to bring in a particular form of text. For example letters, books or magazines. Discuss the range of purposes (for example, some letters instruct, some inform and some persuade).
4. Ask students to collect all the junk mail that comes through their letterbox during the week. Discuss.

Contents

UK Adult Literacy. Levels E1, E2, E3, L1, L2. Reading – text focus. Purpose of text.

- 1 -

Form, Source and Purpose of Text: Curriculum Links

Rt/E1.2 Recognise the different purposes of texts at this level.
(a) understand that different types of text will look different and that the format can often help identify the purpose of texts
(b) know that symbols without words have meaning and understand the meaning of common signs and symbols
Example: Recognise the purpose of simple texts encountered in daily life, e.g. a greetings card, an advert, a notice, an appointment card, a shopping list, a road sign. Recognise and understand the signs for No Smoking, Ladies, Gents, EXIT, ENTRANCE, Bus Stop.
Sample Activities: *Explain the purpose of different short texts. Sort different short texts into categories of purpose. Make a collection of short texts from home, work or leisure, and discuss their purpose and relevance. Explain workplace signs and symbols to a colleague or teacher. Match symbols of household products to their meaning. Use knowledge of context and presentation to work out the meaning of signs encountered in their daily life.*

Rt/E2.2 Recognise the different purposes of texts at this level
(a) understand that different texts have different purposes, e.g. to explain, inform, instruct, entertain
Example: Know the different purposes of texts encountered in daily life, e.g. personal letters, junk mail, invoices, TV listings, DIY manuals, recipes, magazine stories, tickets for an event.
Sample activities: *Discuss the purpose of different short texts and identify features that characterise the text type. Sort different texts into categories of purpose, e.g. letters, instructions, stories, adverts. Select their own reading for pleasure from a range of material at this level; read and discuss texts with fellow learners and teacher.*

Rt/E2.3 Identify common sources of information. Understand that…
(a) different sources of information are designed for different uses, e.g. newspaper, directory, listing
(b) similar information can be found in different sources and be presented in different ways
(c) sources can be electronic as well as paper based, e.g. teletext, web sites
(d) reading for information often involves locating specific details rather than reading a whole text
Example: Know where to find out what is on television (i.e. newspaper, TV guide, teletext).
Sample activities: *Sort and match information to its source, e.g. football results to newspaper sports section, definitions of words to dictionary, list of dentists to Yellow Pages. Identify a personal list of information needs and likely sources as a checklist for learning and use. Use front page of a web site to find items of news, sport, gossip, entertainment.*

Rt/E3.2 Recognise the different purposes of texts at this level. Understand that…
(a) different texts have different purposes, e.g. to inform, explain, instruct, entertain, describe, persuade
(b) texts of the same form can have different purposes, e.g. a letter
Example: Select appropriate texts to suit their own purposes in daily life, e.g. newspaper, phone directory, tourist information leaflet.
Sample activities: *Read a variety of short texts with different purposes. Decide when each might be relevant in their own life. In pairs, look at different sorts of letters delivered to home. Note their features and decide on any action/response, e.g. an official letter, circular letter, personal letter. Select their own preferred text and read it for pleasure or entertainment.*

Rt/L1.2 Recognise how language and other textual features are used to achieve different purposes (e.g. to instruct, explain, describe, persuade)
(a) understand that choice of language and textual features reflect the purpose of a text
(b) know that different types of text use different sorts of language, structural and presentational devices
(c) understand that readers can choose different sorts of texts to read for pleasure, depending on their tastes and interests, e.g., imaginative texts: stories, novels, poems; factual texts: biographies, travel writing, information texts
Example: Be able to distinguish between an objective description and a persuasive description, e.g. a description of what is an NVQ portfolio, compared with a description in an advert.
Sample activities: *In pairs, annotate enlarged photocopies of different types of text (e.g. a job vacancy, an estate agent's description, rules for a sport, a poem), by circling/highlighting/making notes on particular features of language, structure, format and layout. Discuss their findings with their partner. Experiment with reading a range of texts for pleasure. Keep a reading record (on paper or screen) of titles and authors of texts read, and a brief note of their 'enjoyment rating'. Use the list for reference for choosing future texts. Open a set of documents in a folder and list whether they are letters, memos, e-mails, notes or legal documents.*

Rt/L2.2 Identify the purpose of a text and infer meaning which is not explicit
(a) understand that different kinds of text have different purposes, that texts can have more than one purpose, and that the real purpose of some texts can be different from the explicitly stated purpose
(b) understand that format, structure, vocabulary and style provide clues to the purpose of a text
(c) understand that the relevance of a text depends on the reader's purpose as well as the purpose of the text
Example: Recognise when an article in a newspaper or magazine is being ironic or satirical, e.g. a review apparently praising a TV programme or film, but actually being critical of it.
Sample activities: *Skim a selection of different types of text and categorise them by purpose from their general impression, e.g. an anti-abortion leaflet, a company report, a short story. In pairs, read in detail various texts, e.g. letters, extracts from reports, specialist or general interest articles, information texts. From a list of statements of purpose, select which ones apply to which texts, and whether these purposes are explicit or implied (e.g. Is this text aiming to: give personal opinions/objective facts/make the reader laugh/flatter the reader/justify a position / explain a process/apologise for a mistake/complain?). Discuss decisions with their teacher.*

Examples and sample activities in italic are from the Adult Literacy Core Curriculum. They are assembled here for ease of use when tracking progress or working with mixed level classes.

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Looking at Texts – a sorting activity

This makes an ideal activity for paired or small group work in mixed ability classes at the beginning of term. Originally prepared for a class of E2, E3 and L1 students but adaptable for E1 (oral contribution) and L2.

Warning: this activity requires a great deal of preparation especially if you have a large class or students working at several different levels. However, *you only have to prepare once*. The collected texts can then be used repeatedly.

You will need
- Whiteboard or flip chart, and pens.
- Overhead projector and copies of OT1/2 (pages 7/8) on acetate (optional but useful).
- Large plastic polyfiles or similar – use a different colour for each curriculum level you are covering.
- Large round stickers (10 pence size) - one colour for each level (preferably to match polyfiles).
- Copies of relevant worksheets on pages 9-14.
- A selection of texts (see notes below).
- Student reference cards (p5-6), blu-tac (optional).

Suggested organisation
- Gather together about 15 texts for each level – texts that we used are listed on p4.
- We used three large plastic polyfiles in blue, yellow and red.
- When collecting texts consider both the form, purpose (see prompt cards p5-6) and reading level.
- Attach a coloured sticker to each text and number the sticker. For example, we used thirteen E2 texts, attached a blue sticker to each and labelled them 1 to 13.

Tip: Select texts that are relevant to your students. For example, local newspapers and advertisements, flyers about local events, junk mail, school letters, local bus timetables, current TV guide. Refer to list on page 4.

Text types for each level (further suggestions on pages 2 and 4)
- Entry 1 – emphasis is on signs and symbols, and different physical forms (birthday card, poster, road sign).
- Entry 2 – entertain, instruct, inform, and explain. Emphasis is on texts from different sources.
- Entry 3 – as E2 plus describe, persuade. Include texts that look the same but have different purposes e.g. letters.
- Level 1 – as E3 but emphasis is on different types of language and structure.
- Level 2 - as above but include specialist articles, and texts where the meaning is not explicit.

Warm up and group discussion (essential before embarking on the activity)
- Brainstorm on whiteboard or flipchart. Ask students to suggest as many types of text as possible. If you are working on a whiteboard, it can be helpful to ask a confident student to take notes for you. Ask students if they know any methods of classifying text (fiction / non-fiction, formal / informal, paper / electronic, etc.)
- When students have finished, introduce some of your own examples (or use OT1, p7, masking the top).
- You will probably find that the students come up with many more ideas - this is good, stress this fact. For example, they may suggest number plates, teletext, web pages, certificates, text messages, timetables, etc.
- Launch into discussion about the purposes of the texts you have come up with as a group. Go through some of the suggestions and discuss their purpose – ask students why they think each text was written (see prompts on p6). Point out that some texts have more than one purpose.
- Explain that understanding the purpose of texts will help students make sense of what they read (and improve their writing skills).
  If suitable, introduce the term audience and the importance of knowing the intended audience when writing.
- Summarise by going through each purpose and explaining the main points. Use OT1, unmasking gradually.

Main activity
Distribute polyfiles and worksheets to pairs of students. You may want to pull out samples from each polyfile and demonstrate how to fill in the worksheets. Leave prompt cards on tables or blu-tac to whiteboard for easy access. E1/2 students will need help reading worksheets; E1 students may need a scribe unless paired with higher ability students.

Plenary
Discuss findings. Stress the importance of thinking about what we read, using OT2 as a focus. Point out that you will be showing the OT's again in future sessions and that the class will looking at a range of texts with different purposes (and writing their own texts). Encourage students to bring in their own texts. Further ideas on page 1 and worksheets.

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'Ideas List' - suggested text types for E2, E3 and L1.

E1 (green – not included) – variety of simple texts (signs, symbols, cards, etc.) from different sources	

E2 (blue) - explain, entertain, inform, instruct	
1. email (…I'm going to be late)	Inform
2. Comic Relief Joke Book	Entertain
3. Vale of White Horse waste collection dates (postcard)	Inform
4. How Brakes Work (web page)	Explain
5. Radio guide from Guardian Saturday guide	Inform
6. Postcard from Norwich	Inform
7. BSA (Basic Skills Agency) small spelling reference card	Inform
8. The Great Mouse Plot (miniature Roald Dahl book for kids)	Entertain
9. Step by Step recipe	Instruct
10. Bus Timetable X3	Inform
11. Home Office - get a smoke alarm (leaflet)	Explain (inform)
12. Westclox alarm clock instructions (fold up leaflet)	Instruct
13. Scout firework display illustrated handout (A5 yellow paper)	Inform (persuade)

E3 (yellow) - as above, plus describe and persuade. * plus texts of same form can have different purposes (e.g. letters)	
1. How to buy Candis magazine (from magazine)	Explain (persuade)
2. Appointment Card (dentist)	Inform
3. Basic Skills Agency info card – when to use capital letters	Inform
4. Postcard from library saying book is ready to collect	Inform
5. B Wise (budget shop) sale leaflet	Persuade
6. Email (regarding Robot Magazine subscription)	Inform
7. Ad (Slendertone)	Persuade
8. *Candis letters	Persuade
9. *Scout Letter (upcoming events and camp	Inform (persuade)
10. Try Us Out ad (magazine subscription)	Persuade
11. House for sale	Describe (persuade)
12. Somewhere for weekend (Guardian travel)	Describe (persuade)
13. Sharp Microsystem Quick Guide	Instruct
14. Chicken tonight recipe	Instruct
15. *35A bus (plain timetable)	Inform
16. *Oxford - London bus (fancy timetable with tourist info etc.)	Inform (persuade)
17. Roald Dahl short stories (for adults)	Entertain
18. Guardian TV guide	Inform
19. Half price Abingdon fair small handout	Persuade

L1 (red) - as above, plus: A. Use of language and other textual features to reflect the purpose of a text. B. Different types of texts can be read for pleasure (inc. non-fiction such as autobiographies) as in nos. 1-9.	
1. Guardian poems	Entertain
2. Spot the difference	Entertain
3. Crossword	Entertain
4. Big Sister - short story from magazine	Entertain
5. Life after Julie – interview (from Sunday supplement)	Entertain (inform)
6. All About Hamsters booklet from pet shop	Inform (instruct, explain)
7. N64 free small paperback about games and cheats	Entertain (persuade, inform)
8. Pygmalion (play script in paperback book)	Entertain
9. Horoscope	Entertain (inform)
10. Till receipt - Tesco	Inform (record?)
11. Check out the NHS	Inform
12. Smarty Pants knitting pattern (baby clothes)	Instruct
13. How Anthrax works - web page	Explain (inform)
14. email (about a holiday cottage)	Inform
15. Tesco money off vouchers	Persuade
16. House for sale (property ads)	Describe (persuade)
17. Soulmates (lonely hearts ads)	Describe (describe)

L2 (white - not included) all above, plus texts with more than one purpose or a purpose different from that stated.	

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– 4 –

entertain

instruct

inform

explain

describe

persuade

Print back to back with page 6 (on thin card), cut into six strips and use as student reference cards. Alternatively, use page 6 as a student handout.

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Purpose	Examples
Purpose **to entertain** - something read for *pleasure or enjoyment*, can also involve imagination / exploration. All types of fiction. Some non fiction.	**Examples** ♦ Short stories and novels ♦ Plays ♦ Autobiographies and biographies ♦ Poems ♦ Jokes, quizzes, horoscopes
Purpose **to instruct** - tells how *something should be done* through a series of *sequenced steps*.	**Examples** ♦ Instructions with flat pack furniture ♦ Directions to a place ♦ Recipes ♦ Safety notices ♦ Dosage label on prescription medicines
Purpose **to inform** - giving the *facts* about something.	**Examples** ♦ News reports (especially broadsheets) ♦ Encyclopaedias ♦ Letters from schools (about a trip) ♦ Government publications (such as a safety in the home leaflet)
Purpose **to explain** - *how* or *why* something happens e.g. processes involved, about natural phenomena, how something works.	**Examples** ♦ "How it Works" books ♦ DIY and gardening books ♦ Leaflets telling you how to do something (such as voting by post) ♦ Letters answering a query or complaint
Purpose **to describe** - *actual* places, events or objects.	**Examples** ♦ Travel books and features ♦ 'For Sale' ad in newspaper classifieds ♦ Diaries ♦ Report of a local event in newspaper ♦ Some letters or postcards
Purpose **to persuade** - present arguments and information from *different viewpoints*, to *change or influence* the reader's way of thinking.	**Examples** ♦ Newspaper editorials ♦ Adverts and posters ♦ Charity leaflets ♦ Magazine covers ♦ Letters, especially junk mail

UK Adult Literacy. Levels E1, E2, E3, L1, L2. Reading – text focus. Purpose of text.

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PURPOSE

- ♦ *entertain*
- ♦ *instruct*
- ♦ *inform*
- ♦ *explain*
- ♦ *describe*
- ♦ *persuade*

Stories   Jokes   Bills
Travel Books   Recipes
Editorials   Manuals
"How it Works" Book
Newspapers   Jokes
Poems   Tickets   Plays
Junk Mail   Postcards
DIY Books   Posters
Autobiographies
Magazines Adverts
Encyclopaedias   Letters

What is it?

Where has it come from?

What is it for?
Why was it written?

Do I believe it?

Form
Source
Purpose
Audience

Who is it aimed at?

Thinking about what you read...

Looking at texts and their purpose

Instruct Entertain Inform Explain

- Look at the texts in the folder.
- Each text has a sticker.
- If your text has a blue sticker, its no. will be B1, B2, etc.
- You do not have to look at all the texts. Look at ones that you like.
- Think about questions 1 2 3 and 4
- Put your answers in the table.

1) What is it? (**form**) – e.g. a poster, a bill, a card.

2) Where is it from? (**source**) – e.g. from a book, a web site.

3) What is it for? (its purpose) -
   Does it **explain** something?
   Does it give you or someone else information? (**inform**)
   Does it **entertain**? (would someone read it for pleasure)
   Does it tell you how to do something? (**instruct**)

4) Who is it for? (**audience**) – e.g. children, adults.

No.	1. What is it?	2. Where is it from?	3. What is it for? Why was it written? (Purpose)	4. Who is it written for?

Adult Literacy. Level E 2

Reading: Text Focus. Rt/E2.2 Understand that different texts have different purposes. To explain, inform, instruct, explain.

No.	1. What is it?	2. Where is it from?	3. What is it for? Why was it written? (Purpose)	4. Who is it written for?

Extension: Swap packs with another student.

Next week: please bring in 5 texts you have come across e.g. from the postman (junk mail, postcard, bills, cards), at work (time sheet, letter), free newspapers, books, etc.

Adult Literacy. Level E 2

Reading: Text Focus. Rt/E2.2 Understand that different texts have different purposes. To explain, inform, instruct, explain.

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Looking at texts and their purpose

Entertain
Instruct Describe
Persuade Inform
Explain

- Look at the different texts in the folder.
- Each text has a round sticker.
- If your text has a yellow sticker, its no. will be Y1, Y2, etc.

- You may not have time to look at all the texts.
- Think carefully about the questions. Discuss with a friend.
- Write your answers in the chart.

1) What is it? (**form**) – e.g. an email, a recipe, a postcard.

2) Where is it from? (**source**) – e.g. from a paper, a web site.

3) What is it for? (its **purpose**) -
Does it **explain** something?
Does it give you or someone else information? (**inform**)
Does it **entertain**? (would someone read it for pleasure)
Does it tell you how to do something? (**instruct**)
Does it try to influence you? (**persuade**)
Does it **describe** something?

4) Who is it aimed at? (**audience**) e.g. teenagers, general adult.

Ref no.	1. What is it? (Form)	2. Where is it from? (Source)	3. What is it for? Why was it written? (Purpose)	4. Who is it written for? (Audience)

Adult Literacy. Level E 3

Reading: Text Focus. Rt/E3.2 Understand that different texts have different purposes. Understand that texts of the same form can have different purposes (e.g. a letter).

Ref no.	1. What is it? (Form)	2. Where is it from? (Source)	3. What is it for? Why was it written? (Purpose)	4. Who is it written for? (Audience)

Don't worry…

If you don't know all the answers - we will discuss the results as a class at the end of the session.

If your answers are not the same as your partner's, there is not always just one correct answer!

Extension: Swap packs with another student. Each pack contains a different selection of texts.

Next week: please bring in at least 5 texts that have come through your letter box during the week. Try to include several letters - these could include junk mail letters, personal letters, formal letters, letters from school or work, official letters, etc.

Adult Literacy. Level E 3

Reading: Text Focus. Rt/E3.2 Understand that different texts have different purposes. Understand that texts of the same form can have different purposes (e.g. a letter).

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Looking at texts and their purpose

Instruct Entertain Describe Persuade Inform Explain

- Look at the different texts in the supplied folder.
- Each text is marked with a numbered round sticker.
- If your text has a red sticker, its reference no. will be R1, R2, etc.
- You may not have time to look at all the texts.
- Discuss questions 1-4 with your partner.
- Record your answers below.

1) What is it? (**form**) – e.g. a letter, an advert, a voucher.

2) Where is it from? (**source**) – e.g. from a book, a web site.

3) What is it for? (its **purpose**) -
Does it **explain** something? Does it **describe** something?
Does it give you or someone else information? (**inform**)
Does it **entertain**? (would someone read it for pleasure)
Does it tell you how to do something? (**instruct**)
Does it try to influence you? (**persuade**)

4) Who is it aimed at? (**audience**) e.g. general adult, specialist.

Ref no.	1. What is it? (Form)	2. Where is it from? (Source)	3. What is it for? Why was it written? (Purpose)	4. Who is it aimed at? (Intended audience)

Adult Literacy. Level L1

Reading: Text Focus. Rt/L1.2 Recognise how language and other textual features reflect the purpose of a text. That different texts use different sorts of language, structural and presentational devices. That there are different types of text that can be read for pleasure (e.g. stories, poems, travel, information, biographies, imaginative texts).

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Ref no.	1. What is it? (Form)	2. Where is it from? (Source)	3. What is it for? Why was it written? (Purpose)	4. Who is it aimed at? (Intended audience)

Don't worry
If you don't know all the answers - we will discuss the results as a class at the end of the session.

If your answers are not the same as your partner's, there is not always just one correct answer!

Extension: Swap packs with another pair of students. Each pack contains a different selection of texts.

Next week: please bring several texts with different purposes that you have come across during the week. For example: junk mail, things you have seen or used at work, letters, books you have read, magazines or newspapers you have bought. Can you find some texts that have more than one purpose?