Explain It Clearly With a Paper Blueprint

Teacher		**Class**	Grade 8
Subject	ELA	**Topic**	Informative writing
Date		**Room**	
Lesson length	60 minutes	**Country**	United States

Students learn to select, organize, and explain facts to examine a topic. They build a four-box paper blueprint for an informative text.

Curriculum links

- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

Learning objectives

- Students will plan selection and order of evidence before drafting.
- Students will organize facts into introduction, body groups, and conclusion.
- Students will analyze each fact by explaining what it shows readers.

Success criteria

- I can choose facts that stay on my topic.
- I can order facts into a clear beginning, middle, and end.
- I can explain what each fact shows the reader.

What students already know

Ask: What topic could you explain for two minutes without any notes? Partners share for 1 minute each.

Key words

informative	giving useful facts to help someone understand [1]
select	choose what is most relevant
organize	put ideas in a clear, logical order
analyze	explain what facts show or why they matter [1]

Materials

- Lined paper - one sheet per student
- Pencils
- Slides 1-5, 7, 9-12
- Worksheet Task E and Task F - one copy of each per student
- Printed fact bank - 8 short statements about backpack design
- Whiteboard and markers

Before the lesson

- Print Worksheet Task E and Task F, one copy per student
- Print and cut fact bank of 8 statements, one set per pair
- Load Slides 1-5, 7, 9-12 and test display
- Set desks for pairs with lined paper and pencils ready

Lesson outline

0–5 min **Starter** 5 min · Whole class

Activate what students can already explain and hook them with paper planning.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 1 title and Slide 2 photo and read its line aloud.
2. Say the hook and hold up a folded lined-paper sheet.
3. Show Slide 5 question and model a 20-second answer about a familiar topic.
4. Direct partners to pitch two topics each and pick the narrower one.

STUDENTS DO

1. Listen and look at Slides 1, 2, and 5.
2. Pitch two familiar topics to a partner, like how backpacks are designed or how sleep helps memory.
3. Agree which topic is narrower and say what a reader would understand after reading.

Say: No laptops. No phones. Just your brain and a blueprint professionals still use. Informative writing shares what you know well so others can understand it too. Turn to your partner and answer our question in one minute each, then pick the topic that is narrower and clearer.

Ask: What topic could you explain for two minutes without any notes? (Any familiar everyday topic they already know well, such as how a backpack, library returns, or water bottle works.) · Why does knowing a topic well help the reader? (Because informative writing conveys ideas and information to an audience about something the writer knows well [1].)

Check understanding: Thumbs up if you have a narrowed topic. If many hesitate, point to the three board options and let them choose one.

Support: Let students choose from three everyday options on the board instead of inventing a topic. **Stretch:** Have students add what question a confused reader might still ask about their topic.

Use: Slides 2, 5

5–15 min **Teach - Inform or Argue** 10 min · Whole class

Show how informative writing selects, organizes, and analyzes facts instead of arguing.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 3 and read: Good explainers teach, they do not argue.
2. Show Slide 4 compare chart and sort two sentences with the class into Informative or Opinion.
3. Show Slide 7 statement and link it to thesis, fact groups, and conclusion.
4. Preview the four-box blueprint: thesis, fact group 1, fact group 2, conclusion.

STUDENTS DO

1. Read Slides 3, 4, and 7 with the teacher.
2. Vote inform or argue for each example sentence.
3. Copy keywords informative, select, organize, analyze with meanings.

Say: Informative writing examines a topic to help readers understand ideas and information. Good explainers teach, they do not argue. Our big idea is: Select the right facts, organize them clearly, then show what they mean. Today you will plan that on paper before you draft.

Worked example: Opinion sneaking in: This backpack is the best backpack ever. Step 1: Find opinion word - best. Step 2: Replace with precise fact - This backpack has padded straps and a hip belt. Step 3: Check tone - it now shares facts, details, and examples in neutral tone, and organizes ideas to build understanding.

Ask: How is informative different from opinion writing? (Informative explains with facts, details, and examples in neutral tone; opinion argues a view.) · What three jobs do you do as an informative writer? (Select the right facts, organize them clearly, then show what they mean.) · Why keep a neutral tone? (To help readers understand information, not to persuade them.)

Check understanding: Mini-whiteboards: write I for informative, O for opinion for two new sentences. Reteach neutral tone if mixed.

Support: Post sentence starters: This part introduces... This part gives evidence for... This shows... **Stretch:** Ask students to add a precise definition or measurement to make a sentence more informative.

Use: Slides 3-4, 7

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15–25 min **We Do - Keep It on Topic** 10 min · Pairs

Practice selecting only facts that examine the central topic.

YOU DO

1. Hand out Worksheet Task E and display Slide 4 reminder about organizing ideas to build understanding.
2. Model one item: check it against the topic sentence and mark informative or not informative.
3. Circulate as pairs sort the rest and require a reason for each sort.
4. Take quick feedback on one tricky item.

STUDENTS DO

1. Read each clue in Worksheet Task E with a partner.
2. Sort examples into informative or not informative writing.
3. Underline the word that proves opinion or off-topic for each not-informative item.

Say: You are the editor. Read each example and ask: does it share facts to help understanding or does it argue or wander off topic? Sort these examples into informative or not informative writing. Be ready to explain one choice.

Worked example: Topic: Backpacks are designed to carry weight with less strain. Example: Padded straps spread weight across shoulders - informative, shares a relevant fact. Example: Blue backpacks are cooler than red ones - not informative, argues with opinion.

Ask: How do you know a fact should be kept? (It directly helps examine the topic and builds understanding of the central idea.) · What is a sign a sentence is not informative? (It argues, uses opinion words like best or terrible, or gives unrelated information.)

Check understanding: Cold-call two pairs to justify one sort. If unsure, reread the topic sentence together and recheck.

Support: Mark the topic sentence in bold and have students check every item against it word by word.
Stretch: Have pairs rewrite one not-informative item so it becomes relevant and neutral.

Use: Worksheet Task E

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25–50 min **Main - Paper-Only Blueprint** 25 min · Pairs

Plan selection, organization, and analysis in a four-box blueprint before drafting.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 9 task and model folding lined paper into four labeled boxes: thesis, fact group 1, fact group 2, conclusion.
2. Think aloud the worked backpack blueprint, writing two facts per body box plus This shows... lines.
3. Give pairs the 8-statement fact bank and tell them to pick a familiar topic, name the audience, list facts, number them in order, and add analysis.
4. Stop at 18 minutes for trade: partners circle the strongest evidence in each box and suggest order fixes.

STUDENTS DO

1. Fold paper, label four boxes, choose topic and audience, and select 4 best facts from bank or own knowledge.
2. Write two facts per body box, number order, and add one This shows... or This means... line per fact to analyze relevant content [1].
3. Trade blueprints, circle strongest evidence in each box, and discuss order.
4. Revise order and analysis based on partner feedback.

Say: Pick a familiar topic and name your audience. List four relevant facts about it. Number them in an order that makes sense. Fold your paper into four boxes and plan first, then you will trade and circle the strongest evidence.

Worked example: Fact bank: 1. Padded shoulder straps spread weight across shoulders. 2. A hip belt moves some weight to hips. 3. A popular video game sold 5 million copies last month. 4. Mesh back panels let air flow to keep backs cooler. 5. The inventor's favorite color is blue. 6. Chest straps keep shoulder straps from slipping. 7. A school lunch costs $3.50 on average. 8. Reflective strips help drivers see students in low light. Worked blueprint - Thesis for 8th graders: Backpacks are designed to carry heavy books with less strain. Fact group 1 Comfort: Padded straps spread weight - This shows weight does not dig into shoulders. Hip belt moves weight to hips - This means shoulders carry less load. Fact group 2 Safety and coolness: Chest straps stop slipping - This shows the load stays balanced. Reflective strips help drivers see students - This means safer walks in low light. Cuts: 3, 5, 7 are off-topic. Conclusion: Good design spreads weight and adds safety, which is why choice of straps matters.

Ask: Where does this fact belong and why? (In the group it best supports, in an order that makes sense for the reader to follow.) · What does your analysis sentence do? (It explains what the fact shows or means so the reader understands the idea, not just the fact [1].)

Check understanding: Walk and check boxes have thesis plus 2+2 facts plus analysis lines. If missing analysis, point to This shows... starters.

Support: Allow students to pull facts from a printed fact bank of 8 short, on-topic statements. **Stretch:** Have students write a counter-question a reader might ask and note where to answer it.

Use: Slide 9

50–60 min **Plenary** 10 min · Whole class

Review what helps understanding most and check informative writing basics.

YOU DO

1. Show Slide 11 vote: What most helps a reader really understand your topic? Take a class vote.
2. Show Slide 12 quiz and hear answers for main job and organizing content.
3. Hand out Worksheet Task F for 4-minute individual tick-the-best-answer check.
4. Close by linking vote result to selection, organization, and analysis.

STUDENTS DO

1. Vote and explain choice for Slide 11.
2. Answer Slide 12 quiz questions aloud.
3. Complete Worksheet Task F on their own and self-check.

Say: What most helps a reader really understand your topic? Picking the best facts, putting ideas in clear order, or explaining what facts mean? All three matter. Tick the best answer to show understanding, then hold up your blueprint to show your plan.

Ask: What is the main job of informative writing? (To examine a topic and help readers understand ideas and information.) · What does it mean to organize content? (To put ideas in a clear, logical order so the audience can follow from start to end [1].)

Check understanding: Collect Task F ticks and blueprint boxes. If analysis is weak, model one more This shows... sentence tomorrow.

Support: Give the three-step ending frame: restate idea, sum up key point, tell why it matters. **Stretch:** Ask students to add a final thought connecting the topic to something readers do every day.

Use: Slides 11-12, Worksheet Task F

Common mistakes

Mistake	How to spot it	How to fix it
Adding opinions like best or terrible instead of neutral facts	Hear judgment words or I think statements in blueprint facts	Swap for precise terms, for example most used or less effective, to keep explanatory voice [1]
Listing facts without saying what they show	Body boxes have facts but no This shows... or This means... line	Add one analysis line per fact that explains its meaning for the audience [1]
Including interesting but unrelated facts	Fact does not connect to thesis, such as game sales in a backpack explainer	Cut it or rewrite it so it directly examines the topic

Support

- Allow students to pull facts from a printed fact bank of 8 short statements.
- Provide half-finished template with boxes for thesis, fact groups, and conclusion plus analysis starters.

Stretch

- Have students write a counter-question a reader might ask and note where to answer it.
- Have students combine two fact-analysis pairs into one body paragraph with a transition.

For the LSE or teaching assistant

Sit near pairs using the fact bank. Prompt check against thesis, read This shows... starters aloud, and help number facts in order.

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Check for understanding

Question	Answer
What is the main job of informative writing?	To examine a topic and help readers understand ideas and information.
What does organizing facts mean?	Putting ideas in a clear, logical order.
What should you write after each fact?	One sentence explaining what the fact shows or means.

Homework

Finish your four-box blueprint analysis lines if incomplete.

Sources

1. NAEP - Writing 2007: Writing Sample Questions · nationsreportcard.gov · http://www.nationsreportcard.gov/writing_2007/w0016.aspx
2. Darcy Pattison · Wikipedia · https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Darcy_Pattison