Explanation

Purpose: To explain the processes involved in natural and social phenomena, or to explain how something works.

Structure: General statement to introduce the topic, eg in the autumn some birds migrate
A series of logical steps explaining how or why something occurs, eg because hours of daylight shorten
Steps continue until the final state is produced or the explanation is complete

Features: Present tense, eg many birds fly south
Connectives that signal time, eg then, next, several months later
Causal connectives, eg because, so, this causes

Writer’s Knowledge:

- Decide whether diagrams, charts, illustrations or a flow chart would help to explain.
- Uses a title that indicates what you are writing about.
- Using how or why in the title helps. Try to make the title intrigue (interest) the reader, eg Why do sloths hang about?.
- Use the first paragraph to introduce your subject to the reader.
- Organise the writing and illustrations to explain: what you need, how it works, why it works (cause and effect), when and where it works, what it is used for.
- Add in extra, interesting information.
- Try to end by relating the subject to the reader.
- If you use specialised terminology a glossary may be needed.
- Interest the reader with exclamation, eg Beware - whirlwinds can kill!
- Or use questions, eg Did you know that...?
- Draw the reader in, eg strange as it may seem..., not many people know that...

Finally, re-read your explanation, pretending you know nothing about the subject - is it clear?

Adapted from The National Literacy Strategy Grammar for Writing p154/5