

# IMPROVE YOUR READING SKILLS:

## 2 MONSTER TECHNIQUES



On Paper 1 of your English exams you will be given a leaflet or article or letter. Questions will assess your ability to (a) understand WHAT it's about and (b) HOW it is written. The better you are at reading, the better you will be at discussing HOW the text is written. Yet it is the part of reading that many students find most difficult.

Here are TWO key features of a writer's style to look for in any text:

### 1 - LOOKING AT FACT V OPINION

	Is it FACT?	Is it OPINION?
Look for ...	Facts, dates, statistics, quotes from experts, an impersonal style (no "I" and "me")	Anecdotes (stories about the writer's experience), personal pronouns ("I", "me", "we")
How to write about what you notice	<i>The text is factual. We can tell this because the writer includes a number of facts and statistics. For example, he suggests that there are XXXX. His style is impersonal, with no use of personal pronouns like "I" or "me". This makes it feel more actual and less like an opinion text.</i>	<i>The writer uses personal anecdotes to illustrate his points. He describes various memories from his childhood and these give his text a personal feel, as if it is an extract from an autobiography. His use of personal pronouns ("I" and "me") shows that the text is personal.</i>
Killer words	<i>Factual, impersonal, personal pronouns, suggests</i>	<i>Anecdotes, illustrate, describes, personal, autobiography, pronouns</i>
Warning	Remember that some texts will have elements of fact <b>and</b> of opinion. Take care not to oversimplify a text, suggesting it is ALL factual or ALL opinion (example: an article which may begin with a personal anecdote and then use statistics to make a bigger point)	

## 2 – LOOKING AT FORMAL V INFORMAL STYLES

	Is it FORMAL?	Is it INFORMAL?
Look for ...	<p><b>Formal vocabulary:</b> either because they are technical words, or less familiar words, or polysyllabic words (words containing more syllables). Less use of “I” and “me”</p> <p><b>Sentence structure:</b> sentences may be longer and more complex, each one containing more ideas. They may contain formal connectives like “although, because, despite, however”</p>	<p><b>Informal vocabulary:</b> familiar words, contractions (“isn’t” instead of “is not”), shorter words, colloquial words (“Hi”), slang words. The writer may use “I/me” or may address the reader directly as “you”</p> <p><b>Sentence structure:</b> There may be more short sentences, or sentences may be long but joined with connectives like “and” and “but”, making the style feel more conversational</p>
How to write about what you notice	<p><i>The text has a formal style. Partly this is because the vocabulary itself feels formal. For example, the writer uses technical words like “re-invented” and “dissuaded” which give the text a much more formal, scientific feel. The writer does not refer to himself at all: there is no use of the personal pronouns “I” and “me”. This makes it more impersonal. The sentence structure also adds to this effect: sentence are complex, joined with connectives such as “although”. This makes it feel as though we are reading quite a formal, high-level text</i></p>	<p><i>The text has an informal style. The writer’s choice of vocabulary is often colloquial (chatty), as if he was addressing a friend. He uses very familiar words like “another thing” where he could have said “in addition”: this makes it feel as if he is addressing us as readers on the same level. The writer’s sentences are long, but easy-to-follow. This is because he joins many ideas with the connective “and”. Again, this makes the text feel as if we are reading a conversation</i></p>
Killer words	Formal, technical, refer, impersonal, connectives, high-level	Informal, colloquial, addressing, connective, conversation
Warning	Remember that some texts will formal and informal elements (eg a letter will address the reader directly, but may still use formal vocabulary and sentence structure)	

## MYSTERY TEXTS

What could you say about each?

Think FACT v FICTION and FORMAL v INFORMAL

<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>
Nutritionists recommend that adults include 18g of fibre in their diet each day. One typical bowl of Crunchy Bran delivers half of that amount in one go. And getting the other half of the fibre we need doesn't have to be hard work either.	Proud mum in a million Natalie Brown hugged her beautiful baby daughter Casey yesterday and said: "She's my double miracle."	Yes, it's heavily influenced by Hitchcock, but then there are worse people to be influenced by. Ford is the workaholic Ivy League academic whose neglected wife (Pfeiffer) starts encountering some spooky bath-time experiences which seem to emanate from the rather chilly looking lake outside her luxurious house.	There was a double eclipse in the early autumn of 1605 - a lunar eclipse on 19 September followed by an eclipse of the sun in early October. Such celestial phenomena were traditional held to 'portend no good'.
<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>H</b>
Seville is voluptuous and evocative. It has to be seen, tasted and touched. The old quarter is Seville as it was and is. Walk in its narrow cobbled streets, with cascades of geraniums tumbling from balconies and the past shouts so loudly that one can almost glimpse dark-cloaked figures disappearing silently through carved portals.	Armstrong entered Purdue University in 1947 as a naval air cadet to study aeronautical engineering but his course was interrupted by service in the Korean War, in which he flew seventy-eight combat missions and was shot down on one occasion.	Thirty years ago, Neil Armstrong was preparing for the most momentous step made by a human being in the twentieth century. But first he had to get there, wiggling his way out of the lunar module that had brought him and Aldrin this far.	Freshly squeeze 2 oranges and pour the juice into a jug. Purée the flesh of 1 mango and pour into the jug with the orange juice. Whisk in 100ml natural yoghurt and a 15ml spoon honey, thoroughly. Pour into tall glasses over ice and serve.
<b>I</b>	<b>J</b>	<b>K</b>	<b>L</b>
2wentys Flights are ready to blast off again for summer 99. It's a new concept in flying where we give you what you want (not what some old gipper wants). Let's face it, if you're flying to Ibiza it's Sasha and Digweed not Mozart and Back you're after	Ensure that the electrical supply is turned off. Ensure the existing circuit to which the fitting is to be connected has been installed and fused in accordance with current L.L.L wiring regulations	I contracted polio when I was two years old. I don't remember it. But I do remember my parents telling me about the advice that the doctor gave when it was time to take me from the hospital. He told them, "Just put her in bed. She's going to be staying there the rest of her life."	The blood vessels of the circulatory system, branching into multitudes of very fine tubes (capillaries), supply all parts of the muscles and organs with blood, which carries oxygen and food necessary for life.