

Impersonal language

Impersonal language uses the **third person** for the writer and reader.

It often uses the **passive** form of verbs.

It does not use the **imperative**.


Personal

first person for the writer

second person for the reader

imperative

We've put a cauldron in your room. Please use it during your stay.



Impersonal

Cauldrons are provided for the use of the guests.

third person for reader

passive

• Do the signs use personal or impersonal language?

Complete the chart.

1 Dragons are admitted only with a responsible child.

2 Please leave your broomsticks in the broom stand.

3 Guests are reminded that frogs are not allowed in the café.

4 Fire-eaters requiring first aid should report to the duty officer.

5 Flying carpet rides will be resumed once the storm is over.

6 Thank you for your patience while our elves were on strike.

	Person (1st, 2nd or 3rd)	Passive verbs (✓ or X)	Imperative (✓ or X)	Personal or impersonal?
1	3rd	✓		
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				



Now try this!

- Look at the signs which use personal language.
- Re-write them using impersonal language.

Teachers' note Revise the passive and imperative forms of verbs and give the children plenty of practice in identifying them in sentences. Also revise pronouns: ask the children what pronouns the writers might use for themselves and for the reader. Point out that personal language speaks directly to the reader but impersonal language does not. See also the writing activity on page 43.

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A great pet? 1

Faye is trying to persuade her mum to let her have a dog. She has written her **argument** in a letter.

- Read Faye's letter.

Dear Mum,

A dog would be a great pet for the whole family. We all like dogs, so we could save the life of a dog from a dogs' home. We don't need to spend money on an expensive pedigree dog.

The first good thing a dog would do for us would be to improve our health. Scientists have found that people who have pets are not ill as often as those who don't. It is something to do with feeling calm and relaxed when you stroke a pet.

Not only that - owning a dog means going for walks, and we know that walking is the best kind of exercise for everyone, even people as old as mums and dads.

You might think that the novelty will wear off and that nobody will bother walking the dog, but think about it - we all like walking, but not so much when we are alone. If we had a dog we wouldn't have to persuade anyone else to come with us for a walk, because dogs always want to go out for walks. You must surely want to take care of our health?

The next good point about having a dog is that it would protect us and our home. I will be able to walk to Gran's house safely without you and Dad if I have a dog to protect me. In addition to that our house would be safe from burglars. There was a programme on television in which ex-burglars talked about the things which put them off breaking into a house, and they were more afraid of dogs than burglar alarms.

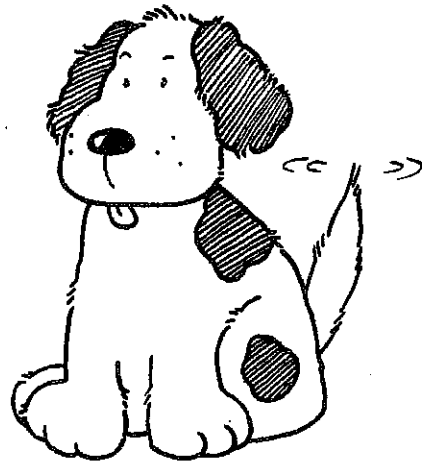
I know that dogs need to be trained and that it is hard work, but surely it is worthwhile to make the effort so that we can all be safer?

I know you don't like the idea of dog hairs and muddy footprints to clean up, but we can get a short-haired dog and we can wipe its feet before it comes into the house.

As you can see, a dog would not only give us pleasure, but it would improve our health and keep us safe, so please can we go and choose one this week?

Love from Faye

xxx

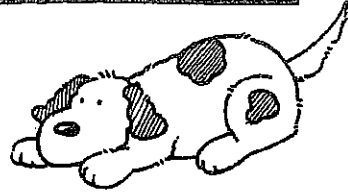


Teachers' note Use this with page 21. Discuss the purpose of the argument and ask the children to make notes about the points Faye makes in favour of having a dog and the points she knows her mum will raise to oppose it. Ask the children to look for the examples and evidence Faye uses to persuade her mum to agree with her, and any appeals she makes to her mum's feelings.

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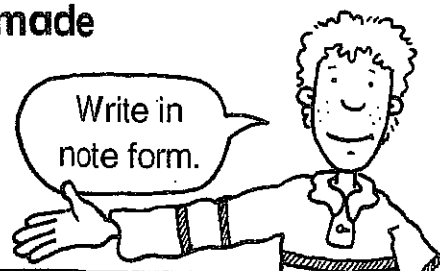
A great pet? 2

- Evaluate the argument in *A great pet? 1*. Give a mark out of five for each feature. Support your marks with examples from the argument.



Feature	Mark	Example, and why you chose it
How well did Faye express the points she made?		
How well did she link the points?		
How well did she use examples and evidence?		
How well did she prepare for, and answer, points against her argument?		
How well did she appeal to her mum's views and feelings?		
Total (out of 25)		How good was the argument? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Poor <input type="checkbox"/> Average <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Very good <input type="checkbox"/>

- List any other points which Faye could have made.
- List points which could be made against Faye's argument. How might Faye answer those points?



Teachers' note Use this with page 20. Invite the children to compare and justify (using examples) the marks they awarded. Ask them if they can think of any points which Faye could have made more of (for example, the cost of buying and keeping a dog, or what might happen to dogs in a dogs' home who are not found homes). See also page 22.

A great pet? 3

- Re-read the argument in *A great pet? 1*.
- On the notepads, make notes about each side of the argument. Add any other points you can think of.

For having a dog



Against having a dog



- Summarise each side of the argument.

The arguments for having a dog	The arguments against having a dog
<p>Strengths</p> <p>Dogs improve your health</p>	<p>Strengths</p>
<p>Weaknesses</p>	<p>Weaknesses</p>

Teachers' note The children should first complete the activity on pages 20 and 21 and have these pages in front of them. Introduce this activity by asking the children what points they would make for having a dog if they were Faye. The notebook headings could be masked so that the page can be used as a structure for summarising other arguments. See also the writing activities on pages 38 and 39.

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Official language

Official language sometimes contains longer and more complicated sentences than everyday language.

Split them into shorter sentences. Use simpler words.

- Re-write the passages in everyday language.

Use a dictionary.

Concern has been expressed regarding the excessive speeds at which roller-skaters traverse the square, leading to the proposal that a speed limit of seven kilometres per hour be introduced.

Owners of snakes of lengths greater than one metre or of a venomous variety are required to confine them within enclosed areas and to undertake to prevent their escape.

We are in receipt of information from the occupants of property adjacent to your own indicating that the perimeter hedge of your property exceeds the permitted height of 2.13 metres by an estimated 5 metres.

- Look for other examples of official language.
- Copy them out. Then re-write them in everyday language.



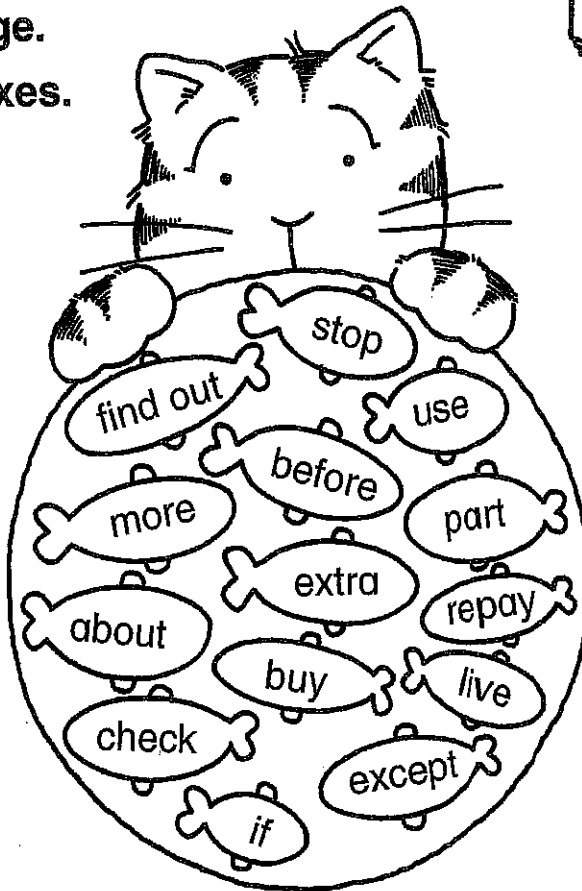
Teachers' note You could ask the children to bring in examples of official language. Discuss how they are different from everyday language, drawing attention to the vocabulary, the passive voice and impersonal language (personal pronouns are not used to address the reader and, not usually, to refer to the writer). See also pages 19 and 43, which focus on the features of impersonal language.

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Word fishing

- Find words on the fish to replace the official language. Write in the boxes.

Use a dictionary.



additional

extra

component

prior to

regarding

reimburse

other than

supplementary

reside

verify

utilise

ascertain

discontinue

in the event

purchase

- Find the meanings of these official words.

henceforth _____ hitherto _____

herewith _____ notwithstanding _____

nevertheless _____ subsequent _____



- Write some school rules using five of the official words and phrases on this page.
- Re-write each rule in everyday language.

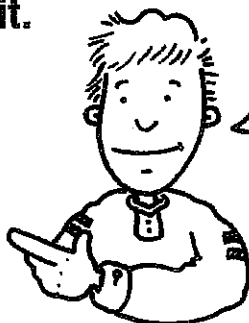
Teachers' note You may wish to introduce the activity by telling the children about the Plain English Campaign, which aims to persuade organisations using unnecessarily complicated language to write in language people can understand. The children could look for examples of 'gobbledy-gook' in official publications and discuss how they could be changed.

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Bracket it

If you want to separate part of a sentence from the rest, you can put **brackets** around it.

We went to Beijing (the capital city of China) last year.



SEN(brackets) TENCE

The sentence makes sense without the part in brackets.

- Use the brackets to add information to the sentences.

Use a dictionary.

1. Passengers with Special Tickets (for example, _____) may not travel in this section.

Give examples of Special Tickets; they include 'Flexipass' and 'Travelpass'.



2. Domestic animals (_____) may be advertised in this column.

Give examples of domestic animals.



3. The house (_____) is situated at the end of the road.

Say what the house is like. Make it up.



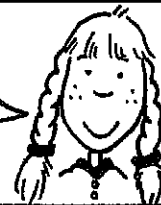
4. The armoury contains a mangonel (_____) and several fierce-looking maces (_____).

Explain what a mangonel and maces are. Look them up.



5. A speciality of the Middle-East is its round flat breads (_____).

Add that local people call the bread 'pita'.



Now try this!

- Find five examples of brackets in official texts.
- Explain why each part in brackets is included.

Teachers' note Explain and demonstrate how brackets are used (for surrounding part of a sentence, to separate it from the rest of the sentence). Ask the children to read out the sentences, both with and without the part in brackets, and to comment on how the sense changes.

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Scientific language

Scientific language uses technical words.

It uses impersonal language.

- Underline the technical words.

Look them up, then write the glossary.

Use a dictionary.

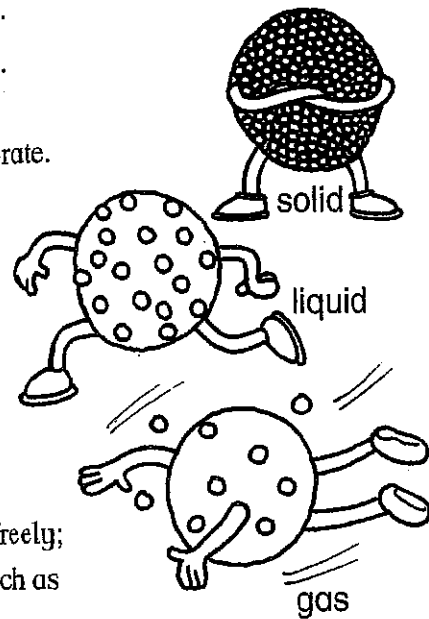
Melting ice

Everything is made up of particles called atoms which can be seen only through a powerful microscope. They are usually joined together to form small groups called molecules. The molecules are held together by invisible bonds.

In a solid material like ice, the molecules hold together firmly. That is why a solid keeps its shape when it is taken out of a container. When a material is heated its molecules start to vibrate. They have kinetic (movement) energy. They bump into one another and pass on their kinetic energy.

When ice is heated the molecules begin to separate from one another; this is what makes the ice turn into a liquid – water. Because the molecules are not held together tightly a liquid does not keep its shape when it is poured from a container.

If water is heated the molecules move apart even more and it becomes a gas – steam. The molecules of a gas move about freely; they escape into the air once a gas is let out of a container such as a balloon or a gas pipe.



Glossary

particles - tiny pieces of matter

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____



- Look for features of impersonal language in the text.
- List examples of each feature.

Think about pronouns and passive verbs.



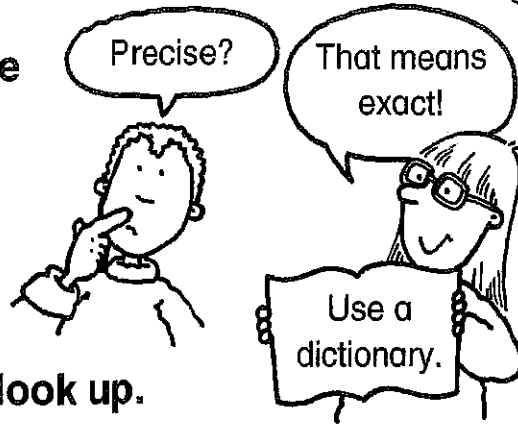
Teachers' note When the children have completed the activity, they could re-write the text, adding simpler illustrations, so that a younger child could understand it. They could also look for other examples of scientific language (for example, from information books and leaflets) and comment on the style. Encourage them to notice features such as voice, person and vocabulary.

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Official legal language

Legal language is used when people or companies sign agreements or contracts. It has to be very precise.

- Read the competition rules from a magazine.
- Underline any words you need to look up.



Competition rules

The first correct entry drawn after the closing date wins four nights' accommodation at the Hotel Posh for two sharing.

The prize is subject to availability.

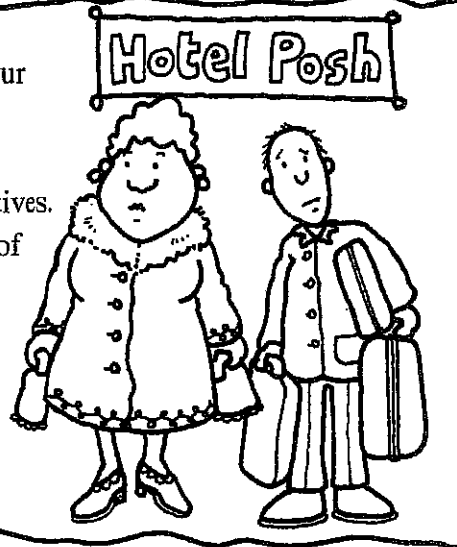
The prize is not transferable and there are no cash alternatives.

Employees of Hotel Posh and Flashy Mags, and relatives of employees, are not eligible to enter.

The minimum age for entrants is 18.

Entry is limited to one per person.

Winners will be notified by post within one week of the closing date. The publishers accept no liability for losses or injuries suffered in connection with the prize.



- What do the rules mean? Re-write them in simple language.

After the closing date there will be a draw. The winner is the first entry we draw which has the right answers. The prize is



- With a partner, read the Terms and Conditions of other legal agreements.
- Make notes about what they mean.

Teachers' note The children need to have prior experience of reading legal language in shared texts. Examples include the terms and conditions of mobile phone contracts, guarantees for electronic toys and the conditions on the back of tickets (for instance, train tickets). Model how to work out what they mean and explain them in everyday language.

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Inuit calendar

- Read the passage.
- Cut out and complete the Inuit calendar.

The calendar shows the cycle of the months and seasons.



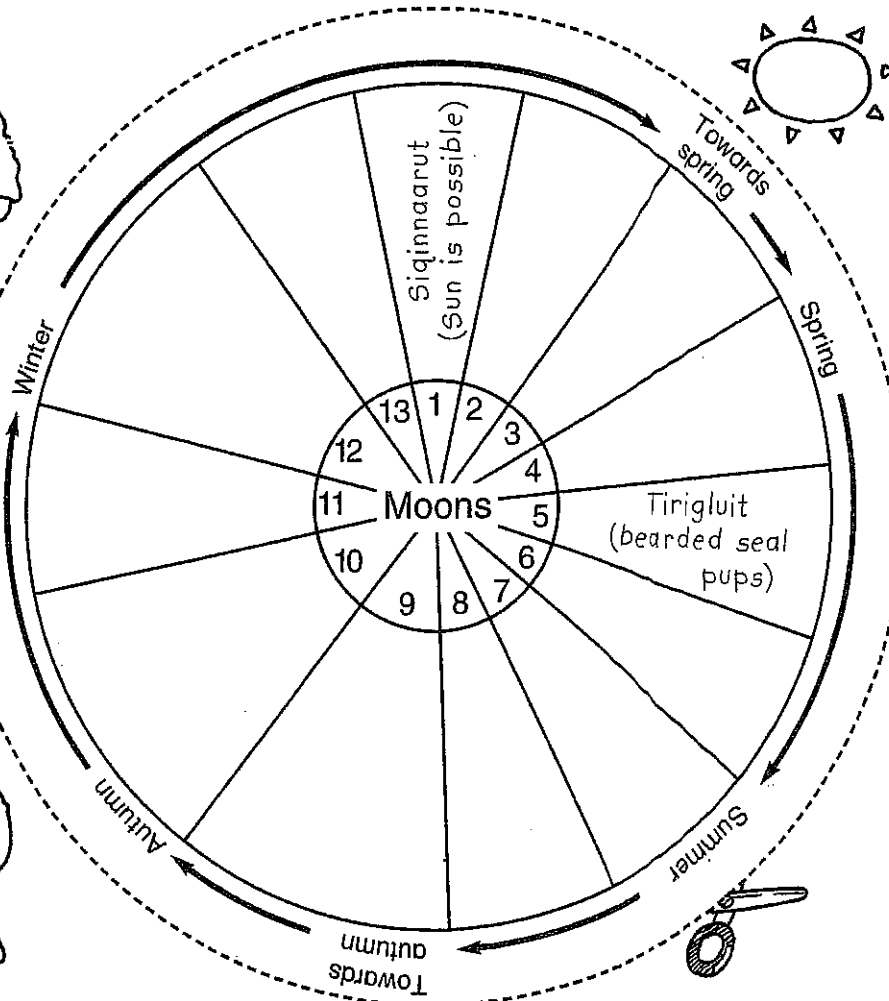
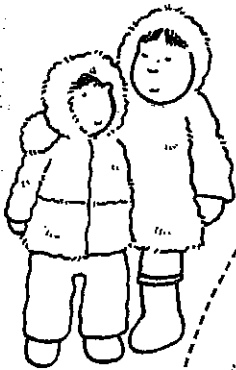
The traditional Inuit calendar was linked to the changing of the seasons, the weather and the lives of the animals they hunted.

Most groups of Inuit used a calendar with thirteen moons (months) whose names described what usually happened during them. Four moons had weather as their main sign: the first (Siqinnaarut: Sun is possible), the second (Qangattaasen: Sun gets higher), the eleventh (Ukiulirut: winter starts) and the thirteenth (Tauvigjuaq: great darkness).

All the other moons, except for the twelfth (Tusartuut: hearing news from neighbours) were connected with animals, especially seals: the third, fourth and fifth moons were Avunnit (early seal pups), Naittian (seal pups) and Tirigluit (bearded seal pups).

The sixth, eighth, ninth and tenth moons were linked with the life of the caribou: Nurrait (caribou calves), Saggaruut (caribou hair sheds), Akullirut (caribou hair thickens) and Amirajaut (velvet peels from caribou antlers).

The seventh moon was Manniit (eggs).



Teachers' note Point out that the writer of the passage is aiming to explain the links between the Inuit calendar and the environment. The calendar chart, on the other hand, is designed to make it easy for the reader to work out the sequence of the months and where the seasons fall.

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