

Text Purpose

Learner Handout

Key idea

Text purpose means the reason why a text is written. In the Entry 3 Reading exam, you may need to identify the main purpose of a short everyday text.

Why text purpose matters

- It helps you understand the text more easily.
- It helps you decide what information is important.
- It helps you answer exam questions about the writer's purpose.
- It helps in real life when reading notices, emails, adverts, timetables and instructions.

Common purposes and clues

Purpose	Meaning	Common clues	Everyday examples
To inform	give facts or information	dates, times, prices, places, factual words	notice, timetable, opening hours, information leaflet
To instruct	tell the reader how to do something	steps, numbers, command verbs: go, click, write, check	recipe, online guide, form instructions
To persuade	encourage the reader to do, buy or believe something	special offer, buy now, free, best, visit us, exclamation marks	advert, sale poster, charity leaflet
To warn	tell the reader about danger or risk	warning, caution, do not, danger, safety symbols	No Smoking sign, wet floor sign, medicine label
To advise	give helpful suggestions	should, try, remember, top tips, it is a good idea	health leaflet, careers advice, revision tips
To describe	give details about a person, place or thing	adjectives, details, senses, description words	review, travel blog, product description

Exam strategy: 4 steps

- Read the title and first sentence carefully.
- Ask: "What does the writer want the reader to know, do or feel?"
- Find two clues in the words, layout or picture.
- Choose the best main purpose for the whole text.

Remember

One text can have more than one purpose, but exam questions usually ask for the main purpose. Choose the best answer and use clues to prove it.

Mini examples

Text	Main purpose	Clues
Special Offer! Buy one get one free. Visit today.	To persuade	special offer, buy, visit today
From Monday, the bus will leave at 8.15 am.	To inform	gives a change of time
Click Forgotten Password. Enter your email. Check your inbox.	To instruct	steps and command verbs

Useful clue words

Purpose	Helpful clue words
Persuade	special offer, free, buy, join, visit, best, limited time
Instruct	first, next, finally, click, write, enter, check, follow
Warn/Advise	warning, caution, do not, should, remember, top tips

My notes
