

## Describing How Something Works / Describing A Process

**Age Group:** Young Adults / Adults

**Level:** ESOL Level 2 / Advanced

**Type of group:** IELTS/General English/Business/One-to-One

**Time:** Two and a half hours class time (parts of the lesson could be set as homework)

**Overall Aim:** Preparing students for the Writing Part 1 of the Academic IELTS exam through familiarizing students with the language of describing how something works / describing a process. Can also be used for a non-exam class.

**Skills Focus:** Integrated skills lesson involving: reading in detail/note-taking/summarising/draft writing/presenting information to the class/final writing

**Language Focus:** Use of present simple active / present simple passive to describe how something works / describe a process, use of linking words in a process

**Materials:** web site: [www.howstuffworks.com](http://www.howstuffworks.com), print-outs from web site

**Resources:** Computer with Internet connection (for students or only for teacher)

### Background Information

I've used this lesson with academic IELTS students in preparation for part one of the writing paper but it would also be very suitable for use with a general English or a business English group or even as a one-to-one lesson.

### Possible Procedure

I've explained the procedure below with variations at each stage.

#### **Stage 1**

Write web site address to board: [www.howstuffworks.com](http://www.howstuffworks.com)

If you want the students to choose topics of their choice direct students on how to navigate the website to find topics of interest. This could be demonstrated with a projector in a computer classroom, as a handout or simply write instructions to the board.

The web site lists topics such as "How batteries work" or "How the heart works" listed under different categories such as "sciencestuff" or "healthstuff". Students navigate the site and print off a chosen topic.

*Variation: If the students don't have access to computers or don't know how to use a computer or are unfamiliar with the Internet then the teacher could decide on what topics the students read about and print them off the web site. You could also only print off a couple of topics, photocopy and give half the class one topic and the other half the second topic. Another idea could be to give chosen topics to pairs or small groups of students. The reading stage could be at the beginning of a lesson or set as homework.*

## Stage 2

Students read the printed text and make notes to focus on the important points with a view to writing and presenting the information later.

*Variation: Students use a highlighter pen as opposed to making notes. You may want to supply class dictionaries.*

## Stage 3

After students have read their texts discuss with them the use of verb tenses. Elicit how the author of the text has ordered and linked important points in the description. Do any remedial work on the passive tense if necessary at this stage e.g. a gapped text where students have to insert verbs in the correct form. (Jordan - "Academic Writing" has such an exercise)

## Stage 4

From their notes students **draft** a summary of the text. Monitor and help if necessary at this stage and encourage students to help each other. Set a word limit e.g. 150 words as in IELTS exam.

## Stage 5

Students present what they have found out in class. Encourage students to use visual aids such as drawing to the whiteboard use of OHP etc.

Allow students to ask questions on each presentation, feedback on language errors to students after each presentation or after all presentations completed.

*Variation: Students use their notes to make a PowerPoint presentation at this stage. You could do some work on giving presentations (for example with a business group). Another variation would be for students to explain to each other and not in front of the whole group. Furthermore if the students have done their work in pairs they could do the presentation together.*

## **Stage 6**

Do further language work at this stage if you think it's necessary. I have found in the past that the main errors seem to be missing out the verb "to be" in passive forms, inappropriate overuse of the passive and missing the "s" of the third person with the present simple active.

## **Stage 7**

Students write a final draft of work of around 150 words (as in the IELTS exam) to be marked. This could be for homework.

*Variation: You could make a wall display from the final written work with diagrams or put the work on a student web page.*

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