

Unit



Information text: Non-fiction articles

Tools in this unit

- Reading tools: Understanding 'Chicken-eating spider'
- Grammar tools: Nouns
- Vocabulary tools: Formal language rules
- Editing tools: Simple and compound sentences; Commas; Capital letters
- Writing and creating tools: Write your own non-fiction information article

Modes covered

- Receptive: reading, listening
- Productive: speaking, writing, creating

General capabilities

- Literacy
- Information and communication technology capability
- Critical and creative thinking
- Personal and social capability
- Intercultural understanding

Curriculum content in this unit

- Language for interaction: ACELA1551
- Text structure and organisation: ACELY1747, ACELA1553, ACELA1559
- Expressing and developing ideas: ACELY1743, ACELY1746
- Examining literature: ACELY1744, ACELY1745, ACELA1552, ACELY1740
- Interacting with others: ACELY1811
- Interpreting, analysing, evaluating: ACELA1770, ACELA1557
- Creating texts: ACELY1741, ACELY1748
- Responding to literature: ACELY1747

Responding to texts

‘Chicken-eating spider’

by Gillian Shaw and Octavia Cade

A farmer in the Peruvian Amazon notices one of his hens ‘crawling’ across the chicken run one night and into the forest. On closer inspection, he finds a giant tarantula dragging the hen to its burrow. This is how the legend of *arana pollita* or the chicken-eating spider of Peru began, says Martin Nicholas, spider expert and member of the British Tarantula Society.

Seeking to confirm the myth, Nicholas set out on an expedition to the Amazon, along with a TV team for U.S. channel PBS in 2005. After a series of nights in the hot, humid rainforest, searching for nondescript burrows, they discovered a species new to science. Spanning an average of 25 cm from leg to leg, the spider is one of the world’s largest, after the 30-centimetre-across goliath birdeater (*Theraphosa blondi*) of Venezuela.



The adult females cohabit with a large number of newly hatched young and juveniles in each burrow, which is highly unusual, says Nicholas. Most tarantulas are not gregarious and will even cannibalise their young. At night, the family of spiders hunt en masse. The record for the number of spiders together was 60 in a two-metre radius.

Nicholas says the spiders have adopted a ‘he who catches it, eats it’ strategy. With small insect prey, juveniles catch and eat their kill alone. But if they attempt to take larger prey, such as a small mammal, other spiders will help.

They all envenomate and subdue the prey before ripping it apart and feeding on their respective parts.

Source: *Cosmos Magazine*. ‘The Science of Everything.’ Dec/Jan 2009, p. 14.



Understanding 'Chicken-eating spider'

Read the extract from the article '**Chicken-eating spider**' then complete the following. You may use a dictionary.

- 1 Who first discovered the spider?
- 2 What is another name for an *arana pollita*?
- 3 Explain the meaning of the following.
 - a 'cannibalise their young'
 - b 'envenomate'
 - c 'gregarious'
- 4 With whom do the adult spiders live?
- 5 Write words from the extract that mean the following.
 - a victim
 - b baby spiders
 - c home for spiders
 - d poison with venom
- 6 Briefly describe how the spider kills and eats its prey.
- 7 Highlight the word that best describes the purpose of this article.
to amuse to inform to persuade

Nouns

Nouns are naming words. They name people, places, animals, things, qualities, emotions or conditions, e.g. Irene, Germany, platypus, soccer, despair.

Four types of nouns

1 Proper nouns begin with a capital letter and name people, places, titles, days and months.

Examples: Alice Springs, Michael, Doctor, Friday, Christmas

2 Common nouns name general things around you that you can see and touch.

Examples: milk, spider, grass, apple, chair

3 Collective nouns name groups or collections of people, animals and things.

Examples: choir, team, herd

4 Abstract nouns name things you can't see, touch or measure, such as emotions, qualities and conditions.

Examples: hate, nerves, sadness, integrity

The **gender** of a noun refers to whether it is **masculine (male)** or **feminine (female)**. If a noun has no gender it is called neuter. Some nouns can be both masculine and feminine:

masculine – boy

feminine – girl

both – Prime Minister

neuter – car

1 Classify the nouns in the box by writing them in the noun table below.

farmer	member	Peru	juveniles	forest	tarantula
anxiety	Nicholas	prey	females	fear	mammal
series	spider	burrow	British Tarantula Society		

Proper (3)	Common (9)	Collective (2)	Abstract (2)

2 Which of the nouns above is feminine?

3 Which noun from the box is masculine?

4 Write the collective nouns for the following.

a group of kittens b group of insects

c group of bears d group of mice

5 Make up your own collective nouns for the following.

a group of nerds

b group of ugly dogs

c group of people who love the Queen

d group of politicians

e group of bank robbers

f group of people who like *The Hunger Games* series.

6 Write the feminine form of the following nouns:

a bridegroom b hero

c son d widower





Formal language rules

The way we write depends on the audience we write for and the purpose of our writing. While informal writing is acceptable when writing letters to family and friends, there are certain audiences and purposes for which you should always use a formal language style. Formal language should be used when you write essays, tests, job applications, letters of complaint or explanation, speeches, reports and formal invitations.

Formal language rules

- 1 Always use correct grammar and tense.
- 2 Do not include visual or SMS language, e.g. @#\$%!!
- 3 Do not use contractions, e.g. 'don't' or 'can't'. **Use 'do not' and 'cannot'.**
- 4 Use a serious and polite tone.
- 5 Do not begin sentences with 'so' or 'because'.
- 6 Follow rules for format, e.g. include the date and sign letters.
- 7 Avoid using slang terms or abbreviations.
- 8 Do not include brackets with your thoughts.
- 9 Explain all abbreviations and jargon using brackets or footnotes.
- 10 Use language that is inclusive, e.g. not racist or sexist.

1 What are the following sentences trying to say? Rewrite them using formal language.

a 'Dude, that spider was totally awesome!'

.....

b 'It was soooooooooo big it could of carried a chook!'

.....

c They hunt in giant packs, like sixty at a time (scary as)!!!

.....



Simple and compound sentences

A sentence:

- is a group of words containing a **subject** and at least one verb known as the **predicate** (which tells us what the subject is or does)
- **makes** sense on its own
- **always** begins with a capital letter
- **ends** with either a **full stop**, a **question mark** or an **exclamation mark**.

Sentences are either **simple** or **compound**, depending on how many clauses they have. A clause is a group of words that contains a verb.

A **simple sentence** contains one clause.

Example: Farms in Peru sound scary.

A **compound sentence** contains two clauses, linked by a conjunction (*and, if, because, since, but*).

Example: Farms in Peru sound scary **because** huge spiders live there.

Note this:

Full stops must be used at the end of every sentence that is not a command, a question or an exclamation.

- 1 Edit the following simple sentences by adding a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark.
 - a Keep your fingers away from the spiders' burrow
 - b Where is Peru
 - c Do you know how to get into the city from here
 - d Scientists know many very interesting facts

2 Rewrite the following simple sentences as compound sentences by adding a conjunction (and, if, because, since, but) and a clause of your choice.

a Farmers work hard.

.....

b I want to get away from here.

.....

c There was complete silence.

.....

Commas

Commas make sentences easier to read and understand. Commas are used for four main reasons when you are writing:

1 To show readers where to pause and take breath when reading a sentence.

Example: Spiders of the size found in Peru will never be found in Australia, despite warnings that they are on the move.

2 To separate the name of a person being addressed or spoken to from the rest of the sentence.

Example: Stop touching the spiders, Nicholas!

3 To separate words in a list.

Example: Female spiders are big, black, scary and hairy.

4 To mark the beginning of direct speech.

Example: The doctor asked, 'Is there any antivenom left?'

3 Edit the following sentences by adding commas in the correct place.

a In Science this year we are studying insects tree frogs owls and snakes.

b I enjoy cooking my family and sports.

c The teacher asked the class 'Who would like to help me dissect this frog?'

d There are many rules to observe when looking for insects to ensure that you do not get stung or bitten.

Capital letters

Five rules for capital letters

1 Proper nouns must begin with a capital letter.

Example: Tom was born in Sweden.

2 The first word of every sentence must begin with a capital letter.

Example: We take the dog for a walk every day after school.

3 'I' is always written using a capital letter.

Example: After dinner I help my mum with the dishes.

4 A capital letter must be used at the beginning of the words spoken, even when they follow a comma.

Example: James wondered, 'When will class end?'

5 Capital letters are used at the start of every main word in the title of a film, book or play.

Example: *The Spiders that Ate Sydney*

4 Using what you know about sentences, full stops, question marks, exclamation marks, commas and capital letters, edit the following piece of text so that it is grammatically correct.

In the middle of the summer i took a trip with my dad into the bush we loaded our tent sleeping bags mattresses and supplies into the back of dad's car and set out for an adventure mum was holding the baby as she waved goodbye to us She called out 'I will miss you both be careful' i was really looking forward to catching some insects in the jars I had prepared but dad wanted to go fishing 'Are we there yet' I asked dad after a few hours. it was hot in the car and I suddenly wanted to go home 'Stop your whining son' I was quiet for the rest of the trip



Writing and creating tools

Writing task

Good writers:

- **research** and **plan** before they start to write
- **draft**, **edit** and **proofread** before submitting their work.

When good writers plan they also carefully ‘map out’ their writing by asking and answering the following questions:

Message: What is the main point you want to tell your readers? e.g. Spiders are amazing.

Audience: Who will read your piece? e.g. Dad, spider enthusiasts, fishermen

Purpose: Why are you writing this piece? e.g. to describe, to instruct, to persuade, to imagine

Style: How will your piece look and sound? e.g. funny, friendly, angry

Write your own non-fiction information article following formal language rules. Write a magazine article about any topic that interests you – it can be something scientific if you like. See the ideas box below. Your article should be 300 words and include a bibliography of your sources.

an amazing invention

an insect

an animal

a planet

1 Research

2 Plan

Research your topic (using your library or the internet). Keep a record of your sources, i.e. where you found your notes. Write your notes below under the following headings:

- Topic/title/headline
- Message/main theme
- Audience
- Purpose

- Style
- Attention-grabbing opening line (hook), e.g. interesting statistic, quote, brief personal story

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- Interesting points – three

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- Conclusion

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Record of sources for bibliography and quoting

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3 Draft

Write your information text in your workbook and list your sources of information at the end.

4 Edit and proofread

Read over your article. Does it make sense? Check spelling, grammar and punctuation. Have you provided a clear explanation of your topic?

Creating task

Explore **multimodal presentation methods** for your information text:

- Present your information text as a brochure – either hand drawn or in digital format. Make sure you include visuals – either diagrams or pictures.

Listen and respond to what other students have done:

- Deliver your text as an **oral presentation** that includes a diagram, map, chart or other visual.
- Write a 50-word summary of one of the presentations you have listened to and identify the order of the information presented.
- Describe the effect the order of information used in the presentation and the visuals had on the class.