FREE HOME EDUCATOR GUIDE

Rain Has a Route

Lesson scripts and practical teaching guidance

Year 4 English · Three lessons on reading, writing and designing factual explanations

Teach the same skill to any learner using the free script and original passages in this guide. The paid pack adds three sequences of printable practice, alternative scaffolds, challenges and detailed model responses. Each lesson ends with something you can use to decide what to teach next.

Before you begin

Prepare. Gather paper, a pencil, three sticky notes and a dry book or shallow tray. If you demonstrate with water, place a teaspoon of water on a spare tray over a towel and empty it when finished. The demonstration is optional. A pencil rolled slowly on the tray gives a useful substitute for the direction of the slope.

Start with a minute of talk. Ask the learner to tell you something they did that morning. Then ask how a zip, tap or light switch works. Notice whether they answer each question differently. If both answers become a sequence of ‘and then’, the first two lessons are a good starting point.

Word	Plain explanation	Quick demonstration
Recount	A text that tells the reader about an experience or series of events.	‘This morning I carried some books to the library.’
Explanation	A text about how or why something works or happens.	‘The water spread because it could not leave quickly.’
Cause and result	Something that produces a change, and the change that follows.	Tilt a tray. The change in height causes the pencil to roll. The roll is the result.
Grate	A cover with openings. A drain grate lets water pass through.	Sketch a rectangle and draw clear spaces between its bars.
Flow	Movement of water or another substance.	Slide a finger from the high end of the tray to the low end.

Select practice after the first guided try. The Support route offers shorter chunks, oral modelling and partly completed responses. The Core route builds a complete explanation through independent revision. The Extension route includes testable predictions, comparison of competing choices and designs for unfamiliar readers. Choose a new route for each lesson if a learner’s reading and writing needs differ.

Start here · Find the right teaching move

Choose a pace. The three scripted lessons can be taught on separate days. If you have 20 minutes, teach the model and the guided try on the first day, then begin next time with retrieval and the independent attempt. Keep the final check for a time when the child can work without help. The final pages provide everything you need to teach and check the unit without buying a workbook.

A five-minute starting check

Read both mini-texts aloud, then let the learner see them. Give quiet thinking time before asking the questions.

A. On Monday I carried a box of markers down the ramp. Two rolled towards the door when the lid tipped. I picked them up before class.

B. How did the markers reach the door? The edge of the open lid pointed down the ramp. When the box tipped, the markers slid out and rolled down the slope until they reached the door.

Ask	Listen for	What to teach first
Which text answers 'What happened to this person?' How can you tell?	'A says "On Monday" and "I", so I know whose experience and when.'	If only the topic is named, sort the openings with the stage strip under Teach Lesson 1.
Explain why the markers rolled towards the door.	A link from the downward slope to the direction of the roll.	If the response is only 'The box tipped', rehearse the second link with the cause strip.
Sketch the route. Put a dot at the start and an arrow where the markers went.	The arrow starts at the high end and points towards the door.	If the arrow points both ways, model a finger trace before drawing.

Record the first unaided response, even if it is incomplete. If reading aloud helps the child access the sentences, record that accommodation separately from a prompt that supplied the answer. Plan to remove one prompt in each lesson.

Lesson 1 · Spot the purpose in the structure

Plan for 40–45 minutes. The learner will explain why a recount opens by setting an event in time and place, while an explanation opens with a question or phenomenon. Keep the core idea simple. Different purposes give each text a reason to organise information differently.

Explain and model · 8 minutes

Read Free Text 1 below. Say, 'I can tell this person is retelling something they experienced. Here is "after lunch". Here is "I". This opening gives me a time and a person to follow. At the end I find out how the moment turned out for that person.' Draw three boxes and label them time and place, events, and outcome.

Read Free Text 2. Say, 'The writer starts by asking why the puddle spread. I am expecting a reason. The words "because" and "so" show me which detail makes another detail happen.' Draw three boxes for question, linked reasons and closing answer. Ask the learner to read the opening of each again.

Guide the comparison · 12 minutes

Copy these prompts to a scrap of paper and give the learner time to answer each separately.

1 Who or what does the opening ask us to follow? A likely answer is a person in Text 1 and the water problem in Text 2.

2 Which words point to what happened next? 'After lunch' gives a time, and 'later' takes us farther along it.

3 Which words show one thing causing another? 'So' ties the leaves and the slower drain to the result.

4 Which ending would help a visitor know why the puddle spread? Ask them to point to actual wording.

If the learner calls both texts explanations, place 'What happened to you?' and 'Why did the water spread?' on separate cards. Have them place each opening against the question it best answers. Allow a learner who understands the question to point first and speak the reason second.

Independent attempt · 12–15 minutes

Give the learner two small original texts from the resource pack or use the mini pairs below. Ask them to arrange the stages of each with a little arrow or note explaining the job of each stage. Then ask for one two-sentence comparison. Provide 'It begins with … so the reader knows …' only after a first attempt.

Mini pair A. 'At recess, I dropped a paintbrush into the wash cup. It splashed my apron. I hurried to the sink.'
Mini pair B. 'Why did the apron get wet? The brush displaced water when it hit the full cup. The spill landed on the apron.'

Check and decide · 7 minutes

Present the question 'What makes a short text useful when you want to know why a spill happened?' Retain the learner's response. If they point to a stage and a causal wording choice, move to Lesson 2. If they match the right text but offer only 'it tells what happened', ask them to finish 'It tells me *why* because the writer explains that …' and try with a new everyday example.

Teach Lesson 1 · Use a stage strip

Set up. Copy the three words in each row onto slips. Place Text 1 and Text 2 beside them. Learners may point, move slips or speak before writing. Keep both strips on display during the guided comparison. Turn them face down for the independent one.



Say. 'I can tell you what both texts are about: a puddle. Now I am going one step further. I am matching the opening to a reader's question. When the reader asks what happened to somebody, an opening can name a person and time. When they ask why it happened, the opening can name the problem. Which strip helps me show that difference?'

Likely response. 'Text 1 starts after lunch. Text 2 asks why the puddle formed.' Ask 'What can each reader expect from the middle?' Listen for the sequence of events versus linked reasons. A useful reply is 'In Text 1 the person notices the leaves, then has to walk around the puddle. In Text 2 the leaves slow the water going through, so it collects.'

Repair two common misunderstandings

- **"It says 'why', so it must be an explanation."** Read 'Why me? I had forgotten my bag again.' Say 'That question could appear inside a recount. Read the next two sentences and ask what the writer keeps doing.' Recheck purpose across opening and middle.
- **"The same information belongs in every ending."** Read 'My shoes were wet' and 'The puddle shrank once more openings were clear.' Invite the learner to swap the endings, then explain which reader's question is left unanswered. Look for an outcome for the speaker versus an answer about the water.

Independent probe. Say 'Show me a word or sentence that helps the reader, then tell me what it helps them understand.' Save one spoken or written example. A response with a text label alone needs the next prompt 'Read it to me and finish "That helps the reader …".'

Lesson 2 · Turn a list of facts into an explanation

Plan for 45–50 minutes. The learner will group accurate details and use links that explain one or more causes. Start from a question the reader would actually ask.

Explain and model · 10 minutes

Write these slips separately. ‘Water keeps arriving.’ ‘Leaves cover some openings.’ ‘Water leaves more slowly.’ ‘The puddle grows.’ Think aloud.

> ‘All four can be true, but this order makes the reason harder to follow. I’ll move the leaves earlier. They cover some openings. Because there are fewer clear openings, less water can get through at once. More water arrives than can leave through the openings, so the puddle grows. I have used a condition and an effect. I can check the link by asking whether the puddle could still grow if very little rain was arriving.’

Draw one arrow between the cause and immediate result, then draw another arrow to the later result. Model reading the link both ways. ‘Because X, Y happens.’ ‘Y happens because X.’ If a clause order sounds awkward, say it aloud and move the connecting word with the reason.

Guide the writing · 12 minutes

Use the original garden notes in Free Text 3 below. Invite the learner to slide the note about the missing red spade away from the process. Ask ‘What makes the water travel across the path?’ If they answer ‘The flower bed’, ask ‘Would the water reach the flower bed if the path sloped the other way?’ Show the tilt with a dry tray. Then ask what allows water to cross the edge and what the source actually says about the soil.

Construct a three-link sequence together. Say ‘Use “because” to give the reason for the first movement, then use “so” to show what the opening makes possible.’ If the learner uses ‘and then’ for cause, first ask them to speak the reason in a separate sentence. Join the ideas once both meanings are clear.

Independent attempt · 15–18 minutes

Ask the learner to write a 60–100 word answer to ‘How does spilled water get from the paving into the flower bed?’ Accept a shorter explanation if it preserves the connected pathway. Invite them to underline the first sentence and circle at least one causal connective. At the end, ask the learner to read it out loud while you point to each fact in the source.

If spelling or handwriting effort blocks planning, let the learner record the chain orally before drafting. Take a short movement break if needed. Read back what they dictated without correcting the ideas, so they can spot gaps themselves before deciding what to type or write.

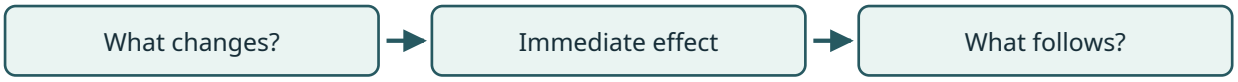
Check and decide · 8 minutes

Ask whether the explanation would still make sense if the gap were blocked. A secure reader can explain that water might collect or move another way, and can distinguish that prediction from what the source actually reports. The writing is ready for the next lesson when a reader can reconstruct the process and explain two links without borrowing extra information from you. If a link is missing, add an arrow and ask the learner to say its cause aloud before revising the sentence.

Teach Lesson 2 · Build and test the cause chain

Model in three passes. Put the following slips out in this order: ‘water collects’, ‘water arrives faster than it can leave’, ‘some openings are covered’, ‘water leaves more slowly’. Ask the learner to draw an arrow between two slips they can connect. Then say ‘I need to know which change comes because of the covered openings. I’ll put the cover first and the slower flow next.’ Finally move ‘water arrives faster than it can leave’ alongside the arrow to the last box. The puddle grows while arrival is faster than drainage.

PLAN A CAUSE CHAIN



Ask. ‘If I take away this first fact, does the rest still have a reason?’ Have the learner rehearse ‘Because some openings are covered, water leaves more slowly.’ If they say ‘The leaves are there and the water goes slower’, use the same two facts to model the difference between a list and a stated cause. Then ask them to tell you the link without the connector card.

Correct the claim without writing it for the learner

Pupil response	Home-educator move
‘The puddle grows every time there is a leaf.’	Put one leaf over one of many openings. Ask if a few drops might still drain away, then invite a claim using ‘can’ or ‘when’.
‘Rain stops the water from leaving.’	Ask which part concerns water arriving and which part concerns leaving. Have the learner sort rain on one side and clear openings on the other.
‘Water ran down because the flower bed was there.’	Turn the dry demonstration tray around. Ask whether the destination or the slope changed the direction.

Short retrieval for the next day. Read ‘The opening was covered. The outlet slowed. Water kept arriving.’ Ask the learner to say two linked sentences and name what would change if the opening cleared. Listen for a reason and for a prediction marked with ‘could’ or ‘might’ when the result has not been observed.

Lesson 3 · Give a diagram a purpose

Plan for 40–45 minutes. The learner will place useful labels, show movement with arrows and integrate one visual and one paragraph so each adds information. A rough drawing can do the work well.

Explain and model · 8 minutes

Give these two sketches in words and draw each once. The first is a cloud over a schoolyard. The second is a short sloping path with an arrow to the opening between two edging bricks.

> ‘A cloud above the yard helps a reader picture the weather. A labelled arrow can show exactly where water changes direction. I need the second drawing because the paragraph says what causes water to move, while the picture shows the route. My arrow needs to touch the opening. If it stops at the edge of a brick, my reader might think water goes through the brick.’

Sketch the example and compare the loop of the arrow with a simple straight route. Label ‘slope down’ and ‘gap in the edge’.

Guide a reader test · 12 minutes

Show the learner your sketch without reading your explanation first. Ask them to trace the route with a pencil tip. If they hesitate, read your caption, ‘Follow the arrows from the path, through the gap, then into the bed.’ Invite them to add a label or move the arrow. Cover the drawing and read the matching sentence, ‘The slope makes the water run towards the low edge of the paving.’ Ask which *new* detail that sentence contributes. A strong response mentions direction from the image and why the movement occurs from the words.

Independent attempt and revision · 16 minutes

Ask for a fresh diagram of the courtyard and a short explanation of the puddle. A reader should be able to find the high point, low point and grate. Have the learner label at least two features and add one arrow you can follow without their spoken help. Ask the learner to reference their diagram in the writing and explain a relationship the picture alone cannot show.

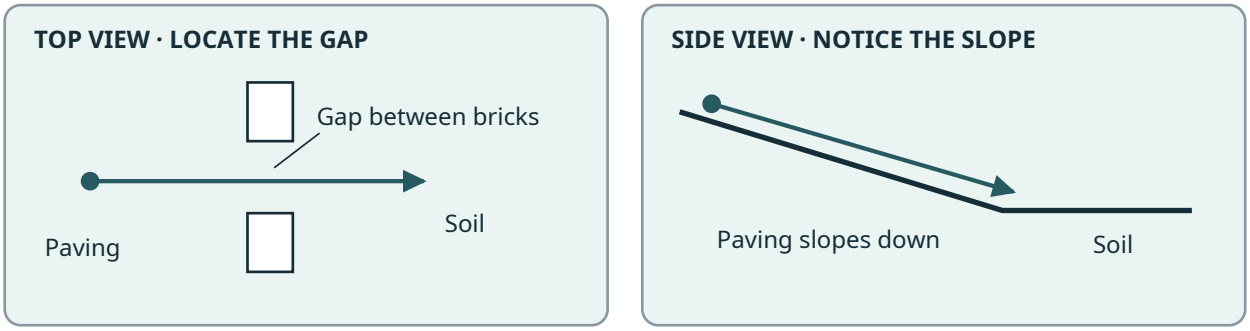
If a learner gives an accurate explanation with an unclear drawing, offer a prepared rectangle with two location marks. If the drawing works and the text just repeats its labels, ask ‘What would an arrow fail to tell us about the leaves or the water arriving?’ A confident learner can draw an alternative view from above and test which format answers a visitor’s question more quickly.

Check and decide · 7 minutes

Ask somebody unfamiliar with the initial texts to trace the pictured route or pretend to be that visitor yourself. They should be able to point to where water reaches the grate and say why it collects when leaves cover openings. Note any extra prompt the writer needs to give. Treat the design as independently mastered when the page supplies both answers without further explanation.

Teach Lesson 3 · Test the diagram with another reader

Ask the learner to compare the two original views before making a diagram. Read the description aloud if a child cannot easily see the picture. In the top view the route crosses a gap between two bricks. In the side view the paving slopes down towards that same gap and the soil is lower.



Think aloud. 'I am drawing for someone walking into the yard. They need to find the gap, so I'll choose the top view. If the reader asks what makes the water move, the side view may help show the slope. My sentence still has a job: "Because the paving slopes, water runs towards the low edge." It explains a cause.'

Hand over the pencil. On a fresh copy of the top view, draw a dot on the paving and one on the soil. Ask the learner to circle the dot where the water begins, draw one arrow through the gap and label two parts of the route. Cover the labels and ask 'Could a reader still see the direction?' Cover the drawing and ask 'Does your explanation have a cause?'

What to do when the reader hesitates

- **Arrow points at the brick.** Have the reader trace the line without verbal help. Ask the learner to move the arrow tip to a reachable place and start the line where the water starts.
- **Labels say 'thing' and 'there'.** Put a finger on the named part and ask 'What could I call this in the text?' Accept a functional label such as 'gap where the water passes'.
- **The paragraph lists the labels.** Ask 'What makes the water travel along this path?' Have the learner say their causal sentence first. Keep the picture visible while they choose a fact the reader needs.

Reader-test script. 'Show me where it starts. Trace it through the gap. Read me the words that tell me why it went that way.' Record the first place the reader stalls. Ask the learner to make one revision, then hand the page to a reader again.

Free Text 1 · A wet return

After lunch I crossed the courtyard with a stack of library books. The sky darkened. A leaf slipped along the wet bricks and caught on the grate. Later more leaves covered the openings and I had to step around a growing puddle. Mr Lee shifted the leaves with a brush. I reached the library with my shoes wet and the books dry.

Free Text 2 · Why water gathered

Why did a puddle form by the grate? The courtyard slopes down towards the drain, so rainwater flows across the bricks to the low point. Leaves covered some openings. Water arrived faster than it could pass through the grate. As a result, it collected. When Mr Lee moved the leaves, water could leave faster and the puddle shrank.

Free Text 3 · The path to the flower bed

A little water spilled from a jug onto sloped paving. The paving tilts towards a flower bed. An opening between two bricks lets water cross into the bed. A small amount then soaked into the soil. A red spade had gone missing the day before.

Free marking prompts

Check	What a secure response can show
Purpose	Text 1 sets up the pupil’s experience and ends with the outcome. Text 2 asks why and connects causes such as the covered openings to effects such as slower drainage.
Cause	The slope directs water downhill. The gap in the edging lets it enter the flower bed. The spade does not affect this known route.
Diagram	The arrows show actual movement. The caption guides the reader. The accompanying words explain a cause that the image alone leaves unclear.

Write your date and one clue the learner noticed independently. Keep an early sample and a later one so you can compare how they explain links and guide a reader.

Free independent check · The blocked slot

Let the learner read these passages or read them aloud neutrally. The learner may use ordinary writing or a scribe who records exactly what they say. Allow about 20 minutes. Avoid supplying an answer until the first version is saved.

A Saturday test

On Saturday I carried a small clean tray outside. I tipped a cup of water onto the end nearest my feet. I watched it run to the slot in the other end. When I placed a scrap of paper over part of the slot, the water spread sideways. I moved the paper and waited until the tray emptied.

Why did the water spread?

One end of the tray was raised, so water ran down to the slot at the low end. The scrap covered part of the slot. Water reached the slot faster than it could pass through, so some collected near the slot and spread sideways. When the paper was removed, more of the slot was clear.

1 · Read the purpose. Which text records an experience? Which text explains why the water spread? Choose one clue from each that helps its reader.

2 · Write a reason. Use your own words to explain why the water travelled to the end and why it spread sideways. Use at least two linked reasons.

3 · Draw for a reader. Sketch the tray, label the low end and the slot, then add an arrow showing the direction of flow. Write a sentence that explains what the picture alone cannot show. Use the space below or a separate sheet.

Free marking guide · Decide what comes next

Model responses for the blocked slot

Purpose. ‘A Saturday test’ follows the speaker’s experience. ‘On Saturday I carried’ tells the reader when and who. ‘Why did the water spread?’ explains the process. Its opening tells the reader what the details will explain. Accept another short accurate example from each.

Causal links. ‘One end was higher, so the water ran down the tray to the slot. The paper narrowed the opening, so water left more slowly. Water arrived faster than it could leave, so it collected and spread.’ Each underlined idea in a marked response should either state a reason or show what followed from it. Punctuation and spelling can be annotated separately.

Diagram and words. A useful diagram shows a high-to-low route and an arrow ending at the slot. The labels let a reader locate the slot and low end. A useful sentence adds a relationship such as ‘When the paper partly covered the slot, water left more slowly.’ The sentence need not describe every line in the sketch.

Skill	0 · Re-teach	1 · Practise with less help	2 · Secure independently
Purpose and structure	Response gives a shared topic only.	Names the two purposes, with little evidence for one.	Names both purposes and connects a clue from each to its job.
Cause and effect	Lists events with no accurate causal link.	Shows one accurate causal link.	Shows two accurate causal links, using the source facts.
Diagram with text	Route or reason is missing.	Route can be followed, or the written reason is accurate.	Labels and arrow communicate the route, and the sentence adds a reason.

Choose one next move. For a 0, repeat the corresponding free model with a new short scenario. For a 1, have the learner repair only one part, then make a second attempt with no frame. A 2 marks an independent demonstration for that skill. Revisit it in the maintenance task after a few days.

Keep the learning · Recheck in a fresh context

Use a different kind of route

Two paper ramps ended above a tray. One ramp had a folded lip across its lower edge. Sam rolled the same marble down each ramp. It dropped into the tray from the flat edge. The folded lip stopped it at the other edge. At the end of the test, Sam drew the positions of both edges for a friend.

Day 2 · Retrieve. Ask the learner to name the purpose of the passage, then to write a question for a short explanation that could use the same events. A suitable example is 'Why did the marble stop at one edge but drop into the tray at the other?'

Day 5 · Transfer. Ask for a two-sentence explanation and a labelled picture with an arrow. Look for the folded lip as an obstruction and for the marble's route from the top of the ramp. Let the learner choose a side or a top view and name which detail their view makes clear. A useful explanation includes 'The folded lip was in the path, so it stopped the marble.'

Fade the support in this order. Give the whole model only when needed. Then offer a single question. Next let the learner choose whether to draw the chain. Finally ask for a first attempt without any cue. A chart drawn independently counts as evidence of using a strategy.

Date	Skill and task	What the learner did unaided	Support given · next check
Starting check	Text purpose		
First independent task	Causal links		
First independent task	Diagram and text		
Later transfer	Paper ramps		

Keep one draft pair. Save an early version and a revision. Write one feedback sentence describing the change that helped a reader. For example, 'Moving your arrow towards the slot helped me follow the route.'