



Understanding instructions: grammar

Instructions that are on signs or in recipes or DIY manuals are usually written using the **imperative verb**. The imperative is formed by using the verb (the 'action' or 'doing' word) but without 'to' or any noun or pronoun in front of it. For example:

'You need to turn left at the post office' becomes '**Turn** left at the post office.'

This type of instruction doesn't say **who** has to follow it.

Here are some examples of instructions written using the imperative:

Sentence		Imperative instruction
You should not smoke here.	=	Don't smoke here.
You must fix this with glue.	=	Fix this with glue.
You must not run.	=	Don't run.
You will need 300g of flour.	=	Take 300g of flour.

Imperative instructions:

- Are often **written as a list**, starting at the top and working down. The list may be numbered, or may have bullet points.
- Should **never be used when writing formally** - in a letter to the bank, for example.

Linking words

One of the ways that instructions tell us what to do, and in what order, is by using linking words. These words also tell us about the way each step in the instructions links to the other steps. Here's a list of linking words that are often used:

first | second | next | after | before | then | finally