

Whatever the time of year, people are always interested in what the weather has in store. These activities will help students understand what is needed in a weather forecast and how to gather information so they can write and present their own weather forecasts.

WHAT IS A WEATHER FORECAST?

Students need to understand the core message of a weather forecast and who the audience for their forecast is. Watch a forecast and ask students to visit a weather websites and watch a video of the latest forecast.

- What weather were they expecting to see?
- What unexpected weather did you see? (snow, hurricanes, etc.)
- Who needs to know about the weather?

Who is the forecast for?

Think about who is watching, why they want to know the weather and when they are likely to be outside (i.e. travelling to work and school, or going to special events at the weekend).

Students can make a list of people for whom the weather forecast might be important and what elements would be of most interest to them.

For example, someone who gets the bus to school may only want to know if it's going to rain on the way to the stop, whereas if you travel by bike, you might want to know how strong the wind is going to be as well, so you can decide if it is safe to cycle or not.

Many BBC Weather forecasts are for the whole of the UK, and the presenter need to convey key elements about the weather for millions of people. Local forecasters can be more precise about their own region.

Think about who your audience is and what it is they need to know or may want to know about the forthcoming weather. As a group, students can decide:

1. Who they are going to broadcast to.
2. What are the main elements of the weather forecast their audience will want to know or need to know.

GATHERING INFORMATION

Where to find information for weather forecasting?

When preparing a weather bulletin, students will need to think about where to find the data they need. There are lots of websites where you can find information about the weather including BBC Weather (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/weather>) and The Met Office (<https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/>).

If your school has its own weather station, you could use the data collected to prepare your own forecast, which will be specific to your own area.

MetLink (<http://www.metlink.org/>) has resources for teaching about the weather from the Royal Meteorological Society.

Observed and forecast data

Weather forecasts are made up of observed and forecast data. When we observe something we watch what it does. Therefore, observed data is data, which has happened and is happening now.

For example, a satellite picture is a photograph taken from space, which shows weather as it happened, and is factually accurate.

To forecast is to predict, so forecast data is what we believe will happen in the future. For example, it is possible to forecast where rain will fall. This may not be exactly right, as nature is unpredictable, but scientifically we can forecast what we think will happen. Ask students why they would want to show an audience both observed and forecast information.

Weather forecasts use graphics, which show where the weather currently is, and how it is going to develop. It helps the audience see a visualisation of the weather on the map.

WRITING A FORECAST

To create your own weather story, you need to understand the structure of a weather forecast.

Get students to watch a video forecast on BBC Weather. Ask them to discuss:

- What was the 'top line' of the bulletin?
- What was the main message about the day's weather?
- Was there other information the presenter put across?
- How did they finish the forecast?

Create your own weather story

Weather forecasters don't use scripts but present the weather talking naturally - putting over the points they have prepared.

Get the students to put together a weather forecast. There is no need to write it all down but they do need to think about the structure - what information do they want to put across and what order will they present it?

- What is the main message to get across?
- How will the forecast start?
- Is it telling the story of the weather day?
- How will the bulletin be rounded up?

PRESENTING THE WEATHER

Students need to be able to convey the main weather message, clearly and accurately, to a TV audience using graphics.

Watch different weather forecasters online and get students to discuss:

- What makes the forecast and presenter engaging?
- At what speed does the presenter convey the message?
- How do they emphasise their point? Verbally and physically?
- What do you like/not like about the individuals?
- What can you try in your presentation?

Have a go at presenting the weather

TV bulletin: Project a detailed weather map from BBC Weather onto an interactive whiteboard or wall in your classroom. (You can use the UK Summary chart or one for your area.)

One student presents the weather while another clicks through the timeline, pausing between each time frame to give the presenting student a chance to deliver their weather report. Choose how long you would like your broadcast to be and try to keep to the set time.

When presenting the weather, think about these questions:

- What is your top line?
- Are you getting the main message across?
- How can you keep your audience's attention?
- How are you speaking slowly and clearly?
- What tone of voice are you using?
- How are you interacting with your graphics?
- Are you keeping to time?

Radio bulletin: For a radio forecast, the presenter can't rely on a weather map to convey information to the audience, so they need to make sure they communicate what's happening with the weather by what they say.

Where are you going to present your bulletin?

If you are doing an in-vision forecast, it is important to think about the place you will record it. At the BBC Weather Centre, the presenters use two different technologies for presenting the weather.

One in front of an interactive screen where they can see the graphics and interact with them directly, or they use a studio with green-screen technology where the weather chart is projected behind them in post-production.

You and your students can choose what would be best way to present the weather in your school with the technology you have available.

If you have access to a green or blue screen facility, you can download a weather chart from the School Report assets folder to use as backdrop for your weather bulletin. Or you could use an interactive whiteboard to display your weather graphics.

Alternatively, you could present your weather forecast outside. Does the view outside and the surroundings help portray your weather story? If rain is due, umbrellas are a great prop to give a sense of what's to come.

WHEN THE WEATHER IS THE NEWS

The weather can be part of the news as a story and not just be a forecast at the end of the bulletin. Ask students to think about when they were last affected by the weather. Perhaps there was flooding or snow which prevented them from going to school.

Read what the experts have written

Search the BBC News site for weather stories or see Features on the BBC Weather site for stories in the news. Get students to think about

- What? Describe the weather.
- Where? Write down the location.
- Who? Write down who is affected.
- How? Write down what affected the weather had.
- When? Write down when it started and when it finished/will finish

Write your own news report about the weather

Write a story of 200 to 300 words.

Remember to use the three Cs:

- **Clear.** Write how you would say it and get straight to the point at the beginning
- **Concise.** Keep your sentences short
- **Correct.** Get your facts right

There is more about writing news stories and the three Cs in our [Lesson Plan: Writing news \(Lesson 4\)](#).