

Recounts (Diary, Letter, Newspaper): Full Lessons for Each Year Group

This document expands the recount outline into full, detailed lesson guidance for each year group from Year 1 to Year 6. It focuses on the development of recount writing through diaries, letters and newspaper reports, building from simple first-person retelling of real experiences in Key Stage 1 to sophisticated control of tone, perspective and journalistic style in Upper Key Stage 2. The progression reflects the [National curriculum in England: English programmes of study](), which emphasises speaking before writing, composing for different purposes and audiences, and increasing control over grammar, structure and vocabulary. It also reflects commonly used primary progression guidance for recount writing across the years.

Year 4: Formal and Informal Tone Choices

Unit overview: This 5-lesson sequence teaches pupils to recount the same event in different forms, choosing language and tone to suit audience and purpose. Across the unit, pupils compare diary and newspaper recounts, build banks of formal and informal vocabulary, practise using direct and reported speech, and write contrasting openings before producing an independent final recount. The sequence is designed for Year 4 writers and reflects the expectation that pupils adapt their language for different audiences, organise ideas into paragraphs, and use grammar such as fronted adverbials and accurate speech punctuation with increasing control.

Lesson 1: Comparing a diary and newspaper recount of the same event

LO: To compare how the same event is recounted differently for different audiences.

SC: I can identify features of a diary and a newspaper recount; I can explain how language choices affect tone; I can sort examples of formal and informal language into a comparison chart.

Vocabulary: formal, informal, audience, purpose, diary, newspaper report, tone, recount, personal, factual.

Explicit teacher narration: "This week we are going to become experts at making writing sound right for its reader. The same event can be retold in more than one way. If I write in a diary, I sound personal and honest, almost as if I am talking to myself. If I write for a newspaper, I sound more formal and factual because I am informing the public. Today I want you to notice that writers do not just change a few words; they also change what details they include, the pronouns they choose and the overall tone."

Modelled example: The teacher displays two short recounts of the same event, such as a school trip or a sudden playground incident. One begins, *I could hardly believe what happened at lunchtime today!* and the other begins, *Pupils at Oakfield Primary were surprised at lunchtime yesterday when...* The teacher thinks aloud: "In the diary, the first person pronoun *I* and the exclamation mark make the tone personal and immediate. In the newspaper version, the naming of the school and the past time phrase make it sound more formal and report-like."

Guided example: The class reads each recount together and highlights evidence for tone. Pupils help complete a comparison chart with headings such as *audience, purpose, pronouns, language choices* and *overall effect*. The teacher prompts: "Would this detail matter to a friend, a diary or the wider public?"

Independent task(s): Pupils work in pairs to complete their own comparison chart using a second set of short extracts. They underline informal phrases, circle formal words and discuss why the writer may have chosen them. Challenge pupils to explain which details were included in one version but left out of the other and why that suits the audience.

Plenary: Pupils share one difference they noticed between the two recount forms and explain how it changes the reader's experience. The class creates a display list titled *How tone changes for audience and purpose*.

Lesson 2: Choosing vocabulary and details for different audiences

LO: To select formal or informal vocabulary and relevant details to suit a chosen audience.

SC: I can sort words and phrases by tone; I can explain which details suit a diary and which suit a newspaper report; I can build a vocabulary bank to support my writing.

Vocabulary: vocabulary bank, audience, purpose, formal, informal, precise, emotive, recount, witness, headline.

Explicit teacher narration: "Good writers make choices before they write. They think: Who is reading this? What do they need to know? How should it sound? Today we are going to collect words and phrases that belong to different tones. Some language sounds chatty, emotional and personal. Other language sounds calm, precise and factual. We will also decide which details matter most to different readers because not every recount includes everything."

Modelled example: The teacher sorts a set of phrases under two headings: *informal diary* and *formal newspaper*. For example, *I was so excited, it was brilliant* and *I could not stop smiling* are placed in the informal column, while *witnesses reported, shortly after midday* and *the event took place* are placed in the formal column. The teacher explains why some words are too emotional for a newspaper and why some formal phrases may sound unnatural in a diary.

Guided example: The class discusses a shared event and decides which details would be most important in each form. For a diary, pupils may choose feelings, favourite moments and personal reactions. For a newspaper report, they may choose time, place, people involved and the key facts. The teacher models turning a plain note such as *we got to the museum* into two versions: *When we finally arrived, I felt thrilled* and *The class arrived at the museum at 10 a.m.*

Independent task(s): Pupils sort prepared vocabulary cards, then create their own vocabulary bank in two sections: *formal* and *informal*. They add possible fronted adverbials, useful verbs and details for each audience. Pupils then choose a short event and note which details they would include for a diary and which for a newspaper report.

Plenary: Pupils read aloud one pair of contrasting sentences from their vocabulary bank. The class checks whether the tone is clear and suggests small improvements where needed.

Lesson 3: Using direct speech and reported speech in recounts

LO: To use direct speech and reported speech appropriately in different recount forms.

SC: I can punctuate direct speech accurately; I can identify the difference between direct and reported speech; I can choose which form of speech best

suits the audience and tone of my recount.

Vocabulary: direct speech, reported speech, inverted commas, speaker, punctuation, formal, informal, witness statement, recount.

Explicit teacher narration: "Speech helps a recount feel lively and believable, but writers do not always use it in the same way. In a diary, direct speech can make a moment feel immediate, as if the reader is hearing it happen. In a newspaper report, reported speech often sounds more formal and concise. Today we are learning how to use both types of speech correctly and how to choose the one that best matches our purpose."

Modelled example: The teacher writes a direct speech sentence: "*Look out!*" *shouted Mia*. The teacher explains the inverted commas, capital letter and comma placement. The sentence is then changed into reported speech: *Mia shouted for everyone to look out*. The teacher thinks aloud: "Both sentences share the same information, but the direct speech sounds dramatic and immediate, while the reported speech sounds smoother and more formal."

Guided example: Pupils help the teacher transform several spoken sentences into both direct and reported speech. The class practises punctuating speech accurately and discusses where each type would fit best in a diary or newspaper recount. The teacher also models how pronouns may shift when turning direct speech into reported speech.

Independent task(s): Pupils complete sentence practice in which they punctuate direct speech, match direct and reported versions, and rewrite short recount sentences from one form into the other. They then write two or three sentences about a shared event: one diary-style sentence with direct speech and one newspaper-style sentence with reported speech. Challenge pupils to embed a fronted adverbial before one of the sentences.

Plenary: Pupils hold up or read out a pair of matching speech sentences. The class identifies which one sounds more formal and explains why.

Lesson 4: Shared writing of two contrasting openings

LO: To write two contrasting openings for the same event, using tone to suit audience and purpose.

SC: I can use language choices to create a formal or informal tone; I can organise an opening clearly with an effective first sentence; I can include speech or detail that fits the chosen form.

Vocabulary: opening, audience, purpose, paragraph, tone, first person, third person, fronted adverbial, recount.

Explicit teacher narration: "Today we are putting our learning together. We are going to write two openings about exactly the same event, but each one will sound different because the audience is different. I need to think carefully about how to begin. A diary opening may begin with a feeling or reaction, while a newspaper opening often begins with key facts. Even though the event is the same, the writer's choices will make each paragraph feel different."

Modelled example: The teacher shared-writes a diary opening first, for example: *Yesterday was one of the strangest days ever, and I still cannot believe what happened at the park.* The teacher highlights the first person voice and emotional response. The teacher then writes a newspaper opening for the same event: *Visitors at Harlow Town Park were surprised yesterday afternoon when a runaway dog caused chaos near the café.* The class discusses how the second version sounds more formal because it names the place, states the time and focuses on the event rather than the writer's feelings.

Guided example: Pupils suggest improvements to both paragraphs. The class adds a fronted adverbial, chooses a stronger verb and decides whether direct or reported speech would fit best in each version. The teacher models checking that the diary remains personal and the newspaper remains factual and clear.

Independent task(s): Pupils write their own paired model paragraphs for the same class event, one as a diary opening and one as a newspaper opening. They use their vocabulary banks and sentence practice from earlier lessons to support them. Challenge pupils to include a well-punctuated direct speech sentence in the diary and a reported speech sentence in the newspaper version.

Plenary: In pairs, pupils compare their two openings and explain which choices created the different tones. A few examples are shared with the class to identify successful contrasts.

Lesson 5: Independent final write and editing for tone

LO: To write and edit a recount that deliberately matches a chosen audience and purpose.

SC: I can sustain an appropriate formal or informal tone; I can organise my recount into clear paragraphs; I can use fronted adverbials and speech accurately when editing my work.

Vocabulary: draft, edit, paragraph, audience, purpose, formal, informal, direct speech, reported speech, pronoun.

Explicit teacher narration: "Today you are writing independently, so this is the point where all your choices matter. Before I begin, I need to decide whether I am writing a diary or a newspaper recount. That choice will affect my pronouns, my details, my vocabulary and the kind of speech I include. After drafting, I must reread my work as an editor. I will check whether the tone stays consistent, whether my paragraphs are clear and whether my speech punctuation is accurate."

Modelled example: The teacher quickly revisits a planning frame with prompts such as *What happened first?*, *Which details matter most to this audience?* and *Where could I include speech?* A short example paragraph is edited live so pupils can see how to improve tone, for example changing *It was really bad* to *I felt worried and shaky* for a diary or *The incident caused concern* for a newspaper report.

Guided example: The class helps to create an editing checklist: check pronouns, check paragraphing, check fronted adverbials, check speech punctuation, check that details suit the audience. The teacher supports pupils in orally rehearsing their first few sentences before they begin writing.

Independent task(s): Pupils complete a final recount in their chosen form. After drafting, they edit using coloured pencils or an editing checklist, focusing on tone, paragraphing and speech accuracy. If time allows, pupils swap work with a partner for a brief peer check focused on whether the writing clearly sounds formal or informal.

Plenary: Pupils complete the sentence *I chose this tone because...* and read a short section of their recount aloud. The class listens for clear evidence of deliberate tone choice.

Grammar focus across the unit: fronted adverbials, direct speech punctuation, reported speech, pronoun choice.