

# Sniff, Swing, Swipe

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## Overview

This text explores how Auckland Zoo solved the problem of keeping its animals entertained – by asking students for help! It presents students’ designs and also feedback from zookeepers. In doing so, the text conveys the technological and scientific concepts involved in the project.

“Sniff, Swing, Swipe” is particularly effective in the way it engages the audience and provides an excellent model for the students’ own writing. As it is a long text, either it could be read over more than one session, or students could focus on particular sections only.

## Suggested teaching purposes

- To support the students in developing the comprehension strategy of **analysing and synthesising**, identifying the authors purpose and point of view, and in making links to their own writing.
- To engage students in reading a text to find out how animals in zoos can be kept entertained and to think about what makes this text engaging.

## Suggested learning goal

I am learning to explore what features make this text engaging for the audience so that I can use the features in my own writing and publishing.

## Success criteria

I will be successful when I have:

- considered the author’s purpose(s)
- identified the audience and considered their needs when reading information texts
- identified the features of the writing that meet the audience’s needs and the authors’ purpose(s)
- shared my opinion about the overall success of the writing and what I have learnt from that to improve my own writing.

## Features of the text

*What features of this text support the teaching purposes?*

- The clear, logically ordered, and repeated problem-and-solution structure:
  - background on the problem
  - background on the project
  - students’ solutions to the problem

- feedback on the solutions
- The “chunked” layout of text and images
- The use of colour to link or separate sections of information
- The engaging title and subheadings, especially those involving alliteration, for example, “The Bird Bungy”, “The Snacker Stacker”
- The way the authors engage the reader, including:
  - the use of the second person (addressing the reader as “you”) to engage readers, for example, “You can see from these photos ...”, “What Feedback Would You Give?”
  - the clear lead-in sentences, which convey the main idea of a paragraph, for example, “The problem for zoo animals ...”, “Room 3 from Mangonui School made a feeding roller”
  - the use of rhetorical questions, for example, “but do you think the animals are having as much fun as you are?”
  - the implicit compliments to the reader, for example, “if you want something amazingly fresh and original, you should ask some children!”
  - the light-hearted tone and expressive child-friendly language, for example, “spat out food if a zebra nuzzled it”, “wickedly smart”, “good at wrecking things”
  - the use of humour
- The clear descriptions and explanations of the designs, for example, “so it could spin”, “so the birds could see what was inside”
- The frequent use of clear cause-and-effect sentences
- The extra and/or clarifying information, often presented in parentheses, for example, “in other words, FUN”, “(It was a bit like a meerkat horror film ... )”, “(The trial was so successful that ... )”
- The supportive photos and diagrams (and the funky, cartoon-like quality of the latter).

## **Readability**

Noun frequency level: 11–13 years for guided reading

*What prior knowledge or experience might help my students to read this text?*

- Their knowledge of writing for a specific purpose and audience
- Their awareness of what they like and need as an audience member
- Their knowledge of layout and design.

*What text features might challenge my students and require a prompt or a brief explanation?*

- Particular words and concepts, including “stimulation”, “enrichment”, “meerkats”, “prototypes”, “mocked up”, “nuzzled”, “enclosure”, “stick mainly to the edge of bush”, “scavengers”, “mischievous”, “nimble”,

“slingshot”, “inner tube”, “mounted”, “axle”, “vandalism”, “brainwave”.

### **Preparation for reading**

The day before reading this article, discuss experiences of reading information texts – that is, of being an “audience member” for these texts. Have the students brainstorm things they need a writer to do to engage them and help them understand the information. Examples might be: a clear description of the topic or situation, logical ordering of ideas, interesting style that makes you want to read more, and explanation of difficult vocabulary. Prompt the students to consider visual as well as text aspects. Develop these ideas into a group list of “criteria for effective writing”.

Record the criteria on the board or a large piece of paper for use in the lesson.

(Making connections)

### **A framework for the lesson**

*How will I help my students to achieve the learning goal?*

#### **Before reading**

- Revisit the criteria from the previous day. Explain that you will be referring back to these criteria as you explore this text.
- Explain that you’ve chosen this text because it is a good model for writing. “We’re going to explore some of its features – and you can offer your own ideas on how successful it is.” Introduce the text by telling the students its:
  - topic: how Auckland Zoo solved the problem of keeping its animals entertained
  - audience: the students
  - purposes: to inform the audience about the problem for zoo animals and the process Auckland Zoo followed to solve this problem; to show the role of students in this process; to convey the technological and scientific ideas in their designs; to encourage the student audience to think about the ideas in the text
- Share the learning goal and success criteria with the students. (Note that they have already met the second success criterion of considering the audience’s needs – that is, their own needs.)

#### **During reading**

*Refer to Effective Literacy Practice in Years 5 to 8, pages 80–93, for information about deliberate acts of teaching.*

- Explain that it’s possible to detect some features of effective writing without reading anything. Have the students flick through the text and look for structural and design features that meet the criteria they created in their pre-reading task. On the group list, tick the criteria that the text meets – and also add new criteria (in a different colour) if they find features they haven’t thought of yet. (Analysing and synthesising; evaluating ideas and

information)

- Have the students independently read the khaki-coloured area on pages 10 and 11. Then have them think, pair, and share about text features that they have found that help the audience and meet the authors' purposes. Prompt the students to think about the organisation of information, the structure of paragraphs, and the language and tone. Check these features against the group list, adding new ideas as appropriate. (Analysing and synthesising; evaluating ideas and information)

Have the students read through the whole text to obtain a general overview. Then organise the students into pairs to explore specific sections suggested below and record any features that they find:

- "Sniff, Swing, Swipe 2001" (orange area, pages 11–12)
- "Meet the Kea" (khaki area, page 12)
- The students' designs (pages 13–15)
- "Keeper Feedback" (pages 16–18)
- Prompt the students to look for features related to:
  - overall structure (choice and arrangement of information, including signposting of sections)
  - paragraphs (including lead-in sentences)
  - sentences (including sentence structure and punctuation)
  - specific words (including choice of adjectives)
  - tone (including humour)
  - supports for difficult information (including explanations)
  - visual features (including colour and font).

(Analysing and synthesising; evaluating ideas and information)

### **After reading**

- Record the students findings against the existing list and add any new features found. "How many ticks are there against each criterion?" Discuss the overall effectiveness of the text in meeting the authors' purposes and audience's needs. (Analysing and synthesising)
- "Did you think the authors achieved what they set out to do? What worked well for you and why?" Have the students compare their responses with those of others in the group. Draw out the idea that different audience members need and like different things. "What does that mean for how an author needs to go about writing?" (Analysing and synthesising; evaluating ideas and information)
- Refine the "criteria for effective writing" and draw out any new learning (the features added in a new colour). "Which criteria do the identified features support?" (Analysing and synthesising)

- Review the learning goal and success criteria and reflect with the students on how well the learning goal has been achieved. For example, “Who is the audience for this text? Do the text features support the reader to understand the author’s intended message? How are you going to know what text features to include in your own writing to ensure it meets the audience’s needs?” Note any teaching points for future sessions.

### ***Links to further learning***

*What follow-up tasks will help my students to consolidate their new learning?*

The students could:

- create a rubric of criteria to stick in their workbooks (or on the classroom wall) and to use in their own writing (Analysing and synthesising; making connections)
- experiment with using one or two features in their own writing, ideally aspects that are “new learning” (Analysing and synthesising; making connections)
- analyse and assess another text against the rubric. (Analysing and synthesising; making connections)