

Language and text features

Collections 2: Working at it “Working on Ice”

The first two paragraphs give the big idea of the whole text – that Antarctica is a unique environment and a lot of planning has to go into ensuring everyone gets fed properly.

Words like “although” and “but” signal that a contrasting idea is going to be introduced.

The word “who” refers to the support staff and provides a link to further information (that they have important jobs).

The use of dashes to link ideas in a sentence creates an informal tone.

The use of “so” and “because” links cause and effect.

The use of informal language (also “snack” and “pop out”) maintains a conversational tone.

The structure of the sentence, using “from ... to ... and”, links the ideas and emphasises that everything needs to be considered.



For nearly fifty years, Scott Base has been New Zealand's base in Antarctica. It houses about eighty people over the summer, although only about ten or twelve of them stay for the long, dark winter. Many of them are scientists, but there are also support staff, who all have important jobs – people like chefs, kitchen hands, cleaners, mechanics, and engineers.

In Antarctica, you use up lots of energy just keeping warm, so you need good, nutritious food to keep up your energy levels. But if you're living at Scott Base, you can't duck out to the local takeaways for a snack – and the chefs can't just pop out to the supermarket, either. In fact, feeding the community at Scott Base takes a lot of organisation because everything has to come in from outside Antarctica. Every aspect, from ordering the food to storing it and disposing of the leftovers, has to be carefully thought out.

So who's in charge?

The new chefs arrive each year at the beginning of October. Over summer, more people need to be fed and more work has to be done, so there are two chefs. The summer chef works for four months from October to February. The winter chef stays for a full year until the next October.

Donna Wightman is working as the winter chef. She has cooked in all sorts of places before, including cafes, restaurants, and wineries around New Zealand and overseas, but cooking in Antarctica is definitely unique!



The “So” in the title refers to the important information conveyed in the previous paragraph. The rest of the question is implied – “So who's in charge [of all this careful planning]?”

The word “so” links cause and effect within the sentence.

The word “including” indicates a list or example to follow.

The use of the word “definitely” and an exclamation mark adds emphasis.

Language and text features

Collections 2: Working at it “Working on Ice”

Use of the passive tense.

The words “includes” and “like” show that a list or an example will follow.

Semicolons are used to clarify that there are groups of items (canned, frozen, and dry goods). It would be very confusing to portray this by using commas only. The semicolon acts as a sort of “super comma” here.

Use of commas to separate items in a list.

Use of dashes and/or “so” or “which” to link ideas.

The use of the word “even” and the exclamation mark adds emphasis.

How does the food get there?

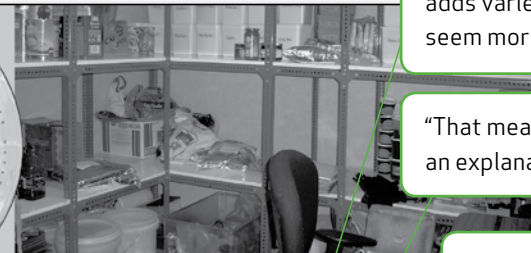
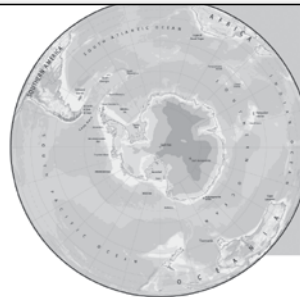
A bulk order of food is brought down to Scott Base by ship at the beginning of February. This order includes canned goods; frozen meat, fish, and seafood; and dry goods like flour and sugar.

During the summer, there are weekly flights by Hercules aircraft. These flights bring what people at Scott Base call “freshies” – eggs, dairy products, fruit, and vegetables. The summer chefs order what they want brought down by plane, but the flights are sometimes delayed by poor weather conditions, so the ordered “freshies” might not turn up for a couple of weeks.

The last flight of the summer is in late February. In June, a plane flies over to drop supplies and mail, but the regular flights don’t start again until October. That means that over the winter, the chef can only use what’s stored on site – which makes it even more important that the food is stored properly.

How is the food stored?

Even in Antarctica, you still need fridges and freezers! All the basic stores needed every day are kept in the kitchen, where there is a walk-in fridge-freezer and dry store. And there are other big freezers for things like frozen meat, fish, and ice cream.



Use of quote marks shows that this is Donna speaking. The quote adds variety and makes the text seem more personal.

“That means” indicates that this is an explanation of “food breakout”.

The example illustrates the information in the previous sentence (why it’s important to allow time for food to thaw).

Use of a dash to link ideas.

The use of an exclamation mark adds a personal touch. It shows Donna’s feelings.

Use of commas to separate items in a list.

Use of “either/or” structure to link ideas.

Use of “to” to explain why the eggs are sprayed.

Once a week, Donna does a food breakout. “That means I go outside to our storage hangar and gather up all the ingredients I think I will need for the week so they have time to thaw out. If I needed to open a tin of tomato paste straight from the hangar, for example, it would be frozen – and that can be very frustrating! So, really, you have to be organised for the week ahead.”

Often the problem is how to keep food from getting too cold – so there is also a warm store for eggs, cheese, pumpkin, potatoes, relishes, chutneys, oil, and some canned goods. These are foods that either don’t freeze well or would spoil at the temperature in the kitchen.

Eggs come in for special treatment. They are sprayed with oil to stop the air from getting into the shells, and they will then last for ten months or more without going off. And there’s no need to worry about going short of food. There’s at least two years’ supply of extra food, so the staff are unlikely to run out.