

How to describe a process:

When you have to give a series of instructions to make or produce something there are some common, useful and simple language features you can use to sound fluent and natural. In this programme we use the example of how to cook the perfect omelette to demonstrate this.

The imperative

One common feature when describing a process, such as the instructions for how to make a particular dish, is the use of the **imperative**.

The **imperative** form is made by using the bare infinitive of the verb (the infinitive without 'to'). Here are some examples from the programme. The **imperatives** are **in bold**. Note that in these examples there are no grammatical subjects

- "Use a minimum of four eggs per omelette"
- "Heat the oil, not too much heat, just **heat** it ... "
- "**Put** just one tablespoon of water, not milk, in with the egg ..."
- "**Mix** the eggs up, just lightly **beat** them with a fork ... "
- "**Pour** that into the hot pan ... "

It is possible to use subjects when describing a process like this. The subject most commonly used is 'you'. For example:

- **You** use a minimum of four eggs ...
- **You** heat the oil ...
- **You** put one tablespoon of water

Linking words

When giving a series of instructions it's more natural in speech and writing to join the different instructions together with linking words.

There are many different linking words that can be used to describe a sequence of instructions that are part of a process. Two very simple, but commonly used ones are **and** and **then**. Here are some examples from the omelette instructions.

- ... lightly beat the eggs **then** pour them into the pan ...
- ... Turn the heat down **and then** use your fork ...
- ... **And then** just put a knife underneath **and** flip the omelette over ...

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT?

Activity

Here are the different stages as described by Anita Cormac for making the perfect omelette. However, they are in the wrong order. Re-order the sentences to make the correct sequence.

You can download the activity with answer and the original recording of Anita below.

1. Turn the heat down and then use your fork to just run the back of the fork across the pan, all the way across the pan, just to create some layers. You're letting the partly cooked omelette, pushing it to one side and letting the raw egg fall into those spaces, and you'll find you'll create an omelette which is quite set underneath and quite soft on the top.
2. For a great savoury omelette, the freshest eggs that you can buy,
3. and then turn that out onto a plate and eat it with some lovely fresh bread.
4. and then put just one tablespoon of water, not milk, in with the egg and just mix the eggs up, just lightly beat them with a fork
5. and just heat the oil, not too much heat, just heat it,
6. use a minimum of four eggs per omelette. You need a little bit of oil in the bottom of a non-stick omelette pan,
7. And then just put a palette knife underneath and flip the omelette over so what you have is a hardly browned side and quite a soft beautiful velvety textur