Non-fiction - Recounts

Recounts are sometimes referred to as 'accounts'. They are the most common text type we encounter as readers and listeners, not least because they are the basic form of many storytelling texts. Stories and anecdotes can have a range of purposes, frequently depending on the genre being used, and they often set out to achieve a deliberate effect on the reader/listener. In non-fiction texts they are used to provide an account of events. Recounts can be combined with other text types, for example, newspaper reports of an event often consist of a recount that includes elements of explanation.

Purpose:
The primary purpose of recounts is to retell events. Their most common intentions are to inform and/or entertain.

Generic structure	Language features	Knowledge for the writer
Structure often includes: - orientation such as scene-setting or establishing context (It was the school holidays. I went to the park ...); - an account of the events that took place, often in chronological order (The first person to arrive was ...); - some additional detail about each event (He was surprised to see me.); - reorientation, e.g. a closing statement that may include elaboration. (I hope I can go to the park again next week. It was fun.) Structure sometimes reorganises the chronology of events using techniques such as flashbacks, moving the focus backwards and forwards in time, but these strategies are more often used in fiction recounts.	- Usually written in the past tense. Some forms may use present tense, e.g. informal anecdotal storytelling (Just imagine – I'm in the park and I suddenly see a giant bat flying towards me!). - Events being recounted have a chronological order so temporal connectives are common (then, next, first, afterwards, just before that, at last, meanwhile). - The subject of a recount tends to focus on individual or group participants (third person: they all shouted, she crept out, it looked like an animal of some kind). - Personal recounts are common (first person: I was on my way to school ... We got on the bus).	- Plan how you will organise the way you retell the events. You could use a timeline to help you plan. - Details are important to create a recount rather than a simple list of events in order. Try using When? Where? Who? What? Why? questions to help you plan what to include. - Decide how you will finish the recount. You'll need a definite ending, perhaps a summary or a comment on what happened (I think our school trip to the Science Museum was the best we have ever had). - Read the text through as if you don't know anything about what it is being recounted. Is it clear what happened and when? - Is the style right for the genre you are using? (Technical/formal language to recount a science experiment, powerful verbs and vivid description to recount an adventure, informal, personal language to tell your friends about something funny that happened to you.)