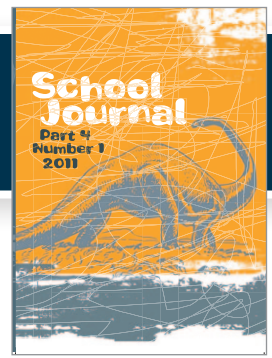


# Switching Sides

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Year 8



## Overview

In September 2009, Sāmoa switched from driving on the right-hand side of the road to driving on the left-hand side. “Switching Sides” provides the background to the switch and recounts the preparations for the changeover. The article features the perspective of a young girl in Sāmoa and (in a separate breakout box) reveals the protests and criticisms that preceded the change. It also includes information about other countries that

drive on the left and explains why there are different rules around the world. It supports the key competency of participating and contributing.

Students will bring their own experiences of using roads (in New Zealand and elsewhere) to help them understand and ask questions about the upheaval caused by the change.

Texts related by theme

“To Spray or Not to Spray” SJ 4.3.05 | “Deer, Oh Deer” SJ 4.1.10 | “Spitfires from Tonga” SJ 3.1.09

## Text characteristics from the year 8 reading standard

adverbial clauses or connectives that require students to make links across the whole text

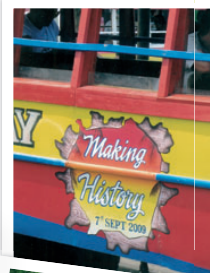
non-continuous text structures and mixed text types

words and phrases with multiple meanings that require students to know and use effective word-solving strategies to retain their focus on meaning

metaphor, analogy, and connotative language that is open to interpretation

Once the decision was made, months of preparation followed. The government ran a major public awareness campaign through the radio and television stations, and Matalena began to notice large banners stretched above the main roads: “Sauni mo le suiga o le itu-aualea” (Get ready for the road switch). “Drive on the left” stickers were issued to motorists for their rear windows. The 40 kilometres per hour speed limit around towns was reduced to 24 kilometres per hour, and speed humps were laid to slow drivers down. Roads were upgraded and widened, and the positions of traffic lights and traffic signs were changed.

Hundreds of “Tausisi ile itu agavale” and “Keep to the left of the centre line” signs were made, ready for the big day, to be erected as a reminder every few kilometres. Right up to the last minute, teams of road workers were painting large arrows on the country’s 233 kilometres of road to remind drivers what side their vehicles should be on.



### P.A.S.S.

Not all Samoans supported the government’s plans for changing the road code. In fact, the proposal caused fierce opposition, sparking protest marches the country had ever seen. Around a fifth of the population was against the switch, with 33 000 people signing a petition that was presented to the Prime Minister. A protest group, People Against Switching Sides (P.A.S.S.), even made a failed plea to Sāmoa’s Supreme Court. It said that the government was pushing through the changes too quickly and the lack of consultation went against the country’s constitution.

Critics believed the switch would bring mayhem to the roads. They said

the country’s vehicles would continue to be left-hand drive for a long time to come as people couldn’t afford to replace them. This concern about the cost of the switch was echoed by many. One bus company owner, facing a huge bill for modifying his buses, said, “I would rather bring my buses to parliament and burn them there for parliament to see what they are doing to us.” Car dealers and taxi drivers had similar concerns.

Despite the opposition, the government chose to continue with its plans. “The time is right for us,” said Prime Minister Tuila’epa Sālele Malielegaoi.

A monumental day: In December 2007, more than 15 000 protesters marched to the Samoan parliament building. Their banners and posters said “Safety Sāmoa” and “Why wasn’t I asked?”



sentences that vary in length, including long, complex sentences that contain a lot of information

academic and content-specific vocabulary

illustrations, photographs, text boxes, diagrams, maps, charts, and graphs containing main ideas that relate to the text’s content

## Possible curriculum contexts

### SOCIAL SCIENCES

LEVEL 4 – Understand how formal and informal groups make decisions that impact on communities.

LEVEL 4 – Understand how people participate individually and collectively in response to community challenges.

### ENGLISH (Reading)

LEVEL 4 – Purposes and Audiences: Show an increasing understanding of how texts are shaped for different purposes and audiences.

### ENGLISH (Writing)

LEVEL 4 – Purposes and Audiences: Show an increasing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.

### Possible reading purposes

- To find out when, why, and how road rules in Sāmoa were changed
- To understand how the people in Sāmoa reacted to a major change
- To evaluate the process of making a major change in the daily life of the people of Sāmoa.

### Possible writing purposes

- To research and report on the impact of the change on Sāmoa
- To plan a debate arguing for or against the change in Sāmoa
- To recount how a specific community responded to a challenge
- To explain the way decisions are made in our school or community.

See [Instructional focus – Reading](#) for illustrations of some of these reading purposes.

See [Instructional focus – Writing](#) for illustrations of some of these writing purposes.

## Text and language challenges

### VOCABULARY:

- Possible unfamiliar and/or specialist words and phrases, including “rely”, “public awareness campaign”, “banners”, “issued”, “speed humps”, “monumental”, “protesters”, “parliament”, “proposal”, “opposition”, “sparking”, “petition”, “a failed plea”, “consultation”, “constitution”, “critics”, “mayhem”, “echoed”, “modifying”, “pedestrians”, “instinct”, “crossing drills”, “precautions”, “compulsory”, “road verges”, “launch”, “changeover”, “churchgoers”, “intersections”, “roundabouts”, “broadcast”, “standstill”, “idle”, “signalled”, “resume”, “cautiously”, “confidence”
- The use of gagana Sāmoa, including names
- The colloquial and idiomatic terms and expressions, including “taken for granted”, “kinder on the environment”, “the time is right”, “the last minute”, “last but definitely not least”.

### Possible supporting strategies

- While reading and discussing the first paragraph, discuss the vocabulary usually associated with government decision making and the ways people respond to proposed changes. Use word maps to record and group words the students suggest, for example, separating out the vocabulary associated with protest from the vocabulary associated with persuasion and enforcement.
- Identify the language that students are likely to encounter in many contexts and focus on this for vocabulary learning. Offer students guidance on which words are most important for them to learn (and which are very low frequency and not such a priority).
- *The English Language Learning Progressions: Introduction*, pages 39–46, has some useful information about learning vocabulary.

### SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED:

- Knowledge of some formal and informal ways in which people respond to official rules
- Knowledge of the road rules in New Zealand and how they differ in other countries
- Some knowledge of Sāmoa’s history, including the fact that it was once ruled by Germany
- An understanding of the structure of a recount.

### Possible supporting strategies

- Give students a few questions on the topic such as “What do you think are the three most important road rules?” with each student having one topic and covering some of the prior knowledge needed. Nominate appropriate sources (for example, another teacher, a parent, or a book) for each student to go to. Then have them report back to the class as “experts” on their questions. Provide adequate scaffolding for those students who need it (for example, sentence starters to help students report back to the class). As students share their information, prompt them to use or feed in and record the vocabulary that is relevant to this text and topic.

### TEXT FEATURES AND STRUCTURE:

- The introduction that summarises the change
- The break-out that explains opposition to the change
- The additional historical and geographical information
- The map that shows countries that drive on left- and right-hand sides
- The use of passive sentence constructions for effect.

### Possible supporting strategies

- Review with the students the kinds of recounts they will be familiar with from their school studies as well as those in the print media (for example, newspapers and magazines).
- Support students to notice, understand, and use passive sentences. Ask them what the main action is and who did it. Explain that this kind of sentence is made by putting the object in front of the verb, adding the correct form of the verb “to be”, and using the past participle form (usually -ed) of the verb. Discuss why the passive is used.

# Instructional focus – Reading

**Social Sciences** (Level 4 – Social Studies: Understand how formal and informal groups make decisions that impact on communities.)

(Level 4 – Social Studies: Understand how people participate individually and collectively in response to community challenges.)

## Text excerpts from “Switching Sides”

History was made in Sāmoa on 7 September 2009. After a hundred years of driving on the right side of the road (a practice dating back to the early days of German rule), the entire country changed to driving on the left. Sāmoa was the first country in forty years to switch sides – and the only country ever to change from right- to left-hand driving.

Critics believed the switch would bring mayhem to the roads. They said the country’s vehicles would continue to be left-hand drive for a long time to come as people couldn’t afford to replace them. This concern about the cost of the switch was echoed by many. One bus company owner, facing a huge bill for modifying his buses, said, “I would rather bring my buses to parliament and burn them there for parliament to see what they are doing to us.”

Despite the opposition, the government chose to continue with its plans. “The time is right for us,” said Prime Minister Tuila’epa Sailele Malielegaoi.

Despite the opposition to the changeover, there were no accidents, traffic jams, or pile-ups.

## Students (what they might do)

**Students make connections** with their knowledge of Sāmoa and of driving to understand the meaning of the title.

**Students ask questions** to determine the meaning of “German rule” and seek information elsewhere if necessary.

**Students ask questions** about the potential problems of driving on a different side of the road. They **form hypotheses** about what they will learn in the text.

**Students synthesise** ideas about the government’s reasons for change and the critics concerns to reach a conclusion about the impact of the change.

**The students use knowledge of sentence structure** to work out the meaning of the complex sentence.

**Students locate and synthesise** information to come to a conclusion about the impact of the opposition to the change in Sāmoa.

## Teacher (possible deliberate acts of teaching)

**DIRECT** the students to preview the article by reading and discussing the introductory paragraph. Ask students to share their ideas (or direct experiences) about driving on a different side of the road.

**EXPLAIN** that a useful reading strategy is to ask questions in your head as you read. The questions you ask help you to find the information you need.

**MODEL** some possible questions:

- I wonder why they decided to change?
- I think “the early days of German rule” refer to when Sāmoa was a German colony. How could I find out more about this?
- I wonder what other countries have changed their driving side and why?
- I will keep these questions in mind as I read to see if the article answers any of them.

Additional support: Discuss the paragraph and ask the students to work in pairs to construct questions. Have the pairs share their questions and record them on the whiteboard. As you do this, prompt them to use the topic vocab that you’ve discussed/worked on.

**ASK QUESTIONS** if necessary to help students clarify their understanding of the opposition to the switch.

- What are “critics”? Who are the critics in this article and what are they criticising?
- List the reasons the government gave for the change and compare them with the criticisms on page 29. What is your opinion? Why?

**MODEL** the way you read and understood this extract.

- First I traced the reference back through the paragraph from “They” to “Critics” and then “this concern” back to “people couldn’t afford to replace them” and then from “one” to “many”.
- I know the present participle “facing” is short for “who is facing”. (Discuss what “who” refers to and the meaning of facing.)
- Then I identify the quote and who said it and what it means.

**MODEL** your thinking to support students to reach conclusions about the opposition’s impact on the changeover.

- I noticed the government decided to go ahead with the changeover despite the opposition of some people. I wonder why? I wonder how the people who opposed the changeover felt about this decision? Was their voice heard?
- After the changeover, the article says that there were very few accidents. I wonder how the people in the opposition felt when they heard this. Were they campaigning on more than just the safety issue?

**GIVE FEEDBACK**

- I noticed that you reread some sentences to make sure you understood them. That’s a good strategy to use as you read more complex sentences. You’ll be able to work them out more quickly.
- Sharing what you knew about Sāmoa helped your group to better understand the article because you provided some important background information.
- I noticed you kept coming up with new questions about the switch as you read. That’s a great way of keeping track of new information.

## METACOGNITION

**ASK QUESTIONS** to make the students’ strategies explicit for them.

- What personal experiences helped you to think about the implications of changing driving sides? How did these connections help you understand the text?
- Have you found some topic vocabulary to put into your vocabulary notebook? Why did you choose these? What information do you need to write about each expression?
- What did you do to reach those conclusions? What information did you synthesise to support your conclusions?

Reading standard: by the end of year 8

The Literacy Learning Progressions

Assessment Resource Banks

# Instructional focus – Writing

English (Level 4 – Purposes and Audiences: Show an increasing understanding of how to shape texts for different purposes and audiences.)

## Text excerpts from “Switching Sides”

When she first heard about the change, Matalena wondered why, if most of the world’s population drives on the right-hand side, Sāmoa had decided to switch to the left.

### P.A.S.S.

Not all Samoans supported the government’s plans for changing the road code. In fact, the proposal caused fierce opposition, sparking one of the biggest protest marches the country had ever seen. Around a fifth of the population was against the switch, with 33 000 people signing a petition that was presented to the Prime Minister.

Despite the opposition to the changeover, there were no accidents, traffic jams, or pile-ups. And in spite of a few minor dents, some near misses, and the sound of squealing brakes – history had been made. For Sāmoa, and Matalena, it was the beginning of a new left-hand era.

## Examples of text characteristics

### AUDIENCE

*One way of engaging readers in a non-fiction article is to use a personal story. Readers can identify with the person, and the author can use direct quotes and the person’s perspective to engage the audience.*

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

*Authors sometimes provide additional information that elaborates on the main information. Sometimes this relevant but non-essential information is put in a separate breakout, fact box, or footnote. This avoids breaking up the main text and gives the audience the option of when to read it.*

### SUMMARY

*Writing a brief summary that brings together the main points is a good way to end a recount. A summary often refers back to the start of the recount to leave readers feeling satisfied that they know more than they did at the beginning.*

### LISTS

*Lists are useful to bring together several separate, related details. There are punctuation rules that govern lists within a sentence. The verb used in a list should use the plural if it relates to all the listed items.*

## METACOGNITION

**ASK QUESTIONS** to encourage the students to think more deeply about their writing.

- How did you try to gain the interest of your readers? Why did you choose to do it that way?
- What did you mean when you said ...? How will your readers work this out?
- How did you decide which details to include and which to leave out? Is there some other way you can use the extra information you’ve gathered?

## Teacher

(possible deliberate acts of teaching)

**PROMPT** the students to consider their writing intentions.

- Who is your audience? Why have you chosen this audience?
- What do you want your audience to know or understand? Why should they care? Remember it’s your job as the author to engage the audience and keep them reading.
- What structure will best suit your audience and purpose? How will you organise information to get your message across to the audience you’ve chosen?

**EXPLAIN** that some information in an article may be “interesting but not important”.

- In non-fiction writing, you may include another viewpoint or some details that are interesting but not essential to understanding the main message.
- Consider your audience and your purpose: if this kind of elaboration will confuse readers, leave it out or make it very clear that it is not essential.
- Review the information you’re giving your readers. Is it all essential?
- What text structures could you use to help your readers decide how important this information is?

**EXPLAIN** that a summary is a useful way to end a recount.

- A brief summary can bring together the main points. It can refer back to the start of the recount to bring the reader full circle and clarify the main ideas. Identify your main ideas (from each paragraph), which you should have in note form from your planning. Check that you include all of your main points in your conclusion.

**PROMPT** students to use rules of punctuation and grammar for lists, using commas correctly and ensuring that the verbs used agree with the items listed.

**MODEL** the punctuation and grammatical constructions used in this extract.

- In each sentence, the items in the lists are separated by commas, with a conjunction before the last item.
- In the first sentence, the main clause contains the list and its verb, “were”. This verb is plural because it agrees with all of the three items listed.
- In the second sentence, the list is not in the main clause. It is part of a prepositional phrase (marked by the complex preposition “And in spite of”) so it does not have a verb. The verb is in the main clause “history had been made”.

**GIVE FEEDBACK**

- Your introduction shows me what you’re going to talk about and makes me want to find out more.
- I was interested in hearing Mena’s point of view in your report about Diwali. It helped me to understand what it would be like to be part of the preparations.
- Your proofreading has fixed the punctuation in the list of events. It’s now easier to read and understand.
- I can see that you have used the criteria to focus your writing. It makes it much more concise.

Writing standard: by the end of year 8  
The Literacy Learning Progressions