

Teaching writing

Guide for Years 8–9

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In the later middle years, writing provides students with powerful opportunities not only to learn about themselves and their connections to the world, but also to connect with the wider world in a variety of contexts. Through writing, they organise their thoughts, identify important information, solve problems, create and explore the aesthetic uses of language, reflect, and learn how to communicate in different real-life and lifelike contexts for a range of purposes. Students assume a variety of roles and, through their writing, create and negotiate relationships with different audiences, using language to control power, distance and emotional involvement along the continuum from informal to highly formal. They explore the potential of the written mode to interface with other modes, for example visual and digital, to create effective texts.

Teachers recognise that students' school writing experiences, as they become increasingly academic, can differ from the everyday writing experiences of most people. By providing real-life and lifelike contexts, teachers can include the production of longer and more complex print, multimodal and electronic texts for authentic and sophisticated cognitive writing purposes.

Building a supportive writing community

The quality of writing is enhanced when students see the topic as worthwhile and relevant to their lives and the writer has:

- an interest in the topic
- depth of knowledge and understanding about the context
- experience with the text type
- knowledge and skills about the available lexical and grammatical choices
- confidence as a writer
- motivation to write.

As in the early middle years, a key factor in motivating students to write and enjoy writing is the nature of the learning community. In a supportive writing community, teachers:

- build knowledge about language and literacy through shared, guided and independent reading activities that focus on the craft of the writer
- negotiate the writing task or aspects of the writing task with students
- write an exemplar of the task to identify the key contextual and language features that will require explicit teaching and to develop task-specific criteria
- explicitly teach the language features for successful completion of the task
- model the writing process by producing and sharing their own writing with students
- think aloud about the decisions and explicit language choices they make in producing texts
- provide opportunities for joint construction of a text or part of a text (e.g. introductory paragraph, headline)
- establish routines and structures for supportive interactions in which students talk about their texts, and share, conference and respond to texts with the teacher or peers
- provide specific constructive feedback on drafts and the final text using a shared terminology (built through explicit teaching of the criteria) to talk about language
- model and explicitly teach reflective strategies as texts are drafted, crafted, edited and published
- share and celebrate students' writing.

The teaching focus

Expectations for Years 8–9 focus on students' ability to use their language resources effectively and appropriately in producing a wide range of text types that simulate real-life purposes for a variety of cultural and social contexts; in writing to learn; and in writing to demonstrate learning. Teachers continue to embed writing activities in holistic units of work. Teaching focuses on:

- the writing process and students' understandings of themselves as writers
- active writing strategies required to achieve particular purposes, including writing to entertain, writing to learn and writing to demonstrate learning
- the impact of cultural and social beliefs, values and practices on texts and readings
- the power of choices of subject matter, grammar, vocabulary or modes to represent people, places, objects, issues and concepts in particular ways
- extending vocabulary and subject knowledge
- features of a wide range of text types that narrate, entertain, instruct, inform, explain, analyse, influence and persuade, communicate and invite points of view, or include or exclude different characters, viewpoints or audiences
- ways of using textual features to represent the subject matter, create relationships with audiences and organise cohesive texts
- non-linear texts such as digital narratives and lyric poetry, and texts that combine genres, such as stories told as a series of letters or emails, and feature articles that use procedural texts for satirical purposes
- patterns of language features (vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, thematisation, and nominalisation) and literary devices across whole texts.
- variations in language use across different contexts and in different roles and relationships
- strategies for selecting information and crafting texts in familiar and new contexts
- core spelling and recognition of commonly confused words (e.g. homonyms, homophones) and strategic spelling of multisyllabic words based on phonology, visual patterning, morphology and etymological knowledge
- conferencing, editing and proofreading strategies including using authoritative sources such as dictionaries, thesauruses and spellcheckers
- skills in constructively responding to texts written by peers and reflecting on own writing process and text product.

Planning modelled writing lessons

In Years 8–9, teachers and students collaboratively explore the ways in which texts are crafted during read-aloud, shared and guided reading activities within the context of the unit. Teachers draw on this shared knowledge during modelled writing lessons as they:

- demonstrate the production of more complex literary and non-literary texts using print and electronic media
- use exemplar texts to compare different text types or the same text type in different contexts

- model the thinking processes involved and the metalanguage students can use
- demonstrate the reasoning behind choices that writers make

Teachers may choose to model the whole process during one lesson by writing and revising a short text or may return several times to the same text and model the process of rethinking and revising their text over time. Models constructed in the classroom are unlikely to get to a published stage as the focus is on the process of composing. Joint constructions of the text or parts of the text can be part of modelling.

Before writing

Step 1: Identifying or negotiating the writing task in context

Discuss the context, purpose or problem that is the focus for the writing task. (This may also be the unit focus.)

Identify the cultural purpose and text type to suit the context.

Select suitable subject matter, role, audience and medium for the writing task.

Discuss the assessment processes, including criteria and standards.

Step 2: Accessing prior knowledge

Establish or review students' knowledge of the context/topic and the text type.

Record ideas and information in a systematic summary of shared knowledge.

Talk about the social purpose and audience for the writing.

Introduce or review examples of a text type appropriate to the context and purpose.

Discuss, compare and contrast several model texts, for example:

- contextual and textual elements (e.g. narrative elements; issue or point of view taken in a feature article; knowledges, values and practices of individuals or groups represented in a text)
- print and images
- generic structure (stages of the text) and how the model confirms and/or challenges expectations
- vocabulary (subject-specific, general, connotations)
- grammatical choices
- literary devices.

Step 3: Designing a writing plan

Plan the parts of the whole text using the summary of shared knowledge from step 2.

Consider the language choices required to suit the role.

Select, group and sequence ideas to be included in different stages of the text.

Think aloud and encourage students to think aloud to make the decision-making process explicit. Use guided questioning to provide explanations and reasons as information and ideas are sorted and organised.

During writing

Step 4: Composing the first draft / joint construction

Use a whiteboard or chart to write a first draft of a short text or part of the text. As you write, think aloud about the selection and sequencing of subject matter and the lexical and grammatical choices you make in representing the ideas in a text to suit your role, audience relationship and medium.

Model:

- selection of subject matter and vocabulary to reveal author's voice
- whole text and paragraph structure
- use of cohesive devices such as text connectives
- selection of appropriate and effective vocabulary choices, including expanded nominal groups and evaluative language
- use of varying sentence structures to suit the purpose
- different spelling strategies.

Step 5: Rethinking, revising and conferencing

Invite students, individually or in groups, to provide constructive feedback on the draft (focus on meaning):

- Does it make sense?
- Is the appropriate author's voice communicated?
- Is the message you are inviting clear?
- What changes (vocabulary, grammar, generic structure) might improve the effectiveness of the writing?

Think aloud about the possible need for other codes (e.g. images, sound bites, colour) to support the text.

Rethink and revise the draft based on feedback.

Step 6: Editing and proofreading

Use an editing checklist to proofread and correct spelling and punctuation. Think aloud about the reasons for your editorial changes.

After writing

Step 7: Sharing writing and publishing

Share your writing with the group by reading the piece and inviting students to respond.

OR

Discuss publishing options for your writing and establish a publishing plan, which might include decisions about:

- medium for publication
- print/electronic format

- scanning images
- borders
- font (style, size and colour).

Further explicit teaching in response to language issues arising from the modelling process.

Scaffolding for independent writing

Scaffolding is the process of developing students' abilities to approach a writing task independently by:

- providing a supportive environment
- providing guided task support through directed activities and frameworks
- explicitly teaching the metacognitive processes and language needed for the writing task.

This can occur as the students, with the guidance and modelling of the teacher, deconstruct exemplar texts, explore ways to develop drafts through guided practice, and reflect on their writing and the writing of others. Teachers can also scaffold learning during and after writing and during formal and informal conferences.

Before writing

Scaffolding process	Teaching focus
<p>Before writing, teachers provide learning activities in which students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • talk about the domain knowledge of the world, language and self that relates to the writing task • explore relevant contextual and language aspects of the writing task • establish personal writing goals and consider how these relate to their understanding of task requirements and assessment criteria • clarify key features of the context, cultural purpose, text type, subject matter, role, audience and medium • make decisions about planning and designing their texts • identify active writing strategies. 	<p>Text, purpose and audience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitudes, values and beliefs • Purpose and text type • Subject matter • Writer's role and relationships to audience (power, distance, attitudes) • Medium (e.g. anthology of stories, newspaper) • Assessment processes, criteria and standards • Retrieving deep understanding of the subject matter <p>Textual features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stages of the text type • Organisational patterns • Vocabulary • Grammar and sentence structure • Cohesion • Word structure • Punctuation <p>Metacognition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referring to previous writing work and feedback received <p>Knowledge about writing process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active writing strategies • Task demands • Goal setting • Retrieving and organising ideas • Designing a writing plan to meet assessment demands

Effective teaching strategies

Examples of activities	Reflection/conferencing questions
Step 1: Identifying the task	
<p>Immersion in relevant texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predicting and confirming expectations of text purpose, stages, subject matter, roles, relationships and medium • Finding similarities and differences across texts <p>Exploring the cultural and social context surrounding text production</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designing a flowchart on how the newspaper or advertising industry works in the context • Identifying the use of personal pronouns to engage audience (e.g. using highlighters) • Roleplaying to investigate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – positions adopted (accepting, resisting) – subject matter or language chosen to suit and challenge different relationships 	<p>Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do I know ... need to know ... have I learnt (KWL)? • What sort of text is best suited to my purpose? • What is my main subject matter? <p>Teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are you going to write about? • What is your role? Who is your intended audience? Are they known/unknown? are you the expert, a peer, or a subordinate? • What attitudes do you have towards the subject matter and audience? • Where can your text be published? What modes can be used to support your writing? • How should this text be judged? How will you tell if your writing is appropriate and effective?
Step 2: Accessing prior knowledge	
<p>Generating ideas and researching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listening, reading and viewing relevant texts • Speedwriting • Sharing prior knowledge through discussion and retrieval charts • Exploring genre boundaries • Field trips and excursions <p>Sharing writing to collaboratively construct knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussing people, concepts, events or activities • Posing questions, hypothesising • Building a metalanguage with students • Experimenting with different points of views (e.g. an alternative protagonist), settings, tenses, personal pronouns • Teacher-led or small-group writing focusing on selection and sequencing of ideas, different grammatical choices to suit context, and the writing process <p>Organising and clarifying ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concept maps/webs, T-charts <p>Making grammatical choices</p> <p>Transformation activities that look at the effect of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing words and word groups in sentences • Comparing choices of person in two different texts • Identifying evaluative words to judge or appreciate • Varying sentence structures <p>Developing vocabulary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word banks • Etymological activities • Sensory writing activities • Speaking games and activities • Reading 	<p>Teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What deep understandings of the context and text are relevant to this task? • How do you generate your ideas for writing? • How does listening or viewing different texts help you with your writing? • What grammatical choices will you need to make to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – represent your subject matter – construct the appropriate relationship with your audience – suit your medium? • How did you choose the resources you used? • How were they helpful? • What strategy did you use to organise your information before you began writing? • How do you generate your ideas for writing? <p>What helps you get organised for writing?</p>

Examples of activities	Reflection/conferencing questions
Step 3: Designing a writing plan	
<p>Planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brainstorming on the task Five Ws: who, what, when, where, why PMI on subject matter (plus, minus, interesting) Y-chart on setting, characters, etc. <p>Organising main ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Storyboard or plot profile Sequencing chart Paragraph frame Top-level structuring Literary sociograms or character charts Sensory word banks and comparisons <p>Identifying representations of people, places and things</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Y-chart on setting, characters, etc. Selecting quotes and evidence to support representations <p>Sharing writing plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> with peers with teacher <p>Reviewing plan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Talking to elaborate, clarify ideas <p>Developing metacognitive awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students may contribute to a class journal to record writing–reading connections and/or maintain a writer’s reflective notebook <p>Planning checklists</p>	<p>Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do I plan to do with this text, e.g. entertain, inform? What representations do I want to construct? Who will be my audience? How do I want my audience to react or respond? What would an audience like this respond to, e.g. humour, emotive appeals, shock tactics? What ideas should I include? What organisational pattern will I use? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> list/description comparison/contrast cause/effect problem/solution question/answer narrative structure <p>Do I want to manipulate or play with the stages of the text type?</p>

During writing

Scaffolding process	Teaching focus
<p>During writing, which may occur in the supportive classroom environment or in an independent setting, teachers scaffold students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> make links between their previously activated domain knowledge and the demands of the task compose, revise and discuss their drafts, considering their choices of textual and language features to match the purpose and audience for their writing. <p>Students have a greater degree of independence when working with familiar text types, and are more heavily supported when composing new or complex text types.</p>	<p>Metacognition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Active writing strategies <p>Text, purpose and audience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attitudes, values and beliefs Purpose and text type Subject matter Writer’s role and relationship with audience (power, distance, attitudes) Medium (e.g. anthology of stories, newspaper) Assessment processes, including criteria and standards Appropriateness and effectiveness of text for the context <p>Textual features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stages of a text Organisational patterns Paragraphing Sentence structure Vocabulary Grammar Cohesion

Scaffolding process	Teaching focus
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word structure/spelling • Punctuation <p>Knowledge about writing process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routines for conferencing • Group work procedures • Conferencing strategies and formats • Publishing elements such as handwriting, formatting, layout, graphics, font, visual and auditory features

Effective teaching strategies

Examples of activities	Reflection/conferencing questions
Step 4: Composing a draft	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing a draft based on an individual or shared writing plan • Using class vocabulary charts and other resources to assist in making word choices • Using authoritative sources as a resource for vocabulary uses and spelling <p>Developing metacognitive awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for peer conferencing • Checklists based on task-specific criteria 	<p>Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does my writing sound like speech or written language? • Will my reader understand these ideas? • Will this have the desired effect on my audience? Will they think I'm a person like them, an authoritative expert, a trustworthy source, or maybe find me inspiring? • Have I used a suitable organisation pattern to share my ideas clearly and logically? • Is my writing cohesive? Do my sentences and paragraphs make sense? Is there a better way of organising my sentences to engage the reader or convey my message? • Have I made the most effective word choices? <p>Teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In what ways is talking before writing helping you? • What strategy did you find most helpful for organising information? • How has exploring different authors' perspectives on an issue helped you prepare for writing?
Step 5: Rethinking, revising and conferencing	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading and rereading drafts to check clarity of meaning and author's voice • Sharing own draft and responding to others' drafts (author's chair) • Discussions in pairs to identify parts that don't make sense or seem to have information missing • Using an editing checklist based on the task criteria, and commonly shared codes (e.g. s = spelling) to note breakdowns in meaning • Editing the draft to repair breakdowns, checking with authoritative sources where necessary <p>Developing metacognitive awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining a personal or class grammar notebook or spelling list 	<p>Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have I used suitable words and sentence patterns? • Do I sound like I want to sound in this situation? • Will my audience understand my message, laugh at the funny parts, believe what I write? • Is there anything that I need to change to make the meaning clearer, to be more interesting, or have a stronger impact on my audience? <p>Teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have enough information to support your ideas? • How did you know what words were missing? • How does talking with your peers help you to express your opinion when you are writing? • Explain how you used a thesaurus to help with your revisions. • How does it help you to listen to someone else read your writing?

Examples of activities	Reflection/conferencing questions
Step 6: Editing and proofreading	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting appropriate layout, such as position of diagrams and illustrations, font, colour, headings and spaces to suit the medium for publication • Reading and rereading draft for correctness and accuracy (spelling, grammar, punctuation) • Using an editing checklist and codes to proofread and edit technical and language features <p>Developing metacognitive awareness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students may evaluate their work and the work of their peers against the criteria and standards provided for the task 	<p>Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is my text grammatically correct? • Are the words spelt correctly? • Have I used correct punctuation? • Does my presentation allow the audience to focus on important parts of the text and meanings invited? <p>Teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What strategies did you find useful during writing? • What editing strategies are helpful to you? • What grammatical choices did you use specifically to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – represent the subject matter – assume your role – create the appropriate relationship with your audience – position your audience – make effective use of language modes and the medium?

After writing

Scaffolding process	Teaching focus
<p>After writing, students share their written work. Teachers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • value and celebrate students' efforts • provide opportunities for reflective thinking that focuses on the whole process and the texts produced • guide students' self-evaluation of their writing in terms of the task-specific criteria and standards • collaborate with students to select pieces of writing for assessment folios that students believe reflect their growth and competence as writers • encourage students to explain their selections using appropriate terminology. 	<p>Text, purpose and audience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the finished text operates in context • How students' world knowledge has changed or grown as a result of their engagement in writing <p>Textual features</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge of terminology for talking about writing has expanded (metalinguage) <p>Metacognition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection on strategies used, personal strengths as a writer, and links with their own world knowledge <p>Knowledge about writing process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active writing strategies • Reflecting on task demands, goals set and evaluating the appropriateness of their writing to meet these goals • Criteria for assessing writing • How language choices are made in response to context

Effective teaching strategies

Examples of activities	Reflection/conferencing questions
Step 7: Sharing writing and publishing	
<p>Evaluating texts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflecting on and evaluating own writing and the writing of peers using a variety of assessment tools, including checklists, logs and criteria sheets • Identifying strengths and new personal writing goals • Reviewing their drafts and reflecting on the drafting process • Using their class or personal journal to record ideas that can be used again: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – ideas for writing – new and interesting words – personal grammar and spelling lists – useful graphic organisers – strategies that work <p>Developing metacognitive awareness</p> <p>Students may use a reflective journal, discussion or other evaluative tool:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What world knowledge have I gained? • What have I learnt about using language? • What have I learnt about the writing process? • How do I view myself as a writer? • How can I improve? 	<p>Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What have I done? • What can I do to improve my writing? • How can I use what I have learnt? • Do I enjoy writing? Why? • Was my text effective and appropriate for the context? • Did the audience respond as I expected? <p>Teachers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does what you know about reading different books help you when you are writing? • What is effective writing like?