

When teaching writing, there are three things that must happen every day:

- Children need to learn something about writing.
- Children need to write in an environment that brings the whole class pleasure.
- Children need an opportunity to share and talk about their writing.

It's as simple as that. This routine is what's called the contemporary writing workshop approach (Young & Ferguson [2020](#)).

Writing Workshop
Mini Lesson 5 -10 minutes
Book Making Time 20 – 40 minutes
Class sharing & Author's chair 5 – 10 minutes

Writing in Nursery is always an invitation, an enticement to write. In Reception, we expect children to participate in writing every day. We don't expect all children to produce beautiful books every time nor do we expect children to necessarily write on the theme that is being suggested. The youngest writers are spontaneous in their book-making; they write what they are most moved by in that given moment. Sometimes children will start book-making time and not know what they are going to write. After a while they will start drawing, and these drawings will lead to a book being crafted. At other times, they will simply mirror the book-making of others at their table and write in response to what their peers are doing. Some days, they might not make a book at all. Instead, they will sit and watch their peers at work. Be assured they are learning a lot during these moments too.

Mini-lessons

Mini-lessons are orientated towards showing children things that other writers do when composing their books to make them exciting, useful and memorable. The children are then invited to try the same things in their books during book-making time.

Examples in the very early stages could be: make something on every page; make a front cover; write a title; put the author's name on it; tell it, don't read it; make a page, share a page; how to ask your friend for help.

Mini-lessons are taught more than once, and in response to the needs of the children.

Book-making time

Children need purposeful, extensive and repeated practice in the craft of writing. The children are encouraged to work independently, having access to resources that can help them be more independent.

Pupil Conferencing

Conferencing takes place during daily book-making time, when children are engaged in making their own picture books (Ferguson & Young 2021).

This is a conversation between two fellow-writers (adult & child) sitting side by side, talking about how their book is coming along and chatting about writing and being a writer more generally. It's also an opportunity for them to tell you what their picture book is about, read it to you and for you to maybe read it too. Once you've found an opening, you can take the opportunity to teach the child something interesting or important about writing that is appropriate to their level of development.

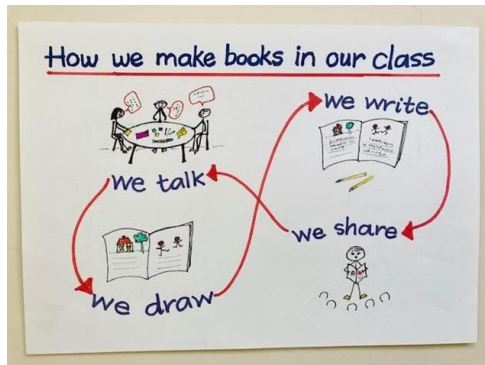
Class Sharing & Author's Chair

Time is given for children to share their books. Children don't spend their time and energy making books without having the expectation of sharing and celebrating their accomplishments with others. Hearing about their friends' sincere interest in their book and the connections they are making and

wanting to share with them as the writer can make a child beam the biggest of smiles and fuel a flame that can nourish them as a writer for months to come. They feel accepted into the community of writers, or what Frank Smith called 'the literacy club'.

Writing Projects

Projects can last between 4 and 6 weeks. It isn't about teaching children how to make a specific type of picture book (this is the focus of the Class Writing Projects are taught throughout the year), but is more about getting children to internalise the routines and procedures of writing workshop, including the writing processes they'll use:



Talking <-> Drawing <-> Writing <-> Sharing

The Process

Generating Ideas

Children's ideas for their books come from their experience of hearing and reading other picture books, from talking and drawing, from their own interests, the things happening in school, and from what they read and watch at home. The teacher may hold a class 'ideas parties' where ideas are generated and shared collectively.

Talking

Children are given lots of time throughout the writing workshop session for talking and sharing with each other. Their talk acts as an important form of planning.

Children talk with one another before they write, as they write and after they write. These interactions occur in different ways and can include:

- **Idea explaining** Children share what they plan to write about during the session with others.
- **Idea sharing** Children work in pairs or small 'clusters' to co-construct their own texts together.
- **Idea spreading** One pupil mentions an idea to their group. Children then leapfrog on the idea and create their own texts in response too.
- **Supplementary ideas** Children hear about a child's idea, like it, and incorporate it into the text they are already writing.

Drawing

Drawing is not a rehearsal for writing: drawing is writing

- Horn & Jacobbe (2007)

For children of this age, drawing, along with talking, is a form of planning. Early on, children learn that their book is only finished when every page has a picture and some writing on it, and slowly this becomes the expectation.

Writing

Depending on what stage they are at developmentally, children will be using 'kid writing', single letters for words, sound spellings and conventional spellings (Byington & Kim 2017). We want writing to be as fluent and as low-stakes as possible. Through daily instruction and daily meaningful practice, children will, over time, begin to write more conventionally.

To help children during writing time a writing checklist is shared.

Sharing, revising and 'proof-reading'

Through the sharing process, children as young as Nursery age will revise or update their picture books, adding more details to their drawings or by adding in more writing in response to their readers' reactions, questions, noticings and comments. They can also begin 'proof-reading' their pieces by checking that they are 'finished'.