

Writing in Key Stage 1 (Year 1 & 2)

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 10 - 15 minutes
Writing Time 40 – 50 minutes
Class sharing & Author's chair 10 – 15 minutes

Mini-lessons

Mini-lessons are orientated towards showing children things that other writers do when composing their books to make them exciting, successful and memorable. The children are then invited to try the same things in their books during book-making time. Examples could be: talk it then write it; generating writing from your drawings; writing a great title; going back and adding sensory detail; share what you've written so far; how to use capital letters. Mini-lessons are taught more than once.

Writing 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

This takes place during daily writing time, when children are engaged in making their own picture or chapter books (Ferguson & Young 2021). It is time for the adult to talk with the child about how their book is coming along and chatting about writing and being a writer more generally. It's also an opportunity for the teacher to engage in high-quality individualised instruction that is appropriate to their level of development.

Class Sharing & Author's Chair

Time is made for children to share their writing. 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 writing 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'

Product Goals

Writers will sometimes talk about their published writing as being their product – the thing they have crafted at the end of their writing process. Product goals then are things we have identified as

being necessary or desirable if our writing is going to be a meaningful and successful 'product' for our readers. Product goals are identified collaboratively as a whole class.

These product goals eventually turn into checklists. They are displayed on the working wall so that they can continually be referred to during pupil-conferencing and mini-lessons.

The Writing 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.

Planning: 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.
- Communal text rehearsal Children say out loud what they are about to write - others listen in, comment, offer support or give feedback.
- Personal text rehearsal Children talk to themselves about what they are about to write down. This may include encoding individual words aloud. Other children might listen in, comment, offer support or give feedback.
- Text checking Children tell or read back what they've written so far and others listen in, comment, offer support or give feedback.
- Performance Children share their texts with each other as an act of celebration and publication.

Planning: Drawing

Drawing is not a rehearsal for writing: drawing is writing - Horn & Giacobbe (2007)

For children of this age, drawing, along with talking, is a form of planning. Early on, children should learn that their book is only finished when every page has a picture and some writing on it, and slowly this should become the expectation. Only once this expectation is established can it be broken.

Other Planning Techniques are introduced as the children develop For example: Idea hearts; What do you know?; Top fives and top tens; I'm an expert in; Webbing; Classification trees and Five finger planning.

Drafting

Depending on what stage they are at developmentally, some children will be using 'kid writing' (see link), single letters for words, sound spellings and of course 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, write conventionally.

Revising

Throughout KS1, children are expected to be able to revise their pieces in relation to the product goals set for a class writing project. The children are given a writing checklist which largely focuses **on improving the compositional aspects of their writing**.

Editing

At the beginning of Year One, as in Reception, editing is more about the children ensuring that their book is 'finished' more than anything else.: As the year progresses, and into Year Two, the editing checklist can be developed to help the children to improve the transcriptional aspects of their writing eg correcting spelling and simple errors in punctuation.

Writing Projects

Children love working on 'projects' because they love the idea that they are making stuff - Ray & Cleveland (2004)

The key to accelerating writing development in the earlier years of schooling is for children to make picture books throughout Reception (Young & Ferguson 2021) and to continue with this apprenticeship by asking children to craft picture books and 'chapter books' throughout KS1. Composing in this way allows children to use both drawings and writing to share meaning. Their drawings also act as their planning, a chrysalis for writing not yet crafted, and can be the reminder they need when they return to their developing pieces the next day. Picture books are also great because they seem to naturally encourage children to write cohesively and in complete sentences. In Reception, children typically start by writing one sentence per page and over time extend this to complete paragraphs (Young & Ferguson in press). Finally, the concept of making 'books' is very versatile because they allow children to write in pretty much any genre and they can add, remove and change their pages at will.

In KS1, children will start the year by making picture books with around 6-8 A4 pages stapled together in landscape. As children develop, they are introduced to the idea of 'chapter books.' These are A4 portrait pages with a space for illustrations at the top. Children can use as many sheets as they feel they need before stapling their chapter book together.

When children are invited to generate their own writing ideas and are given the opportunity to develop their pieces for genuine publication and performance, they end up caring deeply about them doing well. They want their books to be 'right' and they want them to be taken seriously. They give their manuscripts an attention and focus that simply doesn't occur when they are writing for the sole purpose of teacher evaluation, on a subject not of their choosing, and for no discernible purpose (Young & Ferguson 2021).