Section 3

Writing instruction

Features of exemplary writing instruction

When students are engaged in purposeful writing tasks, teachers provide support for them through explicit teaching. Teachers also guide students by demonstrating how to achieve particular purposes, discussing the effectiveness of writers’ choices and giving feedback at all stages of writing.

The goal of all teaching is for students to become independent writers. Teachers continue to provide support until students can compose texts for particular purposes independently. However, even when students can write for certain purposes independently, there are always greater writing challenges over the horizon with which they need help. This applies even beyond school. So, even though independence is the goal, explicit teaching and guidance are always needed.

From Focus on literacy: Writing, p. 26.
Through their research, Graham, Harris and Larsen (2001) identified the features of exemplary writing instruction:

- a literate classroom environment where students’ written work is prominently displayed, the room is packed with writing and reading material and word lists adorn the walls
- daily writing with students on a wide range of writing tasks for multiple audiences, including writing at home
- extensive efforts to make writing motivating by setting an exciting mood, creating a risk free environment, allowing students to select their own writing topics or modify teacher assignments, developing assigned topics compatible with students’ interests, reinforcing students’ accomplishments, specifying the goal for each lesson, and promoting an ‘I can’ attitude
- regular teacher/student conferences concerning the writing topic the student is currently working on, including the establishment of goals or criteria to guide the student’s writing and revising efforts
- a predictable writing routine where students are encouraged to think, reflect and revise
- overt teacher modelling of the process of writing as well as positive attitudes towards writing
- cooperative arrangements where students help each other plan, draft, edit or publish their written work
- group or individual sharing where students present work in progress or work completed to their peer(s) for feedback
- instruction covering a broad range of skills, knowledge and strategies, including phonological awareness, handwriting and spelling, writing conventions, sentence-level skills, text structure, the functions of writing, and planning and revising
- follow-up instruction to ensure mastery of targeted writing skills, knowledge, and strategies
- integration of writing activities across the curriculum and the use of reading to support writing development
- frequent opportunities for students to self-regulate their behaviour during writing, including working independently, arranging their own space, and seeking help from others
- teacher and student assessment of writing progress, strengths, and needs
- periodic conferences with parents and frequent communications with home about the writing program and students’ progress as writers.
Strategies to engage all students in writing

Modelled writing

Purpose
Modelled writing helps students to gain knowledge about language, vocabulary and text structures required to write for a range of purposes. Modelled writing includes explicit teaching about the processes involved in composing text.

*Focus on literacy: Writing, p. 29.*

Description
Modelled writing means using both models and modelling. Modelled writing refers, on the one hand, to the selection of models to show students how writing works and, on the other hand, to the teacher’s practice of modelling or demonstrating writing to students.

The best source of models for writing is the real world, that is, the texts that students read. In modelled writing, teachers provide students with examples of the type of text they will be composing, explanations of how these texts work and structured demonstrations of what efficient writers know and do.

*Focus on literacy: Writing, p. 28.*

Preparation

- Use the assessment information gathered to determine the skills, knowledge and understandings to be revisited and taught (build on what students already know and can do).

- Identify the English K–6 Syllabus outcomes to be achieved and the indicators that might demonstrate movement towards or achievement of the outcomes.

- Identify the context or content area the writing will occur in.

- Collect short but well-written examples of different types of texts that students will be composing. Relate each example to a planned unit of work where that particular type of text will play a role in the student’s learning and where the purpose and audience for whom the text is written can be clearly identified.

- Highlight and label the key features of each type of text. Keep these examples in a book or folder with copies of them on overhead transparencies. See an example of an exposition on page 29.

- Provide text scaffolds to support the modelling (composing) of each type of text and include these in the folder as a resource, see page 32. (Samples of a range of text types can be found in English K-6 Modules).

Text scaffolds can also be used in guided and independent writing activities and carefully structured talking and listening activities. For many students from different language backgrounds, carefully structured talking and listening activities will be an important bridge to the successful use of written language.
• Identify the different ways students will build field knowledge prior to the modelled writing session. For example, strategies such as brainstorming what is known about a topic and what we want to find out about it are good starting points for building field knowledge, see page 58. These lead to activities that help students to explore and organise new information appropriate for the type of text to be composed.

• Recognise, value and build on the different cultural understandings, skills and values that students bring to the classroom.

Implementation

• Introduce the type of text by clarifying the purpose and audience for whom the text is written – the social purpose or intention of the text.

• Display the model of writing selected to show students how this particular type of writing works.

• Explore with students the type of texts associated with other key learning areas and state explicitly for students which types of texts are valued in key learning areas. See page 31 for some examples.

• Read together and point out the typical features of the text using the 'think aloud' writing strategy, see page 33.

• List the typical features or on a prepared list tick each typical feature as it is demonstrated. Refer to page 29 for one example of typical features for an exposition.

• Point out to students the type of language used by the author to influence the reader.

• Consider presenting an unsuccessful example of the same type of text. Change the list of typical features into evaluation questions as shown on page 31. Use the questions to demonstrate why the writing may not be as effective when an important feature is missing.

• Cut samples of texts into sections appropriate to the stages of the type of text. Then have the students sequence the sections into an appropriate order. See page 109.

• Use a variety of newspaper and feature articles for students to categorise according to audience and purpose.

• Use different types of text on the same topic to compare the effectiveness of different word and text choices made by the writers.

• Ask questions to keep students’ attention and to check their understanding of important points.

• Provide opportunities for students to practise the knowledge, skills and understandings that have been demonstrated in guided and independent writing sessions.

Helpful hints:
Remember to include samples constructed by students.
An example of modelled writing – exposition
The teacher’s copy showing some of the typical features of an exposition.

**Text Structure**

**A statement of position**
Cars should be banned in the city.

Cars should be banned in the city. As we all know, cars create pollution and cause a lot of road deaths and other accidents. Cars are also noisy.

**Preview of argument**
Firstly, cars contribute to most of the pollution in the world. Cars emit a deadly gas that causes illnesses such as bronchitis and lung cancer. The deadly gas can also trigger asthma. Some of these illnesses are so bad that people can die from them.

**Argument 1**
**Point elaboration**
Secondly, the city is very busy.

Pedestrians wander everywhere and cars could hit them. This could cause some pedestrians to die. Cars today are the biggest killers on our roads.

**Argument 2**
**Point elaboration**
Thirdly, cars are very noisy. If you live in the city, you may find it hard to sleep at night, or concentrate on your homework. The noise can make it especially difficult to talk to someone.

**Argument 3**
**Point elaboration**
In conclusion, cars should be banned from the city for the reasons listed.

**Language Features**

**Use of modal verb to indicate obligation, e.g. should**

Use of word chains to build topic information e.g. cars, pollution, accidents, road deaths.

Use of action verbs e.g. die, wander.

Linking verb ‘causes’ used instead of causal conjunction e.g. cars emit… that causes…

Relating verbs, e.g. ‘is’, to relate parts of the clause, e.g. the city *is* very busy.

Use of connectives to sequence arguments, e.g. firstly, secondly, thirdly.

Adapted from English K–6 Modules, p. 254.
Cars should be banned in the city

Cars should be banned in the city. As we all know, cars create pollution and cause a lot of road deaths and other accidents. Cars are also noisy.

Firstly, cars contribute to most of the pollution in the world. Cars emit a deadly gas that causes illnesses such as bronchitis and lung cancer. The deadly gas can also trigger asthma. Some of these illnesses are so bad that people can die from them.

Secondly, the city is very busy. Pedestrians wander everywhere and cars could hit them. This could cause some pedestrians to die. Cars today are the biggest killers on our roads.

Thirdly, cars are very noisy. If you live in the city, you may find it hard to sleep at night, or concentrate on your homework. The noise can make it especially difficult to talk to someone.

In conclusion, cars should be banned from the city for the reasons listed.
Features of an exposition

Typical features of an exposition

- States topic and the writer’s opinion in the first sentence with a summary of the reasons.
- States argument 1 (usually the strongest argument) with details that support this reason. The writer considers the roles and relationships of those involved to determine the tone of the writing.
- States argument 2 with details that support this reason.
- States other arguments with details to support them.
- A conclusion is written to reinforce the writer’s opinion.
- Language features include:
  - simple present tense
  - connectives and conjunctions to link arguments, e.g. *next, therefore, as a result, firstly.*
  - words which qualify arguments, e.g. modal verbs *should, could,* modal adverbs, e.g. *surely, completely,* modal nouns, e.g. *catastrophe, devastation,* modal adjectives, e.g. *urgent, reasonable.*

Evaluation questions for an exposition could be:

- Does the first paragraph state the topic and the writer’s opinion with a summary of the reasons?
- Is each argument clearly stated with details to support that argument?
- Is the last paragraph written as a conclusion reinforcing the writer’s opinion?
- Are the language features appropriate for this type of text?

Linking texts with other key learning areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of text</th>
<th>HSIE</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>PDHPD</th>
<th>Creative Arts</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Descriptions</td>
<td>Changes resulting from colonisation</td>
<td>Animals, machines</td>
<td>Healthy lifestyles</td>
<td>Portrait of a person or painting</td>
<td>Describing the passing of time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reports</td>
<td>Local area, countries</td>
<td>New inventions</td>
<td>Nutritional foods</td>
<td>Musical instrument</td>
<td>3D shapes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
<td>Care plan for natural site</td>
<td>Describe an experiment or make a kite</td>
<td>Play a game or how to test lung capacity</td>
<td>Make a puppet</td>
<td>Build a prism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recounts</td>
<td>Historical events, biography</td>
<td>Record the growth of plants over time</td>
<td>Personal experience, biography</td>
<td>Art gallery excursion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanations</td>
<td>How people grow and change</td>
<td>How a machine works</td>
<td>How muscles make the body move, how food is digested</td>
<td>How an instrument makes a sound</td>
<td>How to solve a problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expositions</td>
<td>Children should be able to watch any TV program they like</td>
<td>Should we spend money preserving endangered animals?</td>
<td>There should be no school rules</td>
<td>Modern music is better than classical</td>
<td>No one needs to learn tables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions</td>
<td>Environmental issues</td>
<td>Recycling</td>
<td>Childhood vaccination</td>
<td>Dancing is the best exercise</td>
<td>Using calculators in class</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from *Choosing literacy strategies that work, Stage 2,* p. 199.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task scaffolding – writing an exposition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This proforma can be used on an OHT. It provides one example of a task scaffold to support the modelling (writing) of an exposition by the teacher. This sample scaffold can also be used to support students during guided or independent writing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Exposition

**Topic**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Write the topic and your opinion in the first sentence. Give a summary of your reasons.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Argument 1  
with details that support your reason. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My first reason/argument/point .....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To begin with, .....</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Argument 2  
with details that support your reason. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A second reason .....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furthermore, .....</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Argument 3  
with details that support your reason. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My last point .....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another reason .....</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conclusion/reinforcement of your opinion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In conclusion .....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Therefore we/I believe .....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finally, .....</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
‘Think aloud’ writing

Purpose
The purpose of this strategy is to explicitly demonstrate the choices and decisions that writers make as they plan, analyse and edit their own writing.

Description
‘Think aloud’ is exactly what it means – the process of saying aloud what the writer is thinking while completing a writing task. It can be described as self-narration. By modelling for students the types of behaviours good writers are engaged in as they write, teachers are providing students with the opportunity to become aware of the many strategies writers use to generate and organise ideas. As appropriate, the teacher can encourage students to chime in and help ‘think’ through the writing task.

It is a strategy that can be used to demonstrate a comprehensive range of skills, knowledge and understandings about writing. For example, it can be a useful strategy when teaching elements of:
• text structure, grammar and punctuation
• spelling
• handwriting
• the process of writing; for example, editing, proofreading.

Students can be encouraged to use ‘think aloud’ writing as they provide peer support during shared or paired writing.

Implementation
The teacher chooses a writing focus based on the identified needs of the students. For example, the focus could be to teach students specific editing and proofreading skills. The teacher might select a sample of a student’s draft writing and use ‘think aloud’ writing to demonstrate the decisions and reasoning when editing or proofreading the text.

Some examples in this handbook where ‘think aloud’ writing can be used effectively are:
• during modelled writing where the teacher models each step of the POWER strategy while writing on an overhead transparency, see page 96
• when using collaborative talk while sequencing a scrambled text, see page 108
• when an analogy is used to predict the spelling of an unknown word, see page 169
• self-talk while completing a concept map, see page 77
• when modelling the process for indentifying key words and phrases while note-making, see page 80.

Helpful hints: Keep the sessions fairly short. Don’t attempt to verbalise everything as you write.

Focus on only one or two aspects of the text at a time. The same text can and should be revisited time and again to focus on different text features.
Guided writing

Purpose

The purpose of guided writing is to:

• provide students with explicit and systematic teaching of writing to meet their specific needs

• conduct a writing activity that involves the students and the teacher jointly composing a text

• provide opportunities for students to work as a group or in pairs to support each other, with the teacher as a guide.

Description

Guided writing is a key strategy for assisting students who need additional support in writing.

In guided writing students are required to draw on the knowledge, skills and understandings developed during modelled writing sessions, with varying degrees of support from the teacher.

A common guided writing activity involves students and the teacher jointly composing a text.

The guided writing sessions can involve the whole class, small groups or individuals. They can provide a setting for effective team teaching with the support teacher learning assistance (STLA) and other support personnel such as the English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher.

Preparation

• Analyse assessment information gathered to prioritise and identify each student’s specific needs, see page 18 ‘A process for assessing writing achievement’.

• Match identified needs to the outcomes of the English K–6 Syllabus and determine the outcomes that students will be working towards or achieving.

• Identify indicators of achievement that students might display as they move towards achievement of the outcomes.

• Identify and plan monitoring procedures, see pages 19, 20.

• Decide on how the writing sessions will be conducted; for example, small groups, individuals, whole class.

• Identify the strategies that will support students in building field knowledge prior to the guided writing session, see page 57.

• Recognise, value and build on the different cultural understandings, skills and values that students bring to the writing classroom.
Guided writing strategies

Using a jigsaw cloze to reconstruct text

A jigsaw cloze is a variation of written cloze in which lines of a poem, sentences of a literary text or stages in a factual text are cut up and jumbled like a jigsaw.

Students can reconstruct the text with teacher direction, using as a guide the stages of the text type, the language features that might give them clues (time connectives, use of pronouns) and their knowledge of order of events. See pages 106–110 for the explicit teaching of a sequencing task related to the reconstruction of an explanation.

Constructing a fact file

Provide students with a proforma for organising their information to construct a fact file for a topic being researched.

Jointly construct a fact file to demonstrate the process.

Encourage and support students to work in pairs to research and construct their own fact file.

Invite students to share their fact file with other students and compare facts researched.

Below is an example of a fact file constructed after researching a favourite Australian author on the internet.

---

**Author:** Pamela Allen

**Birthdate:** 1934

**Some personal details:** Born in New Zealand, moved with family to Australia, won numerous book awards

**Hobbies and interests:** Studied Fine Arts, loved drawing as a child, writes and illustrates picture books for the very young

**Books include:** Who Sank the Boat?, My Cat, Maisie, Belinda, Alexander's Outing

---

**Key**

- Award winner
- Film of book
- Fiction
- Picture book
Keeping a learning journal

Students can use a learning journal to help them reflect on what they have learned during the course of a unit and to practise integrating new information into written texts.

Demonstrate to students how to keep a learning journal during the course of a planned unit of work (see the example below). Ask students to turn to the first double page in their folder. Explain that the left hand page can be used for brainstorming things learned each day and the right side for writing a factual paragraph using information from the list or writing about one topic from the list.

Set up two sheets of chart paper side by side (left and right) and jointly construct a text to provide a model for students as they work independently on their own journal pages.

Display and review a list of typical features of a well constructed factual paragraph that students can refer to if a prompt is needed, see page 95.

Assist students to use correct spellings and understand the patterns of grammar for the type of text they are constructing. This could be done by brainstorming and scribing on an overhead transparency appropriate action and relating verbs, nouns groups that describe, and adverbial phrases to give information about what, where and why, see page 37. Students may be prompted to use these language features when constructing their text.

An example of a learning journal kept during the course of a Science unit on space.

Brainstorming things learned each day on the left hand page.

Constructing a factual paragraph using information from the list on the right hand page.

What is the moon like?

384,400 kms from Earth
our closest neighbour
no air to breath – atmosphere
covered in craters
huge mountains
spins on its axis
orbits the Earth for 29 days
empty of life
a natural satellite
dead and silent world
low gravity

What is the moon like?

The moon is a dead, silent world
384,400 kms from Earth. It is a natural satellite and our closest neighbour. The moon orbits the Earth taking 29 days for each rotation. The Moon is empty of life and there is no air for humans to breath. The surface of the Moon is covered with giant craters and huge mountains.
Identifying grammatical patterns

When brainstorming, group the brainstormed words and phrases. This assists students to understand the patterns of grammar for the type of text they are constructing.

- a natural satellite
- a remarkable large satellite
- a dead silent world
- our closest neighbour
- low gravity
- empty of life

**Action verbs**
- spins on its axis
- explored its surface
- orbits the Earth

**Relating verbs**
- has
- is

**Noun groups**
- that describe

**To describe**
- relating verbs to provide information
- action verbs to describe

**THE MOON**
Devising a board game

Work in small groups to devise a board game on a literature theme or other topic being studied.

Examine a variety of board games and discuss the main components. Provide a proforma with leading questions to guide students in devising their own game. See the example below.

After the games have been devised, it is important that each group has the opportunity to display and explain its game to the rest of the class and to play the games created by other groups.

This process allows students to discuss the games, give compliments and share concerns about any potential problems.

Leading questions when devising a board game

Who will be playing this game? Students in our class

What will be the purpose of the game? To learn more about a topic we are researching, to interpret charts, diagrams, a matrix ...; to construct simple sentences: questions, statements, commands.

How will that purpose be achieved? Students will be given a ‘clue sheet’ to use for constructing questions and statements; players will be given a ‘clue sheet’ to locate the answers.

What will be the name of the game? The topic: Earth in Danger!

How many players will be needed? Two players.

What will the board game look like? It will have numbered squares and the players will race against each other to the finish (see example on page 39).

How will the players move or win points? By giving the correct answers.

Who will start first? Students will take turns to start first.

What will be needed to play this game? Answer cards, game board, eight question cards, six cloze statements, counters, ‘clue sheet’, spinner.
Earth in Danger!

Game for two players.

Be a quiz winner! Look at your ‘clue sheet’ carefully and find the answers.

How to play
Players take turns spinning the spinner and move according to the number they spin. If a player moves to a colour, they choose a card of that colour and answer the question or complete the statement, using a ‘clue sheet’ to search for the answer. The ‘clue sheet’ may be a diagram, graph, matrix or written clue. (See page 40.) If their response is correct, they advance according to instructions on the card.

Equipment
Spinner with numbers 1 and 2
Counters
Red and green game cards
Clue sheets
An example of an information report that could be used as a ‘clue sheet’.

**EARTH IN DANGER**

Planet Earth is in danger. The climate is heating up, which may cause seas to rise and flood our coastal cities.

**The Earth is heating up**

Since 1980 the world’s climate has become half a degree warmer. The 1980s was the hottest decade in more than two centuries. The climate is expected to heat up another one to four degrees by the year 2050.

The warmer seas may expand and parts of the world’s ice caps and glaciers could melt. As a result, coastal cities could become flooded to a depth of about sixty centimetres.

*Our Earth, BST Booklet, Year 3, 1999.*

An example of statement and question cards.

- **Why is planet Earth in danger?**
  - Advance one step.
- **What does the thermometer tell us?**
  - Advance one step.
- **What can happen when the climate heats up?**
  - Go one step forward.
- **The Earth is....................... up.**
  - Go one step forward.
Organising information to compare and contrast

Provide students with a scaffold for organising information to compare and contrast some aspect of a topic under investigation.

Brainstorm to record information already known on a topic. Suggest categories for comparing and contrasting, and jointly complete the scaffold in preparation for constructing a descriptive report. See one example of a scaffold below.

As a variation, invite students to work with a friend and use the scaffold to organise information about themselves to describe how they are alike and how they are different. Brainstorm suitable categories that students can use for comparing and contrasting their individual characteristics.

### Comparison/Contrast Organisation Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who/what are being compared/contrasted?</th>
<th>Sue (me) and Alice (my friend)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appearance</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alike?</td>
<td>Both have black hair and brown eyes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different?</td>
<td>Sue is tall and thin; Alice is short.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food preferences</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alike?</td>
<td>Fudge, potato chips, pancakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different?</td>
<td>Sue likes Hungry Jacks; Alice, McDonalds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hobbies and other interests</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alike?</td>
<td>Swimming, netball, going to the movies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different?</td>
<td>Alice plays the flute – Sue plays the drums.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Constructing a flow chart

Discuss the use of flow charts to sequence information about related aspects of a topic.

Explain that a flow chart is a visual text and another way of explaining and recording a chain of events in a sequence. Explanations and information reports are often supported by flow charts to enable a better understanding of the topic. Show examples such as the one below.

We visited an orange orchard and a factory where cordial is made...

Citrus Fruit

Orange, lemon, mandarin, grapefruit, kumquat and tangelos are citrus fruit.

Citrus fruit trees grow best in warm climates. In colder lands, they can be grown in greenhouses.

Fruit growers try to make sure their plants produce a high yield. The soil must be fertile, so chemical fertilizers or manure are added. These provide nutrients which help the plants to grow well. Some growers use chemical sprays to stop the fruit from falling from the tree too early. Pesticides to combat insects and fungicides to prevent disease. (Because of this, it is important to wash any fruit if the skin is to be eaten.)

New varieties of citrus plants have been created. Some bear larger fruit. Other new plants grow all their fruit the same shape and colour. There are also new plants which resist pests and diseases.

Making Orange Fruit Juice Cordial

Fruit is picked → Fruit crushed to a pulp → Pulp sent to factory in drums → Bottles delivered to shops

At Tinamba Bay Camp, BST Booklet, 1993.

Emphasise that it is very important to study the flow charts carefully (note the direction of the arrows, the sequence of action verbs etc.) to clearly understand the information provided.

Jointly construct a flow chart as a model for students to follow.

Decide on a topic under investigation, consider the audience and layout and determine the main chain of events to be sequenced. Ensure students have sufficient field knowledge and the data readily available to complete the flow chart.

Use questioning techniques and ‘think aloud’ to assist students to design and interpret the flow chart.

When completed evaluate the clarity and effectiveness of the flow chart.
Evaluating questions may include:

1. Is the topic clear?
2. Are the selected events the most important ones?
3. Is the chain of events in the right sequence?
4. Is there a sequence of action verbs crucial to the explanation?
5. Do the noun or noun groups support the diagrams or pictures?
6. Could a reader not familiar with the topic understand this?

Invite students to work in pairs or small groups to construct their own flow chart.

**Helpful hints:**
Consider using the flow chart as a clue sheet for constructing questions and locating answers when constructing a board game.
Jointly construct a recount

Jointly construct a recount of a shared experience, for example, a school excursion to the Sydney Royal Easter Show. Use a recount plan to guide organisation in preparation for writing. See the example below.

Determine the purpose and audience.
Consider the context of the recount; for example, if the recount is to be published in the school newsletter the audience is distant and the language choices will be formal. The writer will also need to include more information in the writing because the reader may not have shared the experience.

Decide on the information that will need to be included in the introduction.

Brainstorm the key events. Sequence these key events.
Select four of the key events and model how to elaborate on those key events using phrases.
Demonstrate how to use authoritative sources to support the development of elaborations, see page 45 for examples.

Consider the logic that will underpin the organisation of events.

Decide how the recount will end.

Sample of a recount plan to guide organisation, in preparation for writing. The writer selects the events about which he or she will write. These are shaded in the example below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background/Orientation</th>
<th>Saturday 23rd March</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When? Who?</td>
<td>Class 5B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where? Why?</td>
<td>The Sydney Royal Easter Show – to find out more about the Great Australian Muster, i.e. the time when the country comes to the city.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Record of events</th>
<th>Events in the Main Arena 09:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Order could be, for example:</td>
<td>– NED - the legend of Ned Kelly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– The Santa Gertrudis Spectacular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Showtime Freestyle Motor X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– RM Williams Stockmen’s Ride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Bush poet Guy McLean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Fireworks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Mick Johnson ‘Comedy Clown’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Hyundai Precision Driving Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– Horseman from Snowy River</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Re-orientation (optional) e.g. | The day was both educational and entertaining. |
|--------------------------------| We now know more about the Great Australian Muster, i.e. the time when the country came to the city. |
| How did it end?                |                                          |
| Feelings and thoughts about the events |                                             |
| Evaluations                    |                                             |
| Judgements                     |                                             |
Model how to elaborate on these key events using effective phrases gathered from an authoritative source.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key events</th>
<th>Elaboration of the event using phrases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Santa Gertrudis Spectacular was one of the earliest events we saw.</td>
<td>A special parade in the Main Arena of Santa Gertrudis cattle to mark the 50 years of Santa Gertrudis cattle in Australia was impressive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watching NED – The legend of Ned Kelly was interesting.</td>
<td>This production presented the ‘true and tragic tale’ of the famous bushranger brought to life by a cast of 80 actors and crack riders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We were able to see the exhibition of Kelly memorabilia in the Woolworths Fresh Food Dome foyer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Variations:

- Create a class mural to show the sequence of events. Jointly construct labels for the mural that recount main events and highlight elaborations.
- Cut a recount into sections. Separate the topic sentence in each event from its elaboration.
  
  Have students working in small groups or pairs sequence the recount. Students can refer to the recount plan on page 44 as a prompt, if needed.
  
  On completion, students report and justify their choices.
Innovating on a text – encouraging confidence and creativity in students’ writing

Select a suitable text containing a repetitive structure either throughout the book or in parts of the book and innovate on the text.

Read the text several times with the students.

Discuss the structure, the language features, the pictures, the intended audience and the author’s purpose in writing the text.

Discuss how some of these aspects might change after innovating on the text.

Model a simple innovation and have students work in small groups to create an innovation of their own.

For example, But Where is the Green Parrot? by Thomas and Wanda Zacharias, could become But Where is the Little Brown Lizard?

The description of each location along with a sketch of the camouflaged lizard for children to find, supported by the repetitive question But Where is the Little Brown Lizard? could become a captivating story, composed by primary aged students for younger students to read.

Model a simple innovation and have students work in small groups to create an innovation of their own.

Text: But Where is the Green Parrot?

➔ Start of story

An example of one location.

➔ End of story

See an example of an innovation on the next page.
An example of an innovation on part of the text
But Where is the Green Parrot?
But Where is the Little Brown Lizard?

Variation:
Students could work as a whole class to create a shared big book for Kindergarten, with each group contributing its own innovation (location) as part of the story sequence, using the same repetitive language structure.
An example of an innovation exercise for older students

Select a suitable text that contains examples of the language features to be taught. The text below could be used as a model for students on how a writer can use noun groups and descriptive phrases to effectively build a picture for readers.

Read the text several times with the students, drawing attention to the context, structure, language features, intended audience and the effectiveness of the writer’s choices.

Arriving within sight of his old home, he rested on his oars and surveyed the land cautiously. All seemed very peaceful and deserted and quiet. He could see the whole front of Toad Hall glowing in the evening sunshine, the pigeons settling by twos and threes along the straight line of the roof; the garden, a blaze of flowers; the creek that led up to the boat-house, the little wooden bridge that crossed it; all tranquil, uninhabited, apparently waiting for his return. He would try the boat-house first, he thought. Very warily he paddled up to the mouth of the creek and was just passing under the bridge when ... Crash!

(The Wind in the Willows by Kenneth Grahame.)

Plan an innovation with the students. Use questions to guide a brainstorm of phrases that will describe the scene of someone returning to their childhood home after many years away only to find it now empty and deserted. Use the text as a model to develop the noun groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prompt questions</th>
<th>Brainstorm ideas and phrases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrive in what?</td>
<td>Sports car, rests on steering wheel, driving, parking, staring into the darkness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe the first scene – what can he see?</td>
<td>It’s quiet and deserted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the day like?</td>
<td>Front step broken, path overgrown, trees swaying,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How might he feel?</td>
<td>It’s night time but not dark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The moon is shining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Windows all broken, shattered, the veranda is falling down, weeds are everywhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sticky, dusty cobwebs, draping, hanging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Garden neglected, weeds everywhere, ivy covers everything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>House lonely, deserted, uninhabited, empty, sad-looking</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Jointly construct an innovation as a whole class group before the students work in smaller groups or pairs to develop their own innovations.

He arrived at his childhood home in the evening after many years away. He approached slowly in his red sports car and came to a stop. He rested his hands on the steering wheel and peered through the trees into the darkness. All seemed quiet and deserted. The moon shone down brightly, illuminating the overgrown pathway, littered with leaves and broken branches. The trees swayed in the gentle wind, waving and whispering like long lost aunties welcoming him home.
Independent writing

Purpose
Independent writing provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate their skills in composing a variety of text types.

Description
When writing independently, students should be encouraged to:
- define their purpose
- identify their audience
- engage in further research if necessary
- jot down ideas and notes
- think about how to organise ideas effectively
- write drafts
- share drafts with peers and the teacher
- rework drafts in the light of comments about text organisation, cohesion, grammatical choices, sentence structure, spelling, punctuation and layout
- prepare and edit a final draft
- publish and present their work for further feedback.

Focus on literacy: Writing, pp. 31, 32.

Strategies to support independent writing
Students who need additional support in writing may need to spend more time with the teacher on joint construction experiences before undertaking independent writing.

Strategies to support these students when they have proceeded to independent writing include:
- the POWER strategy, see pages 95–101
- conferencing with peers, teacher and other support personnel, see pages 51–53
- appropriate levels of scaffolding, see pages 83–89
- cooperative learning, see pages 54–56
- independent use of the Self-Regulated Strategy Development (SRSD), see pages 90–94.

Implementing learning experiences for independent writing
Many of the learning experiences outlined in the guided writing section could be used for independent writing once students have gained the knowledge, skills and understandings to construct the type of text required and can undertake independent research.
Writing conferences

Purpose
Writing conferences allow teachers to:

• monitor and assess student progress
• evaluate and plan effective teaching and learning activities
• establish a supportive framework for problem solving by students and their peers
• provide explicit teaching suited to the individual learning needs of each student
• cater for and support the range of abilities within a classroom
• share information
• provide positive feedback for student success
• give students the tools and the language to reflect on their own and other students’ writing.

Description
A writing conference is a discussion between a teacher and a student or between one student and another about a student’s writing. It may be a highly structured process in which the student and the teacher keep a written record over time, or it may be an informal process applied incidentally as required. The writing conference may occur before, during or after writing.

Teachers and students involved in a writing conference should focus on the purpose and the intended audience of the text as well as the structure and language features. Later the text should be proofread for such details as spelling and punctuation.

Types of conferences might include:

Individual conference
Individual conferences allow teachers to discuss and negotiate text with each student and to monitor each student’s development in writing. A writing conference record can be kept.

Group conference
Group conferences occur when a group has a common need or interest, such as working on the innovation of the same narrative text or writing a procedural text.

Peer conference
Students can conference with each other once the teacher has modelled the procedure.

Whole class conference
Whole class conferences are opportunities for a teacher to model writing strategies and to provide models of written texts.

Another type of conference can take place in the assessment and reporting process. This can be known as:

The three-way conference, the student-led conference or the student-centred conference

The teacher, parent and student meet to discuss the outcomes achieved and address any relevant issues. Learning goals, proposed by the student in cooperation with his or her teacher, are agreed upon.

Questions that might guide a conference

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What has the writer composed?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Is the text effective?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is the purpose clear?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is the text well-developed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What type of text is used?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What does the writer know?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Does the writer know enough about the field or topic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is the writer clear about the intended audience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is the writer clear about the purpose of the writing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Is the text type appropriate?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Has the writer used appropriate language choices?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What does the writer need to know?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does the writer need to know:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• more about the field or topic?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• what type of text will best reflect the purpose of the writing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• more about structuring and staging the text?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• more about the language features such as verb types and synonyms?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• how to organise the clauses or sentences so the text is cohesive?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• how to check spelling?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• how to find more appropriate vocabulary?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• how to express shades of meaning?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What can be done to help the writer move on?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Ensure the writer clarifies the purpose of the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Provide specific support in the area of need.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Choosing literacy strategies that work, Stage 2.
It is important to provide students with suggestions for comments they could use when conferencing. The example provided below lists comments as strengths and needs and is specifically related to the writing of a narrative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Needs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• It’s funny</td>
<td>• More humour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It’s scary</td>
<td>• More suspense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It’s exciting, etc.</td>
<td>• A better beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Great beginning</td>
<td>• A better ending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Great ending</td>
<td>• More accurate spelling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Accurate spelling</td>
<td>• Full stops and capital letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Easy to read</td>
<td>• Paragraphs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Punctuation clear</td>
<td>• More interesting title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• I like the part when…</td>
<td>• More descriptive language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interesting title</td>
<td>• A better complication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Some interesting adjectives, e.g. hairy, enormous, freaky</td>
<td>• Better sequencing of events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Interesting complication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Good resolution</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clear sequence of events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cooperative learning

Purpose

Cooperative learning is the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximise their own and each other's learning.

Description

Class members are organised into small groups after receiving instruction from the teacher. They then may work through the assignment until all group members successfully understand and can complete the task. Cooperative efforts result in participants striving for mutual benefit so that all group members gain from each other's efforts and have a shared common purpose.

In cooperative learning situations there is a positive interdependence among students' goal attainments; students perceive that they can reach their learning goals if and only if the other students in the learning group also reach their goals. No one group member will possess all of the information, skills, or resources necessary to complete the task.

What it achieves

Cooperative learning has been found to improve academic performance, lead to greater motivation towards learning, increase the time on task, improve self-esteem and lead to more positive social behaviours. Cooperative learning is particularly effective in classrooms that include a range of abilities and achievement levels as well as in those with culturally and linguistically diverse populations.

Cooperative learning fosters the development of higher level reasoning and problem-solving skills and occurs when students work together in small groups to accomplish shared goals. It is not just placing students in a group and telling them to work together, or having the student who finishes first help the slower students to finish. Particular attention needs to be given to the structure of the group and the requirements of the task. Students should have the opportunity to work in a variety of groups.

Five essential elements

Cooperative learning is planned and organised. According to Johnson and Johnson (1989), five basic elements must be included for the lesson to be cooperative.

1. **Positive interdependence**: Each student needs to feel that his or her contribution is important and necessary for the group to succeed. The feeling is that they must sink or swim together. Assigning group roles to students helps in developing a shared contribution.

2. **Face-to-face interaction**: Group members need to encourage, support and assist each other's efforts to learn. It is important for students to learn to explain their reasoning to each other.

3. **Individual and group accountability**: Each student's performance must be assessed regularly and group members need to be aware who needs more help to complete the task. Group members must each agree that they need to work together to complete their task if the group is to be successful.
4. **Social skills must be taught**: Learning groups are not productive unless members are skilled in cooperating with each other. The skills should be taught and then practised by the class and continually monitored and reinforced. Some of the skills that students need to learn are:

- taking turns speaking
- listening techniques
- asking clarifying questions
- speaking quietly
- speaking politely and positively to one another.

5. **Evaluation**: This can be achieved by asking two questions:

- What is something each member did for the group?
- What is something each member could do to make the group even better?

**Roles in cooperative learning groups**

When students are involved in cooperative learning, giving each member of the group a specific role can be an effective way of ensuring active participation.

Depending on the size of the group, the task that is set and the outcomes to be achieved, roles of group members could include:

- **Leader**: Leads the group when carrying out the task by saying what the strategy or process will be and the steps involved.
- **Time keeper**: Sets the timer for each activity and lets the group know when it is time to move on.
- **Reader**: Reads the text aloud to the group or leads the group when they are reading along together.
- **Recorder**: Records any ideas or information researched.
- **Writer or scribe**: Writes drafts with input from the group. This may take place during a group conference with revising and editing occurring as a result of discussion.
- **Illustrator**: Creates a visual text, if appropriate.
- **Runner**: Is the only group member to request assistance from the teacher.
- **Reporter**: Reports back to the class the findings or main ideas of the group.
- **Investigator**: Carries out any research.
- **Clarifier**: Makes sure everyone in the group understands; paraphrases if necessary.
- **Editor and proofreader**: Reads and makes suggestions for the final draft.
- **Publisher**: Is responsible for publishing the final draft.
Cooperative learning structures

The following are some of the cooperative learning structures provided in this handbook that assist students to understand and engage in the process of writing:

- Brainstorming and categorising to plan the first draft, see pages 58–60
- Cooperative cloze, see page 121
- Sequencing text (Jigsaw close), see pages 106–109
- Note-making, see pages 61–64
- Constructing a fact file, see page 35
- Devising a board game, see pages 38–40
- Innovation on a text, see pages 46–49
- Writing a recount, see page 44
- Writing conferences, see pages 51–53.