

The cognitive and motivational case for inviting children to generate their own writing ideas

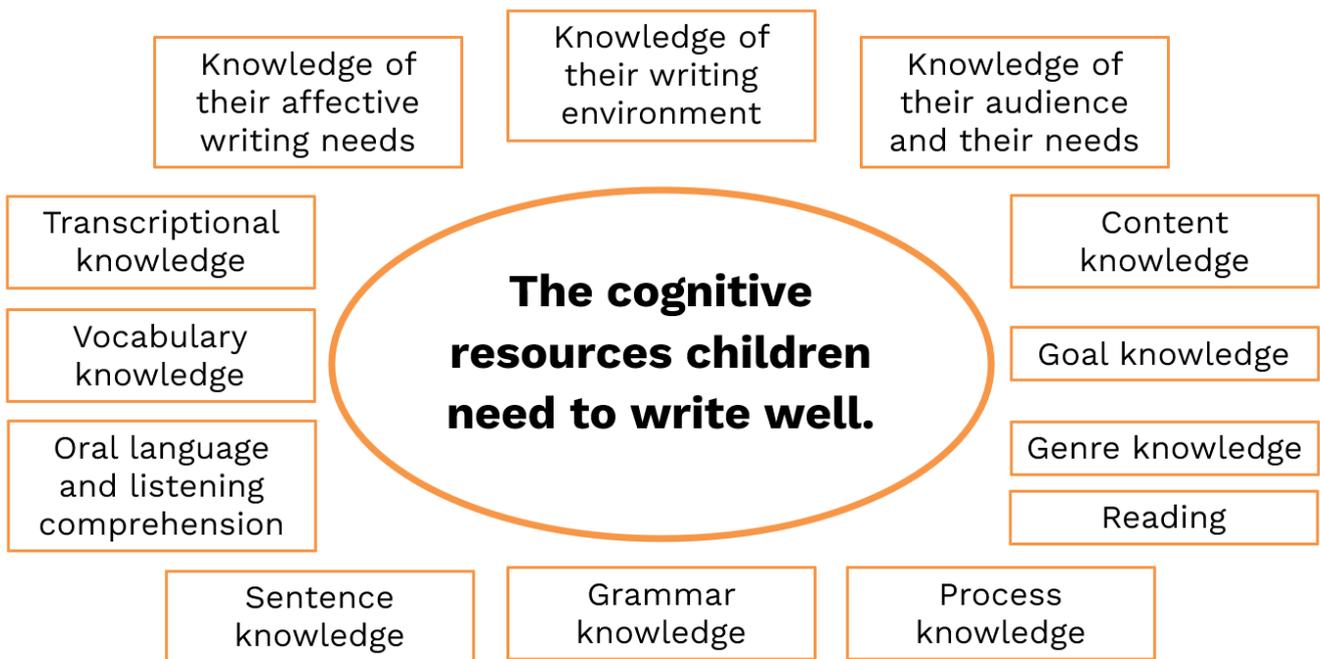


The Writing For Pleasure Centre

- Promoting research-informed writing teaching

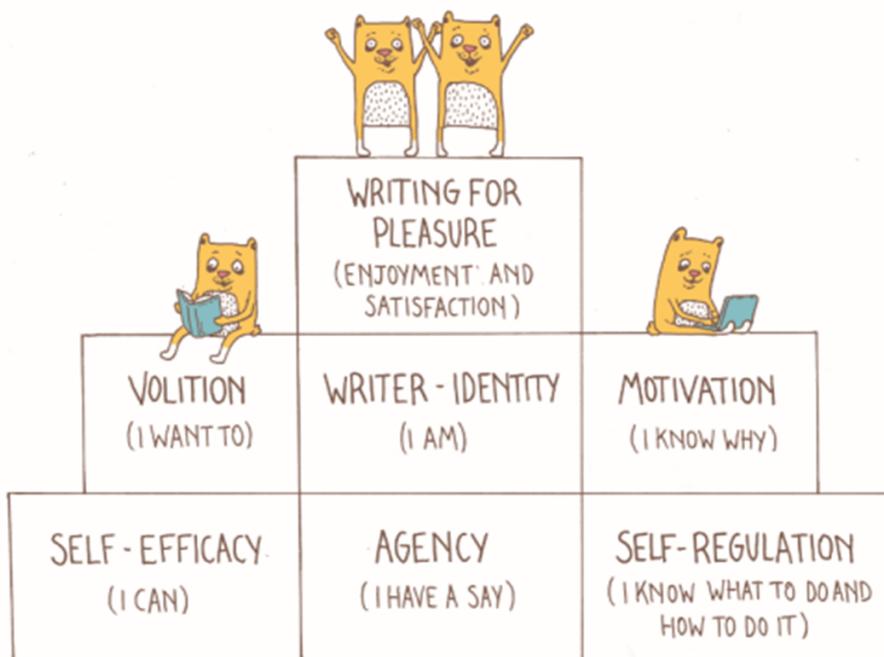
Children unnecessarily (but routinely) underperform in writing classrooms simply because they are required to write on topics for which they have limited knowledge and little motivation to write about (Young & Ferguson [2022a](#), [2022b](#), [2022c](#)).

Writing is probably the most cognitively challenging thing children have to do while at school. Writing requires them to coordinate at least thirteen different cognitive resources simultaneously (Young & Ferguson [2022a](#)).



(Writing is hard (but rewarding). The cognitive resources children have to draw on to write well. Adapted from The Science Of Teaching Primary Writing by Young & Ferguson [2022a](#))

In addition, there are many social, emotional, metacognitive and self-regulatory skills that children have to use and apply to produce a great piece of writing, and to develop themselves as confident and successful writers.



Young & Ferguson's (2021) hierarchy of emotional writing needs

Having been brought up on a diet of scheme-supplied writing prompts, contrived topics, and artificial writing situations, many children learn to detest the writing classroom (Clark et al. 2021; Young & Ferguson 2022c, 2023a). Children can find that the quality of their writing is actually being judged on their ability to remember the stuff they've been required to write about by the scheme-writer rather than on the quality and accuracy of their craft. Teachers too end up spending the majority of their writing lesson giving out content knowledge and not *writerly knowledge* (Young et al. 2021; Young & Ferguson 2022a). Children's writing development suffers as a result.

In contrast, in *Writing For Pleasure* schools, we know that when children are allowed to choose and access a topic they are familiar with and emotionally connected to, their writing performance improves and they produce higher quality texts (Young & Ferguson 2021, 2022b, 2023b). This is because, perhaps for the first time, they can write from a position of cognitive strength, confidence and expertise. They get to access content which is not only stored in their long-term memory but they are also extremely keen to write about. This frees them up to focus on [all the other demanding cognitive resources](#) required to write successfully!

If you are interested in finding out more, download our eBook: [No More: I Don't Know What To Write... Lessons That Help Children Generate Great Writing Ideas For 3-11 Year Olds](#) and [The Science Of Teaching Primary Writing](#).

