

How to help children plan great writing



The Writing For Pleasure Centre

- Promoting research-informed writing teaching

Plans are of little importance, but planning is essential

- Winston Churchill

How often when we are talking with children during writing time do we hear: 'I'm stuck' or 'I don't know what to write next'? Research has consistently shown that planning is one of the best ways to improve the fluency, quantity and quality of children's writing (Young & Ferguson [2021a](#), [2022a](#), [2023a](#), [2023b](#)), yet it is often an underdeveloped and underappreciated part of the writing process in schools.

Planning becomes important when ideas need to be captured on paper or screen as external representations. Plans discover, make visible, and organise our insights and ideas. Children who spend time planning have been shown to produce more complete stories and improve their writing performance (Young & Ferguson [2023c](#)). They also understand more about the writer's craft and are able to use these techniques successfully in future writing.

Planning strategies are many and varied and can include: talking, drawing, physical and dramatic play, thinking, daydreaming, observing, reading, gathering notes from the internet, mind mapping, webbing, drawing diagrams or maps, making tables and lists, noting possible phrases, writing an outline, creating or filling in a planning grid, free writing, or discovery drafting.

Planning is a matter of personal preference. Children may benefit from drawing rather than talking when they are undertaking an early attempt at a composition, whilst others like to arrive at a plan through talking to peers. Some children like planning grids and graphic organisers, while others prefer to undertake what is in effect a discovery draft. Some children like to use post-it notes creatively. And, as Sharples ([1999](#)) reminds us, plans are also there to be altered and updated. What is important is that the child has a general idea of where their writing is going, while planning at a more micro level is unlikely to be useful (Kellogg [2008](#)). Finally, research shows that the quality of children's writing is improved when their planning is informed by an explicit publishing goal and when there is a defined and definite audience to receive the writing at the project's end (Young & Ferguson [2021](#)).

To find out more, get our latest eBook: [No More: I Don't Know What To Write Next... Lessons That Help Children Plan Great Writing](#). Remember, it's **FREE** for members:

**No More: I Don't
Know What To Write
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**Lessons That Help Children
Plan Great Writing**



Ross Young & Felicity Ferguson

