

The components of effective grammar instruction



The Writing For Pleasure Centre

- Promoting research-informed writing teaching

Have you heard of SRSD instruction? SRSD stands for self-regulation strategy development. Sounds quite posh and complicated doesn't it? It's actually incredibly grounded and easy to understand. SRSD instruction is about teaching children strategies which enable them to be independent writers by using for themselves what they've just been taught. It's one of the most validated and effective practices a teacher of writing can employ in their classroom (Harris et al. 2006; Graham et al. 2011; McQuitty, 2014; Koster et al. 2015; Sun et al. 2022). That's why it appears as one of our 14 principles of world-class writing teaching (Young & Ferguson 2020, 2021a, 2022a, 2022b).

All children, but particularly struggling or less experienced writers, need high-quality teaching and explicit instruction if they are to fulfil their potential as writers (Young & Ferguson 2023a). This is why SRSD instruction works so well. The concept is simple. Teach your class one *craft move* before inviting them to use the move for themselves in their writing that day.

Case studies show that the most effective writing teachers deliver instruction in keeping with SRSD when teaching 'craft knowledge' (Young et al. 2021), 'sentence-level strategies' (Young & Ferguson 2022c) and 'functional grammar lessons' (Young & Ferguson 2021b).

This type of grammar instruction typically goes something like this:

The components of effective functional grammar instruction	
Step One:	Orientate Remind the children of the class writing project you are currently working on. This includes checking they know what they are writing and who they are writing it for.
Step Two:	Discuss <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce the <i>grammar move</i> you want the children to try out in writing time today. Name the <i>craft move</i>. For example '<i>fronted adverbials</i>'. (Young & Ferguson 2022b).• Then be a salesperson. Tell your class why this <i>craft move</i> is so fantastic and how its use could be so useful to them. Share how you've used the <i>craft move</i> in the past.• Link the <i>craft move</i> to the class' product goals for the writing project (Young & Hayden 2022). For example: '<i>fronted adverbials</i>' is going to help us move between places and time in our stories, which is on our product goals list.
Step Three:	Share Models or Model Live Share models. Show children examples of where other writers have used this <i>craft move</i> in their writing. There should certainly be an example of where you've used the <i>craft move</i> in your own writing. You should also show examples from other students' writing. Invite children to ask you questions.

	<p>Or</p> <p>Model using the <i>craft move</i> live in front of your class. Share some of the writing you are currently working on and show how you're going to use the <i>craft move</i> to enhance your writing. Invite children to ask you questions.</p>
Step Four:	<p>Provide Information</p> <p>We always recommend turning your instruction into a poster or resource which the children can refer to throughout writing time. This helps them memorise the <i>craft move</i> and any conventions it might involve. For example, you might make a poster to accompany a lesson on using <i>semi-colons</i>. The poster can almost always be pre-prepared to save time and can remain up in the classroom over many days, weeks or even months. Children will be showing independent, self-regulating behaviour every time they consult the poster.</p>
Step Five:	<p>Invite</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite children to use the technique during that day's writing time. • Monitor children's use of the <i>craft move</i> during your daily pupil-conferencing (Ferguson & Young 2021). • Sometimes you might feel you want your children to practise the <i>craft move</i> prior to using it in their own writing. However, in all honesty, we find this is rarely necessary.
Step Six:	<p>Evaluate</p> <p>You can invite children to share how they used the <i>craft move</i> in their writing during class sharing and <i>Author's Chair</i> (Young & Ferguson 2020). If you have noticed a student who has used the <i>craft move</i> in a particularly powerful, innovative or sophisticated way during your pupil-conferencing, you should invite that child to share their writing with the class. The class can then discuss their friend's writing and its impact.</p>

<p>1. Orientate</p> <p><i>What the project is and who they are writing for.</i></p>	<p>2. Discuss</p> <p><i>Sell the grammar craft move - explain why it's so fantastic.</i></p>	<p>3. Model</p> <p><i>Show them examples. Share your poster.</i></p>
<p>4. Provide Information</p> <p><i>Explain any conventions.</i></p>	<p>5. Invite</p> <p><i>Children use and apply the grammar craft move during writing time.</i></p>	<p>6. Evaluate</p> <p><i>Pupil-conference during writing time. Share great examples with the rest of the class.</i></p>

If your teaching of these grammar *craft moves* is well planned and, above all, responsive to what your pupils need instruction in most, then, over time, children will internalise these strategies for themselves and so become confident, agentic, personally responsible and independent writers (Young & Ferguson [2020](#); Young et al. [2021](#)).

It's important to remember that the stages shared above constitute a good guide. However, teachers should also feel free to experiment with them if they want to. The professional judgement made by a particular teacher might be that a certain stage could be omitted altogether and that another stage might need more time devoted to it. For example, some teachers like children to practise the *craft move* prior to using it in their own writing, while others find this an unnecessary distraction. Some like to model the *craft move* live, and create their poster in front of their class, while others like to have made their poster prior to the lesson, or to share writing they have already crafted.

Finally, it's essential to recognise that this is only one of the principles of world-class writing teaching. The reality is that it works best when interconnected with the other principles (Young & Ferguson [2021a](#)). In particular:

- Pursue purposeful and authentic class writing projects (The Writing For Pleasure Centre [2022](#))
- Set writing goals (Young & Hayden [2022](#))
- Teach the writing processes (Young et al. [2021](#))
- Balance composition and transcription (Young et al. [2021](#))
- Be reassuringly consistent (Young & Ferguson [2020](#), [2021c](#), [2021d](#))
- Be a writer-teacher (UKLA [2022](#))
- Pupil-conference: meet children where they are (Ferguson & Young [2021](#))

You can find out more about any of these principles by using this [link](#) or by downloading, for free, our *Handbook Of Research On Teaching Young Writers* ([2023b](#)).

Finally, if you'd like to read, see and use real classroom examples of SRSD instruction, you may wish to purchase any of the following publications:



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