



## Teach students the writing process



*Teachers can help students become effective writers by teaching and supporting them to apply a variety of strategies for each component of the writing process. Teachers should explain and demonstrate writing components and how they can be used alone or in combination in order to teach students to apply strategies flexibly throughout the writing process.*



### How to carry out the recommendation

1. Teach students strategies for the various components of the writing process.
2. Gradually release writing responsibility from the teacher to the student.
3. Guide students to select and use appropriate writing strategies.
4. Encourage students to be flexible in their use of the components of the writing process.

### Potential roadblocks

1. Students initially use the strategies/techniques of writing after they are taught; however, over time they tend to stop.
2. Teacher need to prepare students to take state assessments, which tend to focus on only a few genres.

*Reference:* Graham, S., Bollinger, A., Booth Olson, C., D'Aoust, C., MacArthur, C., McCutchen, D., & Olinghouse, N. (2012). *Teaching elementary school students to be effective writers* (NCEE 2012-4058). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance. Retrieved from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/PracticeGuide/17>



How to carry out the recommendation

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**1. Teach students strategies for the various components of the writing process.**

Students need to learn strategies for each component of the writing process. Basic strategies such as POW (pick ideas, organize notes, write and say more) should be introduced in the early grades (1 or 2) while more complex strategies such as peer revising should be introduced in later grades. Table 3 on page 16 of the practice guide referenced on the first page of this document provides a chart of various writing strategies, how students can use them, and the appropriate grade levels for each.

**2. Gradually release writing responsibility from the teacher to the student.**

Each writing strategy should be taught explicitly through a gradual release method. First, provide the necessary background knowledge on the strategy, including why the strategy is helpful. Next, articulate how to implement the strategy and model its use multiple times. Then allow small groups to apply the strategy while monitoring student performance. Once students are able to use the strategy in a group, give students the opportunity for guided practice of the strategy, with teacher support. Finally, provide students with opportunities to apply the strategy on their own.

During this process, be sure to evaluate students' understanding and adjust instruction when necessary. For example, for students who are struggling to acquire a particular writing strategy, more time can be spent in small-group instruction. Conversely, for those students who are moving more quickly, consider increasing the complexity of the strategy.

**3. Guide students to select and use appropriate writing strategies.**

After students have learned how to use various strategies independently, they will need to learn how to select appropriate strategies for a variety of writing tasks. To support them, consider visually displaying strategies around the room by illustrating each strategy and noting when to use it. As students' skills in using a variety of strategies increase, design activities in which students set goals to use specific strategies, evaluate their success, and think critically about how to make the strategy work even better.

**4. Encourage students to be flexible in their use of the components of the writing process.**

Once students learn to use the various strategies, teachers need to provide instruction and practice on using strategies in a flexible manner. Design activities that require students to move back and forth between the components (planning, drafting, sharing, evaluating, revising, editing, publishing) in order to strengthen their ability to apply writing strategies flexibly.

Potential roadblocks and how to address them

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Roadblock	Suggested Approach
<i>Students initially use the strategies/techniques of writing after they are taught; however, over time they tend to stop.</i>	Once students begin independently applying strategies and techniques, teachers need to monitor progress. As students develop skills with a specific component of the writing process (planning, drafting, sharing, evaluating, revising, editing, publishing), they may no longer need to rely on particular strategies. However, if a student has stopped using a strategy but is still struggling on a specific component of the writing process, the teacher should intervene and take necessary action, such as targeted one-on-one or small-group instruction.
<i>Teachers need to prepare students to take state assessments, which tend to focus on only a few genres.</i>	Writing for one genre often requires students to use skills they have learned for writing in another genre. For example, even when writing a persuasive essay, including a narrative example may be necessary in order to support an argument. Therefore, despite the specific prompts on a state assessment, students need to be prepared to write for multiple purposes. Teachers can point out particular skills they are learning that might be useful for the types of writing required for the state assessment.



*For more information on the research evidence and references to support this recommendation, or for more detailed explanation from the What Works Clearinghouse committee who developed this recommendation, please refer to the practice guide cited at the bottom of the first page of this document.*