

Written Work Strategies – Secondary School

- Every opportunity should be given to utilise a student’s verbal ability by answering questions orally or on tape and by being engaged in classroom discussions and debates.
- When engaging in creative writing exercises, such tasks may need to be broken down into their component parts. For example, ideas could be developed orally, which could then be written down in ‘Bullet’ form or on a mindmap or writing frame, before beginning the writing task.
- Visual writing aids may be useful to organise ideas before writing e.g. mindmaps or concept maps. Tony Buzan has written books about mindmaps (see www.inspiration.com). SimpleMind and Popplet are two mindmapping apps for Apple and Android devices.

It may be useful to approach writing tasks using a 5-stage method: analyse the question, brainstorm, plan, write and check.

1. Analysing the question: Take time to understand the question, deconstruct the meaning, check your understanding and select relevant material to answer the question.
2. Brainstorm: roughly write down all the ideas for answering the question, make associations between ideas, without attending to structure at this stage.
3. Plan: Plan the structure of the answer, using mindmaps, outline plans or writing frames in certain subjects may be appropriate.
4. Writing: with the planning stage completed, the focus should be on writing skills and expressing ideas. Use the plan to structure the answer and keep the writing to the point.
5. Check: Check the piece of writing preferably reading aloud or saying each word quietly. More errors will be picked up if the piece is proofread three times, once for content, once for spelling and once for punctuation.

The approach outlined above will allow the student to be more efficient once they start to write. It will help them organise their ideas and allow them to get into a flow when they write. It will also make sure that the student does not forget important points halfway through an essay and have to re-organise the whole answer.

Differentiation Strategies for Written Work

- If the student is finding written homework overwhelming or having difficulty planning written work some differentiation may be of benefit. The student could submit a detailed mind-map or a bullet point plan of his or her answer and then only write ½ of the essay. This ensures that the student understands the course content, is practising writing, how to plan and organise their ideas, and is not being overwhelmed by the workload. It will also highlight the structure of essays and help the student organise their thoughts before approaching a piece of written work.
 - For example, the student could just write the introduction and conclusion of an essay. Then they could receive a mark for this combined with the overall plan.
 - Alternately the student could write up two significant points that would make the core, body of the essay. Then they could plan out in detail the introduction, a third major point and the conclusion.
- As above, the student can develop a detailed mindmap or outline of their answer but present it verbally to the teacher/class.
- Use Speech-to-Text technology as an alternative means for producing written work.

Proofreading and Checking Written Work

- Use the COPS strategy as a step by step proofreading approach. The **COPS Strategy** focuses on editing and therefore improving a student's writing. It stands for Capitalization, Omissions, Punctuation, and Spelling.
- Grammarly is a useful Spelling and Grammar tool that can be downloaded for free to any computer. It checks for spelling and grammar errors in Microsoft Word documents, as well as email documents. See <https://app.grammarly.com/>.