Making your message clear

• Know what your message is and who you are writing for.
• Think about the best way to set out your message, for example using paragraphs, bullet points or images.
• Consider using capital letters, bold, italics or underlining to stress key points, but don’t overdo this.
• Decide whether it is appropriate to state your overall message at the start of your text: this may not be appropriate if you want your message to become clear gradually.
• Think about the best order in which to present the different parts of your message.
• Use a topic sentence in each section, with additional detail after or around it.
• Use a dictionary and thesaurus together to choose the vocabulary that best expresses your message.
• Choose and use vocabulary that suits your audience. For example, a message about online safety aimed at young children will use more simplistic language and shorter sentences than the same message for adults.
• Use examples to illustrate your message if appropriate.
• If making an argument, use phrases which clearly promote your viewpoint, for example ‘It is obvious that...’, ‘It is beyond doubt that...’ and ‘I believe strongly that...’
• Ask a friend to give you feedback on how clear your message is.
• Conclude your writing by summarising your overall message, perhaps with a final memorable comment.
Matching writing to purpose and audience

• Be very clear about the purpose of your writing and your target audience.

• Think about how formal or informal your writing should be depending on purpose and audience.

• Think about the length of your writing.

• Think about the form of your writing, for example web page, diagram or leaflet.

• Choose a tone which suits purpose and audience, for example light-hearted for an entertaining news story, critical for a film review, or objective for a balanced media piece.

• If it is appropriate, set out information in formats other than paragraphs, for example bullet points, tables or diagrams.

• Use a dictionary or thesaurus to find the exact word that you need.

• If your audience needs information, give facts and explanations.

• If your audience needs description, use adjectives, adverbs and visual language, which will paint a picture for them.

• If your audience needs instructions, use imperative verbs, for example ‘stand up’, ‘turn left’, ‘press button one’.

• If you want your audience to consider an issue in depth, give them different points of view.

• If you want to persuade your audience, use some techniques of persuasion, for example repetition or rhetorical questions.

• You can use exclamation marks to stress important points, but don’t overuse them.
Planning

• Think about the purpose of your writing. What is it intended to do?
• Think about who your writing is for. Who are the audience?
• Think about the form of your writing, for example a story, a poem, a report or a web homepage.
• Think about the tone of your writing. For example, should it be serious, encouraging, funny or critical?
• Make notes of all of your ideas.
• Organise your notes in the way that works best for you, for example using bullet points, a table or a spider diagram.
• Plan your structure – a simple beginning, middle and end. Then build around these.
• Sum up your main point or ideas for each paragraph or section with a few key words.
• If putting forward an argument, think of predictable attacks against your argument and plan how you will defend against them.
• Experiment with the best order in which to use your ideas.
• When you have decided the order in which you are going to use your ideas, put numbers beside each point to show its place in your sequence.
• Think of an opening point which will get your readers’ attention and a memorable point on which to end your writing.
Ways to make your writing engaging

• Be clear about both the purpose of your writing and your target audience.
• Read examples of the type of writing you are going to create (for example newspaper articles or short stories).
• If you are doing creative writing, don’t be afraid to use your own personal style.
• Think of an opening for your writing that will make your audience want to continue reading.
• Use a mixture of long and short sentences to make your writing more interesting.
• Choose vocabulary carefully, using a variety of interesting words to avoid repetition.
• Maintain your audience’s interest by placing some of your most interesting points at the start, middle and end of your writing.
• Plan the content and wording of your writing so that it is memorable and stays with your audience.
• If appropriate to the type of writing, you can choose to:
  – use rhetorical questions to get your audience thinking;
  – use the words ‘you’ and ‘we’ to make a personal connection with your audience;
  – illustrate points that you make by giving examples which your audience can identify with; and/or
  – use visual language (words and phrases that help the audience to picture what you are describing).
Drafting

• Be clear about the purpose of drafting. If you are not sure, ask your teacher.
• Use feedback from your teachers and your classmates to improve your work.
• Accept that the drafting process may make your work look untidy at first.
• Remember that drafting is not just about producing a neater version of the same thing – you should also be trying to improve the structure and content of your work.
• As you read your whole piece of work, put a dot or asterisk in the margin beside any part that doesn’t sound right.
• Check basic punctuation. If it is wrong, the reader will not be able to follow what you are saying.
• Try to improve your work by including a range of punctuation for different purposes, for example commas to separate phrases, exclamation marks to show emphasis, and ellipses to show a pause or to create mystery.
• Use a dictionary to check spelling.
• When you are looking for a better word, use a thesaurus and a dictionary together.
• Record changes in a different colour.
• Use arrows and numbers to show how you want to set up paragraphs or sections in a different order.
• If you are using ICT and you are going to have a number of drafts, set up an ‘archive’ and a ‘most recent’ folder and number or date each version.
• Accept that, sometimes, it is better to start again.