Writing

Making your message clear

Northern Ireland Curriculum

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

Northern Ireland Curriculum

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.

Writing

Planning

Northern Ireland Curriculum

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.

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).

Writing

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.