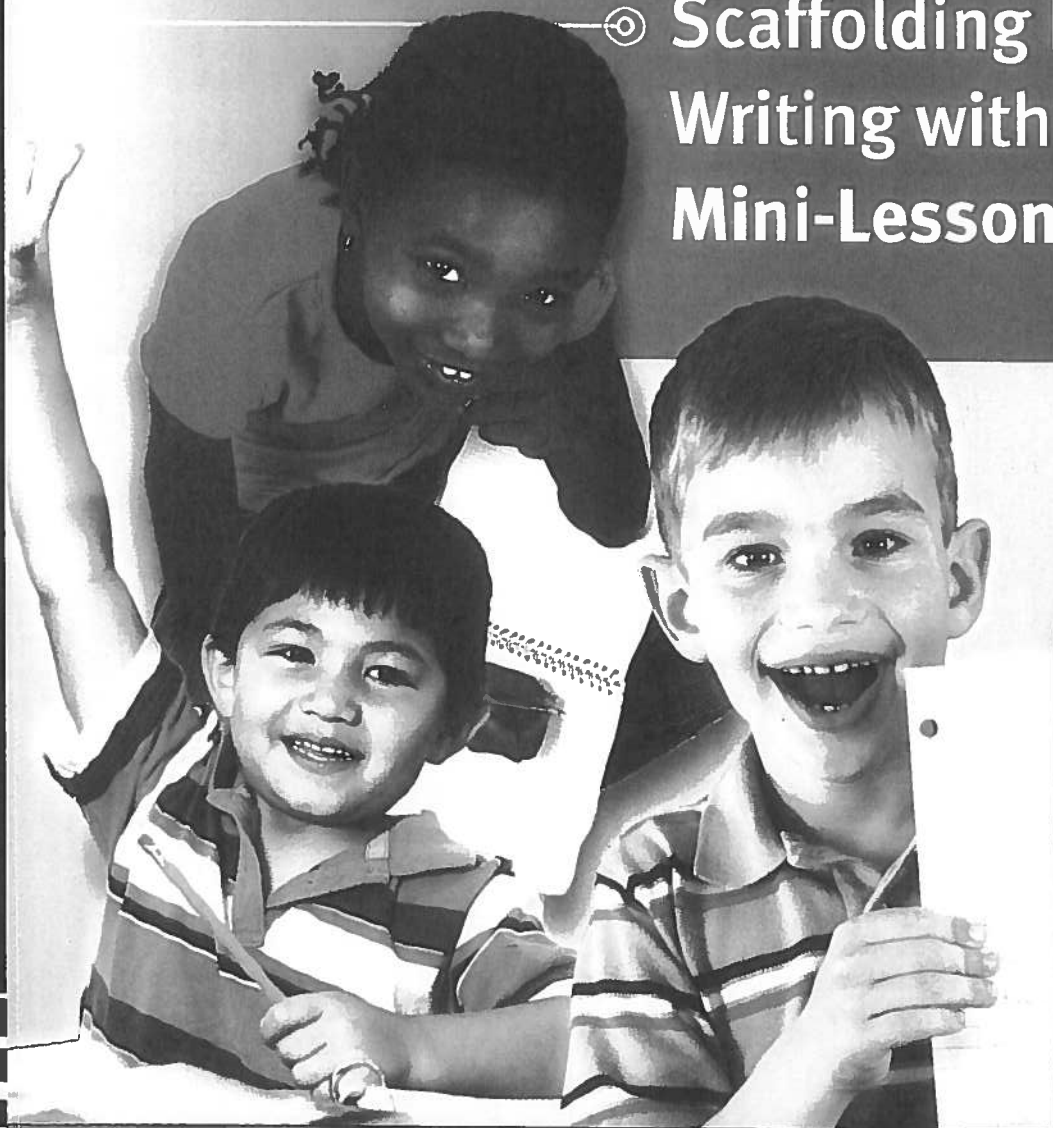


Writing Strategies for All Primary Students

⊙ Scaffolding Independent
Writing with Differentiated
Mini-Lessons



Includes
classroom-tested
strategies for:

- emerging writers
- writers who struggle
- English language learners, and
- advanced writers

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Chapter

1 1

Reread So You Know What to Write Next

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Students use this sentence-composing strategy to produce coherent text independently. Teachers explicitly model how writers reread as they are writing, a routine that ensures sentences make sense and faithfully represent the writer's intent.

Why This Strategy Is Important

As they write, experienced writers recursively reread what they have already written so they keep their writing in order. However, beginning and struggling writers often do not reread what they have already composed. Therefore, they may omit important words in sentences, abandon their original thoughts, or veer off in new directions.

When I first began teaching, I was puzzled and frustrated by my beginning students who left out important words in sentences, or who suddenly strayed from their topics. In Writers' Workshop, I taught my students to reread what they wrote to determine the revisions they needed to make as they polished their drafts. However, many of my students continued to turn in stories and poems with missing words or that changed topics mid-sentence.

During the 1994–95 academic year I trained as a Reading Recovery teacher and learned how to scaffold emergent writers who were beginning to write. I learned the importance of having a student repeat multiple times a sentence he or she wanted to write and commit it to memory. For beginners who know how to write very few words automatically, this oral rehearsal is a necessary step. Beginning writers use up so much working memory figuring out the spelling of each word they write that they frequently forget the larger message. By committing their sentences to memory, they are able to write what they intended despite having to temporarily devote full attention to figuring out spelling. I also learned to teach students the routine of rereading what they have written after every second or third word so they know what word comes

next. I discovered that using these two simple steps, beginning students can write coherent sentences that represent what they wish to communicate. (For the full instructions on how to scaffold sentence writing, see Clay, 2005.)

The SCAMPER Model for Reread So You Know What to Write Next

Survey and Assess

I **survey and assess** my students as they draw and attempt to write. I notice which students are able to produce short narratives, which students draw but don't attempt to compose text, and which students produce one- to four-word labels for their drawings. I also notice students who attempt to write sentence-length compositions, but whose sentences don't make sense because they omit words, or their topics change direction.

Confer

Students who draw but cannot yet write, those who label their drawings, and those who produce long messages that contain missing words or confusing text benefit from this strategy. I gather a small group of these students with me on the floor in front of the easel to **confer** with them. I explain that I've noticed that when they tell me stories, they are able to convey a lot more than when they write stories. I also tell them that when I read aloud the stories they write, many are surprised because their stories don't say what they intended. Next I read some of these anonymous examples aloud. My students can often quickly discover what words are missing or when the stories veer off course. Then I tell them I'm going to teach them a strategy that will help them write exactly what it is they want to say.

Assemble Materials

I **assemble materials** that include markers and a piece of chart paper on which I have drawn a picture of a cat and a person at a computer keyboard at the top. I also have small whiteboards, dry-erase markers, and mini-whiteboard erasers for the children. Sometimes I'll use paper on clipboards with pencils for the children.

Model

I **model** the strategy through these steps:

1. I show them the drawing I have made, and I tell them the story that goes with the drawing. I say,

I was trying to write using my computer last night, but my cat, Cassie, kept nibbling my fingers and pushing at them, making it very hard to get my work done. Yet every time I put her on the floor, she just jumped right back up.

2. I think aloud about choosing one idea from that whole story to write down. I explain that before I start writing I have to think and decide exactly what I am going to write about in my story. I pause and then say, "I know. I'll say, 'Cassie pushes my fingers when try to type.'"

3. I explain to the students that once I've thought of my sentence, I say it over a few times to myself so I can remember it. I demonstrate by repeating it aloud three times.

asking the students to join in to help me. Then I say to them, “Now I won’t forget what I’m going to write,” and repeat the sentence one more time. Modeling how I generate and repeat my sentence is a critical step for students who are either labeling or drawing without labels. Some of these children need guidance in generating sentences, particularly children who do not yet use many complete sentences longer than three or four words in their oral language. By modeling a more elaborate sentence and having children repeat it, I support their overall language development.

4. With the sentence established, I think aloud as I model how to go from speech to print. I pick up a marker while saying, “*Cassie* is my first word, so I’ll write *Cassie* here,” and bring the marker to the left side of the page below my drawing. Then I write *Cassie* slowly as I stretch the word out orally. I point to *Cassie* as I read “Cassie,” and then say, “pushes.” I then write *pushes* while orally stretching out the word.

5. After I write the first two words, I demonstrate how writers reread as they are writing. I say, “Now what I need to do is reread what I’ve already written so I know what to write next.” I then point under the word *Cassie* and read “Cassie,” and point under *pushes* and read “pushes.” “Oh, Cassie pushes,” I read quickly. After a slight pause, I say somewhat slowly, “my fingers,” and I write *my* and *fingers* while stretching out those words.

“Now, you know what I need to do? I need to reread what I’ve written so far, so I know what to write next.” I go back to the beginning, pointing under each word as I read, and I invite the students to join me in reading the sentence back. I ask them what I need to write next. A student usually tells me the next word I need to write is “when.” I write *when* while stretching out the word. By this time the students have usually caught on to the pattern of rereading. When I ask them what I need to do next, they chime in, “Reread so you know what to write next.” We continue to read together up to the last word written as I point under each word. I pause, and they tell me the next word or two I need to write. I write in the words, and then ask what we need to do, repeating the sequence until the sentence is complete.

When the sentence is complete, we read the entire sentence together. I comment that it says exactly what I want it to say. I tell them, “Whenever you write, you need to reread what you have written so you know what to write next. What’s the strategy we learned?” We all chant, “Reread so you know what to write next.”

Practice

Once students have seen me model the sequence, it is time for them to **practice** with my help. I tell them that together we’re going to come up with another sentence to practice rereading so we know what to write next, but that this time they will all get a chance to write. I give them time to talk with partners to come up with sentences to add to our story. I listen in while the students talk to each another. I ask a few of the student pairs to share their ideas and then select a short, manageable sentence from among their suggestions. For example, one student pair creates this sentence: “Cassie is a funny cat.” I ask them to repeat the sentence several times. Because students must be able to follow these steps independently, I also ask them to tell me why they needed to repeat the sentence.

Following this phase of the strategy, I hand out the whiteboards, markers, and erasers or clipboards and pencils. (The students have had previous experience with using these materials and already understand the ground rules.) Once they have their

materials, I ask them to say their sentences one more time. Then I guide them through writing the sentences a few words at a time, with rereading in between to make sure they point to the words as they read them and use the rereading strategy.

Before sending them back to their seats, I close with this reminder:

Remember; whenever you are writing, it is very important to do just what we did today. When you write, reread what you have already written. That way you will know what to write next, and your writing will always make sense. What do we say to check what we've written?

We all chant, "Reread so you know what to write next."

Execute

In a final small-group session, I monitor these students as they attempt to **execute** the strategy independently. Before they begin, I ask them to describe how they will repeat their sentences orally several times and reread the words as they write their sentences. I circulate around the room to see if they reread as they write.

I help students execute this strategy from this point on whenever they write. I continue to monitor students as they reread when they write independently. I work one-on-one with the few students who need more support to make the routine theirs.

Reflect

At the end of the day, when as a whole class we pause for a few minutes to recount what we have learned and **reflect** on it, I guide students to tell me something that they learned in each part of the day and make sure someone from the small group reports, "Reread so you know what to write next." Because this routine is so basic and essential to the composing of written text, we repeat this phrase throughout the school year. Eventually, rereading as they write will become automatic for all of the students.

Adapting the Strategy

Adapting the Strategy for Emerging Writers

Students who draw as a precursor to writing, and students who have begun to label drawings but have not attempted to write sentences, are emerging writers. I help these students orally rehearse sentences of their choice and encourage them to dictate their sentences to me as I write the sentences and model the strategy by repeating the words I have written. This modeling helps emerging writers because the actions of generating a sentence and rereading it as it is written down are normally hidden, and emerging writers need to develop an awareness of the procedure in order to eventually control it for themselves.

Adapting the Strategy for Writers Who Struggle

I typically teach this strategy in kindergarten or first grade, but I find that older students who struggle with writing often need explicit instruction in rereading as they write. These students may omit essential words, or produce rambling collections of sentence fragments rather than complete sentences, rendering their prose confusing or incoherent. Often the reason for this jumbled writing is that these students do not reread as they write. With struggling writers, I usually teach this strategy in one-on-one

conferences. For example, in a conference with a typical struggling writer I'll call Oscar, I first explain that I have a writing trick I use to keep my own writing on track that I think will be helpful to him. Then I model a few sentences of my own, showing how I reread after every few words. I ask Oscar to come up with a sentence and repeat it. I then observe while he writes the sentence, and I praise the rereading I observe. We then extend this procedure for a longer composition. I ask Oscar to talk to me about a topic in which he's interested. Once he has generated several ideas orally, I ask him to write down some of his ideas into a paragraph. I observe him while he's writing. When I notice him rereading, I praise him for it. I make sure to praise him for any errors and omissions he notices, pointing out that everyone makes mistakes, but that what makes someone a good writer is noticing and fixing those mistakes. If I notice he is not rereading, I model again and remind him to make sure to stop and reread after every few words. I have found that writers who struggle sometimes need more than one practice session, and often need several weeks of reminders before rereading becomes habitual. However, I have seen the quality of their writing improve dramatically once they implement this simple strategy.

Adapting the Strategy for English Language Learners

Before I teach, I want to make sure the strategy I model is one that will be helpful to my students. I recognize that there are many reasons, aside from a failure to reread while writing, why the writing of an English language learner (ELL) might lack coherence. ELL students sometimes mix English word order with the word order of their home languages or don't know when to use "the" in English. So I take special care to observe my ELL students while they write to see if they reread as they write. Only those students who are composing without rereading while they write will benefit from the lesson.

Those ELLs who do not reread while composing will benefit from an explicit demonstration. To ensure that ELLs understand what I mean when I model, I take care to make my gestures clear and to make my actions match my words. I have a tendency to speak fast, so I make a conscious effort to slow down and watch their faces to ensure that they are following me. I also encourage the more advanced ELLs who speak the same languages as newcomers to explain what I've said in their home languages.

Adapting the Strategy for Advanced Writers

I usually find that advanced writers already reread as they write. So I do not use my limited instruction time for these students by teaching them to reread, something they already know. However, I challenge advanced writers to think about the overall structure of their texts, including the sequence of their paragraphs and sentences. They will reread larger sections of text with an eye and ear to overall sequence and flow. Advanced writers can also tutor their classmates who need more support. I show the advanced writers how to model the Reread So You Know What to Write Next strategy, and then each advanced writer works with one student, modeling the strategy and supporting the student as he or she uses the strategy.

Extending the Strategy

Once beyond the beginning stages, writers typically reread at the sentence level without conscious awareness of doing so. Once young writers have incorporated rereading as they write into their writing process, the teacher no longer needs to draw

their attention to it. However, as writers develop and write longer texts, they will need to reread in larger chunks to check the flow and organization of their writing pieces. With a longer text, one rereads to determine the best order of sentences within paragraphs, and of paragraphs within sections or chapters. During lessons on revision or on organization, the teacher can demonstrate rereading with an ear toward flow, sequence, and organization. Without rereading, revision is not possible.

EVIDENCE CONNECTIONS

Clay, M., & Cazden, C. (1990). A Vygotskian interpretation of Reading Recovery. In L. C. Moll (Ed.), *Vygotsky and education: Instructional implications and applications of socio-historical psychology* (pp. 206–222). Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press. Using examples from actual Reading Recovery lessons, the authors show not only what mediated or scaffolded instruction in writing and reading looks like but also how the teacher adjusts the difficulty of the tasks and the amount of support provided to ensure that children are always working at the cutting edge of learning. Reread So You Know What to Write Next employs teacher modeling to provide a needed scaffold.

Lyons C., Pinnell G. S., & Deford D. E. (1993). *Partners in learning: Teachers and children in Reading Recovery*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Chapter Six of *Partners in Learning* provides a theoretical justification for the inclusion of writing in an early intervention program for struggling literacy learners. In Chapter Seven the authors summarize a study on the relationship between scaffolded writing and growth in reading proficiency. Children who had teachers who “fostered independent actions” (p. 138) in writing made better progress in literacy acquisition. Rereading while composing is one of the independent self-monitoring actions a young writer can take.

REFERENCE

Clay, M., (2005). *Literacy lessons designed for individuals: Part 2, Teaching procedures*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.