

Researching, revising and editing

Chapter overview

The art of clear communication is one of the most important skills you will ever acquire. It will stay with you throughout your lifetime and you will use this skill unconsciously every day.

Researching allows us to source information about a topic and teaches us to make judgements about the quality and validity of this information.

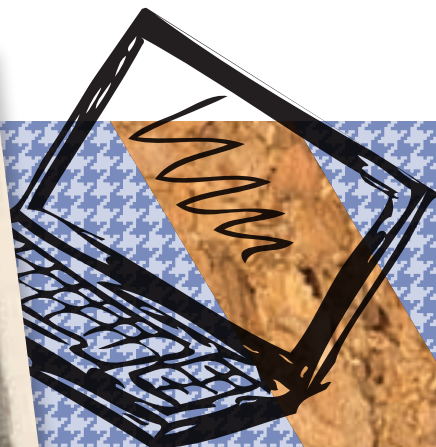
Communication and research skills tie in with the art of editing, which is not merely correcting

grammar, punctuation and spelling but reorganising paragraphs so that they make sense and your work is presented in the best possible light. Editing also requires us to make decisions about word choice and to identify and correct errors.

With these skills you will be able to follow the advice of the great orator Quintilian: your message will be impossible to misunderstand.

One should not aim at being possible to understand, but at being impossible to misunderstand.

Marcus Fabius Quintilian, first century CE



1 Planning and researching your topic

Many students make the mistake of thinking that they can produce a piece of written work without having prepared or explored their response. Before beginning to write, it is essential that you think about what you are being asked to do, decide on a course of action and then investigate how best to respond. This is where planning and research can help. Planning enables you to structure your work, and research helps you to decide exactly what you wish to say.

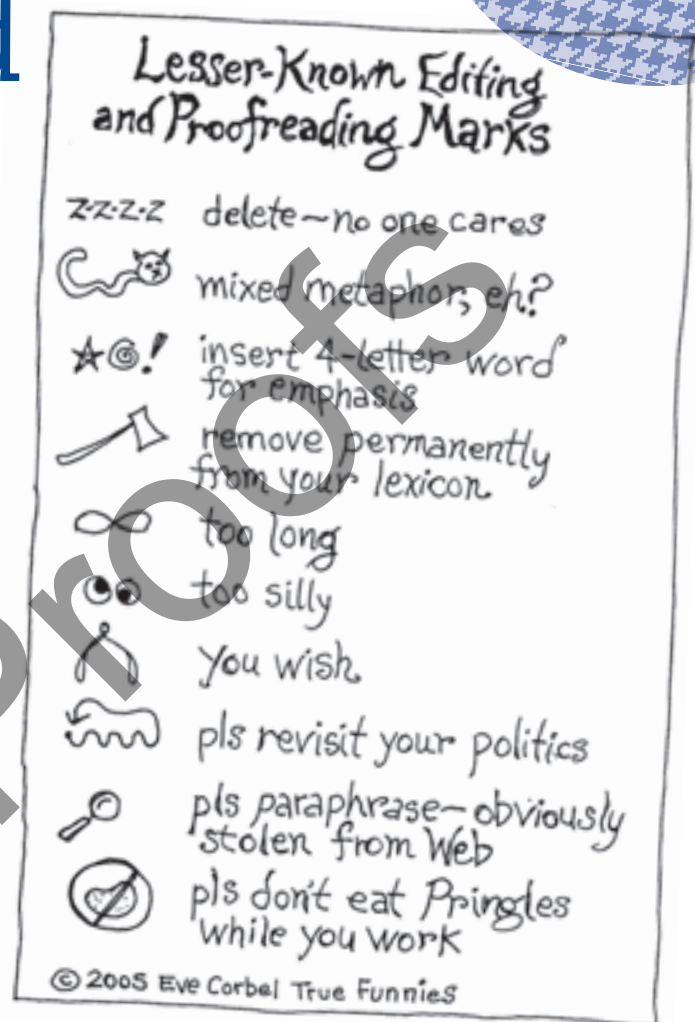
The writing process

A writer's main aim should be to assist readers to understand their work. There are several stages to the writing process that need to be followed in order to write effectively.

Step one: Thinking about the task, or pre-planning

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What are you being asked to do? If you're required to respond to a question, is there a verb such as 'discuss' or 'explain' that gives you a direction?



- What is the purpose of the piece? For instance, are you being asked to inform or to persuade?
- Who is your intended audience? That is, who are you writing your piece for?



The following **verbs** are commonly found in **essay questions**: outline, prove, illustrate, analyse, examine and define. Each word is asking you to do something different so it's important that you use your dictionary to find its meaning.

Once you have decided what you are being asked to do and who you are writing for, jot down as many ideas as you can that relate to the subject. Group connecting ideas together and give them a heading. These similar ideas will help when it comes to forming paragraphs. Finally, research your topic, using the library or the internet for information. (See the following page for more information on how to research your topic.)

Step two: Organising your writing, or planning

Once you have carried out your research it is time to start planning. This involves:

- grouping your research into categories under the similar ideas you came up with in step one
- arranging these ideas from your strongest or most interesting point through to your weakest
- deciding on the number of paragraphs
- creating a topic sentence to clarify the main point for each paragraph.

Step three: The rough copy or draft

Use your plan to write the first draft of your essay. Remember, for your work to be effective, your purpose must be easily understood by the reader.

Step four: Conferencing

It's important to get feedback on your work and having someone read it for you is a great way to do this.

Next, ask someone to read your work back to you. Listen carefully. Does it make sense? Is your meaning clear? Make sure you take notes as they're reading so you can make alterations.

Step five: Editing

If you have not taken a break between finishing your draft and starting to edit, now is the time to do so. Ideally, come back to your work the next day. This allows you to look at your work with a fresh mind, which makes it easier to pick up errors.

When editing, check for the following:

- words that are used over and over again—is there a better word (synonym) you can use?
- unnecessary words or information that is not needed for your writing to make sense
- clichés that detract from your writing
- unspecified pronouns such as 'it', 'them' and 'they'
- inconsistency in tenses
- a lack of variation in sentence length—varying sentence lengths can help to retain the reader's interest
- spelling errors—a spell check is a useful tool, but it will not pick up an incorrect word that is spelled correctly, for example 'their' instead of 'there'.



A **cliché** is an expression that is overused.

Step six: The second draft, or rewriting

Your second draft is written from your edited first copy. If you have enough time, it is a good idea to retype your first draft, not just change it. Retyping allows you to make natural grammatical changes as you go. You are also more likely to pick up hidden errors if you retype. If time allows, you may complete three, four or five drafts.

Step seven: Proofreading and completion

Once you've retyped your work, proofread it; that is, check again for appropriate sentence structure, tense, vocabulary and spelling. Ask another person (the same person who read your draft, if possible) to go over your essay again with you. Once you are satisfied with it, you are ready to submit it.

Breakaway tasks

Remembering

- 1 What steps must you take before you start writing?
- 2 Who should you ask to read your draft copy?
- 3 Should you ask the same person to read your redraft? Why?
- 4 What is the last thing to check before submitting your work?

Understanding

- 5 Explain the writing process in fifty words or less.
- 6 Why is it sensible to retype your first draft? How will this help you?
- 7 Why is it important to check your spelling yourself and not rely on a computer spell check?

Applying

- 8 From the information given on writing an essay, develop a simplified set of instructions for a primary school student about the writing process.

Analysing

- 9 Construct a pie chart that shows how much time you should spend on each step of the writing process.

Evaluating

- 10 What is the most important step in the writing process? Can you explain why?
- 11 Do you think pre-planning is a good idea or a bad idea? Why?

Creating

- 12 Create a new step in the writing process that would mean there was no need to conference your work.
- 13 Devise a checklist for students to complete to help them with the writing process.

Research

Research is a skill that enables you to locate information, which can then be used for various written or verbal purposes. In this way, research is one of the first steps to undertake when planning your response to a task as it allows you to significantly extend your knowledge about a subject.

Practise your research skills at the library, on the internet, or by interviewing people on the subject. Once all of your data is organised, you are one step closer to drafting your response.

Beginning your research

One of the key features of successful research is to make sure that you are organised before you begin. There are a number of ways you can do this; however, one of the best ways is to use a KWL chart.

Topic		
What I know (K)	What I want to know (W)	What I have learnt (L)

You can draw up a KWL chart in your notebook. It contains three columns. The first two should be completed before researching, the last column you complete once you have finished.

• **Column 1 (K): What I know**

In this column, you list what it is that you already know about the topic. Even if you are unsure about whether or not your knowledge is accurate, you can list it here and alter your work later.

By working out what you already know, you can then assess what you do not know and therefore what you need to find out.

• **Column 2 (W): What I want to know**

In this column, you list all the questions that you have about your topic. Your questions will help you to define and narrow your subject so that you eliminate unnecessary work, and research only what is useful. You'll find out more about the right sort of questions in the example below.

• **Column 3 (L): What I have learnt**

In this column (completed at the end of your research) you list all that you have learnt during the process. It is here that you correct any wrong assumptions you made in column 1.

For example, a completed KWL chart for the topic 'Flies' could look something like this.

Breakaway tasks

Remembering

- 1 What does KWL stand for?
- 2 When is each column of the chart completed?

Applying

3 Draw a KWL chart in your notebook. You can model it on the chart below. Complete the first two columns for one of the following topics:

- the River Nile
- the World Wildlife Fund
- humpback whales
- the origins of krumping, popping or locking
- roadster cars
- fashion in the 1950s.



What I know (K)	What I want to know (W)	What I have learnt (L)
Flies are insects.	What insect family do they belong to?	Flies belong to the Diptera order; these insects only possess a single pair of wings.
They are considered dirty.	Why do people dislike flies?	People dislike flies as they have long been associated with death and decay. In fact, some forensic scientists use the size of maggots and flies in dead bodies to determine how long a person has been dead. Flies are often used in books and horror films to create a feeling of unease and filth.
There are lots of different types.	How many different types of flies are there?	There are over 90 000 different types of flies and 30 000 of those are in Australia. Only 8000 have been classified. The common house fly is one of them.
They make a buzzing noise.	How do they make the buzzing noise?	The buzzing noise is made from the beating of the fly's wings.
They transmit disease by vomiting when they land.	Are there any misunderstandings about flies?	Flies don't actually vomit every time they land. When they eat, they drool on their food to soften it, which is where the misconception comes from. It is not fly vomit that spreads disease, but the bacteria on their feet from feeding on manure, for example.

Using questions to help research

The questions you develop for your research will help to steer you in the right direction. You should come up with a variety of questions that help you stretch your knowledge of the topic to avoid repeating similar ideas.

Some of the types of questions that you will use while carrying out your research are: essential, subsidiary, hypothetical, planning, organising, sorting and sifting, unresolved and clarification.



Subsidiary questions are those that go together to build a more complete answer. For example: 'Why did the character end his relationship? Were there any external influences that affected this decision?'

Hypothetical questions allow us to think about possibilities that may or may not be real. For example: 'What would the world be like if the attack on the World Trade Center had never occurred? What would have happened if the character chose not to end their relationship?'

GLOBAL WARMING

What is global warming?

Global warming is the heating up of the Earth's temperature due to carbon dioxide and other air pollution that is collecting in the Earth's atmosphere like a blanket. This traps the sun's heat and causes the Earth to warm up.

Is the Earth really getting hotter?

Yes. Although local temperatures fluctuate naturally, over the past 50 years the average global temperature has increased at the fastest rate in recorded history. And experts think the trend is accelerating: the ten hottest years on record have all occurred since 1990.

What causes global warming?

Human activities, such as burning fossil fuels for electricity and the use of cars and other motorised transportation are creating excess greenhouse gases that are being trapped in the atmosphere.

Source: Adapted from Natural Resources Defence Council, 2010

Breakaway tasks

Analysing

- 1 After reading the extract, match the following questions to the type of question they belong to in the table below. Use a dictionary to help you define the question type.
 - a Why does the issue of global warming upset so many people?
 - b What does the word 'atmosphere' mean?
 - c Does this resource provide me with more information about the reasons for global warming than a textbook or pamphlet?
 - d What if humanity ignored the signs of global warming?
 - e Why is global warming an important issue?
 - f What are the subtopics for global warming?
 - g Will the Earth's temperature reduce in the future?
 - h What pieces of information tell me specifically about the causes of global warming?

Research question	Question type
Why does the issue of global warming upset so many people?	Essential
	Subsidiary
	Hypothetical
	Planning
	Organising
	Sorting and sifting
	Unresolved
	Clarification

- 2 Now create your own question on global warming for each of the question types using the table above as a guide. Be general at this stage—you can get more specific later on.

Conducting your research

Contrary to popular belief, research is not a straightforward step-by-step process. You constantly need to keep evaluating and refining your research, deciding if it answers your topic questions and meets your specific needs.

The research spiral

The research spiral (a term coined by Rosemary Horton, a teacher-librarian) refers to the fact that a number of processes need to be repeated again and again until all the research is complete. You need to move through stages as they suit your purpose.

- **Think**
This step is covered in your pre-research stage when you start a KWL chart. Here you think about what it is you are being asked to do and the questions that will best answer your topic.
- **Plan**
Ask yourself how you are going to find the answers to your questions: the library, the internet, or a combination of the two? (A combination is usually the best practice.)
- **Search and research**
Try different keywords in indexes and search engines. (Use a thesaurus or dictionary.) Use books, magazines, the web and people.
- **Compile and use a reference list**
Read, evaluate and record ideas and source details as you go.
- **Organise**
Sort your information into a sensible order that also meets the specifics of the genre you are writing in.
- **Create your presentation**
Check if the form of presentation is specified or free choice. How do you best show what you have found out and what you think? Have you added a reference list, whatever the format of presentation? For more information on how to keep a bibliography, refer to Module 5.

- **Judge**
Assess how you are doing. Have you answered the question? Look for causes and effects, relationships, similarities and differences. Essentially, when researching, you need to keep asking yourself why things happen the way they do.
- **How could things be improved?**
Ask yourself if the information you have found meets your needs. Is everything written in your own words? Can you rewrite something to make it better or to make your work read more easily? Is there any repetition? Can ideas be joined under a new subheading?
- **Does the information you have fulfil the task's criteria?**
Have you answered all your questions? Do you need to conduct more research to provide a better answer? Do you need to extend any of your answers in order to meet the criteria?

Source: Adapted from Trinity College, WA website 2010

Breakaway tasks

Remembering

- 1 List the different types of questions that help when researching.
- 2 What is the research spiral?

Applying

- 3 Make a word search using twenty words found within the research spiral and the different types of questions to ask when researching.

Analysing

- 4 Why do you research?
- 5 How do specific questions help you with your research?

Criteria sheets and research

What is a criteria sheet?

A criteria sheet outlines the standards that students are marked against when completing set work. Criteria sheets are designed so that not only are all essays marked in the same way, but students are also provided with clear feedback on strengths and areas for improvement.

What do criteria sheets look like?

A criteria sheet has one column, which lists the criteria, and then subsequent columns, which list what the work would look like at different standards. For example:

Expectations at each level

Standards	Evidence in student work typically demonstrates a				
Assessable elements	A very high	B high	C sound	D limited	E very limited
	level of knowledge and understanding of concepts, facts and procedures, and application of processes				
Task criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Located, evaluated and integrated an extensive range of highly relevant information from reputable sources. Has included all aspects of the topic, including who, what, when, where, how and why. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Located, evaluated and integrated a range of relevant information from reputable sources. Has included nearly all aspects of the topic and has attempted to answer who, what, when, where, how and why. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Located, evaluated and incorporated a range of relevant information from reputable sources. Has included the main aspects of the topic and the majority of who, what, when, where, how and why. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Located and collated partly relevant information from a range of sources. Has included relevant aspects of the topic and answers at least who, what and why. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Used information from sources that were somewhat related to your topic. Has attempted to answer who, what and why.

Using a criteria sheet to help with research

Criteria sheets should be your best friend when researching as they give you significant targets to aim for in order to achieve a high standard. The following criteria sheet outlines that the assessor is looking for the following:

- who—this could be the person that the topic is about or who is responsible for or involved in the topic
- what—what the topic is about
- when—when it did or does occur
- where—where it takes place
- how—how it came about
- why—why the topic is important; why it takes place; why there are people involved and so on.

The criteria sheet outlines the maximum standard that can be achieved if these questions are answered and summarises how your essay should be written.

When researching you should regularly refer back to your criteria sheet to ensure that you are meeting each of the elements.

Strands in action

Core tasks

- 1 Read the following information about 'The Ashes'.

The first 'Ashes' game was played in England in August 1882 when Australia beat England for the first time on English soil by seven runs.

The name 'Ashes' comes from a magazine article published four days after the game that lamented the death of English cricket, which 'died' at The Oval—'the body [will be] cremated and the ashes taken to Australia.'

There are four versions of how the actual Ashes were made. The most popular belief is that after a match at Rupertswood (in Victoria), a bail (or ball) was burnt and presented in a small urn to the English captain, Ivo Bligh.

The velvet bag that accompanies the Ashes was made in 1883 by Annie Fletcher (wife of J.W. Fletcher who was secretary of the Paddington Cricket Club in Sydney) and given to Bligh at a dinner after the Third Test.

The actual Ashes and urn have only ever left England once when they were exhibited at the State Bank of NSW in 1988 to mark Australia's Bicentenary.

Some people believe that the original ashes no longer live in the urn. It has been argued that a housekeeper accidentally knocked the urn over and when she found it was full of old ashes, she swept them away, cleaned the urn and replaced them with old wood ash from the fireplace.

- a Devise a list of questions appropriate for the information above, for example, 'What are the Ashes?'
- b Identify each type of question. For example: 'What are the Ashes?' is an essential question.
- c Develop two more subsidiary questions that help you to make meaning from the information above. For example: 'Why did the author describe English cricket as cremated with the ashes returned to Australia?'
- d Write three clarification questions that help you to identify where more information is needed. For example: 'What are the other versions of how the Ashes were created?'
- e Finally, use the internet or your school or local library to find the answers to your questions. Write a short paragraph on the process you have undertaken to get your answers.

- 2 Conduct your own research task on one of the following topics:

- the origins of tennis
- human cloning
- using flies in medicine
- space travel
- a famous artist or singer.

Complete a KWL chart before you begin and write at least ten research questions based on the research questions table in this module. These questions must be submitted with your research task. Your report must be 400–500 words in length.

Extra tasks

- 1 Create a criteria sheet for assessing whether or not effective research skills have been carried out in a piece of work. You should include (but not be restricted to) ideas such as:

- Does the research information relate to the topic?
- Has the author developed key questions that defined their topic?
- Have they reflected on what they have learnt?
- Is the information in a sensible order?
- Is there a list of references?

- 2 Write a poem about researching. Include the processes that must be undertaken and how you arrive at the end product.

- 3 In pairs, write a script for a role-play where two students have to complete a research task. The first student follows the above processes for researching; the second follows no structure at all. Your role-play should go for no longer than five minutes and you must give equal time to each student.

- 4 Find five reputable sources for one of the following topics:
- volcanoes
 - French cooking
 - ancient Greece
 - the Qing dynasty.

2

The art of writing



Communication involves connecting with other living things. We do so every day through the words we speak and write, our gestures and body language, and even how we dress. Yet with all the methods of communication we have at our disposal, it's still easy for people to be misunderstood. This is why being able to revise and edit what you write and say is such an important skill.

DID YOU KNOW...

Uniform grammar and spelling is a fairly modern concept. In Shakespeare's time, words were often spelt phonetically (how they sound)—Shakespeare himself sometimes signed his name as Shakespeare with an 'e' and sometimes as 'Shakespear'.

Building your skills

Improving your writing can be as simple as selecting one or two different words. By using a word that is more appropriate, you can eliminate lengthy sentences that detract from your writing and confuse your reader.

Clauses

A clause is a group of words that contain a subject and a predicate. The subject is the person or thing that is doing something or having something done to it, whereas the predicate gives more information about the subject. For example:

Tony plays tennis.

Subject Predicate

You can see from the example that the predicate tells you about the subject. What does the subject (Tony) do? The subject plays tennis.

There are two types of clauses: independent (or main) and dependent (or subordinate). An independent clause, also known as a sentence, expresses a complete thought. For example:

The manager shouted to the cashier.

'The manager' is the subject and 'shouted to the cashier' is the predicate.

A dependent clause is incomplete in meaning unless it is joined to an independent clause. For example:

The manager shouted to the cashier when the customer ran out the door.

The dependent clause, 'when the customer ran out the door', has a subject (the customer) and a predicate (ran out the door), but does not make sense on its own—it is dependent on the main clause for meaning.

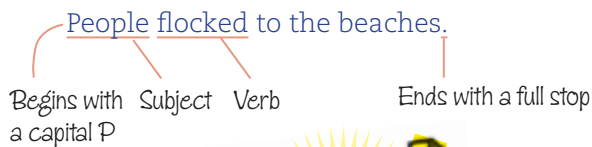
You may also have come across the term 'embedded clause'. This is another name for a dependent clause and acts exactly the same way. For example:

She was visibly upset when her cat leapt out the window.

In this sentence, 'leapt out the window' is the embedded (or dependent) clause.

Sentences

All sentences have a subject and a verb. They also begin with a capital letter and end with a full stop, question or exclamation mark. For example:



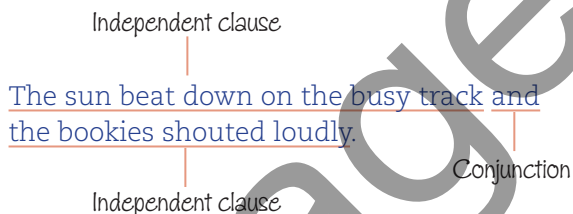
Remember, a **verb** expresses an action, but can also tell us about a process, state or condition, or mode of being.

Simple sentences

A simple sentence, or independent clause, contains just one idea. It has a subject and a predicate; however, the use of too many simple sentences results in stilted, boring reading.

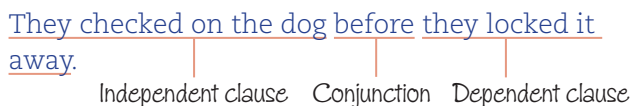
Compound sentences

A compound sentence is two independent clauses (or sentences) joined by a conjunction.



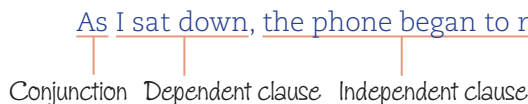
Complex sentences

A complex sentence comprises an independent clause and one or more dependent clauses. In a complex sentence at least one part of the sentence relies on the conjunction to make sense. For example:



'Before they locked it away' would not make any sense on its own. It is dependent on the simple sentence (or independent clause) for meaning.

The conjunction does not have to go directly between the two sentences for them to make sense. This is because a conjunction shows the relationship between two ideas. For example:



Phrases

A phrase is a group of words forming a unit within a sentence. It gives more information about the subject, but does not make sense on its own. It usually does not contain a verb. In the following example, the phrase 'in the fridge' adds information about where to find the pie, but the phrase on its own makes no sense without being attached to a subject or a verb.



Conjunctions

Being able to join two ideas together is really important when it comes to writing paragraphs, stories and essays. A conjunction is a connecting word that joins two single words, two phrases or two clauses. For example:

You'll find it bright and sunny, as it is the middle of December.

It was under the table because I put it there.

Some useful conjunctions to remember are:

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------|----------|
| and | but | because |
| so | whenever | after |
| until | although | however |
| neither/nor | either/or | whatever |
| yet | still | why |
| as | since | though |
| while | | |



A helpful way to think of **conjunctions** is to think of them as two-way streets. They don't just join sentences together; they show the relationship between two items.

Adverbs and adjectives

Adverbs and adjectives are descriptive words. Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives and other adverbs. For example:

She ran quickly.

Adjectives modify nouns and pronouns. For example:

her huge eyes

If you make good use of adverbs and adjectives, your work will be much more interesting to read.

Active and passive voice

Sometimes writers try to make their writing sound more convincing by using the passive voice; however, this can also make the writing awkward and more formal, which distances the reader. In fiction texts, passive voice is especially off-putting and should be avoided.

When the passive voice is used, the action happens to something or someone. The doer of the action may not even be mentioned. In the active voice, something or someone causes the action. Active voice is automatically more engaging because it feels immediate and brings the reader closer.

Passive	Active
The house was entered.	The family entered the house.
The bridge was crossed.	The car crossed the bridge.
The forest was populated by snakes.	Snakes populated the forest.

Varying sentence length

The overuse of short, simple sentences is boring; equally, too many long or run-on sentences can also be very dull, and confusing. For example:

We should all be concerned about the environment as it keeps us alive because we all need clean water to drink and fresh air to breathe and without them we would die.

This would be better as:

We should all be concerned about the environment as it keeps us alive. We all need clean water to drink and fresh air to breathe; without them we would die.



A **run-on sentence** is one that contains more than one main idea. They can be confusing and difficult to read.

A good solution for lacklustre writing is to vary the length of sentences. This will ensure that your reader is not only clear about your meaning but also entertained by your work.

Short, simple sentences are best used to highlight an important point, create excitement and communicate strong emotions such as intense anger or joy. For example:

White rage blinded me. I no longer trusted myself to speak. Words had fled.

Longer sentences, such as complex and compound sentences, can portray emotions in the information being conveyed and bring it to life. For example:

White rage blinded me. I was so furious that I no longer trusted myself to speak. Words had fled. I had never felt so profoundly ashamed of another person as I did now. Would I ever be able to look her in the face again?

The longer sentences at the end of this example enhance the story by showing additional emotions the writer is experiencing and their thoughts.

Breakaway tasks

Remembering

- 1 Describe what an adverb does.
- 2 List the difference between an adverb and an adjective, and a phrase and a clause.
- 3 Identify the parts of a sentence and provide examples.
- 4 Complete the following sentences.
 - a A sentence begins with a ___ and ends with a ___.
 - b A conjunction ___.
 - c An adjective ___.
 - d Sentence fragments are also known as ___.
 - e A compound sentence is two ___ clauses joined together with a ___.

Understanding

- 5 Identify the complete sentences below and write them in your notebook.
 - a I stood in line, waiting for the bus.
 - b The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.
 - c While driving my car.
 - d A cat always lands on its feet.
 - e Amongst the pigeons.
 - f Arriving at work.
 - g He didn't like the colour on the walls.
 - h Understand this.
 - i She always enjoyed going to the movies.
 - j Take the pressure down.

Applying

- 6 Rewrite the incomplete sentences from the activity above in your notebook as complete sentences.

Analysing

- 7 What would be the problem with having too many simple sentences in a piece of text?
- 8 What are the differences between active and passive voice?

Evaluating

- 9 Read the extract and answer the questions that follow.

ANIMAL HEROES

By Anthony Hill

A little Sydney silky terrier called Driver has a special place in the story of our animal heroes. He was one of the very few soldiers' mascots to leave Australia and be smuggled home again at the end of the First World War.

Driver was only ten weeks old when he left Sydney in November 1915, hidden in the pocket of his owner, Fred Roberts. Fred was a horse transport driver with a company of field engineers, and was afraid his wriggling grey puppy might not have been allowed on the troopship.

He needn't have worried. The men had carried many other pets aboard. There was a kangaroo, several wallabies, a possum, and another silky terrier called Sapper, who gave birth to a whole litter of pups during the voyage to Egypt.

Source: Anthony Hill, *Animal Heroes*, Penguin Australia, 2005


- a Does the varied length of sentences in this extract improve or detract from the story? Explain why.
- b Rewrite the extract above so that it contains as many short sentences as possible. How does this affect your reading of the story?

Creating

- 10 List three rules for writing an engaging sentence.
- 11 Devise three new sentences to add to the end of the extract above, including at least one compound and one complex sentence.

Verb and noun agreement

It's really important when writing a sentence that your verbs and nouns are in agreement. You need to think of them as neighbours (sometimes with a few houses in between) and, if they work in harmony, peace reigns in the street. When neighbours don't get along, chaos ensues. Watch that this does not happen to your sentences!



'Singular' means only one.
'Plural' means more than one.

If a noun is plural, then the verb must be plural. If a noun is singular, then the verb must be singular too. For example:

The teacher were correcting work.

This sentence is grammatically incorrect. The noun 'teacher' is singular, whereas the verb 'were' is plural and should only be used when discussing more than one entity. The correct sentence should read:

The teacher was correcting work.

or

The teachers were correcting work.

Imagine if more than one sentence was written without verb and noun agreement. For example:

The farmers is happy because they planted seed which were growing. In spring they should gets a good crop of wheat to sells at market.

Can you see now why the neighbours need to get along? The correct sentences should read:

The farmers are happy because they planted seeds, which are growing. In spring, they should get a good crop of wheat to sell at market.

Applying

- 1 Fix the lack of noun and verb agreement in the paragraphs below. Write them out correctly in your notebook.
 - a The children at the creche is happy to be outside on a sunny afternoon. They is watching the traffic fly past on the street, hoping that their parent will come soon. No one are disappointed when their parents pulls up to take them home.
 - b The horses is galloping freely through the fields, their mane flying in the breeze. The lead stallions abruptly stops, his nostril flaring in surprise at the rabbit hopping busily ahead. He throws his heads majestically in the air, reeling around and heading the herd in the opposite directions.
 - c The waves relentlessly pounded the defenceless yachts. The storms ferocity had taken the sailors by surprise and no precautionary action could be taken for fears of being swept overboard. All thought of winning the races became secondary to survival, with the crews hunkered in the cockpit waiting for the winds to die down.

Analysing

- 2 What similarity is there between a phrase and a clause?
- 3 How would a story be affected if all of the conjunctions were removed?



Strands in action

Core tasks

- 1 Go online and find your favourite poem, speech or song. Copy the text into a document and then examine how the language works.
- 2 Write four to six sentences, making deliberate grammar and punctuation errors. Swap your work with a partner and revise and edit each other's work. When you revise, look for structural changes you could make to improve the writing. You may use conjunctions to join sentences and replace adjectives and adverbs.
- 3 Create a criteria sheet that focuses specifically on the language and grammar used within a piece of work. Devise the standards that must be met by each student and provide advice on how this can happen. For example:

Spelling—each word is spelt correctly. This can be achieved through the correct use of a dictionary, a thesaurus and spell check programs.
- 4
 - a Create four or five interesting and varied sentences about the photos below.
 - b Turn your sentences into a short narrative story to entertain your friends (bearing in mind that your teacher will read it as well).



Extra tasks

- 1 Create a short advertisement to communicate the parts of a sentence and how they relate to one another. Be as creative as you can.
- 2 Create a magazine collage (using both words and pictures) about adjectives and adverbs. Extend this activity by creating complex and compound sentences to link to your collage.
- 3 Create a pamphlet that shows readers:
 - a what a sentence is
 - b how to write a sentence
 - c how to improve sentence writing.

Building better paragraphs

Paragraphs are the essence of a great essay. They group similar ideas together and allow for cohesiveness within a piece of writing. This is why it is important to structure them correctly to create the best paragraphs possible.



What is a paragraph?

A sentence focuses on one idea; a paragraph is a collection of sentences that relate to the one main idea. This means that every sentence in the paragraph must be about the same topic or thought.

There are lots of different ways to structure a paragraph; however, as you move into writing extended responses the easiest one to learn is CEC, which stands for Claim, Explain, Conclude. Using this approach helps your writing to flow naturally from one idea to another.

Claim

Your claim is where you declare what your paragraph will be about and lay out the basis of your discussion. It includes your topic sentence and sometimes one other sentence that further develops the topic sentence. For example:

Australians first went to war in 1863 when 1475 volunteers sailed to New Zealand to support the British against the Maoris.

Explain

The explanation phase requires you to broaden your readers' understanding about the claims you made in your opening sentences. The claims made above were:

- Australians first went to war in 1863.
- They were there to support the British against the Maoris.
- 1475 volunteers went.

The next step in the paragraph is to provide more information and evidence for these ideas.

A series of Maori wars had been waged since 1845. The Australian contingent was divided into four regiments and became known as the Waikato Militia, after the area in which most of the fighting was concentrated. In fact, the Australians did little actual fighting, being used mainly for garrison and patrol duties.

Conclude

The conclusion requires you to bring together all facets of your explanation to neatly finish the paragraph.

Reinforced by another 1200 men in 1864, they did, however, win praise for the dash and enthusiasm they showed whenever they did go into action.

Sometimes a conclusion is described as a summary, but this can be misleading. While you put together the key threads of your claim in a conclusion, you do not repeat them as you would in a summary. Rather, you draw the ideas together. A complete paragraph would look like the following.

The Maori Wars

Australians first went to war in 1863 when 1475 volunteers sailed to New Zealand to support the British against the Maoris. A series of Maori wars had been waged since 1845. The Australian contingent was divided into four regiments and became known as the Waikato Militia, after the area in which most of the fighting was concentrated. In fact, the Australians did little actual fighting, being used mainly for garrison and patrol duties. Reinforced by another 1200 men in 1864, they did, however, win praise for the dash and enthusiasm they showed whenever they did go into action.

Source: *The Fantastic Book of Australian Facts* compiled by Jack Wilkinson, 1983

Breakaway tasks

Remembering

- 1 What does CEC mean?
- 2 In twenty words or less, describe a paragraph.
- 3 Write a list of the important points to remember when writing a paragraph.

Understanding

- 4 What is the main purpose of writing a paragraph?
- 5 Complete the following sentences.
 - a A paragraph has one _____.
 - b The claim step in CEC advises you to _____.

Analysing

- 6 What would be the main problem if you eliminated paragraphs from a story?
- 7 If the CEC approach to structure was ignored, what problems may occur?

Evaluating

- 8 Why is it important for the evidence in your paragraph to relate to the main idea? What would happen if it did not?

Creating

- 9 Invent a new acronym for writing a paragraph. Provide a one-line description of what each letter represents.

Adding interest to your paragraphs

It's very easy to write paragraphs that are factual and to the point by using the same word to describe the idea and describing everything only by its name; However, this produces boring, repetitive reading.

Good writing uses explanation and description. Consider using the following parts of speech to add interest to your writing.

- Adjectives can add extra description.
- Adverbs indicate when, how, why or where the action took place.
- Interjections can be used to add excitement and highlight tension or emotions.

Read the extract below, which highlights just how effective a few words can be. Interest has been added by describing:

- where the action took place
- tension between the characters (look for the interjection)
- description about the characters' activities.

Back in my bedroom to start preparations. I've done the base coat of my nails, toes and fingers. Now then, what is next on my list in order? Ah yes, relax your mind.

I lay down on my bed with a cucumber slice over each eye. Ahhhhh. Let go of all tension.

Fat chance. Libby came barging in singing, 'Sex bum, sex BUM, I'm a sex bum!' Which I think is unsuitable for a four-year-old.

Source: Louise Rennison, ... *And That's When It Fell off in My Hand*, HarperCollins, 2004

Linking paragraphs

Well-written paragraphs naturally flow from one point to the next. In an essay, there must be a strong link between paragraphs, otherwise you run the risk of the reader becoming disengaged and the information becoming irrelevant. You will confuse your reader and convince them that you do not know what you are talking about.

There are three main ways of linking paragraphs:

- showing differences
- joining information
- making suggestions.

Showing differences

The following words and phrases are used to join two paragraphs together when writing a persuasive essay or when giving the opposite of a view already stated: however, nonetheless, even though, but, yet, although, still, then again, nevertheless and even so. For example:

John Howard believed that Australian troops should therefore remain in Iraq; however, the Australian public disagreed with the Prime Minister's course of action.

Joining information

The following words and phrases are used to join pieces of information together: and, also, plus, in addition to, with, then, furthermore, additionally, along with, as well as, when, where, who, which, whose, next, moreover. For example:

Bad weather, as well as poor navigational skills, led Brittany and her friends away from their camp site.

The parts of the sentence have been added together just like a sum:

bad weather + poor navigational skills = Brittany and her friends being lost.

Making suggestions

The following words and phrases are used to link paragraphs when trying to lead the reader towards an understanding or conclusion: therefore, for, because, since, then, consequently, so, for this reason, as a result, thus, accordingly, hence, as a consequence. For example:

Unfortunately, Katie has spent all of her pocket money on lollies and she cannot afford to buy a book.

As a result of Katie's spending habits, she is unable to purchase something else she wants.

Breakaway tasks

Understanding

- 1 Provide an example of a word or phrase that links two paragraphs.
- 2 Describe the different ways paragraphs can be linked together.

Applying

- 3 From the information given about writing and linking paragraphs, turn the following two topic sentences into paragraphs and link them together by highlighting the differences between the subjects.

Topic sentence one: Dogs are considered by many to be man's best friend.

Topic sentence two: Cats are considered excellent pets.

Analysing

- 4 Compare the following two short extracts. Which one is more appealing to the reader? Why?

Extract one: The cat ran across the road. When it got to the other side, it turned right and ran through the cat flap into its house.

Extract two: The mottled grey cat slunk across the road, peering left and right as if looking for an enemy. Upon reaching the cool, green grass of the roadside, it quickly flounced indoors, leaving the small white cat flap swinging in its wake.

Evaluating

- 5 Consider the reasons for linking paragraphs. How might this improve a piece of writing?

Strands in action

Core tasks

- 1 Read the following extract. Identify each paragraph's claim, explanation and conclusion. Find two examples for each phase of the CEC approach and put them into a table in your notebook.

VERY SUPERSTITIOUS

Have you ever crossed your fingers for good luck? Or wondered why people knock on wood just after crossing paths with a black cat? These innocuous gestures actually date back to earlier times when the customs were performed for religious or other significant purposes.

- **Knocking on wood**—In Pagan times it was believed that trees housed gods. Those who needed a favour or good luck would politely mention it to a tree and then touch the bark. A second touch was then performed to thank the god for their support.
- **Crossing paths with a black cat**—This idea stems from the Middle Ages when it was believed that black cats were companions to witches. After seven years of companionship, the cat itself transformed into a demon or witch; therefore, if you wished to avoid bad luck, it was best not to cross paths with a black cat.

- **Crossing your fingers for luck**—Under ancient Roman law, Christianity was forbidden. As a result, early Christians would cross their fingers as a way of identifying each other. Over the years, this custom was adapted as a sign of good luck.
- **Breaking a mirror**—For many years it was believed that your reflection was a representation of your soul. If you broke a mirror, then this would be harmful to your soul and you received seven years bad luck.

Many of these traditions have lasted thousands of years and quite possibly, will live many thousand more.

- 2 Turn the following sentence sums into proper sentences.

- a Fertiliser + rain = record crops
- b Black coat + hot summer sun = heat stroke
- c DNA from blood + fingerprints = criminal caught
- d Moonless night + irresponsible behaviour = teenager hit by car
- e Exercise + wholesome food = good health
- f Unlocked window + valuables in sight = robbery

Once you have six complete sentences, turn two of them into separate paragraphs and link the paragraphs together.

Extra tasks

- 1 Divide yourselves into groups of six. Within these groups create two teams. One team is to argue that CEC is the best way to write a paragraph; the other team is to argue that no structure is best. Use the internet to research, plan and conduct a debate to determine the best way to write a paragraph.
- 2 Plan and make a board game that teaches Year 5 and 6 students about writing great paragraphs. Your board game should focus on one of the following ideas:
 - a fun way to teach the students about the CEC paragraph structure

- how to add interest to your paragraphs
- the steps for effective writing.

Your board game needs to include some way of rewarding people for their learning via a points system, winning tokens, or some other unique way. You may need to write instructions for playing your game.

- 3 Create a poster, storyboard, slide presentation or photographic journal that shows the steps taken when planning and drafting your work. Remember, this is a visual so use no more than fifty words. Your pictures should explain what needs to be done.

Writing essays

As a student you will be asked to produce a large number of written works. Not all of these will be the same. Some will require you to be creative and to come up with a story of your own; others will ask you to argue a point of view and persuade readers of your opinion.

Generic essay structure

Essay writing is often considered harder than it actually is. This is because there are so many different types of essays so it's often difficult to know exactly where to start. A great place to begin is to learn a basic essay structure that can be adapted to suit whatever style of essay you are writing. Generally, it's the content of the essay that will change, not the framework, and this can be factored into your pre-writing plan.

As you move through your secondary schooling, you'll be required to complete responses that vary in length from a short answer to longer essays. The most common essay structure used by students is the five-paragraph essay structure—one introduction paragraph, three body paragraphs plus one conclusion paragraph.

A plan for a five-paragraph essay

- Introduction: This is your mini-outline of the essay and will include your thesis statement (also known as a contention) or the topic of your essay.
 - Paragraph one
 - Paragraph two
 - Paragraph three
- } Each body paragraph will provide evidence for, develop and explain your thesis statement or will provide information on your topic.

- Conclusion: In an informative report, you can make a comment about the subject of your report (if you wish) while restating your contention.

As previously mentioned, this structure can be altered to fit any essay type you are being asked to write. Let's take a look at how the structure works for informative pieces.

Informative essays

An informative report is used to present facts on a topic. It contains three parts.

- **Classification**
This is where you introduce your topic and state what you will be writing about.
- **Description**
Here you use paragraphs with topic sentences to organise your information. Include the features and dynamics of an object, the characteristics and achievements of a person, the appearance, behaviour, habitat and breeding of an animal, or the location, facts and features of a place or event.
- **Conclusion**
In an informative essay or report, you can make a comment about the subject of your report if you so wish when restating your contention.



The topic of sustainability is identified in the heading.

SUSTAINABILITY

Over the past few hundred years (a relatively short time in the world's history) human beings have become aware of the impact humanity is having on our planet; however, it is only in the latter half of last century that the environmental impact humans are having on the Earth became a topic of concern.

The topic is further explained in the introduction and the subject of the report introduced.

Here a definition of the topic is given and contextualised.

Sustainability, that is the relationship between humans, the economy and the environment, was first raised in 1968 at a UNESCO Biosphere Conference held in Paris. Since then, it has become more and more of a concern, with a world summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002 and the development of the Kyoto Protocol (an international agreement that commits 37 industrialised countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 5 per cent from the years 2008 to 2012) from 1990 onwards, with Australia ratifying the protocol in 2007.

Definition of the topic given

Sustainability sets out the idea that humans today should not take from the planet any more than they need to survive, so that people in the future will be able to meet their needs. It is about making sure a lifestyle doesn't have too great an impact on the environment or other societies and culture. To do this, everyone should consider where their clothes, furniture and food comes from and exactly how the energy that is used in the form of electricity, petrol and gas is obtained.

Some of the features of the topic are developed in these paragraphs.

Evidence of the need for a sustainable future is all around us. From salinity problems in our rivers and streams caused by land management practices to the extinction and endangerment of flora and fauna such as the Leadbeater's possum whose natural habitat has been mined and logged, humans need to be more aware of the direct impact they have on the Earth. If we fail to care for our planet, we fail to care for ourselves and our future generations.

Evidence of the topic

The conclusion draws together the topic definition and its purpose. Personal opinion is evident in the phrase 'incredibly important'.

While 'living for the future' may be a difficult idea, it is one that is incredibly important if we wish to ensure that future generations are provided with the same opportunities that exist today.

Checklist for an informative report

Check that you have:

- used formal language
- written in the present tense
- used terms that are accurate and related to the topic
- varied your sentence structure to add interest
- used correct spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Instructional (procedural) essays

Instructional texts tell you how to do something and what knowledge and materials you will need in order to complete the particular task.

Common instructional texts include recipes and do-it-yourself manuals, as well as charts, teacher instructions and pamphlets.

Instructional texts:

- list items used
- include a detailed description of the completed item (if the text requires you to make something)
- include verbs asking you to do something
- provide in-depth information on how to accomplish a task.

To write an instructional text you need to include:

- a title—this usually describes what is being produced, for example 'Carrot cake'
- an equipment or ingredients list
- instructions—use bullet points or numbers to separate each step
- pictures, illustrations or charts—include these if they will help explain the steps or to provide an example of the finished product.



instructions on how to accomplish the task with numbers to separate each step

ingredients list

title

picture provides an example of the finished product

Gingerbread

90 grams butter
½ cup soft brown sugar
1 egg, lightly beaten
1 tablespoon golden syrup
¼ teaspoon bicarbonate of soda
1 teaspoon milk
1 ¾ cups plain flour
½ teaspoon cinnamon
½ teaspoon ground ginger
glace cherries, nuts, currants, chocolate buds, lollies for decoration

This ginger-spiced biscuit mixture can be cut into a range of shapes and decorated with piped icing and/or sweets. The best known shapes are the gingerbread man and the gingerbread woman.

Method

- 1 Preheat oven to 180°C.
- 2 Cream the butter and sugar.
- 3 Add the beaten egg and golden syrup.
- 4 Dissolve the bicarbonate of soda in milk and add to the mixture.
- 5 Add sifted flour and spices.
- 6 Flour the bench then knead the mixture lightly. Roll out to a 3–5 millimetre thickness, then cut out shapes.
- 7 Re-roll the leftover dough and cut more shapes until all the dough is used. Add decorations such as currants or chocolate buds.
- 8 Bake for 10–15 minutes, until just beginning to brown on the edges. Remove from oven then cool on tray for 5 minutes.
- 9 Lift onto a rack to cool completely before decorating.

Makes ten to twelve people shapes.



Checklist for instructional writing

Check that you have:

- a list of items to be used
- a picture or description of the item being made
- information and instructions on how to complete the task
- photographs, illustrations or charts
- used correct spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Narrative texts

A narrative is a piece of creative writing, and its purpose is to entertain the reader. There are many famous narratives that you would be aware of from childhood. Stories such as *Little Red Riding Hood*, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* and *Goldilocks and the Three Bears* are works of narrative fiction that have traditional

roots in folklore. Talking animals and fantastic beasts indicate to the reader that the story exists only in the author's and readers' minds. A plan for a narrative story may look like this.

- **Introduction**
This includes time, place, setting and characters.
- **Complication**
This is the problem that the characters in your story will face and, in most cases, overcome.
- **Climax**
This is the peak of the story, when all the excitement is happening.
- **Resolution**
The complication that the characters face is solved.
- **Conclusion**
The end of the story.

A narrative text that you may be familiar with from your childhood is *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*.



Opening paragraph includes time (once upon a time), place (a sandbank underneath the root of a fir tree) and characters (Mr and Mrs McGregor, Mrs Rabbit, Peter and his sisters).

Once upon a time there were four little Rabbits, and their names were—Flopsy, Mopsy, Cottontail and Peter. They lived with their Mother in a sand-bank, underneath the root of a very big fir-tree. 'Now, my dears,' said old Mrs Rabbit one morning, 'you may go into the fields or down the lane, but don't go into Mr McGregor's garden. Your Father had an accident there; he was put in a pie by Mrs McGregor. Now run along, and don't get into mischief. I am going out.'

Source: Beatrix Potter, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, Frederick Warne & Co., 1902

Mrs Rabbit refers briefly to what happened to the children's father, to intrigue the reader.

Narratives are not limited to children's stories or fairytales. Any fiction book that you read will be considered a narrative (despite its form) as it will contain all the necessary elements outlined above.

Checklist for a narrative

Check that you have:

- a clear sequence of events
- an exciting twist to interest your reader
- a peak in the story where the action comes to a head
- interesting and varied characters
- an ending for each character
- consistent tense
- a tone appropriate to the story
- correct spelling, punctuation and grammar.

Breakaway tasks

Remembering

- 1 List the different essay types.
- 2 What is the purpose of an informative essay?
- 3 What must be included in a piece of instructional writing?

Understanding

- 4 In twenty-five words or less, outline the generic essay structure.

Applying

- 5 Read the following two extracts. Which text type is each extract from?

Extract 1

Had an in-depth talk about O levels with my father, he advised me to only do the subjects that I am good at. He said that vets spend half their working life with their hands up cows' bums, and the other half injecting spoiled fat dogs. So I am rethinking my future career prospects.

I wouldn't mind being a sponge-diver, but I don't think there is much call for them in England.

Source: Sue Townsend, *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole Aged 13¼*, Penguin, 1982

Extract 2

Horses are complex and sensitive creatures, as easily upset by inappropriate feeding as they are by ill-fitting saddles, both of which can make them uncomfortable, if not actually unwell. Even grooming, if carried out incorrectly, can be a potential hazard.

Source: Nicole Smith, *Easy Steps to Riding and Horse Care*, Regency House, 1996

- 6 Name five topics that would be appropriate for an instructional essay.
- 7 Read the following passage. Can you identify the time, setting and place for this text? Hint: It may not be immediately obvious.

Alex Ryder lay on his back, drying out in the midday sun.

He could feel the salt from his last swim trickling through his hair and evaporating off his chest. His shorts, still wet, clung to him. He was, at that moment, as happy as it is possible to be; one week into a holiday that had been perfect from the moment the plane had touched down in Montpellier and he had stepped out into the brilliance of his first Mediterranean day. He loved the South of France—the intense colours, the smells, the pace of life that hung onto every minute and refused to let go. He hadn't any idea what time it was, except that he was getting hungry and guessed it must soon be lunch.

Source: Anthony Horowitz, *Eagle Strike*, Walker Books, 2003

Analysing

- 8 How does an instructional essay compare with an informative one? List both the similarities and the differences.
- 9 What are the advantages of following a generic five-paragraph essay structure?
- 10 What is the problem with rigidly sticking to one essay structure?

Creating

- 11 Write a fifty-word story that follows the narrative essay structure.

Strands in action

Core tasks

- Using the checklists outlined in this module, choose one of the following topics and create an informative, instructional or narrative text.
 - The day I met my future partner
 - How I slowly went crazy
 - The best meat pie ever
 - Where eggs come from
 - Dinner fit for a king
- Read Richard Brautigan's story *The Scarlatti Tilt*. (It's the world's shortest short story!)

'It's very hard to live in a studio apartment in San Jose with a man who's learning to play the violin.'
That's what she told the police when she handed them the empty revolver.

 - Identify the following and write them in your notebook:
 - the sequence of events
 - the twist
 - the story's peak
 - the ending for each character
 - the tense and tone
 - Did you have any difficulties in answering the questions? If yes, which ones?
 - What made answering the questions difficult?
 - Does the writer explicitly state what happened to each character? How do you know what has happened to them?
 - How do you know when the story has reached its peak?
 - How does the author use tense and tone to enhance their writing?
 - How could you use this author's style to improve your own writing?
- Go online and find an example of either an informative, instructional or narrative piece. Paste it into your notebook and use the structures in this chapter to annotate the piece of work, identifying each of its components. Your answer should be similar to the annotated work found in this unit.

Extra tasks

- Find the lyrics to your favourite song. Can you identify what text type it is? Does it tell a story, tell you how to do something or provide information? Paste or copy the lyrics of the song into your book and divide and label it into a generic essay structure just as if it was an essay.
- Write a short essay about how you would teach an eight-year-old about writing different types of essays. If you need visual aids, create these as part of your answer.
- Choose your favourite short narrative piece (of no more than 500 words) and turn it into a cartoon. In your cartoon you need to pictorially convey each element from the narrative checklist in this module. For example, drawing a futuristic cartoon will show that the story's tense is future. For an even greater challenge, limit yourself to ten cells for the cartoon.
- Working in pairs, compare and contrast the lyrics of your favourite songs from Extra task 1 and discuss the different ways each song conveys its message. Do they use similar words, ideas or themes? Do they have the same message? Write your findings in your notebook.

Editing your work



You've written your piece and finally seen it on paper. After planning, researching and writing your draft, you may think your work is finished, but you then need to edit, revise and proofread it. Not all pieces of writing need to go through the whole editing process—but the important ones do.



Editing involves looking closely at a piece of writing and checking and changing its structure and language to make it more accessible for a reader.

Revising means improving your writing.

Proofreading involves identifying then eliminating errors.

An editing checklist

An important and necessary step towards improving how you write is taking the time to revise, edit and proofread your writing. By editing your own work, you'll learn about your weak points. With practice, you'll write better the first time around and reduce the time spent on the writing process.

When editing you need to check:

- content
- overall structure
- paragraph structure
- clarity
- style
- tone.

Content

Content is what you put in your writing. You need to remove anything that is not relevant to the topic.

Sometimes it's hard to decide what to delete, but put every line to the test by asking the question: 'Is the overall piece better for these words being here?' If it's not, take them out.

Read the paragraph below and apply the content test question. What do you think could be taken out of this paragraph?

I think uniforms should be banned because they don't look very good, and you can't choose what you want to wear. Uniforms don't fit very well and don't have a range of colours which is not good. Uniforms often make you cold in winter and too hot in summer unless you get a coat to wear with it. All in all, I don't like uniforms.

Overall structure

Assessing overall structure involves looking at the cohesiveness of your paragraphs, and how they are ordered and linked throughout the piece.

Paragraph structure

After addressing the overall structure, look at each paragraph individually. When editing each paragraph, check that:

- the topic sentence is clear
- all unnecessary information is deleted
- the paragraph follows a logical (sensible) progression

- there is information supporting the topic of the paragraph, perhaps examples, statistics or other evidence
- there is a concluding line, that is a final line that restates your position on the paragraph topic.

Clarity

If your writing has clarity, you will get your message across clearly.

If you find it difficult to see problems in your own writing, you might find it useful to get someone else to check your writing. If they find problems, then parts or even the whole piece may need to be rewritten.

Style

You need to edit your work so that your piece is written in a style that suits its subject. Broadly, there are four styles of writing:

- **persuasive**—where the purpose is to persuade
- **expository**—where the purpose is to describe or discuss
- **creative**—where the purpose is to write imaginatively and entertain
- **analytical**—where the purpose is to examine and draw conclusions.

Tone

Tone describes how your piece of writing makes a reader feel—its mood. Tone must suit both the subject matter and the style. For example, an article on achieving goals would use a friendly, encouraging tone, not a pessimistic or negative one.

Common essay mistakes

Good sportspeople do not become gifted in their field the moment they pick up a bat or ball or don a uniform; it takes years of mistakes and practice before they become accomplished. Good writers are exactly the same. It takes many hours of work before writing becomes easy and free-flowing. With time and by following these simple rules, you can improve your writing considerably.

Common mistake one: not answering the question

Not answering the question is one of the most common errors. This mistake usually occurs for either of the following reasons—you are so anxious to write everything you know about the topic that you write whatever comes into your mind and disregard the question, or you do not understand what the question is asking you to do.

The solution

There are three easy steps to take to make sure your work is relevant to the essay question.

- 1 Identify the key words in the question and use a dictionary to define them. For example:

Discuss the ways in which the homes of the ancient Romans were similar to our modern-day homes.

The key word in this question is 'similar', as it tells you exactly what to look for to answer the question. Your next step is to find a definition for it from the dictionary.

similar (say sim-i-ler) *adjective*

- 1 close to or related in appearance, nature etc.
 - 2 mathematics: relating to figures with equal angles and proportional sides.
- SIMILAR MEANING: for definition 1 akin, alike, synonymous

In this instance, the first definition is the most relevant. You will notice that the dictionary will also give you words that have a close meaning that you can use in your essay.

- 2 Highlight the words that ask you to do something (verbs) in one colour and the words that tell you who or what you need to do it to (the subject) in another colour. If you are not sure what the verb means, look it up. For example:

Discuss the ways in which the homes of the ancient Romans were similar to our modern-day homes.

This question asks you to discuss the homes of the ancient Romans and modern-day homes. It's now time to define the verb in the sentence if you are unsure of what it means.

Once you have done this, you have the exact subject of your essay and what you need to do with it.

- 3 The next step is to write your essay question in your own words. This will help you to gain a greater understanding of what you need to do. For example:

Discuss the ways in which the homes of the ancient Romans were similar to our modern-day homes

becomes

In your opinion, how are modern-day and ancient Roman houses alike?

Note that you do not have to keep the same structure as your essay question as long as you keep the same (or a similar meaning) verb and subject.

Breakaway tasks

Analysing

Separate the steps involved in analysing a topic question and create a poster for each one using both words and diagrams.

Common mistake two: not following an essay structure

Essays, like buildings, need a strong foundation and structure. They require a strong beginning, a solid middle and a purposeful end for it to stand out as a cohesive piece.

The solution

A good plan will give you a solid structure for your essay. Once you have defined your question and conducted your research, you can then plan how to write your essay. (See Module 1.)

Common mistake three: use of slang and symbols

Any written work for school must use the formal conventions of written English. Slang is the English that you use in everyday conversation. It is not appropriate for essay writing. You do not have to use formal English when you are speaking to friends, but you do when you are writing an essay.

Do not use symbols or phone text language in written assignments, unless the symbol is part of an email address or web page. This type of writing detracts from the formal tone you are wishing to achieve and makes your essay more like a conversation among friends than a communication to a (sometimes) unknown audience.

The solution

Keep a dictionary and thesaurus on hand at all times. A thesaurus will help you to find words of a similar meaning. Ask someone to check over your work after you have finished drafting. They will be less familiar with it than you and any errors or omissions will be much more obvious to them.

Common mistake four: plagiarism (copying)

Plagiarism is when you use someone else's work or ideas and try to pass them off as your own. Sometimes this is done unknowingly—you may think you have changed the language so that it is your own; however, you must ask yourself, 'Is this really my idea?'

The solution

Plagiarism can be avoided by learning how to reference your sources and write a bibliography. A bibliography is a list of all the resources you used to help write your essay. Even if you have not quoted from a source, you must still include it in your bibliography as it has been used for information. Including the sources you used in your work gives the reader an indication that what you have written has been obtained from somewhere else. For example:

When in London it's a great idea to visit the National Gallery. The National Gallery has around 2300 pictures, forming one of the greatest collections in the world (Williams, 2002).

Author's family name Year the book was published

The author's family name and the year the book was published are given in brackets so someone who wishes to learn more about the book can find it in your bibliography.

Resources in a bibliography are listed under sub-headings according to their form, such as 'Books', 'Websites', 'Films' etc. Resource should be listed in alphabetical order within each category, and each entry is presented in the same way. For example:

Bibliography Books

Author's family name and initial of given name (or names) Year the book was published

Gauldie, R. 2006, *Globetrotter Travel Guide to Ireland*, New Holland Publishers, United Kingdom.

Williams, R. 2002, *Top 10 Travel Guides*, Dorling Kindersley, Great Britain.

Name of the country in which the book was published

Title of the book in italics

Name of the company that published the book

Websites

A Guide to Shakespeare, accessed 30 January 2010 <www.avonnotes.com/guide_to_shakespeare>

University of Darwin Learning Centre 2006, *Guide to Punctuation*, University of Darwin, accessed 5 March 2011 <www.udlc/guide_to_punctuation>

Date the page was accessed—for authentication purposes

Address of the exact page of the website looked at

Title of page (where possible)

Name of person or organisation responsible for site (where possible)

Date the site was created or revised (where possible)

Author of page (where possible)

DID YOU KNOW...

Search engines (such as Google) are a great way to get started looking for information, but they are *not* a resource themselves. You must always reference the website you obtained the information from and not the search engine you used to get there.

You must list the exact web page you visited so credit is given to the original owner of the words or idea. Do not include in your bibliography the names of search engines you have used.

Breakaway tasks

Understanding

- 1 Write down in your own words how a bibliography is used.
- 2 Describe why you should not use slang or symbols in your writing.

Common mistake five: incorrect punctuation

Punctuation is important as it helps your reader to understand exactly what you mean. Incorrect punctuation can cause your reader to become confused.

The solution

Unfortunately, the only sure solution for fixing punctuation errors is to learn what each punctuation mark does and how it should be used in a sentence. There is a quick reference guide on the next page.

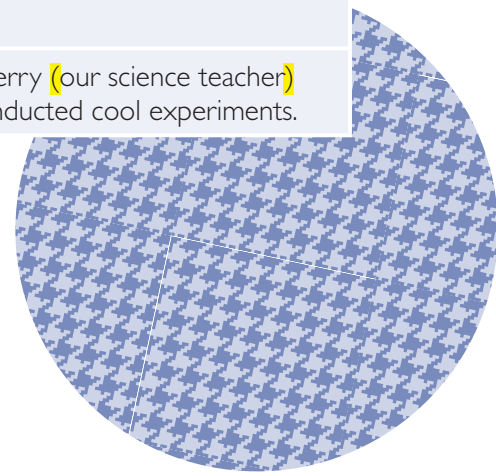


Here is a useful table outlining the more commonly used punctuation marks with examples of it at work.

Punctuation mark	How it looks	How it is used	Example
Full stop	.	Used to show the end of a sentence	I have just returned from the shops.
Capital letters	A, H, T, I	Used for the pronoun 'I', at the beginning of a proper noun, to begin a sentence and to form acronyms.	When Sally came home from the ACT, I picked her up at the airport.
Quotation marks	' '	Used to show direct speech and to indicate special names and titles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you always wanted to be a doctor? I love 'Don't Believe You' by Pink.
Apostrophe	'	Used to show that letters have been removed to form a contraction and to indicate ownership.	Sally said she can't make it on Friday as she's hosting her brother's engagement party.
Comma	,	Used to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> separate items in a list separate independent clauses set off a dependent clause ensure clarity. 	Thomas, who had just turned 13, said, 'I am missing my calculator, mp3 player and pocket watch'.
Colon	:	Used before a list or additional explanatory information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Henry went to the shop and purchased the following items: eggs, milk and bread. What is the cleverest animal? A snake: no one can pull its leg.
Semicolon	;	Used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to join two independent clauses without a conjunction before a clause introduced by a transition word, such as 'however', 'therefore' or 'hence'. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I waited for the train; it didn't arrive. I wanted a piece of chocolate; however, I had already eaten a block.
Exclamation mark	!	Used at the end of a sentence or expression to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> express a strong feeling or emotion indicate an interjection. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That was fantastid! Hey! Cut that out.
Brackets	()	Used to enclose extra, non-essential information in a sentence.	Mr Cranberry (our science teacher) always conducted cool experiments.



An **acronym** is a word that is formed by the first letters of a name that consists of more than one word. For example, ANZAC is the acronym for the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps.



Breakaway tasks

Applying

Read the following extract and complete the table in your notebook.

WIFE REPLACEMENT

Divorce (in the time of the Saxons) was rare ... but there was another way to take a second wife while the first one was still alive. If your wife was carried away by an enemy you must try to buy her back. But, if you couldn't afford

to pay for her then you could take a new wife instead!

If a man was fed up with his first wife (and that has been known to happen) then he must have been tempted to go around making enemies. But there must have been a bit of girl power in Saxon times. If a man was captured by an enemy then a wife could take a new husband in the same way.

Source: Terry Deary & Martin Brown, *Horrible Histories: The Smashing Saxons and the Stormin' Normans*, Scholastic, 2006

Punctuation mark	Quote from text	How it is used
Ellipsis point	Divorce (in the time of the Saxons) was rare ...	Shows that there is more to follow the statement.
Full stop		
Exclamation mark		
Brackets		
Capital letter		

Common mistake six: spelling errors

Incorrect spelling and using the wrong word are common errors people make when writing.

The solution

Spelling errors are easily fixed with a little bit of time and patience. Do not rely on the spell check program on your computer. A spell check cannot pick up when a homophone has been used.



A **homophone** is a word that sounds the same as another but has different spelling and meaning, for example 'their', 'there' and 'they're'; 'weather' and 'whether'.

Study the following tips on how to improve your spelling. These will help you when it comes to writing difficult words.

- Break words into syllables. Every syllable has a vowel or vowel sound. When you break words into syllables your ear has a better chance of hearing the sounds that make up the word.
- Learn the meaning of a new word. This will help the word stick in your mind.
- Use mnemonics. This means making up a sentence in which each word begins with a letter of the word you are trying to remember, for example 'rhythm **has** your **two** **hands** **moving**' to remember the spelling of 'rhythm'.
- Recognise patterns. Learn prefixes (added to the beginning of a word, for example un-, in-, re-) and suffixes (added to the end of a word, for example -ion and -age).
- Note that nearly all adverbs end in -ly, for example friendly, quickly, smartly.

- Use the word as often as possible.
- Read as much as you can. When reading you unconsciously absorb spelling, grammar and punctuation as it is modelled to you.
- Practise, practise, practise. The best way to learn a word is to say it, spell it and learn what it means. If you use it in a sentence a few times, you are more likely remember its spelling.

Essay writing in a nutshell

Good essay writing comes down to a combination of knowing what you are being asked to do, planning your essay so it has a strong foundation, following the structure for the essay's genre and proofreading and redrafting your work to eliminate mistakes. Most importantly of all, good essays take practice.

Breakaway tasks

Remembering

- 1 Write a list of common essay mistakes.

Evaluating

- 2 Can you recommend another way of revising and editing your work? What negatives and benefits does it have over the method described in this module?

Strands in action

Core tasks

Find a list of resources that you have used for a piece of work. Turn this list of resources into a complete bibliography. If you do not have your own resources, use the ones below. Note that you will need to rewrite each bibliography item in the correct format.

Topic: Flies

'The last flies of summer' Tuesday September 22nd 2009, *The Japan Times*, Jon Mitchell

'Fly facts' www.ridmax.com/flies.htm, accessed 25 June 2010.

'Do flies vomit every time they land?' www.straightdope.com, accessed 17 May 2008.

'Introduction to Insect Biology and Diversity. 2nd ed.' Purcell A. H. 1998 Oxford University Press p. 493–499.

'The Natural History of Flies' 1965 W W Norton (pub) New York. Harold Oldroyd.

Extra tasks

- 1 Choose a piece of music that would be beneficial to listen to while editing your work. Explain why you believe the music would help.
- 2 Interview a teacher, parent, guardian or sibling about how they revise and edit their work. Ask them about:
 - common errors they make
 - how they fix these errors
 - what steps they take when revising and editing
 - how they would define 'revising'
 - how they would define 'editing'
 - how they avoid plagiarism
 - how they reference their work
 - anything else you feel is relevant.

At the end of your interview, write recommendations on how you believe your interviewee can streamline their editing and revising process, or write an appraisal of their most effective techniques.

- 3 Predict the future of the researching, revising and editing process now that technology has become so advanced. Do you believe that humans will always conduct the process or will something else take over?
- 4 Invent a device that will be able to research and revise in the future. Explain how it works and make sure it is able to conduct the same processes that humans can.