Writing

Skills and progression in writing

'Practitioners should provide opportunities for learners to create texts of increasing complexity across a variety of contexts such as report writing, argumentative and discursive writing and personal and creative writing. They will write in different genres, including reports, instructions and recipes, e-mails, poetry and narrative prose. These different types of text will require learners to write with increasing accuracy, making effective use of spelling, grammar and punctuation. Writing becomes more sophisticated as the learner develops and uses a wider vocabulary, adopts spelling strategies and uses punctuation to enhance meaning and communicate more sophisticated ideas. Learners will become more independent as they progress, planning and creating their own texts for a range of audiences with less teacher input at all stages of the writing process.'

(Assessing Progress and Achievement in Literacy and English)

Writing is a core skill which impacts on learning in all subject areas. Young people explain and extend their thinking through writing. It requires them to review their knowledge and understanding of subject content to select key ideas and information and recreate this in their own words. Writing is a tool for thinking and learning and a vehicle for assessing learners' progress. As such it can have a significant impact on achievement and attainment in all areas. Extended writing can offer challenging opportunities for young people to apply their learning and develop higher-order thinking skills such as analysing, evaluating and creating.

Teachers from across all subject areas should focus on developing writing skills as well as knowledge and understanding of subject content. In order to develop these skills successfully, young people should have frequent opportunities to write in a variety of contexts and for a variety of purposes. Learning and teaching should focus on the process of writing and offer learners the opportunity to reflect on their progress in key skills so that they are aware of what they need to do to improve. All teachers should have high, but appropriate, expectations of the ability of learners to improve their writing skills.

The following table illustrates progression in the key writing skills young people should be developing across all subject areas. The Literacy and English progression framework provides more specific guidance on the expectations at each Curriculum for Excellence level.

https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Documents/assess7-assessing-progress-and-achievement-framework-Literacy-and-English.pdf

Progression Framework Writing Skills

Structure and organisation	- Select appropriate ideas and relevant information for the purpose of the writing. - Organise essential information or ideas and any supporting detail in a way that makes sense. - Learners will progress to organising writing accurately in paragraphs. - Paragraphing will become more sophisticated as the learner begins to use conventions such as linking phrases and topic sentences that signpost a structured line of thought or argument.
Technical accuracy	- Write with increasing accuracy, making effective use of spelling, grammar and punctuation. - Adopt spelling strategies and use more complex punctuation to enhance meaning and communicate ideas (for example, dash, colon, ellipsis, semi-colon or brackets/parenthesis). - Sentence structure will progress from the use of common conjunctions to link some sentences to the consistent use of sentences of different lengths and types for effect (for example, lists, repetition or parallel structures, rhetorical questions, minor sentences, inversion or parenthetical inserts/asides).
Choice and use of language	- Use suitable vocabulary, including technical vocabulary, to communicate effectively. - Writing will become more sophisticated as the learner demonstrates a widening range of vocabulary and the ability to use more complex structures. - Learners will progress from beginning to use vocabulary and language for effect to independently using language, style and tone in a way that engages and/or influences the reader.
Layout and presentation	- Present work legibly, in a way that engages the reader. - This will progress to making effective use of layout and presentation to support meaning and to meet the requirements of the purpose and audience well.

Review and editing	• Learners will review and edit their writing throughout the writing process.
	• This will begin with reading reviewing and correcting writing to ensure it is technically accurate.
	• It will progress to reviewing work to edit and revise writing to ensure clarity and improve on content, language, style and structure.

Breadth, challenge and application in writing

Practitioners should plan for progression by considering:

- **Breadth** – learners should undertake a broad range of writing tasks across learning for different purposes including relevant and real life purposes and audiences. They should also have opportunities to choose their own topics and tasks.

- **Challenge** – topics and tasks will be of increasing complexity, requiring a greater degree of independent planning and research. Learners will demonstrate more complex language and higher-order skills. They will assess and edit their work with increasing confidence.

- **Application** – learners will apply skills by writing with less support and about less familiar topics. They will write for wider audiences across the four contexts for learning: in curriculum areas and subjects; as part of interdisciplinary learning; in the ethos and life of the school as a community; as part of personal achievement.

The writing process

Writing activities in all subject areas should take account of writing as a process. Learning and teaching should consider the following:

1. **Type and purpose of the writing**
2. **Agreed criteria for success (in the best practice this should be differentiated to meet the needs of all learners and build on prior learning)**
3. **Support for planning**
4. **Opportunities for individual or peer evaluation**
5. **Time for learners to review and edit their writing.**

1. Type and purpose of writing

Almost all writing fulfils one or more of the following purposes:

- writing to recount or instruct
- writing to explain or inform
- writing to analyse or evaluate
- writing to discuss or persuade.

Knowledge of a range of different types of writing will enable learners to identify the most appropriate type of writing to suit the purpose and audience of their task. This could be a newspaper article to inform people about an historical event or a leaflet to persuade someone to stop smoking. A good understanding of the features of different types of writing such as style, structure and language will support young people to develop their writing skills and become more independent.

Open the zip file and read PDFs: 1. Type of writing and 2. Explaining, analysing, evaluating.

To explain

Medical leaflet
Informative and formal
Unbiased
Third person
Present tense
Subject specific language

To persuade

Political leaflet
Informative
Biased
First person
Present/future tense
Persuasive and emotive language

It is important that writing tasks have a clear purpose and audience and that learners have the opportunity to apply and extend their prior knowledge about different types of text.

Purpose: why are you writing? What is the purpose of your writing? Are you writing to: • recount or instruct • explain or inform • analyse or evaluate • discuss or persuade	**The purpose, context and audience of your writing affects:** • **the content - the ideas and information you write**
Context: what situation are you writing for? What type of writing will best suit the purpose of the writing piece? It could be a report for the managing director of a company or for the government, or an article to be published in a magazine or newspaper, or leaflet to provide factual information	• **the format - the layout of your writing**
Audience: who are you writing for? It could be other pupils or pupils younger than you, the local community, a politician or the manager of a business.	• **the style or language used - how formal or informal you are.**

To establish purpose, context and audience, the task must be appropriately designed. Practitioners should provide tasks which:

- are challenging, relevant and stimulating
- make the purpose and audience of the task clear
- offer learners the opportunity to fully demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills
- allow learners to use prior learning to develop success criteria for the task.

Open the zip file and read the PDF: 3. Creating rich tasks

Reflective questions

How often are learners given the opportunity to engage in extended writing tasks across all subject areas?

What types of writing task are most commonly planned by staff across subject areas?

How are staff across subject areas supported to develop a shared understanding of a range of different types of writing and the style, structure and language of these writing types?

How do staff plan for relevant and stimulating writing tasks which present appropriate challenge to learners?

2. Agreeing criteria for success

Success criteria for writing activities should be created with the learners as part of the learning and teaching process. Learners should be supported to understand the subject content required for the piece of writing but they should also have the opportunity to discuss the expectations for the piece of writing. This will include the features of the specific writing type as well as structure, organisation and technical skills.

- Content criteria (subject driven)
- Writing criteria (to support development of writing skills)

Writing activity

Research the arguments for and against minimum pricing for alcohol. Imagine you are a health researcher and write a report for MSPs to help them decide whether or not to reconsider the issue.

Content success criteria:

- The report will show understanding of the key arguments against the minimum pricing of alcohol.
- The report will show understanding of the key arguments for the minimum pricing of alcohol.
- The report will include evidence such as quotations from experts and statistics to support points.

Writing success criteria:

- The report will be written in present tense.
- The report will be written in formal language, including vocabulary specific to the subject.
- The report will include linking words showing cause and effect.
- The argument will be structured in a logical way with topic sentences and linking phrases.
- Spelling, punctuation and paragraphing will be accurate.

Reflective questions

What approaches are staff using to develop success criteria with the learners which highlights both subject knowledge as well as literacy skills?

How do staff ensure that learners have a clear understanding of the literacy outcomes of the task before they begin the work?

3. Support for Planning

Modelling

It is effective practice to model the different stages of the writing process; exploring and revisiting the choices made when thinking, planning, writing, reviewing and editing.

Modelling involves making the thought processes of a writer visible and explicit. Activities like shared writing, where a group or a class creates a text together, can help learners understand that writers are constantly assessing and re-evaluating the choices they make and their likely impact on the reader.

As part of modelling, learners will engage with exemplar texts, discussing features such as language and structure, before using the exemplars as models for their own work. Practitioners, and perhaps parents, can write alongside learners and offer their own work for discussion.

https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Pages/lit11writing.aspx

Planning

A frequent weakness in writing is the limited development of ideas. The thinking/planning stage is an important part of the writing process to support young people's thinking. Strategies to support the selection and organisation of ideas and information include brainstorming, mind mapping, spider diagrams or the use of writing frames. Writing frames can support young people who need additional help to plan and organise their thinking. Resources such as word banks can also be helpful in supporting young people to structure their writing and use appropriate vocabulary.

Open the zip file and read the PDF: 4. Supporting structure and language

Talking to write strategies

Group discussion activities, as part of preparation for writing, engage learners more effectively in the topic. They can help learners to develop their thinking and form viewpoints about a subject. These can be rich learning experiences which also develop understanding of the content required and provide learners with the structure and vocabulary for their own writing.

Detailed support for group discussion can be found on the National Improvement Hub:

https://education.gov.scot/improvement/Pages/lit10-group-discussion-plr.aspx

Open the zip file and read the PDF: 5. Listening and talking to write.

Reflective questions

What opportunities do young people have for group discussion before writing?

How well do these activities support young people to develop and structure their thinking before writing?

What opportunities are there for staff to work collegiately to share practice and plan relevant opportunities for young people to apply their learning through well-structured writing tasks?

4. Opportunities for peer and self-evaluation

In order to improve their writing, learners require opportunities to review and edit their writing. This activity should take place throughout, as well as at the end, of the writing process.

Interim editing and reviewing of work will enable learners to recognise errors and will develop important literacy skills as they become more independent in editing and reviewing their work to improve technical accuracy, content, style and structure.

Open the zip file and read the PDF: 6. Interim writing – edit and review.

Peer reviewing can support learners as they read the work of peers and recognise errors that they have made themselves. Evaluating the work of others encourages them to engage in the success criteria and identify how to improve their own work. As learners undertake this process, they should become more familiar with the requirement to meet content and skill based success criteria.

Open the zip file and read the PDF: 7. Peer review

Reflective questions

To what extent do learners get the opportunity to edit and review their work throughout the writing process?

What opportunities are learners given to peer assess their work?