

Writing Progression: Years 1–6

Summary

Composition and Ideas

Year	Progression / knowledge	What this looks like in writing	Example
Y1	Generate simple ideas from personal experience, stories, pictures and discussion. Say what they want to write before beginning.	Write one or more clear ideas in a logical order.	I went to the park. I saw a huge dog. It ran after a red ball.
Y2	Develop an idea across several sentences and include relevant detail. Begin to recognise that writing changes according to purpose.	Write a short narrative, recount, description or information text with related ideas.	The dragon lived inside a dark cave. Every night, it crept out quietly to search for food.
Y3	Develop characters, settings and events; select relevant information in non-fiction. Begin to sustain an idea across a paragraph.	Add detail that helps the reader picture or understand what is happening.	As Tom stepped into the abandoned house, the rotten floorboards creaked beneath his feet.
Y4	Develop ideas with increasing control. Select details that support purpose and create a particular impression.	Sustain characters/settings and organise information clearly across a text.	Beyond the misty valley, jagged mountains rose above the tiny village, hiding it from the outside world.
Y5	Choose and develop content deliberately for audience and purpose. Build atmosphere, character or viewpoint through selected detail.	Sustain ideas across longer pieces and avoid unnecessary detail.	Although Maya tried to appear calm, her trembling hands revealed how frightened she really was.
Y6	Shape and sustain ideas across a whole text. Make deliberate choices about viewpoint, emphasis, detail and form.	Select, develop and sometimes withhold information to create a deliberate effect on the reader.	The letter remained unopened on the table. Daniel passed it three times before finally reaching for it.

Planning

Year	Progression / knowledge	What this looks like in writing	Example
Y1	Rehearse sentences orally and sequence simple ideas before writing.	Use talk, pictures or a simple sequence to decide what happens first, next and last.	First: find the door. Next: open it. Finally: enter the secret room.
Y2	Record key words or simple notes and organise ideas into a sensible sequence.	Use a simple story map, boxed plan or beginning/middle/end structure.	Beginning: lost puppy. Middle: search in park. Ending: puppy found by pond.
Y3	Gather vocabulary and ideas from model texts, reading and discussion. Plan paragraphs around a theme.	Use headings, paragraph notes or a story mountain.	Setting → problem → action → resolution → ending.
Y4	Plan content and organisation with audience and purpose in mind. Select useful vocabulary and structures from reading.	Create paragraph-by-paragraph notes rather than writing full sentences in the plan.	P1 storm begins; P2 family shelter; P3 river rises; P4 rescue.
Y5	Identify audience, purpose and form before writing. Select content, vocabulary and organisational features accordingly.	Plan the intended effect as well as what will happen or be explained.	Audience: younger pupils. Purpose: persuade. Tone: friendly but convincing.
Y6	Plan flexibly and make deliberate decisions about structure, viewpoint, pace, tone and formality.	Adapt a plan while writing when a more effective structure becomes apparent.	Open in the middle of the action → flashback → return to present → reveal.

Drafting, Paragraphs and Cohesion

Year	Progression / knowledge	What this looks like in writing	Example
Y1	Write sentences in a sensible sequence and keep ideas connected to the topic.	Create a short piece that can be followed from one sentence to the next.	We got on the bus. Then we drove to the zoo. We saw the lions first.
Y2	Link related ideas and use simple sequencing words. Begin to group related material.	Create a coherent short text rather than unrelated sentences.	First we mixed the flour. Next we added the eggs. Finally we baked the cake.
Y3	Use paragraphs to group related ideas around a theme. Use pronouns and conjunctions to link sentences.	Recognise when the writing moves to a new time, place, event or idea.	The next morning, Sam returned to the forest. He followed the narrow path until it disappeared.
Y4	Use paragraphs consistently and build links within and between them.	Use nouns/pronouns, adverbials and repeated key ideas to guide the reader.	Later that afternoon... / Meanwhile... / On the other side of the valley...
Y5	Build cohesion within and across paragraphs using adverbials, pronouns, synonyms and controlled repetition.	Organise longer writing so the reader can follow shifts in time, place, topic or viewpoint.	Despite this... / In contrast... / Several hours later... / This discovery...
Y6	Control whole-text structure. Use paragraph length and placement deliberately as well as cohesive devices.	Create smooth links while avoiding repetitive or mechanical connectives.	The search continued for hours. By dusk, however, their confidence had begun to fade.

Vocabulary and Language

Year	Progression / knowledge	What this looks like in writing	Example
Y1	Choose relevant nouns, verbs and simple adjectives.	Replace vague words with more precise everyday choices.	big dog → enormous dog; went → hurried
Y2	Use expanded noun phrases and stronger verbs to add detail.	Choose vocabulary that helps the reader picture the subject.	the cold, dark cave; whispered instead of said
Y3	Select increasingly precise verbs, adjectives, adverbs and prepositional phrases.	Use vocabulary to create a clearer picture and avoid unnecessary repetition.	The exhausted traveller stumbled through the doorway.
Y4	Choose words and phrases for atmosphere, precision and effect. Begin to use figurative language appropriately.	Select vocabulary to match mood and genre.	Freezing wind whipped across the deserted shoreline.
Y5	Select vocabulary to convey tone, character and degrees of meaning. Use modal language where appropriate.	Recognise subtle differences between near-synonyms.	glanced / stared / peered; might / should / must
Y6	Use vocabulary deliberately to control formality, precision, tone and reader response.	Shift language appropriately between formal and informal contexts.	Formal: Residents are advised to remain indoors. Informal: You'd better stay inside.

Sentence Structure and Grammar

Year	Progression / knowledge	What this looks like in writing	Example
Y1	Construct simple sentences and join words or clauses using 'and'.	Write sentences that make grammatical sense and identify where one sentence ends.	The cat jumped and the dog barked.
Y2	Use coordination and subordination. Use statements, questions, commands and exclamations.	Vary how ideas are joined rather than relying only on 'and'.	I stayed inside because it was raining. / When the bell rang, we lined up.
Y3	Use a wider range of conjunctions and adverbial/prepositional openers. Maintain tense consistently.	Create varied sentences with subordinate clauses.	Before the sun disappeared, the children hurried home.
Y4	Use fronted adverbials and varied subordinate structures. Maintain subject-verb agreement and tense.	Move clauses and phrases for effect while retaining clarity.	Without warning, a deafening crash echoed through the hall.

Y5	Use relative clauses, modal verbs, adverbs and varied clause structures. Use tense choices purposefully.	Add information economically and vary sentence construction.	The castle, which had stood empty for decades, overlooked the village.
Y6	Use a wide range of sentence structures, passive forms and formal grammatical choices where appropriate.	Manipulate sentence structure for pace, emphasis and formality.	The door slammed. Silence. / The missing equipment was discovered the following morning.

Punctuation

Year	Progression / knowledge	What this looks like in writing	Example
Y1	Use capital letters and full stops; begin to use question and exclamation marks.	Demarcate simple sentences consistently.	Where is my bag? / What a huge spider!
Y2	Secure sentence punctuation; use commas in lists and apostrophes for contractions and singular possession.	Apply punctuation accurately in familiar structures.	I packed socks, shoes, a coat and a hat. / didn't / the girl's bag
Y3	Use inverted commas for direct speech and increasingly accurate apostrophes and commas.	Punctuate the spoken words and separate them from reporting clauses.	"Come back!" shouted Ben.
Y4	Use speech punctuation accurately, commas after fronted adverbials and apostrophes for plural possession.	Apply punctuation within increasingly complex sentences.	After several minutes, the children's voices disappeared.
Y5	Use commas to avoid ambiguity and brackets, dashes or commas for parenthesis.	Select punctuation according to sentence structure and meaning.	The wolf, exhausted after the chase, collapsed beside the tree.
Y6	Use semicolons, colons, dashes, hyphens and bullet points where appropriate, alongside secure earlier punctuation.	Choose punctuation deliberately to clarify relationships and shape emphasis.	There was only one option left: run. / The path was narrow; nevertheless, they continued.

Spelling

Year	Progression / knowledge	What this looks like in writing	Example
Y1	Apply taught phonics, common exception words and basic suffixes.	Segment words into phonemes and use known grapheme choices.	jumped, cats, quicker; the, said, was
Y2	Apply taught spelling patterns, suffix rules and common exception words. Distinguish some homophones.	Use spelling knowledge rather than relying only on sound.	there/their; see/sea; happily; biggest
Y3	Apply Year 3/4 patterns, prefixes and suffixes; use dictionaries with support.	Use morphology and word families to help spell unfamiliar words.	disappear, impossible, careful, information
Y4	Secure Year 3/4 patterns and word-list vocabulary; check uncertain spellings independently.	Use roots, prefixes, suffixes and dictionary skills.	knowledge, separate, important, preparation
Y5	Apply Year 5/6 spelling patterns and increasingly use morphology and etymology.	Notice relationships between words and spelling.	sign → signature; muscle → muscular
Y6	Spell most taught words accurately and use strategies independently for ambitious vocabulary.	Proofread specifically for spelling and verify uncertain words.	conscience, necessary, environment; check technical vocabulary in a dictionary

Handwriting and Presentation

Year	Progression / knowledge	What this looks like in writing	Example
Y1	Form lower-case and capital letters correctly; develop consistent direction, size and spacing.	Produce writing that can be read easily.	Letters sit on the line and words have clear spaces.

Y2	Increase consistency in letter size and spacing and begin to use strokes needed for joining.	Write longer pieces without letter formation reducing legibility.	Consistent ascenders/descenders and clear word spacing.
Y3	Use joined handwriting with increasing consistency and legibility.	Maintain readable handwriting across a paragraph.	Joins are consistent and letters remain clearly distinguishable.
Y4	Develop fluent, legible and consistent joined handwriting.	Maintain presentation quality during longer independent writing.	Consistent size, spacing, joins and alignment.
Y5	Write legibly and fluently and choose whether to join according to purpose.	Use print appropriately for labels, diagrams, forms or emphasis.	Joined prose; clear print for a labelled scientific diagram.
Y6	Maintain fluent, legible handwriting and make appropriate presentation choices independently.	Present final work so layout supports purpose and audience.	Clear headings, spacing and paragraphing in a formal information text.

Editing, Revising and Proofreading

Year	Progression / knowledge	What this looks like in writing	Example
Y1	Reread writing to check it makes sense and make simple corrections.	Notice a missing word, capital letter or full stop.	i went home → I went home.
Y2	Reread for sense and improve or correct simple vocabulary, spelling and punctuation.	Add a missing detail or replace a weak word.	The dog went fast. → The dog raced across the field.
Y3	Assess writing with support and suggest improvements to grammar and vocabulary. Proofread punctuation and spelling.	Make changes that improve meaning, not just presentation.	The man went into the cave. → Nervously, the man crept into the cave.
Y4	Revise vocabulary, sentence structure and organisation; proofread technical accuracy.	Check whether paragraphs and details are in the best place.	Move a sentence to a different paragraph because it belongs with that idea.
Y5	Evaluate effectiveness and edit for meaning, cohesion, grammar, vocabulary and consistency.	Make purposeful additions, deletions and substitutions.	Remove repeated information; replace repeated 'said' only where a different verb genuinely improves meaning.
Y6	Edit independently at whole-text, paragraph, sentence and word level; proofread systematically.	Revise for impact as well as correctness.	Shorten a paragraph to quicken pace; alter a formal word choice; correct a tense inconsistency.

Audience, Purpose and Form

Year	Progression / knowledge	What this looks like in writing	Example
Y1	Begin to recognise why they are writing and who may read it.	Make simple choices appropriate to a familiar form.	A thank-you note begins with the person's name and explains what you are thanking them for.
Y2	Write simple forms for different purposes, such as recounts, stories, instructions and information.	Use obvious features of the chosen form.	Instructions use commands: Mix the flour. Add the water.
Y3	Recognise how organisation and language differ between narrative and non-fiction forms.	Use headings, paragraphs or narrative features appropriately.	Information text: subheadings and factual vocabulary.
Y4	Adapt organisation and language to a clearer audience and purpose.	Choose appropriate tone and features for the form.	Persuasive leaflet: direct address, positive vocabulary and clear reasons.
Y5	Select form and language deliberately for audience and purpose.	Maintain an appropriate tone across most of the text.	Formal report differs from an informal diary entry.
Y6	Control formality, viewpoint, structure and conventions according to audience and purpose.	Blend or adapt conventions when this improves the writing.	A formal letter uses precise, courteous language; a narrative may deliberately shift viewpoint.

Reading Aloud and Oracy

Year	Progression / knowledge	What this looks like in writing	Example
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Y1	Say sentences aloud before writing and read completed writing clearly.	Use oral rehearsal to hear whether a sentence makes sense.	Say: 'The little rabbit hid under the hedge' before writing it.
Y2	Read writing aloud with appropriate intonation and use discussion to improve ideas.	Hear missing words or awkward phrasing when reading back.	Pause at full stops and raise intonation for a question.
Y3	Discuss vocabulary and sentence choices and read writing with expression.	Use partner talk to test and refine a sentence.	Which is stronger: walked slowly or trudged?
Y4	Use discussion, drama and oral rehearsal to explore viewpoint and language.	Adapt voice, tone and expression to meaning.	Hot-seat a character before writing a diary entry.
Y5	Use purposeful talk to develop arguments, character and vocabulary; perform writing effectively.	Explain and justify language choices.	I chose 'staggered' because it shows he was weak and unsteady.
Y6	Use oracy to rehearse complex ideas, test formality and evaluate effect on an audience.	Read aloud as an editor and performer, adjusting rhythm, tone and emphasis.	Compare two openings aloud and decide which creates the intended tension more effectively.