

The Writing Framework in Plain English

The Parent & Educator Guide to
Teaching Writing in Primary Schools

6 key takeaways for every age group,
from reception through to secondary

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About This Guide

In July 2025, the Department for Education published *The Writing Framework* — 150 pages of guidance on how primary schools in England should teach writing, from reception through to Year 6 and beyond. The framework was updated in September 2025.

We've read all 150 pages so you don't have to. This guide breaks down the six key takeaways for each age group, written in plain English for parents and educators.

What is the Writing Framework? Non-statutory guidance from the government giving schools in England practical, research-based advice on how to teach writing effectively. It covers handwriting, spelling, sentence mastery, grammar, the writing process, supporting struggling writers, and leadership of writing across the school.

All appendix and page references in this guide refer to the full DfE document, available at [gov.uk/government/publications/the-writing-framework](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-writing-framework)

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■ Reception Parents

6 things you need to know about teaching writing

1. Handwriting starts from day one in reception

Explicit handwriting teaching begins alongside phonics at the start of reception. Children learn letter formation, pencil grip and the movements needed for writing.

2. Children won't be writing essays

In reception, children are not expected to produce extended writing. The focus is on practising handwriting, spelling and saying out loud what they want to write.

3. Talk is the foundation for writing

Children learn to compose by speaking first. Oral composition, storytelling and rich conversation at home and school build the language skills writing depends on.

4. 75% good level of development target by 2028

The government has set a milestone that 75% of children reach a good level of development by the end of reception, including the writing early learning goal.

5. Spelling is taught through phonics

Children learn to spell by applying the letter-sound knowledge they gain through phonics. This is practised through dictated sentences, not just in isolation.

6. What you can do at home matters

Encouraging your child to speak, share ideas and listen to stories builds the language foundation that writing depends on. A story-rich home environment makes a real difference.

■ KS1 Parents (Years 1–2)

6 things you need to know about teaching writing

1. Handwriting is taught daily

Regular, explicit handwriting lessons continue through Years 1 and 2. Children learn letter families, correct formation and begin joining letters.

2. Sentence mastery is the goal

The best way to teach children to write is by teaching them to master sentences first. Paragraph writing comes later once sentence skills are secure.

3. Grammar is taught in context, not in isolation

Grammar and punctuation are taught as tools for making meaning in writing, not as abstract exercises disconnected from real texts.

4. Spelling builds on phonics

Children apply their phonics knowledge to spelling, learning common exception words and spelling rules progressively through Years 1 and 2.

5. Reading and writing support each other

Children who read more write better. But reading should not always be followed by a writing task — enjoyment of reading matters in its own right.

6. KS1 tests are no longer compulsory

End of Key Stage 1 national tests in reading, writing and maths are no longer compulsory. Since September 2023, schools can choose whether to use them. Many still do.

■ KS2 Parents (Years 3–6)

6 things you need to know about teaching writing

1. The writing process has five phases

Planning, drafting, revising, editing and sharing. Children learn that writing is not linear and that good writers move back and forth between these stages.

2. Writing assessment at KS2 is changing

The Curriculum and Assessment Review confirmed there will be a strengthening of writing assessment in Year 6. Teacher assessment of writing at the end of Year 6 remains statutory.

3. Handwriting still matters in upper primary

Fluent, legible handwriting frees up working memory for composing. Children who struggle with handwriting often produce lower quality writing.

4. Writing across subjects is encouraged

Children should apply their writing skills in science, history and other subjects. Writing about what they know gives them a strong knowledge base to draw from.

5. Vocabulary is key to good writing

A broad, deep vocabulary enables children to communicate accurately and creatively. This is built through reading, direct teaching and discussion.

6. The GPS test assesses grammar separately

The grammar, punctuation and spelling (GPS) test is statutory at the end of Year 6. But doing well on the test does not automatically mean a child can construct good sentences.

■ Secondary Parents

6 things you need to know about writing after primary

1. Writing demands increase sharply in Year 7

Secondary school requires regular writing across subjects like science, geography and English. Children need fluent transcription skills and strong vocabulary to cope.

2. The transition from primary is a vulnerable period

Research shows the move to secondary is one of the most challenging periods, particularly for children who struggle with writing.

3. Every subject requires different writing skills

Children must learn to adapt their writing for each subject. Good routines and models should be embedded across all subject teaching, not just English.

4. Children who arrive behind need extra support

The framework stresses that secondary teachers must identify and support pupils who enter Year 7 with low literacy levels, as struggles will be felt across every subject.

5. Writing helps thinking and learning

Writing is not just about recording — it helps children consider information more deeply and cements learning in long-term memory.

6. Avoid letting AI do the writing

The framework is clear: when children abdicate composition to AI, none of the cognitive benefits of writing apply. The thinking happens through the act of writing itself.

■ SEND Parents

6 things the Writing Framework says about your child

1. High expectations for every child

The framework is clear that all pupils, including those with complex needs, should receive and be included in writing instruction. No child should be left out.

2. Teachers should identify needs early

Schools should use the graduated approach of assess, plan, do, review to build an ongoing understanding of each child's writing needs and provide individualised support.

3. Smaller steps, more practice

Children who need extra support may need teaching broken into smaller incremental steps with more opportunities to practise, so they can achieve alongside their peers.

4. Every child can engage with writing

For some children, engagement may look different — storytelling with objects, making marks with different tools — but every child should be supported to participate.

5. Leaders are responsible for SEND provision

School leaders must work with the SENCO to ensure all children with SEND have high-quality, accessible writing teaching that is appropriate for their needs.

6. Handwriting difficulties don't mean giving up

Children with physical barriers to handwriting should still be supported to engage with writing. Alternative approaches and tools should be explored, not used as a reason to opt out.

■ Reception Teachers

6 things changing for you

1. Handwriting instruction starts immediately

Explicit handwriting teaching should begin at the start of reception, alongside phonics. Daily practice is recommended to build automatic letter formation.

In practice: Audit your handwriting provision — is it daily, systematic and separate from phonics?

2. Oral composition before written composition

Children should compose orally — saying aloud what they want to write — before being asked to write independently.

In practice: Build in time for children to say their sentence aloud before picking up a pencil.

3. Don't expect extended writing

Reception children should not produce extended pieces. Focus on handwriting practice, spelling through phonics, dictated sentences and oral composition.

4. The early learning goal for Writing includes transcription

Mastering transcription prepares children to become writers. The ELG assessment requires children to write recognisable letters and simple sentences.

5. Fine motor skills may need targeted support

Some children will need teaching in thumb, wrist and shoulder movements before they can hold and control a pencil. Plan for this at the start of the year.

In practice: Plan fine motor activities for the first half term, before expecting pencil control.

6. Reception and Year 1 curricula must connect

The framework flags that in many schools, reception and Year 1 curricula don't sufficiently connect. Share assessment data and plan transitions carefully.

■ KS1 Teachers

6 things changing for you

1. Sentence mastery is your priority

Sentence-level teaching should be a key component of your writing curriculum. Teach children to construct sentences before expecting paragraphs.

In practice: Try sentence combining activities using Appendices D and E of the framework.

2. Handwriting must be taught explicitly and regularly

Regular, precise handwriting lessons are essential. Teach letter families, correct starting points, direction, shape and spacing.

In practice: Teach letter families together, not alphabetical order.

3. Spelling is taught through phonics application

Children apply GPCs to spelling. Teach common exception words explicitly and ensure children practise spelling in the context of writing.

4. Grammar in context, not isolation

Teach grammar as a tool for meaning-making within writing. The framework warns against decontextualised grammar exercises.

In practice: If grammar is being taught through worksheets, that is a red flag. Grammar should live inside real writing.

5. Gradually transfer responsibility to pupils

Teaching approaches that move from teacher modelling to shared writing to guided and independent writing have proven effective.

6. KS1 tests are optional — but assessment still matters

National tests have been optional since September 2023. However, ongoing formative assessment and internal moderation remain essential.

■ KS2 Teachers

6 things changing for you

1. Teach the full writing process explicitly

Planning, drafting, revising, editing and sharing should all be taught as distinct phases. Children need to understand writing is not linear.

In practice: Use Appendix F to map a progression model for the writing process across Years 3 to 6.

2. Writing assessment is being reformed

The Curriculum and Assessment Review is looking at how writing is assessed at KS2. A strengthening of writing assessment in Year 6 has been confirmed.

3. Write about what children know

Children should write about topics they are already familiar with. This reduces cognitive load and allows them to focus on craft.

In practice: If children are writing about unfamiliar topics, you are doubling their cognitive load. Let them write about what they already know.

4. Model texts are essential

Use high-quality model texts to teach sentence structures, text organisation and the craft of writing.

5. Cross-curricular writing needs careful planning

Writing in other subjects gives practice opportunities, but tasks should match children's stage of writing development.

6. Internal moderation is vital

Moderate writing collaboratively, throughout the year, with teachers across key stages.

In practice: Moderate at least termly, with teachers across key stages, not just within year groups.

■ Secondary Teachers

6 things the Writing Framework means for you

1. You need to know the primary curriculum

The framework says secondary teachers should understand what is expected by the end of primary.

2. Embed writing routines across all subjects

Good writing routines and models should not be limited to English.

3. Identify and support low-literacy arrivals

Children entering Year 7 with low literacy will struggle across every subject. Identify and support them immediately.

4. Break down complex writing tasks

The EEF recommends this as one of seven key strategies for improving secondary literacy.

5. Disciplinary literacy is your responsibility

Each subject has its own writing conventions. Explicitly teach how writing works in your subject.

6. A new statutory reading check in Year 8 is planned

Separately from the Writing Framework, the government has announced a statutory reading test in Year 8 to check fluency and comprehension, as part of broader literacy policy.

■ School Leaders

6 things you need to implement

1. You are responsible for your school's writing culture

Headteachers must create a positive writing culture and ensure all teachers are trained to teach writing.

2. The writing lead should plan across all year groups

A well-sequenced writing curriculum from reception to Year 6 is essential.

3. Invest in teacher training

All classroom teachers need CPD on teaching writing, not just subject specialists.

4. Use the framework's audit tools

Each section includes an audit checklist. Use these to evaluate current practice and plan improvements.

In practice: The framework includes audit checklists for handwriting (page 37), spelling and composition. Start with the area your school improvement plan already targets.

5. Assessment must go beyond the GPS test

Strong GPS results do not mean children can write well. Ongoing teacher assessment and moderation are essential.

In practice: If your school celebrates GPS results but does not moderate extended writing, that gap will show in outcomes.

6. Connect with English Hubs and RISE networks

The 34 English Hubs offer support. RISE networks can help spread best practice on writing.

Want to know more?

More Handwriting provides AI-powered handwriting tools for children aged 2½ to 16.
For parents and schools — understand development, spot what needs support, and get clear
guidance on next steps.

morehandwriting.co.uk

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