

ARMS Revision Strategy

Type of Writing Supported:
All Types

Grade Level: **Grades 3-8**
Upper Elementary to Middle School

Stage of Writing Supported:
Revising

PURPOSE:

What does this strategy help students do?

What the strategy helps students do: The ARMS Revision strategy helps develop the habit of revising their writing with intention—improving organization, clarity, and precision.

Why is this strategy effective?

ARMS gives students a manageable way to approach revision. Rather than seeing it as a vague or overwhelming task, it breaks it into four actionable steps: Add, Remove, Move, and Substitute.

A

Add

Did I include enough detail, examples, or support?

R

Remove

Are there any unnecessary or off-topic words/sentences?

M

Move

Would this sentence or detail make more sense somewhere else?

S

Substitute

Can I replace weak words with stronger ones?

TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

How to Introduce:

- Use a fun acronym poster and model each step with a shared class text.
- Demonstrate revising a short writing sample using the strategy live or on video.
- Connect ARMS to body movement (e.g., miming adding, removing, etc.) for kinesthetic learners.

Scaffolding:

- Provide color-coded revision checklists. ARMS Revision Checklist
- Use peer revision with structured roles (e.g., “You’re the ‘Add’ detective!”).
- Offer sentence stems or question prompts.
- Use Analogies like Gardening or Building a House - see teacher materials for resources.
- Offer audio versions of student writing for self-review.

Practice Ideas:

- Group: Revise a paragraph together using ARMS cards.
- Independent: Use a checklist to revise their own draft with teacher conferencing

DO'S

- ✓ Teach ARMS one step at a time.
- ✓ Use visuals, metaphors, and color-coding.
- ✓ Model each revision step with think-alouds.
- ✓ Provide sentence stems and word banks.
- ✓ Use short, manageable texts for practice.
- ✓ Pair students for peer revision with structure.
- ✓ Connect ARMS to real writing goals.

DON'TS

- ✗ Don't present all four steps at once
- ✗ Don't rely only on verbal explanations
- ✗ Don't assume students know what “revise” means
- ✗ Don't expect students to generate stronger words
- ✗ Don't start with full essays.

ARMS Revision Strategy: Tips for Implementation

How to introduce the strategy:

- Use a fun acronym poster and model each step with a shared class text.
- Demonstrate revising a short writing sample using the strategy live or on video.
- Connect ARMS to body movement (e.g., miming adding, removing, etc.) for kinesthetic learners.

Scaffolding for Different Learners:

- Provide color-coded revision checklists. **ARMS Revision Checklist**
- Use peer revision with structured roles (e.g., “You’re the ‘Add’ detective!”).
- Offer sentence stems or question prompts.
- Use Analogies like Gardening or Building a House - see teacher materials for resources.
- Offer audio versions of student writing for self-review.

Practice Ideas:

- Group: Revise a paragraph together using ARMS cards.
- Independent: Use a checklist to revise their own draft with teacher conferencing

Ideas for group or independent practice

- **Word Wizard Challenge:** Begin the lesson by presenting students with a poorly written paragraph filled with weak words and awkward structure. Challenge them to transform it into a stronger piece using the ARMS strategy. Split the class into small groups and give each group a copy of the paragraph. Set a timer for 10 minutes, and encourage them to identify areas for addition, removal, movement, and substitution. Afterward, have each group share their improved versions, discussing the changes they made and how those changes enhanced the text.
- **ARMS Relay Race:** Organize an interactive relay race where students work in teams. Set up stations around the classroom, each representing one letter of the ARMS strategy (Add, Remove, Move, Substitute). At each station, provide a sentence or paragraph that needs improvement. Groups must rotate through each station, making necessary edits for each part of ARMS. For example, at the “Add” station, they might add descriptive adjectives. Use a stopwatch to time how long it takes each team to complete all stations. The team with the best edits (as judged by the teacher) wins a small prize.
- **Mystery Text Makeover:** Prepare a “mystery text” that is intentionally filled with errors and lackluster language. Keep the text hidden until the lesson begins. As a hook, read the text aloud, and ask students to rate its effectiveness on a scale from 1 to 10. Lead a discussion on what makes a text engaging or dull. Then, reveal the ARMS strategy and explain how it can be used to improve the mystery text. Finally, have students work in pairs to revise the text using the ARMS strategy, focusing on how each aspect can enhance clarity and engagement. Share their revised texts with the class to highlight their improvements.
- **Independent revision journaling** (choose an “arm” to focus on each day).

ARMS Revision Strategy: Do's and Don'ts:

DO'S

- ✓ • **Teach ARMS one step at a time.** Break it into mini-lessons (e.g., focus on “Add” one day).
- ✓ • **Use visuals, metaphors, and color-coding.** (e.g., garden analogy, colored pens for each step)
- ✓ • **Model each revision step with think-alouds.** Show how a sentence changes and why.
- ✓ • **Provide sentence stems and word banks.** Help students substitute and add with confidence.
- ✓ • **Use short, manageable texts for practice.** Paragraphs or even single sentences work well.
- ✓ • **Pair students for peer revision with structure.** Use checklists or guided questions.
- ✓ • **Connect ARMS to real writing goals.** (e.g., “Add” to make your story more exciting)

DON'TS

- ✗ • **Don't present all four steps at once** without modeling or guided practice.
- ✗ • **Don't rely only on verbal explanations**—many struggling learners need concrete supports.
- ✗ • **Don't assume students know what “revise” means**—clarify how it's different from editing.
- ✗ • **Don't expect students to generate stronger words** without scaffolds or examples.
- ✗ • **Don't start with full essays.** It can overwhelm students who struggle with writing.
- ✗ • **Don't treat ARMS as a checklist-only task.** Help students see the purpose behind each step.

Publication Details

Contributors

Tara M. Alexander

Blue Valley Unified
Blue Valley, KS

What is the Writing Classroom?

The Writing Classroom was developed to help educators apply effective, evidence-based writing interventions. Originating at the University of Kansas with funding from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs, this initiative supports instructional strategies for all students, especially those who struggle with writing.

What is AI SCORE?

AI-SCORE enhances writing competency for students with learning disabilities by:

- Integrating evidence-based instructional strategies
- Providing immediate AI-generated feedback
- Personalizing the writing process to improve outcomes

Design and Production

Jenica Stock

Graphic Design

Amber Glover

Content Creation

Sydney Lewis

Development Support

Bridget Smith

Development Support

Samantha Goldman

Project Oversight

Project Leadership

Sean J. Smith, PhD

APLM Principal Investigator

AI SCORE Principal Investigator

Samantha R. Goldman, PhD

AI SCORE Co Principal Investigator

Suzanne Myers, EdD

APLM Co Principal Investigator

Amber Rowland, PhD

APLM Co Principal Investigator

Jocelyn Washburn, PhD

APLM Co Principal Investigator

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