

PLEASE Writing Strategy

Type of Writing Supported:

Informative

Grade Level: **Grades 4-8**

Upper Elementary to Middle School

Stage of Writing Supported:

Planning and Drafting

PURPOSE:

What does this strategy help students do?

The PLEASE strategy helps students plan and organize their writing by breaking down the writing process into manageable steps.

Why is this strategy effective?

This strategy supports students in structuring their ideas clearly and logically, while also integrating self-regulation techniques like goal setting and self-monitoring, which are core to SRSD.

P

Pick a topic

What do I want to write about?

L

List ideas about the topic

What do I know or want to say about this topic?

E

Evaluate the list

Which ideas are the best or most important?

A

Activate the paragraph with a topic sentence

How can I start my paragraph clearly?

S

Supply **Supporting Sentences**

What details or examples support my topic?

E

End with a concluding sentence

How can I wrap up my paragraph?

TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

How to Introduce:

- Use a think-aloud to model each step.
- Start with a shared writing activity.

Scaffolding:

- Provide sentence starters, graphic organizers, and peer support.
- Gradually release responsibility.

Practice Ideas:

- Use PLEASE in journals, science reports, or social studies summaries.
- Pair students for peer planning.

DO'S

- ✓ Model each step with examples
- ✓ Provide opportunities to practice
- ✓ Use visuals
- ✓ Combine modeling with visuals
- ✓ Make it interactive
- ✓ Display and use it

DON'TS

- ✗ Skip the evaluation step
- ✗ Assume students will internalize the strategy without practice
- ✗ Use it only once, repetition builds mastery

Find more information about do's and don'ts for this strategy here.

✓ Model each step with examples

- What to do:
 - Explicitly demonstrate each step of the PLEASE strategy in front of the class using a think-aloud. This means writing and talking through your thought process as if you were a student.
- How to do it:
 - Choose a familiar topic (e.g., Why we should protect animals).
 - Write each step on the board or chart paper.
 - Say things like:
 - “Okay, I’m picking my topic. I want to write about why animals are important.”
 - “Now I’m listing ideas: they help the environment, they’re part of the food chain, they’re fun to learn about.”
 - “Let me evaluate... which of these are the strongest?”
- Why it works:
 - Students see how a writer thinks and makes decisions. It demystifies the writing process and gives them a clear model to follow.

✓ Provide opportunities to practice

- What to do:
 - Have students talk through their ideas before writing. This can be done in pairs, small groups, or as a class.
- How to do it:
 - Use prompts like:
 - “Tell your partner what your topic is and why you chose it.”
 - “Which ideas do you think are strongest? Why?”
 - “What’s your topic sentence going to be?”
 - During guided practice, pause and ask students to explain their choices out loud.
- Why it works:
 - Talking helps students organize their thoughts, clarify their ideas, and build confidence before writing.

✓ Use Visuals

- What to do:
 - Create and display visual supports that outline the PLEASE strategy and provide examples.
- How to do it:
 - Post a large PLEASE anchor chart in the classroom with:
 - Each letter of the acronym
 - A short explanation
 - Icons or visuals for each step
 - Use graphic organizers that mirror the steps
 - Provide sentence frames on posters or handouts
 - Show before-and-after writing samples to illustrate the impact of using the strategy
- Why it works:
 - Visuals reinforce learning, support memory, and provide a reference point for students during independent work.

✓ Combine Modeling with Visuals

- Prepare the Materials
 - Large chart paper or poster board
 - Markers (different colors)
 - Sticky notes or index cards
 - Optional: printed icons or visuals for each step
- Introduce the Strategy
 - Write the word PLEASE vertically down the left side of the chart.
 - Tell students:
 - “We’re going to build a writing tool together that will help us remember how to write strong paragraphs.”
- Build It Step-by-Step
 - For each letter:
 - Ask students what they think it means.
 - Guide them to the correct meaning and write it next to the letter.
 - Add a short explanation in student-friendly language.
 - Include a simple icon or drawing (e.g., lightbulb for ideas, pencil for writing).
 - Example:
 - P – Pick a topic: “Choose what your paragraph will be about.”
 - L – List ideas: “Brainstorm everything you know about the topic.”
 - E – Evaluate the list: “Choose the best ideas to use in your paragraph.”
 - A – Activate with a topic sentence: “Start with a sentence that tells what your paragraph is about.”
 - S – Supply supporting sentences: “Add details and examples to explain your ideas.”
 - E – End with a conclusion: “Wrap it up with a final thought.”

Make It Interactive

- Have students suggest example sentences for each step.
- Write their examples on sticky notes and place them next to the step.
- Let students draw or color the icons.
- Display and Use It
 - Post the chart in a visible spot in the classroom.
 - Refer to it during modeling and writing time.
 - Encourage students to use it as a checklist during independent writing.

✗ Don't Skip the evaluation step

- Why it's a problem: Skipping the "E – Evaluate the list" step means students may include weak, off-topic, or repetitive ideas in their writing. This leads to disorganized paragraphs and unclear main points.
- What to do instead:
 - Teach students how to prioritize their ideas.
 - Use think-alouds to model choosing the strongest 2–3 ideas.
 - Ask guiding questions like:
 - "Which ideas best support your topic?"
 - "Which ones can you explain clearly?"
- Tip: Use a star system or ranking activity to help students visually sort their ideas.

✗ Don't Assume students will internalize the strategy without practice

- Why it's a problem: Even if students understand the steps during a lesson, they won't remember or apply them consistently without repeated use and reinforcement.
- What to do instead:
 - Provide multiple opportunities to use PLEASE across subjects (e.g., science, social studies, ELA).
 - Use graphic organizers, sentence frames, and checklists regularly.
 - Offer guided practice, peer review, and feedback loops.
- Tip: Treat PLEASE like a routine, not a one-time lesson. Repetition builds confidence and mastery.

✗ Don't Use it only once, repetition builds mastery

- Why it's a problem: Using the strategy only once sends the message that it's optional or temporary. Students need to see it as a reliable tool they can use anytime they write.
- What to do instead:
 - Integrate PLEASE into weekly writing tasks.
 - Refer to the anchor chart during every writing block.
 - Encourage students to use it independently and reflect on how it helps.
- Tip: Celebrate when students use the strategy on their own—this reinforces its value and builds writing independence.

Publication Details

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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

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Learn More

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