

POW Writing Strategy

Type of Writing Supported:
Informational

Grade Level: **Grades 1-8**
Elementary to Middle School

Stage of Writing Supported:
Planning

PURPOSE:

What does this strategy help students do?

POW helps students apply a consistent writing approach across subjects and genres. It supports self-regulation and serves as a foundation for more advanced strategies like TREE, WWW, and C-SPACE. Its short acronym makes it easy to remember, especially for students who benefit from simple, accessible tools

Why is this strategy effective?

It is a memorable acronym which serves as a cognitive anchor. Acronyms like COPS serve as mnemonic devices, helping students retain and recall complex processes more easily.

P

Pick Ideas

Brainstorm and plan what to write about.

O

Organize

Organize your notes by story part or section. Choose several possible ideas for each part.

W

Write

Write and say more about the topic.

TIPS FOR IMPLEMENTATION:

How to Introduce:

- Activate Background Knowledge
- Introduce and Model POW

Scaffolding:

- Utilize pictures in the planning process as needed
- Utilize POW Writing Strategy Student Key

Practice Ideas:

- Choose a topic as a group
- Use the POW graphic organizer

DO'S

- ✓ Do explicitly teach each step of POW
- ✓ Do explicitly teach each step of POW
- ✓ Do model your thinking aloud
- ✓ Do provide structured graphic organizers
- ✓ Do connect POW to genre-specific strategies
- ✓ Do encourage elaboration

DON'TS

- ✗ Don't skip the planning phase
- ✗ Don't treat POW as a one-time lesson
- ✗ Don't move on before checking for understanding
- ✗ Don't use a one-size-fits-all graphic organizer

POW Strategy: Tips for Implementation

Step 1: Activate Background Knowledge

1. Begin with a brief class discussion: Ask, “What makes a story or article good or interesting?”
2. List student responses on the board (e.g., clear ideas, good details, organized order).
3. Read aloud or show a short story or article example.
4. Pause periodically to ask questions: “What is the main idea here?” “How did the author organize the information?” “What details make it more interesting?”
5. Summarize by highlighting the key writing components you want students to focus on (main idea, organization, elaboration).
6. Explain that POW will help students remember these important parts when they write.

Step 2: Introduce and Model POW

1. Write the POW acronym on the board or display a poster:
 - P = Pick my idea
 - O = Organize my notes
 - W = Write and say more
2. Explain each step briefly.
3. Choose a simple, familiar writing topic (e.g., “My Favorite Animal”).
4. Model brainstorming aloud: “I want to write about dogs. What do I know? Dogs are friendly, they like to play, they need exercise.” Write these ideas visibly.
5. Show how to organize ideas using a graphic organizer: Put the main idea at the top, group details under it. Explain: “This helps me see what I want to say first, next, and last.”
6. Model writing a few sentences using the organizer, saying aloud how you add details to explain more.
7. Invite students to ask questions or share what they noticed about the process.
8. Repeat the steps quickly to reinforce the sequence.

POW Strategy: Tips for Implementation

Step 3: Guided Practice and Independent Writing

1. Present a new writing prompt to the class.
2. Guide students through POW together:
 - Ask them to brainstorm ideas (Pick). Use think-pair-share if helpful.
 - Provide graphic organizers and help them organize ideas (Organize).
 - Support students as they write sentences and add details (Write and say more).
3. Collect a few student examples that show effective use of POW (with permission). Share these with the class to highlight good planning and elaboration.
4. Review the POW steps again, emphasizing how each step helped the writers.
5. Assign an independent writing task with a new prompt. Remind students to use POW on their own.
6. Circulate, offer encouragement, and gently prompt students who struggle to recall POW steps.
7. After writing, have students reflect briefly on how POW helped their writing.

How to scaffold for different learners:

- Utilize pictures in the planning process as needed. When students struggle to express in words what they want to write, have them utilize the Graphic Organizer that contains space for drawings. These drawings can spark discussion and bring forward vocabulary that will help them write.
- Pass out a hard copy of the POW Writing Strategy Student Key (see below). This can stay on their desks as they work and provide an easy visual cue. Laminate these student keys for longer use and so students can check off/ cross off as they work through the strategy.

Ideas for group or independent practice:

- Choose a topic as a group. Display the POW Graphic Organizer on the smart board. Students can take turns typing or using talk to text to fill in the organizer as they discuss ideas.
- **POW Graphic Organizer Link**: This can be printed and used by students to plan or utilized in printed or digital form to practice the strategy.

- ✓ **Do explicitly teach each step of POW**
 - Break down “Pick my idea,” “Organize my notes,” and “Write and say more” with clear modeling and examples.
- ✓ **Do use visual aids and anchor charts**
 - Display the POW steps in the classroom and refer to them often during writing lessons.
- ✓ **Do model your thinking aloud**
 - Show students how you brainstorm, organize, and expand your writing using POW.
- ✓ **Do provide structured graphic organizers**
 - Help students organize their thoughts with tools that align with POW (e.g., idea webs, planning charts).
- ✓ **Do connect POW to genre-specific strategies**
 - For example, pair POW with TREE for opinion writing or TIDE for informative writing.
- ✓ **Do encourage elaboration**
 - Teach students how to “say more” by adding examples, explanations, or details.
- ✓ **Do offer guided and independent practice**
 - Gradually release responsibility as students become more confident using the strategy.
- ✓ **Do celebrate effort and strategy use**
 - Praise students for using POW steps, not just for the quality of their final writing.

- ✗ **Don't assume students understand the steps without modeling**
 - Don't Dump the Whole Acronym at Once
- ✗ **Don't skip the planning phase**
 - Students need time and support to organize their ideas before writing.
- ✗ **Don't treat POW as a one-time lesson**
 - Revisit and reinforce the strategy regularly across different writing tasks.
- ✗ **Don't expect immediate mastery**
 - Students need repeated exposure and practice to internalize the strategy.
- ✗ **Don't focus only on the product**
 - Emphasize the process of thinking, planning, and elaborating as key writing skills.
- ✗ **Don't forget to integrate self-regulation**
 - Encourage students to set goals, monitor their use of POW, and reflect on their writing process.
- ✗ **Don't assume all students can access the strategy the same way**
 - Why it matters: Students with learning disabilities (LD) may struggle with memory, organization, or language processing.
 - What to do instead: Use multi-sensory instruction—combine visuals, verbal explanations, and hands-on activities.
- ✗ **Don't use a one-size-fits-all graphic organizer**
 - Why it matters: Some students may find standard organizers overwhelming or confusing.
 - What to do instead: Provide customized or simplified organizers with fewer sections, visual cues, or color coding.

- ✗ Don't penalize for spelling, grammar, or handwriting during strategy learning**
 - Why it matters: These surface-level issues can discourage students from focusing on the writing process.
 - What to do instead: Emphasize idea generation and organization first; address mechanics later in the revision stage.
- ✗ Don't move on before checking for understanding**
 - Why it matters: Students with LD may not ask for help even when confused.
 - What to do instead: Use formative checks (e.g., thumbs up/down, exit slips, quick writes) to assess comprehension before progressing.
- ✗ Don't expect students to internalize the steps quickly**
 - Why it matters: Students with LD often need more repetition and practice to retain strategies.
 - What to do instead: Offer frequent review, guided practice, and checklists they can refer to independently.
- ✗ Don't overlook the importance of modeling self-talk**
 - Why it matters: Students with LD may struggle with self-regulation and motivation.
 - What to do instead: Explicitly teach and model positive self-talk (e.g., "I can do this if I take it one step at a time").

Publication Details

Contributors

Carrie Hammye

USD 327

Ellsworth, 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

Learn More

 WritingClassroom.org

 ProjectAIScore.org

 KUCRL.KU.edu/aplm-online

Disclaimer: The contents of this publication were developed under a grant from the US Department of Education #H327F20008. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the US Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Project Officer, Anita Vermeer.