

PLANS Strategy – Student Writing Samples

Below are two annotated student samples demonstrating the use of the PLANS writing strategy. Each includes a 'Before' draft (prior to using PLANS and the PLANS Frame Graphic Organizer (G.O.)), a step-by-step process of the strategy, and an 'After' draft. Additional annotations under the "After" draft highlight how the strategy improved structure, clarity, and completeness.

Sample:  PLANS Writing Strategy SAMPLE Graphic Organizer (11 x 8.5 in)

Sample 1: Animal Adaptations | Camels

Before PLANS:

Camels live in the desert. They have humps and they can drink a lot of water. They have long lashes. Camels can go without water for days. Their body is made for the desert.

Annotations:

- Lacks clear organization and sequencing
- Sentences are short and disconnected
- No introduction or conclusion
- Minimal elaboration on details

Step-by-Step PLANS

P – Preview

- **Student Thinks:** “My topic is animal adaptations. I’m writing about camels. My audience is my classmates and my teacher, and I want them to learn how camels survive in the desert.”
- **PLANS Frame G.O.:**
 - **Title/Topic:** Camel Adaptations
 - **Audience:** classmates and teacher
 - **Goal:** To learn how camels are built to survive harsh desert environments
 - **Big Idea:** Camels have special body features that help them live in deserts.

L – List

- **Main Idea 1:** Camels store fat in their humps.
 - **Detail 1:** The fat gives them energy.
 - **Detail 2:** It helps them go without food.
- **Main Idea 2:** Camels have protective body features.
 - **Detail 1:** Long eyelashes block sand.
 - **Detail 2:** Nostrils can close in a sandstorm.
- **Main Idea 3:** Camels drink lots of water.
 - **Detail 1:** They can drink 40 gallons at once.
 - **Detail 2:** This helps them survive without water for days.

A – Assign

- **Student Orders Ideas:**

1. Humps (food/energy)
 2. Body protections (lashes, nostrils)
 3. Water storage (how much they drink)
- Student numbers each section on the PLANS Frame G.O..

N – Note

- **Student Writes:**
 - Starts with a hook: “Camels are amazing animals that survive in one of the harshest places on Earth...”
 - Follows order of ideas from the PLANS Frame G.O.
 - Each main idea becomes its own paragraph
 - Writes 2+ sentences per detail
 - Uses transitions like *First, Next, Finally*

S – Search

- **Student Revises by:**
 - Reading aloud to catch unclear or choppy sentences
 - Fixing run-ons (e.g., combining short choppy sentences)
 - Checking punctuation and subject-verb agreement
 - Adding a concluding sentence: “These adaptations make camels perfectly suited to life in the desert.”

After PLANS:

Camels are amazing animals that survive in the desert, one of the harshest places on Earth. Their bodies are adapted in many special ways. First, camels have humps that store fat, which provides energy when food is hard to find. Next, their long eyelashes and nostrils protect them from blowing sand and dust during storms. Finally, camels can drink up to 40 gallons of water in one sitting, allowing them to survive without water for long periods. These adaptations make camels perfectly suited to life in the desert.

Annotations:

- Organized into three main ideas with supporting details
- Includes an engaging introduction and a conclusion
- Follows logical sequence (Assign step)
- Uses transitions and elaborated sentences (Note step)
- Revised for clarity and grammar (Search step)

Sample 2: Volcanoes

Before PLANS:

Volcanoes erupt lava. Lava is hot. They are found in different places. People have to leave if one is going to erupt. Some volcanoes are not active.

Annotations:

- Missing focus and structure
- Lacks topic development
- Abrupt shifts in ideas
- Basic vocabulary and syntax

Step-by-Step PLANS

P – Preview

- **Student Thinks:** “I’m writing an informational piece on volcanoes. I want my audience (classmates/teacher) to understand what they are, where they’re found, and how they affect people.”
- **PLANS Frame G.O. Sheet:**
 - **Title:** All About Volcanoes
 - **Audience:** Classmates and teacher
 - **Goal:** Learn how volcanoes form, where they are, and how they affect people
 - **Big Idea:** Volcanoes are powerful and important to understand.

L – List

- **Main Idea 1:** What volcanoes are
 - **Detail 1:** Magma erupts from Earth’s crust
 - **Detail 2:** Creates a cone or mountain
- **Main Idea 2:** Where volcanoes are found
 - **Detail 1:** Found on tectonic boundaries
 - **Detail 2:** Some areas have many volcanoes (e.g., Ring of Fire)
- **Main Idea 3:** Effects on people
 - **Detail 1:** People evacuate before eruptions
 - **Detail 2:** Dormant volcanoes can still be dangerous

A – Assign

- Student organizes ideas logically:
 1. What volcanoes are
 2. Where they are found
 3. How they affect people
- Numbers each main idea and detail on the PLANS Frame G.O.

N – Note

- **Student Writes:**
 - Begins with an introduction: “Volcanoes are powerful natural features that can change landscapes...”
 - Follows the plan with clear topic sentences and supporting detail
 - Uses transitions like *First, Also, Finally*

- Includes academic vocabulary like *magma*, *tectonic plates*, *dormant*

S – Search

- **Student Revises by:**

- Reading aloud to catch awkward sentences
- Fixing vague language ("they are found in places") to specifics ("found on tectonic plate boundaries")
- Adding a strong closing: "Understanding volcanoes helps us stay safe and appreciate the power of nature."
- Using a revision checklist to check grammar, punctuation, and clarity

After PLANS:

Volcanoes are powerful natural features that can change landscapes in moments. They form when magma from beneath the Earth's surface erupts through the crust. Volcanoes can be found in many places around the world, especially along tectonic plate boundaries. When a volcano is about to erupt, people often need to evacuate to stay safe. Some volcanoes are dormant, meaning they haven't erupted in a long time but could still become active again. Understanding volcanoes helps us stay safe and appreciate the power of nature.

Annotations:

- Introduction sets purpose and engages audience
 - Ideas grouped into logical paragraphs
 - Details support each main point clearly
 - Uses academic vocabulary and precise language
 - Demonstrates revision using PLANS structure
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PLANS Writing Strategy Student Sample Summary Chart

Step	Camel Sample	Volcano Sample
P	Defined audience & goal (teach about camel survival)	Defined purpose (inform about volcanoes)
L	Listed 3 main adaptations with supporting details	Listed 3 topics: definition, location, effects
A	Sequenced ideas: humps → body → water	Sequenced: what → where → how it affects
N	Paragraphs from PLANS Frame G.O.; 2+ sentences/detail	Full paragraphs with vocabulary & transitions
S	Revised for structure and run-ons	Revised for clarity, specificity, and flow