

# 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?

# PLEASE Strategy: Case study

Mr. Daniels, a 6th-grade science teacher, introduces the PLEASE writing strategy during a unit on ecosystems. He begins by explaining to his students that they'll be learning a new way to organize their writing using a strategy called PLEASE, which stands for Pick a topic, List ideas, Evaluate the list, Activate with a topic sentence, Supply supporting sentences, and End with a conclusion. He writes the acronym on the board and walks through each step, using a think-aloud to model how a writer might use the strategy to write about the importance of rainforest animals.

As he models, Mr. Daniels verbalizes his thought process: "Okay, I'm picking my topic, why rainforest animals are important. Now I'll list some ideas: they help pollinate, they spread seeds, they're part of the food chain. But which of these is the strongest? That's the evaluate step. I think pollination and food chains are really important, so I'll focus on those." He continues through the rest of the steps, writing a full paragraph on chart paper while narrating his decisions. This whole-group modeling helps students see how the strategy works in action.

The next day, Mr. Daniels transitions to small group practice. He assigns each group a different ecosystem, desert, ocean, tundra, and provides them with a PLEASE graphic organizer, a list of animals from that ecosystem, and a word bank with key vocabulary. Students work together to complete the organizer and draft a paragraph. Mr. Daniels circulates the room, asking guiding questions like, "What's your topic sentence going to be?" and "Which ideas best support your topic?" This collaborative work allows students to apply the strategy with support from peers and their teacher.

Later in the week, students move on to independent practice. Each student selects an ecosystem of their choice and completes a PLEASE organizer on their own. They then write a paragraph in their science journals, using a checklist to ensure they've included each step of the strategy. Mr. Daniels provides anchor charts on the wall and digital versions of the organizer. He also holds brief writing conferences to offer feedback and encouragement.

While most of his students began using the PLEASE strategy with growing confidence, Mr. Daniels noticed that one student, Ava, continued to struggle with organizing her thoughts and remembering the steps. Mr. Daniels met with Ava one-on-one to identify where she was getting stuck. He discovered that Ava had difficulty transitioning from listing ideas to evaluating them and often felt overwhelmed by too many choices. To support her, he adapted the strategy by creating a simplified version of the graphic organizer with visual icons and color-coded sections. He also provided sentence frames for each step and allowed Ava to verbally brainstorm her ideas before writing them down. During small group time, he paired her with a peer mentor and checked in regularly to offer encouragement and feedback. Over time, Ava began to internalize the structure and gained confidence in her ability to express her ideas clearly. By adapting the strategy, Mr. Daniels helped Ava experience success and growth as a writer.

ISSUE/ CHALLENGE	WHAT TO DO	HELPFUL PROMPTS
<p><b>Students list too many ideas</b></p>	<p><b>Teach how to prioritize</b></p> <p><b>Model the Process:</b> Show students how to look at their list and ask, “Which ideas are most important to my topic?” or “Which ones can I explain well with examples?”</p> <p><b>Use a Ranking Activity:</b> Have students number their ideas from most to least relevant or use a star system (★ = strong, ☆ = less strong).</p> <p><b>Teach Criteria:</b> Help students evaluate ideas based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevance to the topic</li> <li>• How well they can explain or support the idea</li> <li>• Whether the idea adds something new or important</li> </ul>	<p>“Which three ideas best support your topic?”</p> <p>“You’ve got a great list! Now let’s pick the top three ideas that best support your topic. Which ones are the most important or easiest to explain”</p>
<p><b>Skipping steps</b></p>	<p><b>Use checklists</b></p>	<p>“Let’s go back—did you include each part of PLEASE?”</p> <p>“Which step do you think you skipped or rushed through?”</p> <p>“Can you check off each part as you go?”</p> <p>“What’s missing from your paragraph that the checklist reminds you to include?”</p> <p>“If you had to explain your paragraph using the checklist, could you match each part?”</p>

ISSUE/ CHALLENGE	WHAT TO DO	HELPFUL PROMPTS
<p><b>Weak topic sentences</b></p>	<p><b>Model Strong vs. Weak Examples:</b> Show students examples of both and discuss why one is more effective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak: “Animals are cool.”</li> <li>• Strong: “Animals are important to ecosystems because they help maintain balance and biodiversity.”</li> </ul> <p><b>Provide scaffolds:</b> Use sentence frames</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “One reason ___ is important is because ___.”</li> <li>• “___ plays a key role in ___ by ___.”</li> </ul> <p><b>Ask Guiding Questions:</b> Encourage students to reflect on their writing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Does your first sentence tell the reader what the paragraph is about?”</li> <li>• “Can someone guess your main idea just by reading your topic sentence?”</li> <li>•</li> </ul> <p><b>Peer Review Practice:</b> Have students swap topic sentences and give feedback using a checklist:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the topic clear?</li> <li>• Does it match the rest of the paragraph?</li> <li>• Is it specific and focused?</li> </ul>	<p>“Does your first sentence tell the reader what the paragraph is about?”</p> <p>“What is the main idea you want your reader to understand?”</p> <p>“If someone only read your first sentence, would they know what your paragraph is about?”</p> <p>“Does your topic sentence match the ideas in the rest of your paragraph?”</p> <p>“Can you turn your topic into a clear statement?”</p> <p>“Can you make your topic sentence more specific?”</p> <p>“Does your sentence include a strong subject and a clear opinion or fact?”</p> <p>“Try starting with a phrase like ‘One reason...’ or ‘A key idea is...’”</p> <p>“Can you combine two of your ideas into one strong sentence?”</p>

# 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

[WritingClassroom.org](https://writingclassroom.org)

[ProjectAIScore.org](https://ProjectAIScore.org)

[KUCRL.KU.edu/aplm-online](https://KUCRL.KU.edu/aplm-online)

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