

# Writing frames and thinking skills

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Writing frames support children's writing in many ways:

- writing frames can help pupils by asking them to select, and think about what they have learnt. By encouraging pupils to re-order information and demonstrate their understanding rather than just copying out text all pupils can be helped to achieve some success at writing, a vital ingredient in improving self-esteem and motivation.
- writing frames help some pupils by preventing them from being presented with a blank sheet of paper – a particularly daunting experience for those for whom sustained writing is difficult.
- writing frames give pupils an overview of the writing task. Before the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy, writing in primary schools had traditionally concentrated on narrative – writing frames can extend the genres of writing that pupils are introduced to and which they learn to master.

## Writing frames and ICT

Completing writing frames on screen usually increases pupils' motivation. They are more easily engaged in finishing and printing the frame than when the task has to be written on paper. Additions and changes can be more easily incorporated in to the task. For the teacher it is easy to create templates for pupils to use on screen and to differentiate either by the structure of the frame or the supporting vocabulary that is supplied. ICT also makes it easier to withdraw the support of the frame by progressively simplifying the structure. If you have access to a projector, then modelling writing on a large screen makes it much easier for all pupils to see.

## Teaching with writing frames

- Teacher models or demonstrates using large version of the frame or with a digital projector;
- joint construction by teacher and pupils using writing frame as an interactive activity;

- supported 'scaffolded' activity (i.e. pupils' use of writing frames which is treated as a draft, writing on a computer can be easily edited and improved);
- independent activity: the genre and its language features are added to pupils' writing repertoire;
- debriefing/plenary discussion of how writing frames help make the process of writing explicit


It is important that writing frames are *always* used within appropriate curriculum work rather than in isolated study skills lessons. In other words, the use of a writing frame should arise from the pupils having a *purpose* for undertaking some writing and an appropriate frame introduced if needed.

They can be used simply as a way to support explicit teaching of writing in different subjects. This works by breaking down the writing process into stages where the frame maintains the cohesiveness of the text and pupils can concentrate on the content and coherence of the text. Pupils see that there are separate small chunks to complete, this makes the task more manageable

The 'teaching thinking' slant on writing frames is then to make the mastery of this process explicit, to discuss how the writing frame has supported the teaching and learning so that the pupils see that writing is something that you learn, rather than something that you are just 'good at'.

Writing frames can be used across the curriculum. There are three examples of writing frames on the CD designed for use on screen (with drop-down forms) as well as a range of writing frames to print out (using text boxes). These have been provided by GridREF 2000, a North-East based NOF provider. Two teacher activities from their training materials for primary teachers are also included. The first is a guide to creating writing frames using *Word 2000* (TableFrames.doc); the second is a guide to using drop-down forms (DropDown.doc) to make these frames easy to use on a computer.

For further information about the theory and practice of using writing frames see 'Writing Non-Fiction' (Chapter 4) in *Extending Literacy* by Maureen Lewis and David Wray, (1995) Routledge.

Comparative Report Writing (historical)		
Name <input type="text"/>	Title <input type="text"/>	Date <input type="text"/>
A comparison between <input type="text"/> and <input type="text"/>		<p><u>Help words</u></p> <p><u>Sentence starters</u>            Modern day            Nowadays            Today  <u>In...times</u>            Many years ago            In (date)            They both            They are alike            They are different            If we compare</p> <p><u>Possible links</u>  <u>although</u>  <u>but</u>  <u>whilst</u>  <u>in contrast</u>  <u>however</u>  <u>whereas</u>  <u>but then</u></p>
Conclusion <input type="text"/>		<p><u>Possible endings</u>            In conclus ion            Finally            In comparing            We can see            Having looked at</p>