For teachers

Important information about this unit

This is a unit to develop student writing in the classroom so that students can avoid the common error of writing a flatline, predictable persuasive essay that is overly dependant on listing. When administering the NAPLAN Writing Task, it is not appropriate to engage in discussion about the topic.

The sample writing task (Hidden Worlds) that accompany this unit are in a different format from the NAPLAN Writing Task, to try to generate student interest and stimulate ideas in the skill-building phase.

Instructions

In the classroom, guide students through the following steps as they respond to the question: Is it a waste of time exploring hidden worlds?

1. Choose a focus from the pictures or text in the stimulus. Don’t let students just write about each image or text prompt on the stimulus (a “stimulus walk”). They should use the stimulus to select an idea they know something about to create an arguable or persuasive stance. Check if you have enough content knowledge for this focus.

2. Adjust the persuasive topic if necessary. When the topic is re-written, check that it is still persuasive, not descriptive.

3. Brainstorm ideas and think about a possible structure on the planning sheets. This will help structure ideas and make arguments ‘develop’ or have a relationship to each other, avoiding a flatline essay that usually consists of a list of fairly unrelated arguments.

4. Model developing an individual thesis statement so that the argument is custom-made.

5. Model writing an outline which builds arguments using one or more of the structures listed on the planning sheets. This will allow you to point out relationships between the arguments or their relative merits and arrive at the most appropriate structure for the argument.

6. Model writing an introduction, body paragraphs and conclusion using the outline as a guide.
For students

Step 1: Choose a focus

Working with a partner, choose one image or piece of text from the stimulus that you both have some knowledge of, or feel strongly about.

Step 2: Adjust the persuasive topic statement if required

In the stimulus, the example persuasive topic statement is, “It is a waste of time exploring hidden worlds”. It is important that you are quite clear about what you are arguing. Carefully consider what the following key words from the topic statement mean for you:

- **waste of time** might mean futile, hopeless, pointless, foolish or impractical
- **exploring** might mean investigating, searching for, experiencing or examining by touch
- **hidden worlds** might mean:
  - places that most people don’t even know exist
  - aspects of natural phenomena that haven’t been understood at a particular point in time
  - what was once known, but is now lost
  - what can be sensed, but cannot be seen or touched
  - what can be ‘seen’ using technology, but doesn’t actually exist.

Choose a piece of stimulus then rewrite the topic statement in your own words. Check with your partner that your topic statement is still contentious, that is an opposing viewpoint is possible. It should not just be descriptive. For example, contentious topic statements would be:

- It is futile for people use a virtual reality to escape from their boring lives. (Agree)
- Progress depends on the human desire to discover and conquer unknown worlds. (Disagree)
- Using avatars to gain mastery in dangerous imaginative worlds is not foolish. (Disagree)

Step 3: Structuring and brainstorming ideas

A brainstorm map is useful to generate ideas. A brainstorm map helps you to:

1. Record what you know about your topic
2. Help inform or build the structure of your argument.

Alternatively, you can begin with a structure in mind and brainstorm your ideas to fit within that structure. This exercise is asking you to start with a structure and work back to a brainstorm.
Working on two separate planning sheets, choose two different structures that might suit your topic. For example, you might choose a plus/minus/interesting (PMI) structure and your partner might choose a cause/effect structure. Brainstorm together and consider how your structure might inform your ideas. Examples of structures on the planning sheets are:

- problem/solution
- cause/effect
- PMI
- action/consequences
- contrasting: e.g. illusion/reality; before/after
- comparing: similarities and differences
- listing: e.g. argument 1/argument 2/argument 3.

Then write a possible thesis statement at the bottom of the planning sheet.

**Step 4: Develop an individual thesis statement**

Your thesis statement should establish your stance on the topic and show the reader how your argument will be structured. You thesis statement should consist of:

- a **stem** that develops out of the topic statement and makes it clear if you agree or disagree with the topic
- an **extension** that signals the structure for the rest of your argument. The extension will often start with a conjunction, such as ‘only if’, ‘when’, ‘as long as’, ‘so that’, ‘if’, ‘because’, or ‘however’. For example:
  - It is not a waste of time for a child to create an imaginary friend because it develops the imagination.
  - It is unwise to encourage a child to have imaginary friends if it prevents them making real friends.
  - Digging up the past is not a waste of time because the past can help us understand our own times.

Don’t rely on an assertion, that is using your opinion as evidence. For example, “I think that having an imaginary friend is stupid and shows you are losing your mind”.

Don’t just rely on a factual descriptive statement. For example, “Having an avatar is necessary to play Second Life”.

Don’t argue something that is self-evident. For example, “Fairy tales are stories of hidden worlds”.

Using the stimulus text, “Are you a Daydream Believer”, a good thesis statement would be, “Daydreaming is a very productive use of time because the action of exploring other possibilities helps people solve problems, be creative and achieve success”.

Step 5: Write an outline
Use your planning sheet to further develop your argument into an introduction, body and conclusion.

Introduction
It may take more than one paragraph to write a good introduction. Your introduction should:

- Get your reader’s attention.
- State your thesis or what you intend to argue.
- Foreshadow your reasons or how you intend to organise your ideas.
- Say why this action is important or urgent.

Body
The number of paragraphs in the body will be determined by the structure you have chosen. For example, paragraph 1 might be an action, then paragraphs, 2 and 3 might be consequences of that action. Or paragraph 1 might be a description of a common illusion, then paragraphs 2 and 3 might show different aspects of the reality. Or paragraphs 1 and 2 might show the advantages of an idea and paragraph 3 might show the disadvantages and assess how significant they are.

Body paragraph 1:
- Topic sentence
- Evidence 1
- Evidence 2
- Concluding or linking sentence.

Body paragraph 2:
- Topic sentence
- Evidence 1
- Evidence 2
- Concluding or linking sentence.

Body paragraph 3:
- Topic sentence
- Evidence 1
- Evidence 2
- Concluding or linking sentence.

Body paragraph 4 (if needed):
- Topic sentence
- Evidence 1
- Evidence 2
- Concluding or linking sentence.

Conclusion
Your conclusion should:

- remind the reader what is important or urgent about this argument
- restate your thesis in different, stronger words.
- try to end with something interesting or significant that throws new light on the topic, for example a quote, or an appeal to the reader.
Step 6: Write the paragraphs of the essay using your outline and planning sheet as a guide

See the example planning sheet.

1. **Attract the reader’s attention with a sparkling introduction**

Get the reader’s attention with something interesting or exciting, for example an interesting fact, an anecdote, a puzzle, something humorous or ironic or a reference to a novel or an event.

**Note:** This section should also make the reader aware of which piece of stimulus you are going to focus on.

*An anecdote: Did you know Albert Einstein was a terrible daydreamer at school and his teachers informed his parents that he wasn’t very clever? Teachers’ and employers’ attitudes to daydreaming might be a good cohesive device to use in the essay.*

Highlight your opinion on the topic with a conjunction, such as ‘because’ ‘or a ‘so that’ or an ‘if’ clause either before or after the statement.

*Dreaming is a very productive use of time because the action of exploring other possibilities through the imagination helps people solve problems, be creative and achieve success.*

Demonstrate why your stance is important or worthwhile.

*Positive daydreaming is wonderful for relieving stress and for helping people visualise future success.*

Foreshadow the main reasons for your stance by listing them or by showing a relationship. For example, the plus and interesting from the PMI structure might be useful in an introduction

**P:** Daydreaming can improve skills, lead to creative inventions, great literature, and help solve difficult problems.

**M:** Daydreams can lead to injury at work or encourage people to believe in their fantasy worlds rather than facing up to reality. However, these are often extreme cases, not the rule.

**I:** Daydreams are an outcome of the right side of the brain, and are greatly under-utilised by schools. Daydreams are controlled, unlike nightmares, and so we can harness their creative force. Great sportsmen, visionaries, scientists and writers daydream deliberately.

Example of an introduction using plus and interesting to emphasise the positive aspects:

*Did you know Albert Einstein was a terrible daydreamer at school and his teachers informed his parents that he wasn’t very clever. How wrong were they! Daydreams are an outcome of the right side of the brain. This ‘skill’ is often not encouraged in schools or in society despite its proven benefits. It isn’t foolish to engage in daydreaming because it can be of great benefit to people as individuals and also to society. Daydreaming has been used by people to make scientific discoveries, write great literature, and help solve difficult problems in creative ways.*

Example of an introduction using minus to emphasise the negative aspects:

*Behind the “safe” computer screen people use at work and at home lurk many hidden dangers. RAT and Trojan viruses wait for an opportunity to steal property, infect files and cause chaos and disruption in peoples’ lives or workplaces. The only thing between this disaster and safety is a vigilant computer operator who isn’t daydreaming about the coming weekend but is carefully keeping up to date with anti-viral programs, being suspicious of unsolicited emails and guarding against becoming the unknowing “slave” of the RAT virus. Daydreaming rather than being aware of real and present dangers in the digital world can cause great distress and financial loss.*

The minus could also be used in a twisted, negative paragraph in the body.

*In the past, daydreaming often had a bad reputation for causing injury to people at work or even encouraging people to believe in their fantasy worlds, rather than facing up to reality. However, these are extreme cases and not the rule. It is important to remember that daydreams are under our control, unlike nightmares, and so we can harness their creative force to improve our lives. Positive daydreaming is wonderful for relieving stress, developing sporting skills and helping people visualise future success in their careers. Sportsmen and women often claim to use visualisation, which is a type of controlled daydreaming, to improve their skills and “see” their success. In fact, they are engaging in a mental rehearsal for the real thing.*
2. Combine and build ideas within a paragraph
   - Show
   - Shake and rearrange
   - Remind.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Show the main idea</th>
<th>State the first argument to prove your proposition or thesis in a topic sentence.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shake the idea</td>
<td>Provide the first point of evidence for this argument by using facts, personal experience, an example from the present or the past, or an anecdote. <strong>Then, for greater depth or development</strong> of that idea, rearrange the ideas by providing more information that adds to the idea, clarifies the idea, shows how this new information is different or the same as the earlier idea or is just something unexpected or worth remembering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show its parts and qualities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rearrange the ideas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remind the reader about the bigger picture</td>
<td>Write a concluding sentence that hints at the relationship between this idea and the next argument or between this idea and the main argument.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following is an example paragraph developed by using the Daydream Believer stimulus text on the example planning sheet.

| This paragraph shows the idea. | Daydreaming is definitely not a waste of time for scientists because it opens up their minds to new scientific possibilities. While daydreaming might appear to be a waste of time to an observer, it gives the mind permission to think over many different topics in a fairly uncontrolled way. Sometimes this type of thinking results in brilliant new ideas or inventions. For example, when Newton was daydreaming under an apple tree, an apple fell on his head causing him to shout out, “Eureka!” Out of nowhere, he suddenly understood the new idea of gravity that, until then, was a mystery. |
| It illustrates the idea. |                                                                              |
| It returns to the main topic. |                                                                              |

| This paragraph shows the idea. | Daydreaming is definitely not a waste of time for scientists because it opens up their minds to creative scientific possibilities. It is believed that Newton was daydreaming under an apple tree, when an apple fell on his head, giving him the idea of gravity. Then, in turn, Albert Einstein disproved the earlier scientific ideas put forward by Newton. Einstein was described as an unsuccessful daydreamer at school. However, it was his longing to understand hidden worlds that enabled him to come up with the theory of relativity that shows space and time are not fixed, but are relative and capable of bending. These revolutionary ideas about invisible worlds were considered, at first, to be the ramblings of madmen or even creations of fiction. The doubters were wrong and Einstein’s theory of relativity remains unchallenged today. |
| It illustrates and then shakes the idea by showing that discoveries evolve by building on earlier discoveries. |                                                                              |
| It rearranges the ideas by leading us to what is really important. |                                                                              |
| It returns us to the topic. |                                                                              |
Write a second example paragraph for this topic using evidence of your own. Ask your partner to check if you completed the steps using Show, shake and rearrange, and Remind or return.

| Show the main idea. | Writers are another group of people who benefit society by exploring the hidden worlds of their imaginations and, in doing so, actually visualise things that haven’t even been invented or are believed to be impossible. |
| Shake the idea by illustrating it with evidence. | |
| Develop this idea with more evidence. | |
| Rearrange the ideas. | |
| Remind the reader of its significance or Return the reader to the topic. | |

Write a third paragraph for this topic using an argument of your own. Ask your partner to check if you completed ALL the steps of Show, shake and rearrange, and Remind or return.

| Show the main idea. | |
| Shake the idea by illustrating it with evidence. | |
| Develop this idea with more evidence. | |
| Rearrange the ideas. | |
| Remind the reader of its significance or Return the reader to the topic. | |
3. Finish with an enlightening conclusion

Conclusions are more than just a repeat of your introduction. A good conclusion can refocus your reader and emphasise your stance. The best conclusions take the reader to an even greater understanding by:

- adjusting the focus
- adding an appropriate quote
- revealing a relationship between the arguments
- mentioning an aspect that is intriguing or worth further investigation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ordinary conclusion:</th>
<th>Enlightening conclusion:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Restates thesis.</td>
<td>Daydreaming is definitely not a waste of time. When children read fairy tales and stories like 'The Hobbit', they often daydream about the wonderful and mysterious places described. Scientific and technological discoveries and inventions are often the outcome of &quot;thinking outside the box&quot;. Ambitious people often daydream about their future successes to prepare themselves for when success becomes a reality. It is very important to explore hidden worlds and daydreaming is a good way to do it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restates arguments.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Result: It is persuasive, but it is also fairly predictable.</td>
<td>Schools should take notice of amazing workplaces like Google. Google’s staff are encouraged to do other activities like listen to music, climb a rock wall or play a game so that their mind can be freed of the controlling left side of the brain, leaving the right side of the brain to dream up ideas that might translate into functions or apps that could transform people’s lives. Sitting at a desk is not the right environment for the mind to have free-play. Daydreaming is not a waste of time because using your imagination to explore unusual possibilities helps you become successful, be creative and solve problems. Just ask Google!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Look at this ordinary conclusion for another topic. Rewrite it so that it becomes an enlightening conclusion.

Exploring hidden worlds through the medium of an avatar is a waste of time. The world we live in is not a boring, unexciting place that fails to offer people challenges. Avatars often involve the human controller in demeaning, even violent activities that might influence them negatively in real life. Technology has transformed our lives in many ways, but having an alter ego that is stronger, faster and more good-looking than we are in real life might lead to feeling dissatisfied with life and who we really are.