

# This isn't just another classroom exercise.

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Today, you're going to be part of a much bigger,  
national conversation that directly affects  
*your students.***

Right now, educators, researchers and policymakers are trying to understand how digital technology is changing the way students learn, think and write. There isn't a clear answer yet.

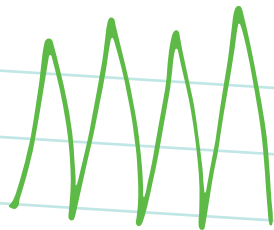
So we're exploring questions like:

- ❑ What do we lose when speed takes priority over planning?
- ❑ How do different methods shape ideas, structure, and understanding?
- ❑ How do digital tools help us and how do they hold us back?



By trying different approaches and reflecting on what works for your students, you're helping build a clearer picture of how they think, plan and write today.

Their experience becomes part of a much wider effort to understand how digital technology is shaping the way students think, learn and perform.





## Introduction

This lesson helps students understand why planning improves essay structure and argument development (two key skills assessed in GCSE English writing).

Pens aren't just writing tools.

They are thinking tools that help students develop ideas before drafting.

The BIG takeaway for students

**Typing helps you write faster.**  
**Planning helps you think better.**

*The best writing  
uses both.*

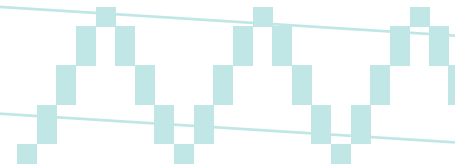
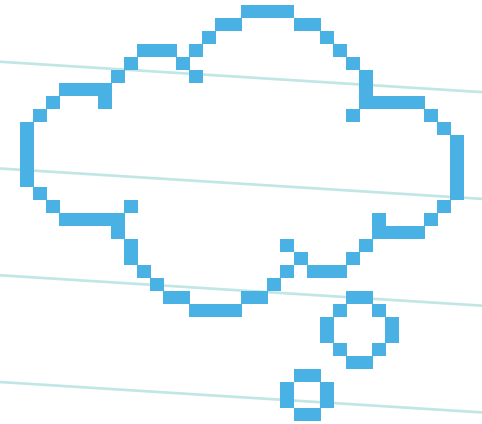
## Why this lesson works

The experiment isolates one variable:

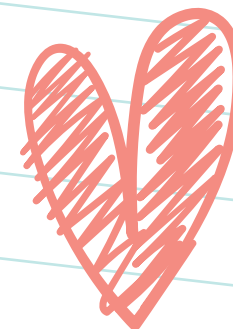
*Planning before writing vs writing without planning*

Separating thinking from writing can make it easier to focus on ideas and structure, which in turn reduces cognitive load, allowing students to focus on reasoning, ideation and structure.

Students get to see the effect in their own writing.



# Warm up task



## Step 1.

### No planning

#### Teacher:

"Write one sentence describing your morning. You have 30 seconds. Start now."

*Students write*

**Stop after 30 seconds.**

## Step 2.

### Quick planning (not linked to your sentence)

#### Teacher:

"Stop. Forget your sentence. Now list three things that happened this morning. They do not need to match your sentence. Just three real things."

*Bullet points only.  
30 seconds. Go."*

*Students write 3 bullets*

**Stop after 30 seconds.**

## Step 3.

### Write again (using your plan)

#### Teacher:

"Now write one sentence using your bullet points. You can combine them however you like. 30 seconds."

*Students write*

**Stop after 30 seconds.**

## Step 4.

### Compare

#### Teacher:

"Which sentence was easier to write? Which one is clearer or more detailed?"

*Quick hands up  
or short answers*

## Step 5.

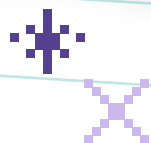
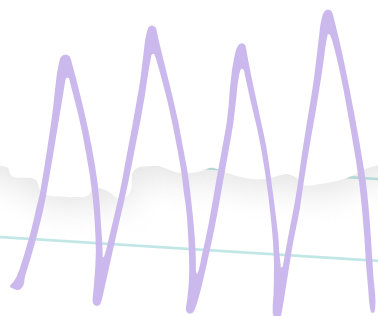
### Make the point explicit

#### Teacher:

"First time, you had to think and write at the same time. Second time, the thinking was already done."

*If that changes one sentence, what happens to a whole paragraph?*

*Today, we're testing what happens when you plan before you write."*



# The lesson plan

## Student prompt

*"A single decision can change everything."*

To what extent do you agree?  
Use examples from the text you  
are studying to support your argument.

## Learning objectives



Students will:

- ✘ Understand how planning affects the clarity of ideas
- ✘ Practise structuring an argument
- ✘ Improve how they plan writing tasks

## The tasks

1. Typed answer

2. Handwritten plan  
+ typed answer

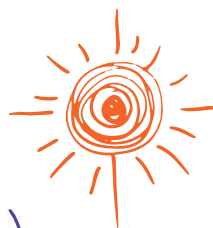
3. Compare the  
results in pairs

4. Reflect +  
complete survey



# Lesson overview

(55 mins)



## 1. Starter discussion: The writing question

### Teacher:

"What makes a good paragraph:  
good ideas or good sentences?"

### Quick class discussion.

Explain that today students will test  
how writing method affects thinking.

(5 mins)

## 2. Type your answer

### Teacher:

" 'A single decision can change everything.' To what  
extent do you agree? Using your laptop, type out  
your response as you think of it. Take examples  
from the text to support your argument."

### Instructions:

- Type their work out immediately
- Write continuously
- Do not plan
- Aim to complete the paragraph

### Purpose:

This stage is to replicate how most  
students actually work.

(10 mins)

## 3. Handwritten planning

### Teacher:

"Now use the template we've got here  
on the screen and respond to the same  
prompt, but this time, handwrite a plan  
in your workbook."

### Instructions:

- Use bullet points
- Complete the planning template

### Purpose:

This stage is to formalise the planning and  
ideation process.

(10 mins)

## 4. Planned writing

### Teacher:

"Now type the paragraph out on your  
laptop using your plan."

(10 mins)

## 5. Comparison

### Teacher:

"Partner up and compare the two paragraphs."

### Criteria:

- Which opening argument is clearer?
- Which one has stronger reasoning?
- Which one contains a better example from the text?
- Which one has a clearer structure?
- Overall, which paragraph is easier to understand?

(10 mins)

## 6. Reflection & data capture

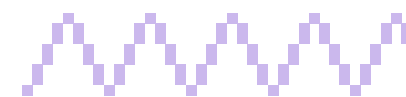
### Teacher:

"Open the URL

[www.thegreatwritingdebate.com](http://www.thegreatwritingdebate.com)

and answer the reflection questions in the online  
survey. Hit submit."

(10 mins)



# THE GREAT WRITING DEBATE

presented by  **PILOT**

If you have any questions please contact

*info@pilotpen.co.uk*

or alternatively visit

[pilotpenuk.com/thegreatwritingdebate](http://pilotpenuk.com/thegreatwritingdebate)