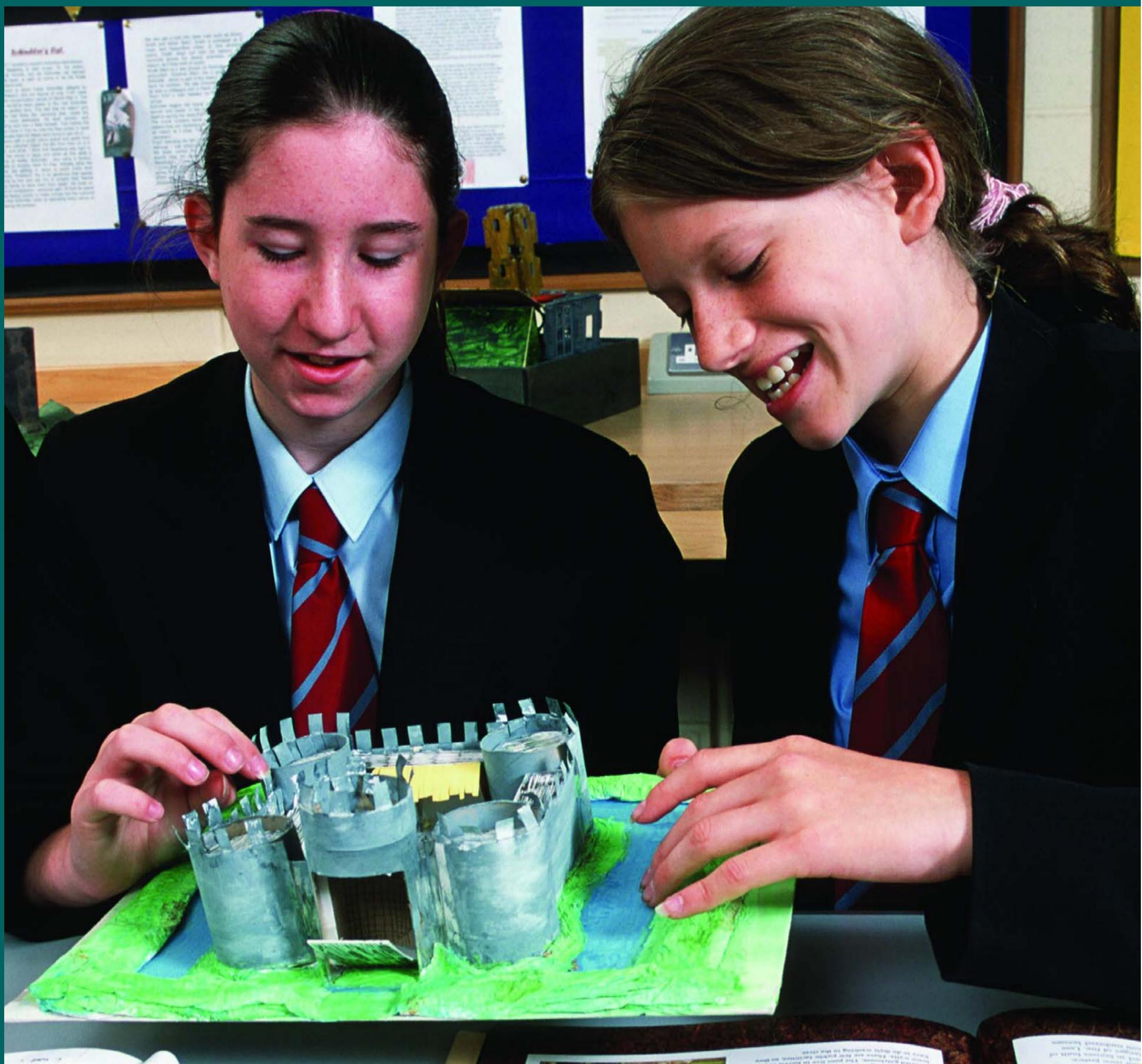


How to . . .

Teach Information Text

in KS3 Humanities subjects



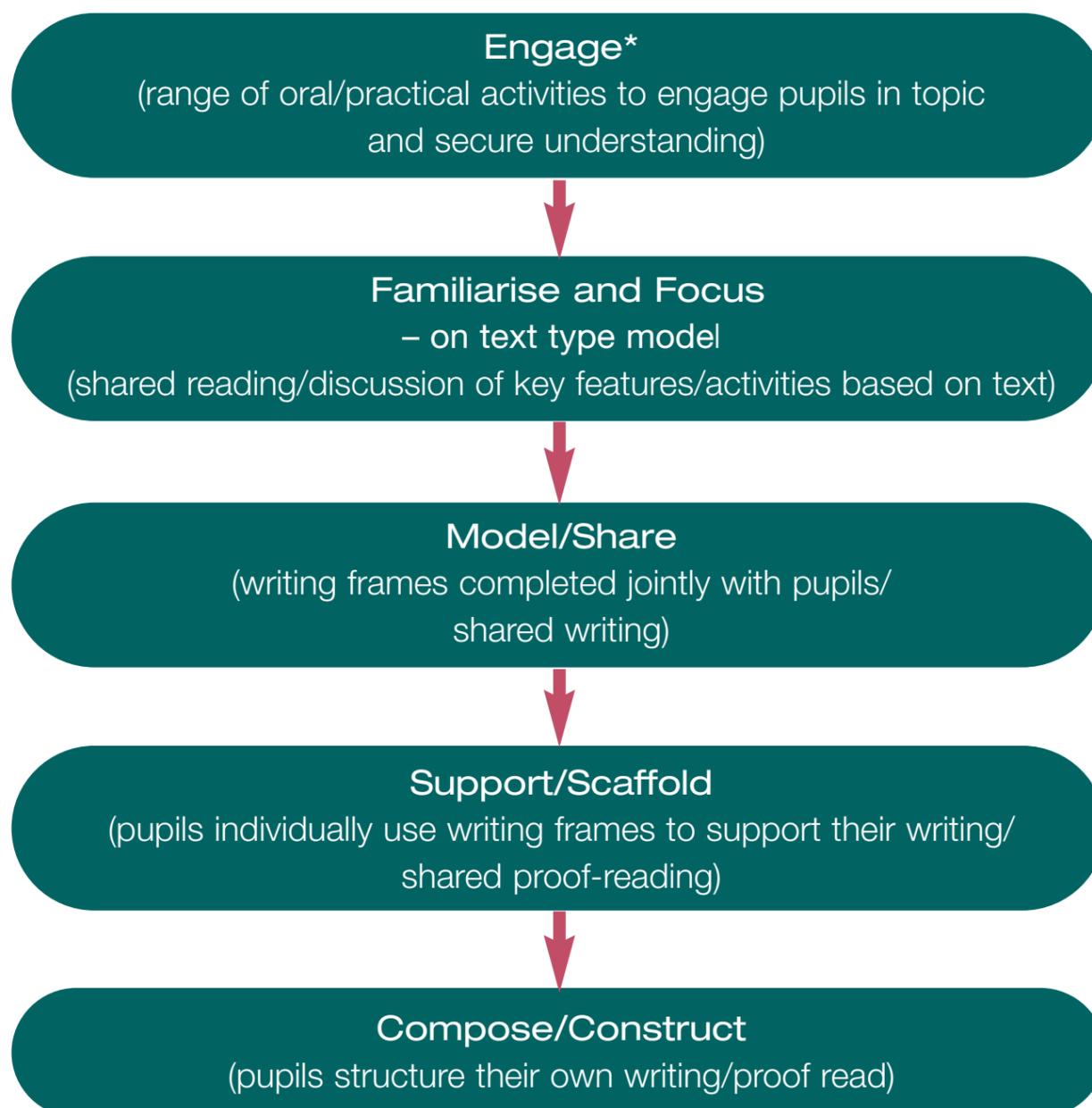
Pupils are introduced to text types in KS1/2 and so many will start KS3 secure in their handling of some of the main text type features and conventions. A significant number of pupils, however, will not be so secure and will need intensive support from subject teachers to develop the writing skills required by KS3 programmes of study. The leaflets in this series are designed to help teachers provide that support.

The main text-types used in KS3 are:

- **Information**
- **Recount**
- **Persuasion**
- **Discussion**
- **Explanation**
- **Instructions**

This leaflet focuses specifically on Information Text but begins with a general model common to all and one which you will find with minor variations in many publications on literacy:

An approach to teaching writing



* Increasing pupils' **access** to subject content (e.g. by engaging pupils in practical activities; by using visual and verbal stimuli as alternatives to reading; by using differentiated worksheets) is very important but it is vital that the strategies outlined in the rest of the model are also used in order to **develop** pupils' literacy skills and enable them to progress and become independent learners.

Information Text

Information text is found in information books/encyclopaedias and many web-sites

- tells us how things are, or how things were
- deals with facts, and not opinions
- organises facts into categories
- is clearly written in simple sentences
- uses paragraphs and sub-headings
- uses the present tense: is, are (except for events in history)
- starts from the big and general and works down to the detailed and particular

Examples

Volcanoes

Volcanoes are generally grouped into four main types: cinder cones, composite volcanoes, lava domes and shield volcanoes

1. Cinder Cones

Cinder cones are formed from blobs ('cinders') of congealed lava ejected from a single opening. These form a pile...

2. Composite Volcanoes

Composite volcanoes are typically large, steep-sided symmetrical cones. They are formed...

It is clearly written, in fairly simple sentences, so that the reader can understand it easily:

In Tudor times rich people ate mostly meat and bread and very few vegetables. Vegetables were not eaten to accompany meat as they are today.

It starts from the big and general and works down to the specific, detailed and particular:

Sikhism is a **major world religion**



The Sikh religion began with the teachings of **ten teachers, called Gurus**



The first Guru was **Guru Nanak**



Guru Nanak was born in 1469 into a Hindu family

There are words and phrases for beginning and connecting sentences which are characteristic of this text-type:

Useful connectives

(Cause)

- as a result;
- since;
- whenever;
- therefore;
- consequently;
- as long as;
- because; as;
- eventually

(Compare/Contrast)

- in the same way;
- similarly;
- however;
- apart from;
- nevertheless;
- compared with;
- but;
- despite this;
- yet;
- instead

Teaching and learning Strategies

Here is a sequence (following our general model) of suggested activities to help pupils learn the skill of information writing

<i>What to do . . .</i>	<i>Why do it . . . ?</i>	<i>Some teaching and learning strategies</i>
Shared compiling of 'Random Fact Sheet' – before beginning to teach topic or after brief introduction	Useful in finding out what pupils already know about a subject	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post it stickers from groups/pairs etc. • Rotating posters` • Interactive whiteboard
Engage pupils	Having established 'where we are', look to see where the gaps in knowledge are, and attempt to fill them in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of oral/interactive subject teaching strategies using plenty of audio & visual resources
Familiarise and Focus	Pupils now need to be introduced to an information text (selected at appropriate reading level) and guided in accessing facts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to a passage being read, use shared noting of key facts • Individual whiteboards or cards which note key facts/new information etc; sharing/ commenting on results
Modelling: shared skimming and scanning	Using a range of simple texts and web-sites, find relevant pages/entries/articles (select texts with plenty of visual support)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared 'Reading with a pen in your hand' – marking relevant and possibly useful sections • These are very difficult skills for non-fluent readers: choose clearly presented texts, discuss and display key words/phrases for search
Shared information gathering and organising	<p>Once possible sources have been identified, establish which information is needed to fill knowledge gaps or to check initial ideas</p> <p>Always start from what they know (or <i>think</i> they know – misconceptions are interesting!) and always finish with: <i>What I still want to know</i></p> <p>Begin to focus on organisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-circulate posters • What are our own questions? • Begin to talk about categories (e.g. industry, transport – check understanding of terms) • Shared text marking – different colours for different kinds/categories of information • Range of group-work strategies to gather and organise facts into categories: 'marketplace'; card-sorts; using the information gathered to label a spidergram/map/to complete grids

What to do . . .	Why do it . . . ?	Some teaching and learning strategies
<p>Use of Writing frames and sentence starters</p>	<p>To provide support and scaffolding</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Various frameworks geared to specific nature of subject-based research • Pairs/groups reconstruct a ‘cut up’ information text noting headings, subheadings • Use bullet points in order to help pupils to sort information • Shared discussion of which facts belong in each section • Model how to summarise key facts in a couple of sentences • Shared completion of part of writing frame followed by paired and individual completion of sections
<p>Focus on paragraphs of text</p>	<p>Teaching pupils to understand how paragraphs tend to be constructed* e.g. Topic sentences/sentences which expand and develop giving more detailed examples etc. /sometimes sentences which summarise/sentences which make a direct link into what follows</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared reading of relevant pieces of information text highlighting the different kinds of sentences • Sequence paragraphs and look for links • Ask pupils to summarise contents of each paragraph – can you tell me what this is about using not more than twelve words? • Focus closely on the language features of information writing (including connectives – e.g. highlighting, then joint compiling of a list of comparison connectives) • Model paragraph writing • All much more fun on an interactive board!
	<p>As pupils become more skilled, they can not only find texts, but also make a judgement of how useful they are.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Cutting and pasting’ relevant information • ‘Deleting’ or Adapting information that is irrelevant or is expressed in language which they do not understand
	<p>With continued support when necessary pupils can create their own frames to suit the topic and the audience and compose a variety of information texts/reports</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a report for a given audience e.g. a request from a 10 year old/A Zorg letter • Produce an information leaflet for a museum exhibition on Life in Tudor Times
	<p>Once pupils become more sophisticated, they may generate their own questions for ‘research’</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils/groups/pairs develop questions for other pupils – are these answered by your account?

Paragraphs are important to Report Writing, and can be specifically taught:

Food in Tudor Times

The diet of both rich and poor people in Tudor Times consisted mainly of meat and bread. Rich people ate a wide variety of meat and game. They not only reared animals to give them meat such as beef, mutton, veal, lamb, pork, duck, chicken, pigeons and rabbits (men called 'Warrenders' were responsible for the rabbits reared for the landowners' tables) but in addition they ate what they hunted, for example, boar, deer and pheasant, badger, hedgehog and blackbirds. It wasn't a very healthy diet as vegetables were not eaten to accompany meat and were regarded as really only fit for people lower down the social scale to eat.

Paragraph 1:

- The initial, topic sentence
- The development and supporting sentences
- The concluding sentence which sets up a link with the next paragraph:

Poorer people also ate quite a lot of meat but they didn't have as much variety as the rich. Many of them would have kept chickens and they also hunted rabbits and birds, particularly rooks and crows, which threatened their crops. When they could afford it beef would be available from the local market and if they were prepared to risk punishment in the form of fines, imprisonment or even death they could indulge in a bit of poaching from the landowners

Paragraph 2:

- Again, note the topic sentence
- Clear links between all the sentences in the paragraph

In order to learn about Paragraph Structure effectively, pupils will need to be taught specifically to:

- Sequence existing texts that have been previously 'cut up'
- Work in groups/pairs etc to sort and/or compile information under given paragraph headings
- Match paragraph sub-headings to the relevant paragraphs
- Take part in shared writing, using, for example, different colours to represent different paragraphs
- Spot, and text-mark, key sentences within paragraphs
- Use mnemonics in order to remember which paragraph must come next in their writing
- Devise, develop and use creatively, relevant writing frames
- Refer to displayed texts which exemplify paragraph structures

Progression

Here is an outline of progression in information writing. It should help to pin-point the skills particular pupils need to develop:

- Independently distinguish between fiction/non-fiction.
- Begin to understand the distinct format of note-taking.
- Use whole sentences to communicate factual information.
- Structure and sequence facts using planning frames.
- Begin to use questions to help classify information.



- Use a range of sources in order to gather information and data.
- List facts sequentially, i.e. explore note-taking.
- Use an information writing frame for planning and writing.
- Understand use made of sub-headings.



- Recognise the key features relating to information writing and begin to use them in own independent writing.
- Begin to form paragraphs by gathering information under sub-headings.
- Confine personal statements to summarising conclusion.
- Gather appropriate information only, using focused skimming and scanning, i.e. consolidate note-taking skills.
- Adapt and alter/reduce report writing planning frame to suit need.



- Write information text without using a frame.
- Expand/contract sub-headed paragraphs as appropriate to needs of reader.
- Write several paragraphs under one sub-heading
- Use a summarising conclusion to end writing and to link back into introduction.
- Extract information from several sources and evaluate its usefulness

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