

# Seven Steps to Writing Success

## Seven Steps for Beginner Writers

The Beginner Writers Manual has been designed to help teachers implement the Seven Steps with children aged four to seven. In this manual, we lay the foundations for understanding the Seven Steps concepts with a focus on brainstorming, verbal activities and creativity.

For beginner writers (including EAL/D and LD students), it is best to keep the mechanics of writing and the secretarial skills (forming letters, spelling, etc.) separate from the goal of creating and communicating ideas. The more visual and verbal the activities, the more creative your students can be.

This means that by the time writing is established, students will be ready to put these concepts into practice.

### Narrative focus

Research has shown that as humans we are 'hard wired' for story – and for young students, this is the best way to introduce them to the joys of reading and writing. The activities and examples in this manual are therefore predominantly narrative, but many of the activities can be adapted for persuasive and informative writing.



# Seven Steps to Writing Success

## How It Works

Literacy research suggests that when children are encouraged to share their ideas through drawing, talking, acting and writing, they become more confident and involved writers. Each chapter has been divided into three parts, with different Action Activities to scaffold students through each Step.

These are:

### 1. What it looks like

This stage is designed to introduce students to the concept of each Step. Here, focus on showing students the techniques in action and get them to identify parts of a text by reading, watching and looking at different types of media. Once they know what it looks like, then they can talk about it!

### 2. Tell me about it

This stage is all about getting the creative juices flowing by sharing ideas and working collaboratively. Introduce students to brainstorming by encouraging them to work as a class and in groups, to talk, laugh and share ideas. Remember, students need to be able to think creatively before they can write creatively.

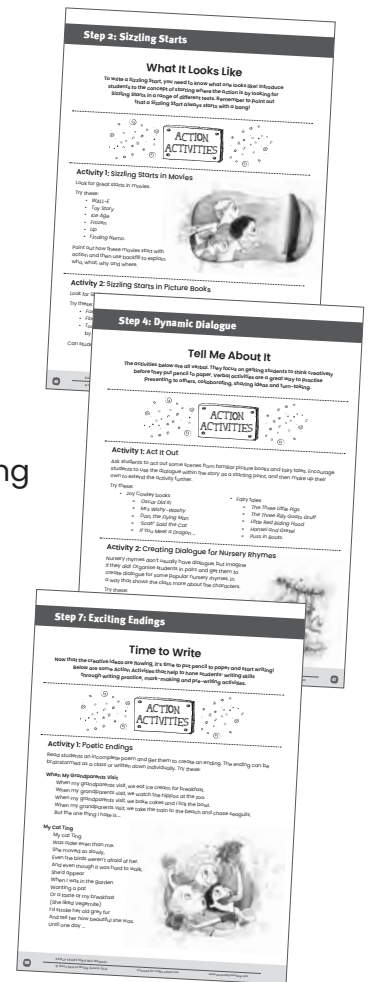
### 3. Time to write

Now that the ideas are flowing, it's time to start writing them down. For younger students this stage can be challenging, so we have included a range of Action Activities for different ages and writing abilities. Remember to focus on getting their creative ideas down on paper rather than correcting spelling and grammar – this should be a separate lesson.

### Putting it all together

Don't rush into writing a whole story. It's best if students don't tackle this large task until they have learnt the core structural Steps (Steps 1, 2, 3 and 7). When students are ready, review the 'Putting It All Together' chapter on pages 111–57. The units of work in this chapter are designed to guide students through the process of writing a complete text.

There is also a marking rubric on pages 154–5 that you can use to assess how students are progressing and to assist with reporting.



Remember, with beginner writers focus on introducing each Step and concept, not necessarily mastering it.

# Seven Steps to Writing Success

## Curriculum Matrix

The Curriculum Matrix lists the Australian Curriculum content descriptions covered by each Step and directs you to the relevant pages in the manual.

### Foundation

Language	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7	PIAT
<i>Language for interaction</i>								
Understand that language can be used to explore ways of expressing needs, likes and dislikes (ACELA1429)				pp 70–5				
<i>Text structure and organisation</i>								
Understand that texts can take many forms, can be very short (for example an exit sign) or quite long (for example an information book or a film) and that stories and informative texts have different purposes (ACELA1430)						pp 94–6		
Understand concepts about print and screen, including how books, film and simple digital texts work, and know some features of print, for example directionality (ACELA1433)							pp 102–5	
<i>Expressing and developing ideas</i>								
Recognise that texts are made up of words and groups of words that make meaning (ACELA1434)				pp 70–5				pp pp 114–52
Explore the different contribution of words and images to meaning in stories and informative texts (ACELA1786)		pp 44–51			pp 80–7	pp 94–6		
Understand the use of vocabulary in familiar contexts related to everyday experiences, personal interests and topics taught at school (ACELA1437)		pp 44–51		pp 70–5		pp 94–6		pp 114–52
Literature	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7	PIAT
<i>Responding to literature</i>								
Respond to texts, identifying favourite stories, authors and illustrators (ACELTI577)		pp 41–3					pp 106–8	pp 125–43
Share feelings and thoughts about the events and characters in texts (ACELTI783)			pp 60–3	pp 70–5	pp 78–9	p 90		pp 114–52
<i>Examining literature</i>								
Identify some features of texts including events and characters and retell events from a text (ACELTI578)	pp 17–37		pp 60–3		pp 78–9		pp 102–5	pp 125–43
Recognise some different types of literary texts and identify some characteristic features of literary texts, for example beginnings and endings of traditional texts and rhyme in poetry (ACELTI785)	pp 17–28	p 40	pp 54–9	p 66	pp 78–9	pp 91–3	pp 100–8	pp 125–43
Replicate the rhythms and sound patterns in stories, rhymes, songs and poems from a range of cultures (ACELTI579)			pp 60–3					
<i>Creating literature</i>								
Retell familiar literary texts through performance, use of illustrations and images (ACELTI580)			pp 56–9	pp 67–9			pp 106–8	pp 125–43

# Seven Steps to Writing Success

## Beginner Writers Starter Plan

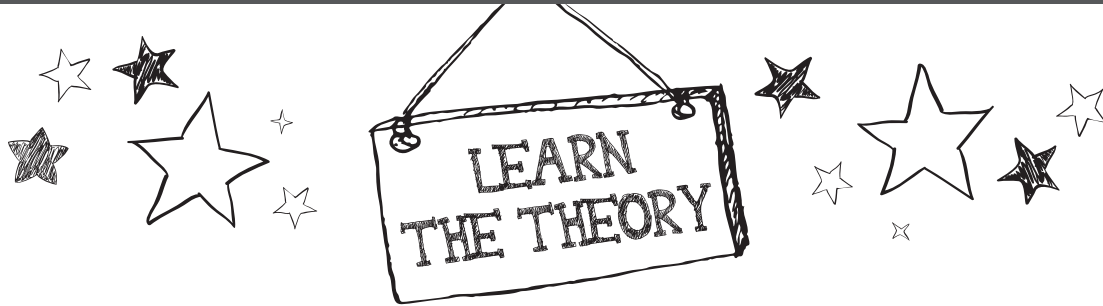
How do you start applying the Seven Steps techniques with beginner writers? Here is a sample plan to help you implement the core structural Steps (Steps 1, 2, 3 and 7).

Please note, this is only an example; you can change it as you see fit to suit the needs of your students.

Topic	Key point	What to review	Activities
<b>Introduction</b>	Chunk large tasks – the tennis analogy	Review the Introduction and 'The Five Secrets' with teachers	
<b>Step 2: Sizzling Starts</b>	Sizzling Starts grab the reader's attention	Learn the Theory, p 39	What It Looks Like, p 40 Tell Me About It, pp 41–3
	Start with action then add backfill	Top Techniques, p 39 Example, p 39	Time to Write, pp 44–51 Student Checklist, p 52
<b>Step 3: Tightening Tension</b>	Build tension gradually using the 'Pebble, Rock, Boulder' technique	Learn the Theory, p 53 Top Technique 1, p 53	What It Looks Like, pp 54–5
	Use the Five + 1 Senses to add lots of detail	Top Technique 2, p 53 Example, p 53	Tell Me About It, pp 56–9
	Make the reader believe the hero will fail	Top Technique 3, p 53 Example, p 53	Time to Write, pp 60–3 Student Checklist, p 64
<b>Step 7: Exciting Endings</b>	Plan your ending before you start writing to avoid the 'quick fix' endings	Learn the Theory, p 99 Top Techniques 1 and 2, p 99 Example, p 99	What It Looks Like, pp 100–1
	Great narrative endings have an action climax and an emotional resolution	Top Technique 3, p 99 Example, p 99	Tell Me About It, pp 102–5 Time to Write, pp 106–8 Student Checklist, p 109
<b>Step 1: Plan for Success</b>	Identify parts of a narrative	Learn the Theory, p 15 Top Technique 1, p 15	What It Looks Like, pp 17–28
	Brainstorm lots of ideas to get one great idea	Top Technique 2, p 15 Example, pp 15–16	Tell Me About It, pp 29–37
	Use the Story Graph as a planning tool	Top Technique 3, p 15 Example, pp 15–16	Tell Me About It, pp 29–37 Student Checklist, p 38

For more resources for beginner writers to supplement the material in this manual, go to *Teacher Hub* on the Seven Steps website.

## Step 2: Sizzling Starts



**Start with a sizzle, not a fizzle! The start of a story needs to grab the reader's attention and make them curious.**

*'The first sentence is the most exciting moment in the story, because I'm opening a door to the Unknown.'* – John Marsden

**You only have about three sentences to achieve this, so make those first words count.**

---

### Top Techniques

1. **Start with action** – Don't start a story at the beginning of the day when nothing is happening. Begin when the volcano starts exploding, or as you walk in the door to find your mum and sister having a huge fight!
2. **Add backfill** – Then, as the story unfolds, you can add any important details about your characters and explain what's happening. Alternatively, this can be done in a separate scene after the Sizzling Start.

#### Example

This 'before and after' writing sample demonstrates how to **start with action** and then **add backfill** as the action unfolds. Use this to model what you expect from your students.

Before

*I got up really early and got dressed and Dad and I cooked pancakes for breakfast. They were delicious. Then we walked to the train station. We were going to the football match. We went to the football every week. On the train ...*

After

*'Goal!' The crowd cheered loudly. Dad and I went to the football every week, but our team usually lost. Today they were winning, and I was cheering louder than anyone.*

# Step 2: Sizzling Starts

## What It Looks Like

To write a Sizzling Start, you need to know what one looks like! Introduce students to the concept of starting where the action is by looking for Sizzling Starts in a range of different texts. Remember to point out that a Sizzling Start always starts with a bang!



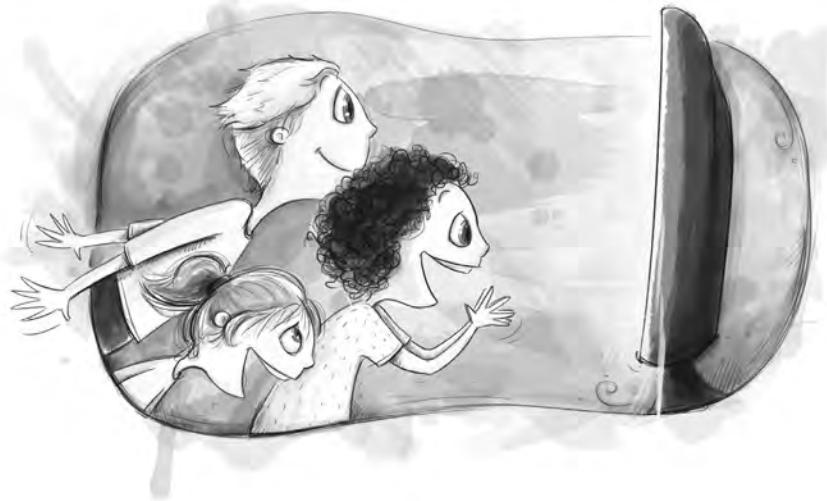
### Activity 1: Sizzling Starts in Movies

Look for great starts in movies.

Try these:

- *WALL-E*
- *Toy Story*
- *Ice Age*
- *Frozen*
- *Up*
- *Finding Nemo*.

Point out how these movies start with action and then use backfill to explain who, what, why and where.



### Activity 2: Sizzling Starts in Picture Books

Look for Sizzling Starts in picture books.

Try these:

- *Fox* by Margaret Wild and illustrated by Ron Brooks
- *Flood* by Jackie French and illustrated by Bruce Whatley
- *Too Many Elephants in This House* by Ursula Dubosarsky and illustrated by Andrew Joyner.

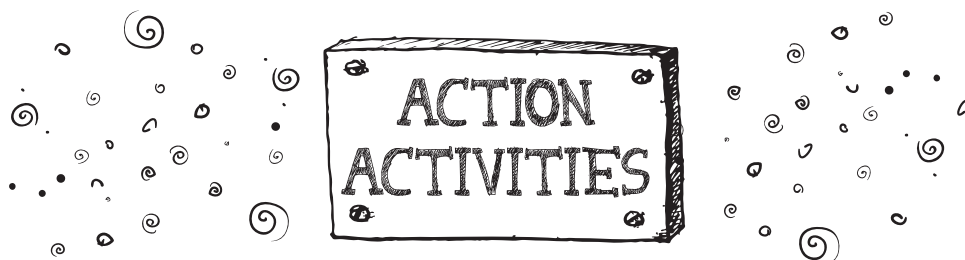
Can students spot the action start and the backfill?



## Step 2: Sizzling Starts

### Tell Me About It

The activities below are all verbal. They focus on getting students to think creatively before they put pencil to paper. Verbal activities are a great way to practise presenting to others, collaborating, sharing ideas and turn-taking.

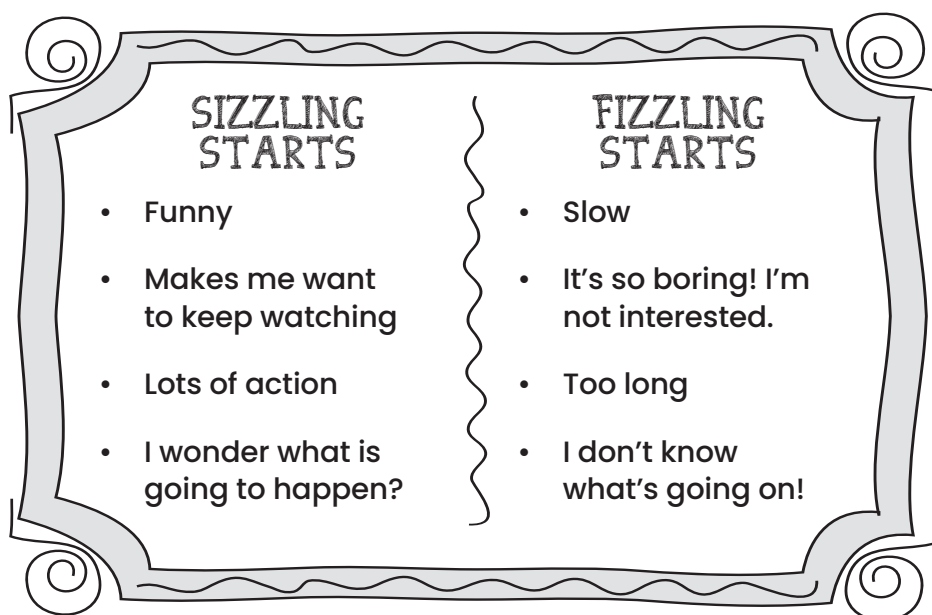


#### Activity 1: Examining Sizzling Starts in Movies

After watching some Sizzling Starts in movies, ask students to describe their reaction. Create a poster with the headings 'Sizzling Starts' and 'Fizzling Starts' to document your discussions.

Try questions such as:

- Does it make you want to watch more? Why? Why not?
- Was it interesting? Why? Why not?
- Was it a Sizzling Start?
- Have the filmmakers gained your attention? If so, how?



# Step 2: Sizzling Starts

## Time to Write

Now that the creative ideas are flowing, it's time to put pencil to paper and start writing! Below are some Action Activities that help to hone students' writing skills through writing practice, mark-making and pre-writing activities.



### Activity 1: Illustrating Sizzling Starts

Now that students are familiar with a range of different Sizzling Starts, get them to work on their visual literacy and mark-making abilities by illustrating their favourite Sizzling Start from a book or movie.

### Activity 2: Fill In the Blanks

Scaffold students to write their own Sizzling Starts by providing them with a half-finished Sizzling Start. Leave blank boxes in the place of nouns and ask students to draw or write to fill in the blanks. Develop one Sizzling Start as a class to get started. A template is provided on the next page.

### Activity 3: Extraordinary Windows

As a class, brainstorm different types of windows, e.g. submarine, aeroplane or castle windows. Ask students to pick a type of window and imagine some extraordinary things you might see out of it. Now get them to illustrate their ideas. To extend this activity further, ask students to write or label what they see under their illustration.

### Activity 4: Through the Window

Using the 'Through the Window' template on page 46, get students to imagine that they're looking out of a window and see something strange or out of the ordinary. Students draw this and write a Sizzling Start based on their illustration. If students need some extra scaffolding, try some of these prompts:

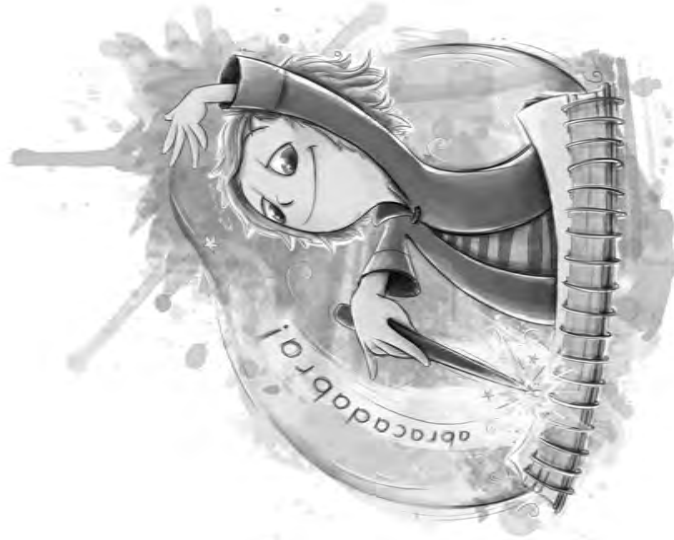
- I can see ...
- I couldn't believe my eyes ...
- Crash! Oh no ...
- Oh no, not again.



# STUDENT CHECKLIST

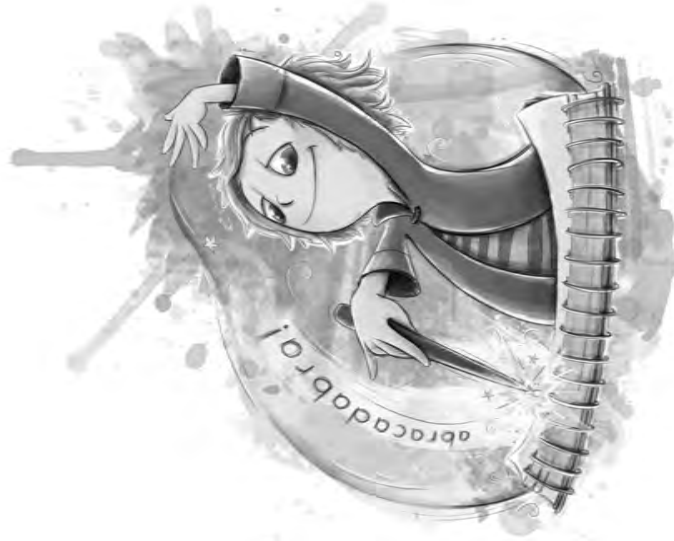
This checklist can be given to students to remind them what you are looking for in a Sizzling Start. Cut them out and attach them to students' work.

## Step 2: Sizzling Starts Checklist



- Start with action.
- Add backfill as the story unfolds or in a separate scene.
- Get back to the live action.

## Step 2: Sizzling Starts Checklist



- Start with action.
- Add backfill as the story unfolds or in a separate scene.
- Get back to the live action.