

Supporting persuasive writing

Summary

Some students, including those on the autism spectrum, struggle with looking at the big picture of an assignment or task. Being able to break down the tasks into smaller chunks can support students to complete assignments themselves. By using a strategy that can be replicated across different assignments can be beneficial as the students learn to study and independently. By teaching this to the whole class it allows all students to have the opportunity to learn a strategy that can support them.

These difficulties may surface during writing tasks, and may result in students:

- writing vague or unclear statements
- creating writing that is difficult to follow, i.e. has poor textual coherence
- writing as they speak and not understand context and structure
- creating writing with weak structure.

Self-regulated strategy development (SRSD) has been shown to help students with their writing by scaffolding conceptual idea generation and sequencing. SRSD is an approach that:

- supports students to independently plan, organise, sequence ideas, compose, and then revise their work
- uses memory aids, such as the POW+TREE mnemonic device, to scaffold writing.

Australian Professional Standards for Teachers related to this practice

- 3.3 - use teaching strategies
- 4.1 - support student participation

For further information, see [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers AITSL page](#)

Preparing to Teach

Self-regulated strategy development (SRSD) improves:

- the quality and length of written compositions
- the number of essay elements used
- use of planning and self-monitoring when writing.

The POW+TREE writing strategy has been shown to be effective in improving the persuasive writing outcomes for students on the spectrum.

What is POW+TREE?

Pick an idea

Organise your notes

Write and say more

+

Topic sentence

Reasons (three or more)

Explain reasons

Ending and examine

Encourage students to learn what POW+TREE stands for, how to use it, and why it is helpful. Students may vary in their response to the strategy – some may require greater support, others will develop the skills to use the strategy automatically to guide their actions during persuasive writing tasks.

Identify scaffolds that will benefit students

Careful analysis of students' abilities to construct a persuasive narrative can help you to know the level of support that they may need and the scaffolding that the students may benefit from.

Some students also find the physical handwriting element tasks to be challenging. For those students, a written piece of text is not a true indication of their ability to compose a persuasive argument.

Appropriate adjustments are described in the [Use technology to support written expression](#) practice.

In the classroom

Introduce POW+TREE to your classroom

- Use the 'Introducing POW+TREE' video above to introduce the strategy to your classroom. The introduction will enable you to teach students the types of strategies and scaffolds that you might decide to use in the classroom.
- Provide all students with the POW+TREE scaffolding guide for students (in Resources, below) and explain each part of the strategy.
- Initially, you may offer all students the opportunity to use any of the available scaffolds.
- As students begin to understand and construct persuasive texts, you may choose to forgo particular scaffolds as they progress with their own individual learning.
- The language you use with your students will influence students' positive perception of scaffolds and their ability to determine if they need them.

Model the strategy

- Model how to use the POW+TREE strategy for your students. Some students will benefit from observing you model the strategy several times.
- You may need to use a range of prompts while students are learning the strategy, such as "Have you remembered to write at least three reasons?"



Watch an example modelled by a peer

- Have students practise presenting their own POW+TREE models to the rest of the class. Research shows that peer video-modelling is an effective strategy to promote engagement and learning for students on the autism spectrum.
- Provide students with examples of completed POW+TREE strategies to support them to complete the writing task.

Encourage students to memorise the strategy

- Encourage all students to practise recalling and memorising the POW+TREE strategy. This will be particularly important for students who do not use any scaffolds.
- Have visual supports around the classroom to reinforce the strategy.

Materials informing this practice

This practice was developed from the core research project [Overcoming Written Difficulties](#).

