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# Plan Your Writing Before You Start Writing

KS4 ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Ages 11-16  3 min read

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## Why Plan Before You Write?

Have you ever started building something without knowing what you wanted to make? Planning your writing first is like drawing a blueprint before building a house. It saves you time, stops you getting stuck halfway through, and makes your final piece much better.

When you plan, you work out what you want to say, in what order, and what evidence or examples you'll use. This means when you actually start writing, you can focus on making your sentences clear and interesting, rather than wondering what comes next.

Think of it like planning a journey. You wouldn't just jump in the car and hope you end up somewhere good. You'd check where you're going, plan your route, and know what to pack. Writing is the same.

## The Best Planning Methods

**Brainstorming** is where you write down every idea that comes into your head about your topic, without judging whether it's good or bad. Don't worry about order or spelling—just get the ideas out.

**Mind maps** work brilliantly for visual thinkers. Write your main topic in the centre, then draw branches with related ideas spreading outwards. Each branch can split into smaller branches with more detail.

**Linear notes** suit people who think in straight lines. Write a numbered list of your points in the order you'll use them, with key details under each one.

**Outlines** are the most formal approach. You create a skeleton of your writing with main sections, subsections, and the key points that go in each. This works especially well for longer pieces like essays.

Think of it like a recipe. Your plan lists all your ingredients (ideas) and the steps (order) to follow. Without a recipe, you might forget something important or mix things in the wrong order.

## How Long Should Planning Take?

A good rule is to spend roughly **25% of your time planning**. So if you have an hour to write, spend **15 minutes planning** and **45 minutes writing**. For longer essays, you might spend 20-30 minutes planning. This investment at the start saves you time later.

## Getting Started

Choose whichever planning method feels most natural to you. Some people love mind maps, others prefer simple lists. Try different approaches and stick with what works for your brain. The best plan is the one you'll actually use.