

You Can... **Encourage extended writing**

Writing stamina, like reading stamina, comes with practice. The hardest thing about extended writing in the classroom seems to be fitting it in among so many other things. An after-school writing club can help, as can encouraging children to continue their story-writing as homework.

Thinking points

- Writing stories in short chapters breaks extended writing into achievable chunks.
- A number of children's books are episodic in nature, effectively short stories revolving around the same characters, such as Paddington Bear, or the Sniff stories by Ian Whybrow. Adopting such an approach can help children with shorter writing stamina.
- With desktop publishing – even simply using a spiral-binder and printing on both sides of A4 paper, children can design a cover and see a finished book, adding blurb to the back cover. This 'finished product' is a great incentive to children to persevere. Add copies to the class library!

Tips, ideas and activities

- When wanting children to write a longer story, in chapters, give them a chapter word-count challenge. This will help them to pace their story across several chapters. It will also act as an incentive to break down the whole into smaller segments.
- Try getting groups of six children to plan a story between them. Each chapter's content must be planned, including how it will begin and end. Each group member, in parallel, then drafts one chapter. In a subsequent session, group members read their chapters in sequence to the rest of the group. An appointed scribe notes any continuity glitches while individual writers annotate their draft with any adjustments prior to rewrites. Planning opening lines of each chapter before they begin writing helps the flow.
- Allow individual children to emulate episodic-style story authors, writing short stories and then joining them together. Encourage the children to create an additional storyline to link the episodes. For example, consider the same central character who, in the first story, misses a bus with awkward consequences; in the second, bakes a cake which goes wrong, and in the third, learns to ride a unicycle with hilarious results.

Discuss with the child, what are the underlying circumstances, hopes and fears of this character. Has he, say, fallen out with his best friend and wants to make up? Does he need to raise money for something and succeeds in the end? Show children how this extra thread can link the stories together with a little massaging of text, to create a short novel from a few short stories.

- Bringing these elements together into an extra, culminating chapter, further extends the children's writing while demonstrating how to tie in loose ends to provide a satisfying ending for the reader.

