



This NEPS Handout has been developed by educational psychologists and is based on current knowledge in this area. It is intended as a guide only. Not all the advice here may apply to any one student or situation. Teachers and parents may wish to identify the strategies that will work best for them.

Tips for Students with Organisational Difficulties (Post-Primary)

If possible books and resources in each subject area should be colour coded, in order to help quick identification. For example, all English books and English exercise books have a green sticker across the spine, all maths books and math exercise books have red etc. The same colour coding can be used to shade that subject on the timetable.

Provide the student with multiple copies of the class timetable (colour coded as above). Ideally, as well as a copy in the school journal, there should be a small laminated copy in the student's pocket (particularly for the first term), a copy displayed at home (perhaps on the fridge) and a copy in the area where the student studies at home.

If possible the student should have two pencil cases, one for home and another for school. Transparent pencil cases can reduce rummaging time.

Label all belongings clearly with the student's name, as they may lose things easily. Consider the location of the student's locker (i.e. accessibility, space on either side etc.)

Ensure the student is facing the teacher's desk and not sitting in a place where there is a lot of traffic, or distractions.

Differentiate visual presentations e.g. a simplified clear timetable, minimise clutter in classroom handouts etc.

Provide the student with additional time to complete fine motor activities such as writing, art work etc. See additional information in *A Continuum of Support for Post-Primary Schools (NEPS)* Chapter 2.

Encourage and support the student to maintain a neat desk and establish a routine for tidying their desk and locker.

Establish a routine where certain items are always placed in certain parts of the school bag- diary in front pocket, large books and folders at the back etc.

Ensure that equipment in the class is kept in the same place and is well labelled.

Attend to the student's ideal writing position. That is:

- Both table and chair are the right size for the student.
- Provide a sloping surface on which s/he can write. Ideally this should have a rim for holding a pencil.
- Ensure s/he sits with his bottom at the back of the chair so his/her thighs are supported.
- Both feet are on the ground.
- Body and head are upright and facing the direction of the teacher.
- Forearms supported on the table.
- S/he uses a correct pencil grip.

Study Skills and Task Attack

Encourage the student to consider their strengths and weaknesses in relation to the requirements of various learning tasks. Get them to think about their preferred method for understanding and memorising new information.

Teach tactics for gathering main points from text:

- Establish the title and main idea.
- If follow-up questions are to be answered, read through questions both before and again after reading the text.
- Look for the key-words and phrases and underline/highlight to support memory and aid revision.
Sketch a picture, picture-sequence or diagram to represent what has been read.
- Look for underlying ideas as well as surface interpretation of text.
- Use spider charts to help the student structure information. (see next page)

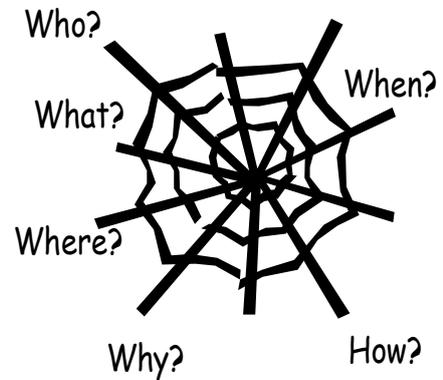


Gathering & Organising Information Spider Charts

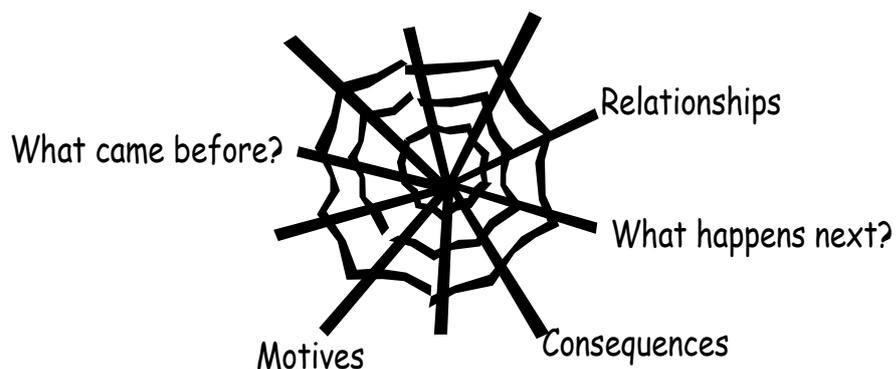
Using the senses



Using questions

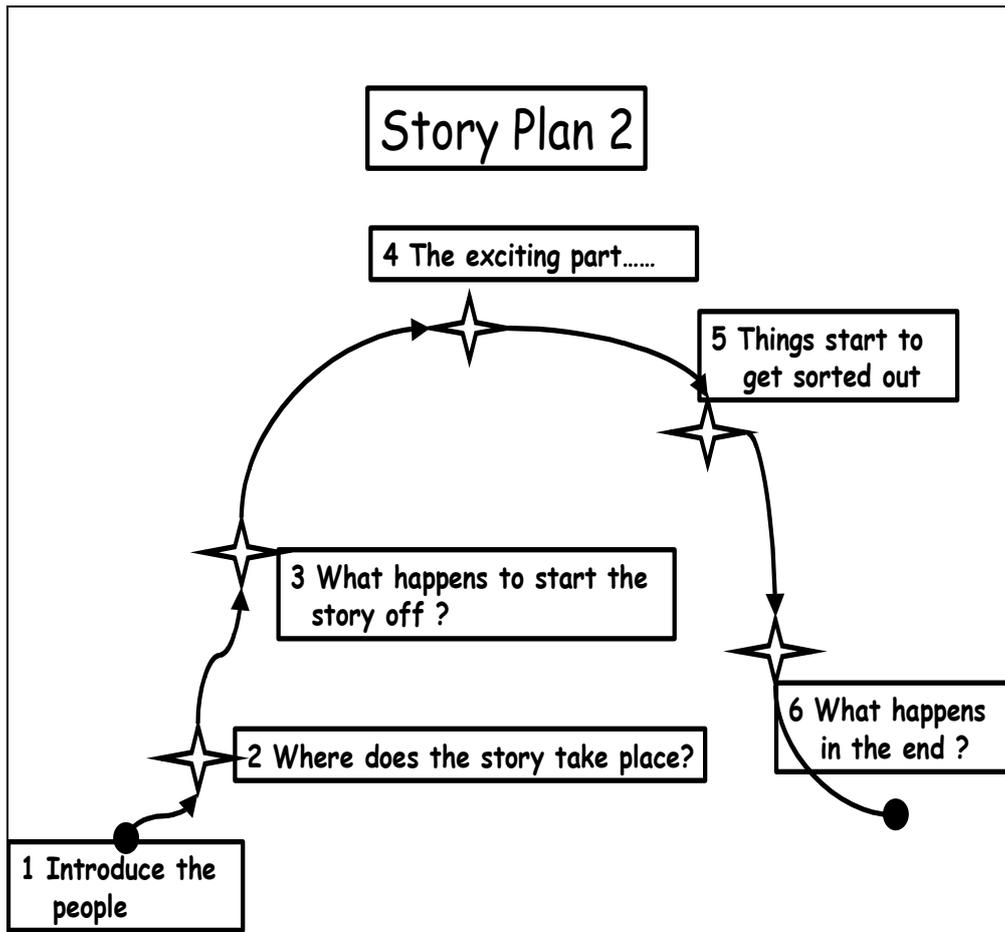


Development



Teach structures to organise thinking:

- Encourage the student to talk through a subject or idea, to extend vocabulary and clarify concepts.
- Teach students to “brainstorm” ideas – writing them down so that they can be grouped and arranged in order afterwards.
- Help them to put ideas in to order using structures such as time, sequence, stages of a process, order of importance etc.
- Provide structured forms for building stories or writing an account of events, using illustrations (See example)



Teach systems for recording

- Encourage students to verbalise sentences before writing.
- Teach systems and codes for note taking, cutting down to main words, reinforcing with illustrations, highlighting with different coloured pens, leaving spaces for expanding notes later etc. use double-paging as appropriate (one page for students to write down thoughts without worrying about spelling, etc and the opposite page for redrafts – possibly with an adult’s help).
- Encourage students to make a habit of re-reading work, perhaps out-loud or to a friend, to correct errors.
- Keep available lists of frequently mis-spelt words, groups of “topic” words, maths tables, and other reminders.
- Consider alternative ways of recording work. For example: word-processors with spell and grammar checks, dictation/Dictaphone etc.

Organisation Skills for Teenagers.



You are responsible for being organised!

Strategies to help manage information at home include:

- Post-it notes
- Lists
- Reminders on your mobile phone
- Diary
- Calendar deadlines
- A copy of the timetable displayed
- Using a school bag with different compartments/sections etc.

Prepare for the next school day by reviewing your timetable, checking your schoolbag, your uniform check, and whether additional equipment is needed for the next day (for PE or Home Ec).

Keep a school timetable at home, in your bedroom/study/ kitchen and in the school locker.

Have a list for 'To Do' with a list of tasks to be done (both for the day's lessons and for homework).

Write down assignments to be completed and deadlines for assignments. Ask a friend if you're not sure.

Organise your study area. Have information organised according to subject, e.g. box files, folders etc.

After you've finished with something – put it away! Being tidy helps you be more organised.

Write jobs down, makes lists whenever you need them.

Check your To Do List everyday.