

# Effective Planning Strategies

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Exemplars of planning strategies employed by students are useful in focusing students on discovering strategies that work best for them for different writing tasks.

Before working with the four exemplars provided, engage the class in discussion about various ways that writers plan. Some of the ways are outlined below:

- lists, which are often used in explanations, including single-paragraph ones
- webs, often used in expository writing
- story grammar (character, setting, initiating event or story problem, events or attempts at solving the problem, resolution of the problem, ending), appropriate for narrative texts
- outlines, used in expository writing (although most students prefer webs)
- flowcharts, used in expository writing that describes a sequence
- RAFTS (Role, Audience, Format, Topic, Strong verb—see pages 41–42)
- Somebody, Wanted, But, So *or* Somebody, Wanted, But, So, Then for narrative texts (see pages 66–67)

There are also many others, including preparing interview questions, making close observations with a notepad, and doing story maps—the list would be long.

Ask students to consider whether different writing tasks call for different strategies. Would they plan to write a business letter the same way that they would plan to write a story? The Organization section of this book recommends planning that relates specifically to RAFTS, especially format, while the B.P.D.O.G. approach, outlined in “Pre-Writing for Business Letters,” works for business letters, but not for stories.

Be sure to challenge students to consider the planning strategies that work best for them. Note that Exemplar A has modified this book’s suggestion of the Somebody, Wanted, But, So, Then strategy for narratives. Exemplar B presents a visual alternative for narrative planning. As a general rule, when discussing and modeling planning strategies with students, invite students to suggest practical alternatives.

The questions related to the following exemplars remind students that different writers plan differently and that it is important to discover what works best for them. However, students should also be open to learning new strategies. Research strongly argues that students who thoughtfully select strategies write better than those who don’t.

## Planning Strategies

The following exemplars feature the work of four students responding to this writing prompt:

One day, while I was sitting in the front of my house, I heard a truck screech around the corner. I saw some gravel fly up as the driver stepped on the gas. Suddenly, a great big box bounced off the back of the truck and landed on the sidewalk.

Review the exemplars and respond to the questions that appear below them.

### EXEMPLAR A

Somebody

I

Wanted

to take the mirror from  
her face

But

the creature  
wanted her to stay

So

I find a  
way to  
break it

### EXEMPLAR B

R = Me (a nine-year-old girl)

A = Mrs. Smith

F = Narrative

T = A big box falling off a truck

S = Telling

R = Role

A = Audience

F = Format

T = Topic

S = Strong verb (purpose)

EXEMPLAR C

Title: The Country Duplicates

Setting: A country town

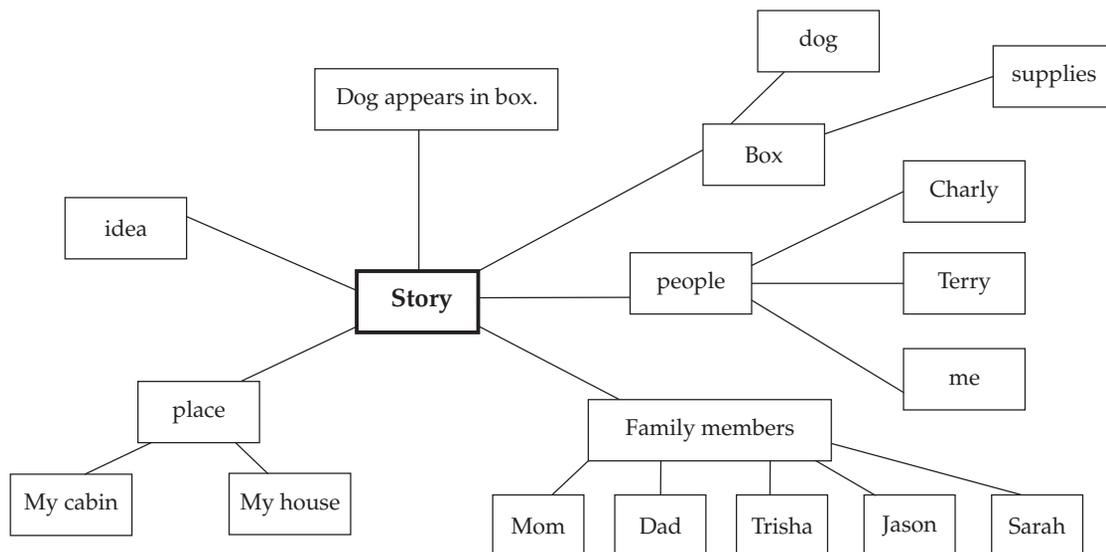
Characters: Me and my mom

Events: Box lands on sidewalk.  
Try to open it.  
Finally open it.  
Duplicate inside.  
Make duplicate.  
It makes duplicates who try to blow up town.  
Pluto blows up.

Ending: I save town from duplicates.  
Send them to Pluto and pay for the damage.  
The duplicates then blow up Pluto.

EXEMPLAR D

There is no address on the box.



Questions:

1. a) Which of these strategies is closest to the strategy you would use to plan a story?  
b) Would you follow the strategy exactly as illustrated above or would you change it? How?
2. Specify your preferred strategy for planning to write a story.