



## **The NAPLAN Writing Cheat Sheet**

### **Persuasive & Narrative in 3 Steps**

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# 1. Introduction to NAPLAN Writing Assessment

The National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is a series of standardised tests administered to Australian students. The writing component assesses students' ability to communicate effectively through written text and is a crucial part of the overall assessment.

## Why NAPLAN Writing Matters

NAPLAN writing tasks evaluate your ability to:

- Generate and organise ideas
- Structure your writing appropriately
- Use vocabulary effectively
- Apply correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling
- Engage with a specific genre (persuasive or narrative)

## NAPLAN Writing Task Structure

In the NAPLAN writing assessment:

You'll have 40 minutes to complete the task

You'll be given either a persuasive or narrative writing prompt

All year levels complete the same genre of writing in a given year

The writing task rotates between persuasive and narrative genres from year to year

## Assessment Criteria

Your writing will be evaluated on ten criteria:

**Audience:** How well you engage the reader

**Text structure:** How well you organise your ideas

**Ideas:** The quality, relevance, and development of your ideas

**Persuasive devices/Character & setting:** Genre-specific elements

**Vocabulary:** The precision and effectiveness of your word choices

**Cohesion:** How well your writing flows

**Paragraphing:** The organisation of your paragraphs

**Sentence structure:** The variety and control of your sentences

**Punctuation:** The accuracy and variety of your punctuation

**Spelling:** The accuracy of your spelling

This guide will break down both persuasive and narrative writing into three simple steps, providing you with a clear framework to follow regardless of which genre appears on your NAPLAN assessment.

## 2. Overview of Persuasive Writing

Persuasive writing aims to convince the reader to accept a particular point of view or take a specific action. It's all about presenting a strong argument and supporting it with evidence and reasoning.

### Key Elements of Persuasive Writing

#### Clear Position

A definite stance on the issue presented in the prompt

## **Strong Arguments**

Well-reasoned points that support your position

## **Convincing Evidence**

Facts, examples, and details that back up your arguments

## **Persuasive Techniques**

Language devices that help influence the reader

## **Logical Structure**

A clear introduction, body, and conclusion

## **Addressing Counter-Arguments**

Acknowledging and refuting opposing views

# **NAPLAN Expectations for Persuasive Writing**

For NAPLAN, your persuasive text should:

- Present a clear and consistent position on the given topic

- Develop at least 2-3 strong arguments with supporting evidence

- Use persuasive devices effectively (e.g., rhetorical questions, emotive language)

- Be structured with an introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion

- Include topic sentences and appropriate paragraph structure

Use a range of sentence types and lengths

Demonstrate accurate spelling, grammar, and punctuation

Use vocabulary appropriate to the purpose and audience

### Sample NAPLAN Persuasive Prompts

"Students should be allowed to use mobile phones in school." Write to convince a reader of your point of view.

"Everyone should learn how to cook." Do you agree or disagree? Write to convince a reader of your opinion.

"Homework should be banned." Write to persuade a reader to accept your point of view.

## 3. Persuasive Writing in 3 Steps

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### Planning Your Argument

Taking a few minutes to plan before you start writing will help you create a more focused and effective persuasive text.

#### Step 1A: Analyse the Prompt

Identify the key issue in the prompt

Decide on your position (agree/disagree)

Consider your audience (who are you trying to convince?)

#### Step 1B: Brainstorm Arguments and Evidence

Use this simple template to organise your ideas:

<b>My Position:</b>	[Write your position here]	
<b>Argument 1:</b>	[Main point]	Evidence: [Support 1]

		[Support 2]
<b>Argument 2:</b>	[Main point]	Evidence: [Support 1] [Support 2]
<b>Argument 3:</b>	[Main point]	Evidence: [Support 1] [Support 2]
<b>Counter-argument:</b>	[Opposing view]	Rebuttal: [How will you address this?]

### Example Planning: "Homework should be banned."

**My Position:** I agree - homework should be banned.

**Argument 1:** Students need time for other activities

Evidence: Physical exercise is important for health

Evidence: Family time and relaxation prevent burnout

**Argument 2:** Homework creates inequality

Evidence: Not all students have equal support at home

Evidence: Access to resources varies between families

**Argument 3:** Learning can happen in more engaging ways

Evidence: Project-based activities are more memorable

Evidence: Real-world applications create deeper understanding

**Counter-argument:** Homework helps reinforce classroom learning

Rebuttal: School hours could be restructured to include practice time

## Step 1C: Create a Quick Outline

Based on your brainstorming, create a simple outline:

**Introduction:** Position statement + brief overview of arguments

**Body Paragraph 1:** First argument with evidence

**Body Paragraph 2:** Second argument with evidence

**Body Paragraph 3:** Third argument with evidence

**Body Paragraph 4 (optional):** Counter-argument and rebuttal

**Conclusion:** Restate position + summary of key points + call to action

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## Structuring Your Response

Follow this framework to ensure your persuasive text is well-organised and effective.

### Step 2A: Craft a Strong Introduction

Your introduction should:

Begin with an attention-grabbing hook (fact, question, quote, or scenario)

Introduce the topic and provide any necessary background

State your position clearly

Preview your main arguments

### Example Introduction

*Imagine spending six hours at school, only to return home with another three hours of assignments. For many students, this is their daily reality. Homework has become an expected part of education, but at what cost? I strongly believe that homework should be banned from our education system. The excessive workload takes away valuable time for physical activity and family bonding, creates inequity between students from different backgrounds, and fails to engage students in meaningful learning. It's time for a change in how we approach education.*

## Step 2B: Develop Powerful Body Paragraphs

Each body paragraph should follow this structure:

**Topic sentence:** Clearly state the main argument of the paragraph

**Explanation:** Elaborate on your argument

**Evidence:** Provide specific examples, facts, or details

**Link:** Explain how this evidence supports your position

**Transition:** Connect to the next paragraph

### Example Body Paragraph

*Firstly, banning homework would allow students to have the time they desperately need for other important activities. After spending most of their day in classrooms, young people need physical exercise to maintain their health and well-being. According to health experts, children should have at least one hour of physical activity daily, which becomes nearly impossible with hours of homework to complete. Additionally, family time and relaxation are crucial for mental health and preventing burnout. When students are constantly stressed about completing assignments, they miss out on these vital aspects of childhood development. By eliminating homework, we would be prioritising the holistic well-being of our students.*

## Step 2C: Write a Convincing Conclusion

Your conclusion should:

Restate your position

Summarise your main arguments

End with a strong final statement or call to action

Leave the reader with something to think about

### Example Conclusion

*In conclusion, homework should be banned because it robs students of valuable time for physical activity and family bonding, creates unfair advantages for certain students, and fails to engage young people in meaningful learning. Instead of clinging to outdated educational practices, we should focus on creating engaging*



classroom experiences that inspire a genuine love of learning. It's time for schools to recognise that quality education doesn't require extending the school day into students' homes. By banning homework, we can create a more equitable, effective, and enjoyable educational experience for all students.

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## Enhancing Your Writing

Once you have your basic structure in place, use these techniques to make your persuasive writing more powerful and effective.

### Step 3A: Use Persuasive Devices

Persuasive Technique	Description	Example
Rhetorical Questions	Questions that make the reader think	<i>Isn't it time we put students' wellbeing first?</i>
Emotive Language	Words that evoke emotions	<i>The crushing burden of homework causes unnecessary stress.</i>
Statistics	Numbers to support your case	<i>Studies show that 82% of students feel overwhelmed by homework.</i>
Expert Opinion	Referring to authorities	<i>According to leading education researcher Dr. Smith...</i>
Personal Anecdotes	Relatable stories	<i>I have seen firsthand how excessive homework affects...</i>
Rule of Three	Listing three items for emphasis	<i>Homework is time-consuming, stressful, and ineffective.</i>

Repetition	Repeating key words or phrases	<i>We need change. We need action. We need to ban homework.</i>
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## Step 3B: Strengthen Your Language

Enhance your writing with:

**Precise Vocabulary:** Use specific, sophisticated words instead of general ones

**Strong Verbs:** Replace weak verbs with more powerful alternatives

**Varied Sentence Structure:** Mix short, impactful sentences with longer, more complex ones

**Transitional Words and Phrases:** Use words like "furthermore," "however," "consequently," etc.

### Vocabulary Upgrades

Instead of...	Try...
Good	Beneficial, advantageous, valuable
Bad	Detrimental, harmful, counterproductive
Important	Crucial, essential, vital
Says	Argues, claims, asserts, contends
A lot	Numerous, substantial, considerable

## Step 3C: Edit and Refine

If time permits, check your writing for:

**Clarity:** Is your position clear? Are your arguments logical?

**Coherence:** Does your writing flow well? Are transitions smooth?

**Spelling and Grammar:** Have you used correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar?

**Impact:** Will your writing convince the reader?

### **Remember!**

In NAPLAN, you only have 40 minutes, so you need to work efficiently. Spend approximately:

5 minutes planning

30 minutes writing

5 minutes reviewing and editing

## **4. Overview of Narrative Writing**

Narrative writing tells a story, either real or imagined. It aims to entertain, engage, or inform the reader through characters, setting, and plot.

### **Key Elements of Narrative Writing**

#### **Characters**

The people (or animals) in your story

#### **Setting**

When and where your story takes place

#### **Plot**

The sequence of events that occur in your story

## **Conflict**

The problem or challenge faced by characters

## **Resolution**

How the conflict is resolved

## **Theme**

The central message or idea in your story

## **NAPLAN Expectations for Narrative Writing**

For NAPLAN, your narrative should:

Have a clear structure with orientation, complication, and resolution

Create engaging characters and setting

Include a well-developed complication or problem

Use descriptive language and dialogue effectively

Use paragraphs to organise different parts of the story

Demonstrate a range of sentence types and vocabulary

Show accurate spelling, grammar, and punctuation

Be appropriate for the intended audience

### **Sample NAPLAN Narrative Prompts**

"The Box" – Write a story about a mysterious box.

"The Door" – Write a story that includes a door that leads somewhere unexpected.

"Being Brave" – Write a story about a time when someone had to be brave.

# 5. Narrative Writing in 3 Steps

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## Crafting Your Story Idea

Planning is crucial for creating a cohesive narrative with a clear beginning, middle, and end.

### Step 1A: Analyse the Prompt

- Identify the key element that must be included in your story
- Decide on a genre (adventure, mystery, fantasy, realistic fiction, etc.)
- Consider your audience and purpose

### Step 1B: Generate Story Elements

Use this template to organise your ideas:

<b>Main Character(s):</b>	Name: Age: Key traits: Goal or desire:
<b>Setting:</b>	Where: When: Atmosphere/mood:
<b>Complication:</b>	Problem/conflict: Obstacles:
<b>Resolution:</b>	How the problem is solved: Change in character:

## Example Planning: "The Box"

### Main Character:

**Name:** Maya

**Age:** 12

**Key traits:** Curious, intelligent, sometimes impulsive

**Goal:** Discover what's inside the mysterious box she found in her grandmother's attic

### Setting:

**Where:** Grandmother's old house in a small coastal town

**When:** Summer vacation

**Atmosphere:** Mysterious, old-fashioned, slightly eerie

### Complication:

**Problem:** The box is locked and has a warning not to open it

**Obstacles:** No key, grandmother won't talk about it, strange things happen when Maya tries to open it

### Resolution:

**How solved:** Maya finds old diary explaining the box contains memories that were too painful for grandmother to face; together they decide to open it and confront the past

**Change:** Maya learns about family history and develops deeper relationship with grandmother; understands importance of facing difficult emotions

## Step 1C: Create a Story Map

Based on your planning, create a simple outline:

**Orientation:** Introduce character and setting, set up story

**Complication:** Present the problem or challenge

**Rising action:** Show attempts to solve the problem, with increasing tension

**Climax:** The most intense moment or turning point

**Resolution:** How the problem is resolved

**Ending:** Final reflection or insight

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## Structuring Your Narrative

Follow this framework to ensure your narrative has a clear structure and engaging progression.

### Step 2A: Craft an Engaging Orientation

Your orientation should:

Begin with a hook to grab attention (action, dialogue, question, or description)

Introduce your main character(s)

Establish the setting (time and place)

Set the mood or atmosphere

Hint at what's to come

#### Example Orientation

*Maya's heart pounded as she climbed the narrow staircase to her grandmother's attic. Dust motes danced in the beams of sunlight that streamed through the small round window, illuminating years of forgotten treasures. It was her first summer staying at the old coastal house, and already she'd discovered a dozen hiding places and secret nooks. But nothing had prepared her for what she found tucked beneath the eaves: a small wooden box, intricately carved with swirling patterns and secured with a tarnished brass lock. What caught Maya's attention, though, was the faded warning etched into its lid: "Some memories are best left undisturbed."*

### Step 2B: Develop a Compelling Complication and Rising Action

Your middle section should:

Introduce a clear problem or challenge

Build tension through a series of events

Show character reactions and development

Include obstacles or setbacks

Build toward a climax

### Example Complication and Rising Action

*That night, Maya couldn't stop thinking about the box. She brought it down to her bedroom and examined it closely, running her fingers over the worn wood and testing the lock. It wouldn't budge.*

*"Grandmother," she asked at breakfast the next morning, "do you know anything about an old box in the attic? One with carvings all over it?"*

*The colour drained from her grandmother's face. "Leave it alone, Maya. Some things are locked away for good reason."*

*But Maya couldn't resist the mystery. She searched the house for keys, tried hairpins, and even considered breaking the lock. Each night, she was sure she heard strange whispers coming from the box – sad voices singing forgotten lullabies.*

*One evening, as storm clouds gathered over the ocean, Maya discovered a hidden compartment in her grandmother's desk. Inside was a small key and a yellowed photograph of a young woman holding a baby. When she touched the key, the lights in the house flickered, and she heard her grandmother gasp from the doorway.*

*"I've been keeping that story locked away for fifty years," her grandmother whispered, tears in her eyes. "Are you sure you want to open it?"*

### Step 2C: Create a Satisfying Resolution and Ending

Your ending should:

Show how the problem is resolved

Demonstrate what the character(s) learned or how they changed

Tie up loose ends



Leave the reader with a final thought or feeling

Connect back to the beginning in some way (optional but effective)

### Example Resolution

*Together, grandmother and granddaughter sat on the window seat as rain lashed against the glass. The box rested between them.*

*"It contains memories of your grandfather's brother – my first love," Grandmother explained. "He was lost at sea when I was just twenty. I locked away everything that reminded me of him because the pain was too great."*

*Maya placed her hand over her grandmother's. "Maybe it's time to remember him."*

*With trembling fingers, they inserted the key together. The lock clicked, and the lid creaked open. Inside were letters, a pocket watch, and a small hand-carved boat. As her grandmother lifted each item, she shared stories Maya had never heard – tales of love, adventure, and loss.*

*By morning, the storm had cleared. Maya helped her grandmother carry the box downstairs to display on the mantelpiece.*

*"Some memories aren't meant to be disturbed," her grandmother said, touching the boat gently, "but that doesn't mean they should be forgotten." Maya nodded, understanding that sometimes the most precious treasures aren't the ones we find, but the stories we uncover along the way.*

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## Enhancing Your Story

Once you have your basic structure in place, use these techniques to make your narrative more vivid and engaging.

### Step 3A: Use Descriptive Language

Enhance your narrative with:

**Sensory Details:** Include sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures

**Figurative Language:** Use similes, metaphors, personification, and imagery

**Show, Don't Tell:** Reveal character traits and emotions through actions and dialogue

**Strong Verbs:** Replace generic verbs with specific, vivid alternatives

Instead of Telling	Try Showing
Maya was curious.	Maya leaned closer, her eyes widening as she examined every inch of the mysterious box.
Her grandmother was sad.	Her grandmother's shoulders slumped, and she turned away, blinking rapidly as she pretended to busy herself with the dishes.
The house was old.	Floorboards creaked with every step, and the wallpaper curled at the edges, revealing layers of the home's history beneath.

Step 3B: Develop Authentic Characters and Dialogue

Make your characters come alive with:

**Clear Motivations:** Show what drives their actions

**Distinct Voice:** Give each character a unique way of speaking

**Natural Dialogue:** Write conversations that sound realistic

**Character Growth:** Show how characters change through the story

Dialogue Tips

Use dialogue to reveal character and move the story forward

Break up dialogue with actions and reactions

Vary dialogue tags (said, whispered, muttered, etc.) or remove them when it's clear who's speaking

Remember proper punctuation for dialogue

Example:

*"What's inside the box?" Maya leaned forward, unable to contain her curiosity.*

*Grandmother's hand froze on her teacup. "The past," she whispered. "And not all of it is pleasant."*

*"But it's still your story." Maya reached across the table. "And now it's part of mine too."*

### Step 3C: Polish and Perfect

If time permits, review your narrative for:

**Pacing:** Does your story move at an appropriate speed?

**Consistency:** Are characters, settings, and plot elements consistent?

**Language:** Have you used vivid, varied vocabulary?

**Paragraphing:** Have you used paragraphs to organise your story?

**Spelling and Grammar:** Have you used correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar?

### Time Management Reminder!

In NAPLAN, you only have 40 minutes, so work efficiently. Spend approximately:

5 minutes planning

30 minutes writing

5 minutes reviewing and editing

## 6. Practice Exercises

Practice makes perfect! Use these exercises to improve your persuasive and narrative writing skills.

### Persuasive Writing Exercises

## Exercise 1: Position Development

Choose one of these topics and complete the planning template:

- School uniforms should be mandatory
- Children should have limited screen time
- Junk food should be banned from school canteens

Develop a clear position and three strong arguments with supporting evidence.

## Exercise 2: Persuasive Techniques

For each persuasive technique below, write an example sentence about this topic: "Kids should have longer school holidays."

1. Rhetorical question
2. Emotive language
3. Statistics (made-up is fine for practice)
4. Expert opinion
5. Personal anecdote

## Exercise 3: Timed Persuasive Response

Set a timer for 40 minutes and write a complete persuasive response to this prompt:

*"All students should learn a musical instrument." Write to convince a reader of your opinion on this topic.*

Remember to follow the 3-step process:

1. Plan your argument (5 minutes)
2. Structure your response (30 minutes)

3. Enhance and edit your writing (5 minutes)

## Narrative Writing Exercises

### Exercise 1: Character Development

Create a detailed character profile for a story protagonist:

- Name, age, and appearance
- Three personality traits
- Something they want more than anything
- Their biggest fear or weakness
- A unique habit or characteristic

Then write a paragraph showing (not telling) these character traits through actions and dialogue.

### Exercise 2: Setting Description

Choose one of these settings and write a vivid paragraph describing it using all five senses:

- An abandoned amusement park
- A busy school cafeteria
- A mysterious forest at dusk

Include at least one simile or metaphor in your description.

### Exercise 3: Timed Narrative Response

Set a timer for 40 minutes and write a complete narrative response to this prompt:

*"The Storm" – Write a story about a character who faces a storm (either a literal weather storm or a figurative storm in their life).*

Remember to follow the 3-step process:

1. Craft your story idea (5 minutes)
2. Structure your narrative (30 minutes)
3. Enhance your story (5 minutes)

## 7. Checklists

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Use these checklists to ensure you've included all the essential elements in your writing.

### Persuasive Writing Checklist

#### Before Submitting Your Persuasive Text, Check:

- ✓ **Introduction:** Have you clearly stated your position and previewed your arguments?
- ✓ **Arguments:** Have you included at least 2-3 strong arguments with supporting evidence?
- ✓ **Persuasive Techniques:** Have you used rhetorical questions, emotive language, etc.?
- ✓ **Structure:** Does each paragraph have a clear topic sentence and supporting details?
- ✓ **Conclusion:** Have you restated your position and summarised your arguments?
- ✓ **Vocabulary:** Have you used precise, powerful words?
- ✓ **Sentences:** Have you used a variety of sentence types and lengths?
- ✓ **Spelling and Grammar:** Have you checked for errors?
- ✓ **Audience:** Is your writing appropriate for the intended audience?
- ✓ **Purpose:** Does your writing clearly aim to persuade?

# Narrative Writing Checklist

## Before Submitting Your Narrative, Check:

- ✓ **Orientation:** Have you introduced the characters, setting, and situation?
- ✓ **Complication:** Is there a clear problem or challenge?
- ✓ **Resolution:** Is the problem resolved in a satisfying way?
- ✓ **Characters:** Are your characters well-developed and believable?
- ✓ **Setting:** Have you described the setting using sensory details?
- ✓ **Descriptive Language:** Have you used vivid details and figurative language?
- ✓ **Dialogue:** If used, is your dialogue realistic and purposeful?
- ✓ **Paragraphing:** Have you used paragraphs to organise your story?
- ✓ **Spelling and Grammar:** Have you checked for errors?
- ✓ **Engaging Ending:** Does your story end in a meaningful way?

## 8. Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

Even the most skilled writers can make these common errors. Learn to recognise and avoid them in your NAPLAN writing tasks.

### Persuasive Writing Mistakes

#### Unclear Position

**Mistake:** Not clearly stating your position or changing your position throughout the text.

**Fix:** Clearly state your position in the introduction and maintain consistency throughout.

#### Weak Arguments

**Mistake:** Making claims without supporting evidence or explanation.

**Fix:** Always back up your arguments with examples, facts, or reasoning.

### Poor Organisation

**Mistake:** Jumping between ideas without a clear structure.

**Fix:** Use one paragraph per argument and follow a logical sequence.

### Repetitive Language

**Mistake:** Using the same words and phrases repeatedly.

**Fix:** Use a thesaurus to find alternatives and vary your sentence starters.

### Weak Conclusion

**Mistake:** Ending abruptly or introducing new arguments in the conclusion.

**Fix:** Restate your position, summarise your arguments, and end with a strong final statement.

### Too Aggressive

**Mistake:** Using overly aggressive or attacking language.

**Fix:** Be firm but respectful; focus on the strength of your arguments rather than attacking opposing views.

## Narrative Writing Mistakes



## No Clear Structure

**Mistake:** Writing without a clear beginning, middle, and end.

**Fix:** Follow the orientation-complication-resolution structure.

## Underdeveloped Characters

**Mistake:** Creating flat, uninteresting characters.

**Fix:** Give your characters distinct personalities, motivations, and challenges.

## Telling Instead of Showing

**Mistake:** Telling readers about emotions and events rather than showing them.

**Fix:** Use actions, dialogue, and sensory details to bring your story to life.

## Unrealistic Dialogue

**Mistake:** Writing dialogue that sounds unnatural or forced.

**Fix:** Read dialogue aloud to check if it sounds like real conversation.

## Too Many Events

**Mistake:** Cramming too many events into your story.

**Fix:** Focus on one main conflict and develop it fully rather than including multiple storylines.

## Rushed Ending

**Mistake:** Rushing the ending or using clichés like "it was all a dream."

**Fix:** Plan your ending carefully and ensure it resolves the conflict in a satisfying way.

## General Writing Mistakes

### Watch Out For These Common Errors:

- ⚠ **Poor Time Management:** Spending too long on planning and running out of time to finish.
- ⚠ **Ignoring the Prompt:** Not addressing the specific requirements of the writing prompt.
- ⚠ **One-Sentence Paragraphs:** Not developing ideas fully within paragraphs.
- ⚠ **Informal Language:** Using slang, contractions, or overly casual language.
- ⚠ **Repetitive Sentence Structure:** Starting every sentence the same way.
- ⚠ **Spelling Errors:** Especially with commonly confused words (their/there/they're, etc.).
- ⚠ **Punctuation Problems:** Missing or misused commas, apostrophes, or quotation marks.
- ⚠ **No Proofreading:** Failing to leave time to review your work for errors.

## Final Tips for Success

Remember that NAPLAN writing success comes down to preparation and practice. Use this guide to help you understand the key requirements for both persuasive and narrative writing, and follow the 3-step approach to ensure you cover all elements in your writing.

The most important things to remember:

- Always analyse the prompt carefully
- Plan before you write
- Follow the appropriate structure for your genre
- Use varied and precise vocabulary
- Check your work if time permits

**With practice and by following the steps in this guide, you'll be well-prepared to tackle whatever writing task appears on your NAPLAN assessment. Good luck!**