Rainbow Writing

Rainbow Writing is a method which aims to improve children's sentence construction through the use of colour. It is particularly effective for bilingual pupils, boys and right-brain dominant learners (visual learners).

What is Rainbow Writing?

Rainbow Writing encourages children to see writing in different colours:

RED words are **exciting powerful verbs**
For example: **charging, dashing, jogged, stared**

PURPLE words are **WOW descriptive words** including both adjectives and adverbs
For example: **youthful, frantically, beautiful**

ORANGE words are **power openers**
For example:
 –ly words **(suddenly, slowly, angrily),**
time connectives **(Later that day, Meanwhile)**
place words **(In the distance, Under the rocks, Beyond the mountains)**

BLUE words are **WOW connectives**
For example: **when if, on the other hand, although, because, despite, as well as, contrary to**

GREEN words are **additional phrases and clauses**
For example: The young girl, **with the cunning smile**, **was...**
The old man, **who had felt ill in the morning**, decided to...

These colours are introduced one at a time beginning with **red** and **purple** words. Once children have a solid grasp of these colours, new colours can be introduced as they are ready for them.

How does Rainbow Writing work?

Rainbow Writing begins with a GREY sentence. Grey sentences are sentences which are made up of simple words and unadventurous vocabulary or doing words and a lack of description e.g:

The boy ran to the shop.

We then begin to improve the sentence by adding extra colours:

Add a more **exciting RED verb**: The boy **sprinted** to the shop. *(This is an example of a two-colour sentence; it contains most of the original grey sentence as well as red words)*
Add a **PURPLE describing word**: The **hungry** boy **sprinted** to the shop. *(This is an example of a three-colour sentence)*
Add an **ORANGE power opener**: **All of a sudden**, the **hungry** boy **sprinted** to the shop. *(This is an example of a four-colour sentence)*
Add a **BLUE connective**: **All of a sudden**, the **hungry** boy **sprinted** to the shop **because** he had found some money. *(This is an example of a five-colour sentence)*
Add a **GREEN additional clause or phrase**: **All of a sudden**, the **hungry** boy **sprinted** to the shop, **which had recently reopened**, **because** he had found some money. *(This is an example of a six-colour sentence)*

Next Steps

Once children are able to add colours to individual sentences, we can then move on to improving whole paragraphs and eventually whole texts. We begin with grey writing; a piece of prose which makes sense and is punctuated correctly but has little engagement or interest:

The boy went into the room. He was looking for a noise. He heard it in the cupboard. He went to look. He opened the door. It was his dog.

We then begin to improve the paragraph using Rainbow Writing. We start by adding **red words (action words/verbs)** and **purple words (descriptive words)**:

The **young** boy **entered** the **dusty** room. He was **searching frantically** for a **strange** noise. He heard it in the **old, battered** cupboard. He **hesitated** to look. He **slowly** opened the **creaking** door. It was his dog.

If children have a solid grasp of the first two colours, it is now possible to continue to add more colours to the text:

Silently, the **young** boy **entered** the **dusty** room. Thomas, **who had recently just turned fourteen,** was **searching frantically** for a **strange** noise. He felt **apprehensive as** it seemed to be coming from the **old, battered** cupboard. **Reaching slowly** for the handle, he took a **deep** breath and **slowly** opened the **creaking** door. There, **in a pile of old clothes,** was his **loveable** companion Lucy. Thomas was about to **scoop** up his dog **when** he saw another **strange** object **lying** behind her.

It is not necessary for children to include all of the rainbow colours in every sentence. Indeed a text made up of only six-colour sentences would be somewhat confusing and overwhelming. Rather we aim that children try to use rainbow colours for effect, taking into account the text-type they are working on. For instance, narrative writing may be particularly **purple-dominant** to describe a scene or characters, whereas a play-script may contain lots of **red words** to show what a character is doing.