One story. Two readers.

The facts (a fictional classroom story)

The class book was missing. We looked on the shelf. Then we looked under the desks. After that, Daniel found the book in the reading corner, behind a cushion.

1. For the class newsletter

A parent or carer was not there. Turn the notes into a short newsletter account of the search and discovery. Keep the facts; do not invent new events.

2. For the teacher next door

They are waiting to hear whether the book has been found and where it was. Write a clear message of one or two sentences.

Choose one difference between your versions. Why does it help that reader?

Make the meaning clear

3. Who put the brushes away?

Draft: “Sam gave the brushes to Alex after art. They put them in the cupboard.”

Facts: Sam handed the brushes to Alex. Alex put the brushes in the cupboard. Your reader needs to know who put the brushes away.

Rewrite the draft so the reader does not have to guess. Keep the facts.

Which word or phrase did you change? How did it help the reader?

4. Read your writing back

Check meaning first:
• Is it clear who did what?
• Have I kept the facts?
• Does my reader have the information they need?

Then check spelling, capital letters and sentence endings. You can read aloud or ask a partner to tell you what they understood.

A useful change does not always make writing longer.

Model a choice, not a “perfect” answer

Allow 15–20 minutes, or split over two lessons. Pupils need to communicate a short account; oral rehearsal, dictation or a scribe can support access. These are possible versions, not the only correct answers.

1. Newsletter: one possible revision

“Our class book went missing. We searched the shelf, then under the desks. Afterwards, Daniel found it behind a cushion in the reading corner.”

The reader can follow the search and its ending. “Then” and “afterwards” are justified by the supplied facts. Other clear sequences are valid; neither joining word is compulsory.

2. Message: one possible revision

“The class book has been found. Daniel found it behind a cushion in the reading corner.”

This answers the waiting teacher’s question directly. Omitting the unsuccessful search fits this purpose. It does not mean shorter writing is always better. “Daniel found the missing class book behind a cushion in the reading corner” is another valid version.

What to listen for in the explanation

“I put the finding first because the teacher is waiting to hear that.” Or: “I kept the search in order so the parent can follow what happened.” Accept other choices that preserve meaning and suit the reader.

Do not add that the book was stolen, that anyone was careless, or that Daniel put it back on the shelf. None of those facts is given.

Teach revision before polishing

3. Removing an unclear reference

Possible version: “Sam gave the brushes to Alex after art. Alex put the brushes in the cupboard.” Another: “After art, Sam handed Alex the brushes, which Alex put in the cupboard.” Repeating a name can improve clarity. Do not force pupils to replace every repetition.

Why the original needs attention

“They” could refer to Sam, Alex or both. The facts establish Alex as the person who put the brushes away. “Them” means brushes here; repeating “brushes” can help. Singular “they” is grammatical; the issue here is unclear reference. No gendered pronoun is needed.

Model one decision aloud

Try: “My reader may not know who ‘they’ means. I will use Alex’s name so they do not have to guess.” Then compare the two versions and ask what is clearer. Focus on one useful change, not a list of faults.

Respond to what pupils actually do

If they add adjectives, ask what the reader now understands better. If they change a fact, return to the fact box. If they only correct capitals, explain that editing accuracy matters but today’s first job is meaning. Praise a justified choice, not length or neatness.

Try it again in real writing

In a later piece, ask pupils to name their reader and mark one change that helps that reader. Let a partner explain what they understood. If the explanation differs from the intended meaning, revise together. Do not treat one worksheet as a measure of writing ability.

Background and use

Informed by EEF KS2 literacy guidance on modelling and supported writing practice; source linked in the article. Original, fictional examples; not classroom-trialled. Print, copy and adapt for teaching; credit SkillFlex if redistributing. Not for resale.