

G.R.O.W.

A Framework for Effective Independent Learning in the Classroom

**Grammar**

Independent practice

**Reading**

Independent practice

**Other**

Independent practice

**Writing**

Independent practice

In today's dynamic classroom, balancing whole-group instruction with the individual needs of students can be challenging. The G.R.O.W. framework provides a versatile structure for meaningful independent learning while the teacher works with small groups.

The guiding principle: Independent tasks should be meaningful, manageable, and explicitly taught before students are expected to complete them on their own.

Why G.R.O.W.?

G.R.O.W. stands for Grammar, Reading, Other, and Writing. It is designed to promote independence, reinforce skills, and keep students actively engaged. By organizing familiar tasks within these four categories, educators can create a predictable structure that supports student ownership and protects focused time for targeted small-group instruction.

G.R.O.W. is practice time. Activities revisit learning that has already been modelled, taught, and rehearsed - they are not a time to introduce brand-new concepts.

How G.R.O.W. Works

G Grammar

Students reinforce previously taught language conventions through word sorts, sentence-building, editing, or targeted practice. The goal is to strengthen understanding through successful repetition.

R Reading

Partner reading builds fluency, comprehension, and confidence. Students can take turns reading, discuss the text, and support one another while practising familiar routines.

O Other (Games)

Educational games, including phonics-based Roll and Read activities, make review interactive and low pressure. This flexible centre can also support cross-curricular practice or unfinished learning.

W Writing

Students may respond to open-ended prompts, practise handwriting, build sentences, or apply an explicitly taught writing technique. Tasks balance creativity with purposeful skill development.

Putting G.R.O.W. Into Practice

Use these ideas as a starting point, then adapt the choices to your students, routines, and current learning goals.

1 Grammar

Offer a word sort, sentence-building task, punctuation review, or short editing activity. Keep directions consistent and provide a model students can reference independently.

2 Partner Reading

Students select a familiar book or passage, take turns reading aloud, and briefly discuss meaning. Simple prompts can help partners focus on retelling, vocabulary, or comprehension.

3 Other: Games and Choice

Use educational games that reinforce vocabulary, phonics, grammar, or comprehension. This centre can also be used to catch up on missed work, revisit a concept, or integrate another subject area.

4 Writing

Provide an open-ended prompt, handwriting practice, sentence expansion, or paragraph development. Give students accessible tools such as word banks, exemplars, or checklists.

Keep it manageable. A smaller number of well-rehearsed routines usually supports more independence than a large menu of unfamiliar choices. Change the content while keeping the routine predictable.

Making Independent Learning Work

- 1 Teach first: Introduce and model every activity before it becomes an independent task.
- 2 Rehearse the routine: Practise where to go, what to use, how to ask for help, and what to do when finished.
- 3 Make directions visible: Use concise visual directions, labelled materials, and familiar examples.
- 4 Build accountability: Choose a simple check-in, response sheet, partner reflection, or quick teacher review.
- 5 Observe and adjust: Notice where students need support, then reteach the routine or simplify the task.

A Framework That Helps Everyone Grow

The G.R.O.W. framework creates intentional opportunities for students to practise previously taught skills toward mastery. With meaningful, manageable tasks in place, teachers can focus on small-group instruction while the rest of the class remains engaged in productive learning. Through grammar, reading, games, and writing, students build confidence, independence, and ownership of their learning.

Free G.R.O.W. labels

Pair the framework with your free classroom labels from The Connected Educator. My personal favourite? The gnomes!

Curate. Cultivate. Connect. Keep the learning elevated!

- Kathryn