

Grammar Chef transcript

Ms Parrot: One situation which I will not forget was the time I took part in a cooking competition with the food critic Gordon Harpal van Tu Acurio Chan. I was sure I would lose, but Gordon Chan made several fatal mistakes . . .

Harumi Kaga: Welcome to our cookery competition. Today we have two contestants: Gordon Harpal Van Tu Acurio Chan, the famous food critic, and Ms Parrot the Grammar Detective. What are you going to make for us today?

Stage 1: Considering the Topic/Title

Gordon Chan: I don't know. I think I'll make a cake. I have made so many cakes it will be easy for me!

Ms Parrot: I'm going to make a Victoria sponge cake. It's very easy.

Harumi Kaga: Good luck to you both. Let's start the competition!

(Ms Parrot and Gordon write down ideas for their cakes.)

Stage 2: Brainstorming

Harumi Kaga: What are you doing?

Ms Parrot: It's what I call brainstorming: writing down all the ideas that come into my mind and are related with what I want to do. It feels like there is a storm in my brain and all the ideas get thrown around and land on my paper! This one's a mindmap, where all the ideas are connected, and this one's a list.

(Ms Parrot unpacks her ingredients and looks online for further items, while Gordon looks for ingredients in a cupboard.)

Stage 3: Researching

Ms Parrot: After you've written down some ideas, you need to do some research and look for the right kinds of ingredients. Looking online is a big help.

(Ms Parrot and Gordon put their ingredients in order.)

Stage 4: Planning

Harumi Kaga: Do you always plan what you do?

Gordon Chan: When you're an expert, you don't need to!

Ms Parrot: When you're not an expert, you need to plan carefully.

(Ms Parrot and Gordon think about the final stage of the competition.)

Stage 5: Thinking about the conclusion

Harumi Kaga: Have you thought about the conclusion? What are you aiming for?

Ms Parrot: I think it's important to consider ingredients, taste, texture and appearance.

Harumi Kaga: Exactly!

Gordon Chan: My conclusion is that my cake will be the best! I don't need to think about the details!

(Ms Parrot mixes her cake. Gordon throws things into a bowl.)

Stage 6: Writing the body paragraphs

Ms Parrot: I think it's important to do everything in order and think about the main part of your cake. Is it properly mixed? Will each bite taste good?

(Ms Parrot and Gordon write a short introduction to their cakes.)

Stage 7: Writing the introduction

Ms Parrot: This is a Victoria sponge cake, based on my grandmother's recipe. It has simple ingredients (eggs, flour, sugar and butter) which give it a good taste, texture and appearance.

Gordon Chan: Cake by Gordon Harpal Van Tu Acurio Chan.

Harumi Kaga: How you introduce your cake is a key to success. We want to see what the main ingredients are and what you think is important.

(Ms Parrot writes a list of where she bought her ingredients, cross referenced to the recipe. Gordon plays games on his mobile phone.)

Stage 8: Referencing and academic integrity

(Ms Parrot mixes her cake again carefully. Gordon is not careful.)

Stage 9: Redrafting

Harumi Kaga: I thought you had already mixed your cake?

Ms Parrot: I'm just checking it again and making sure everything is properly mixed. A lot of things are better if you leave them for a while and come back to them.

Stage 10: Incorporating your voice

Harumi Kaga: Which great chefs influenced you when you made your cake?

Ms Parrot: Delia Smythe and that nice young Englishman, Jammy Olive I think he's called, and that lovely Australian, Lucas Winner. You can see their influences in my cooking.

Gordon Chan: No one. All my ideas are mine. I scoff at these fancy chefs. My voice is the only important one. It's all people want to hear.

Stage 11: Editing and proofreading

Harumi Kaga: What's the final stage?

Gordon Chan: Bake your cake, of course!

Ms Parrot: I always like to check all the little details first.

Stage 12: Submitting on time

Harumi Kaga: And now for the final test. Whose cake is best? Ms Parrot's cake is simple. It passes the tests for ingredients, taste, texture and appearance. It's not the best cake I've ever seen, but it is very good. Gordon Chan's cake, unfortunately, is a disaster. It looks as though he did not plan it, did not mix it and did not check his ingredients. The winner is Ms Parrot!

Gordon Chan: I'll have my revenge for this!

Teaching section

Ms Parrot: Dear me. That was a surprise. I really didn't think I'd win. Of course, Gordon ignored all the important stages.

Making a cake is rather like writing an essay. First you have your topic or title, to give you an idea of what your finished product should be like. Look at this well before the due date and give yourself plenty of time to work on the essay.

Then brainstorm all the things that might be associated with your topic.

After that, do your initial research.

Now you need to plan. You may have to put those things aside that you don't need. Just because you spent a long time finding something, that doesn't always mean it's going to be useful. You need to weigh everything

and make sure there's a good balance. Then put the ingredients in order, ready to use.

Now draft your conclusion. How will everything finish? What are you aiming for? What final impression do you want your reader to have? It might seem strange to start by thinking about the conclusion, but unless you know where you're going you can easily lose direction.

The next thing is to write the body of your essay. This is a bit like mixing your ingredients, getting the balance right. Each paragraph should make one main point and include a topic sentence that tells you what that point is.

Now draft your introduction. What do you want your reader to know about your topic? How will you lead them in to the rest of your essay? Your introduction should include a thesis statement, where you explain what your essay will cover.

Remember to include references every time you refer to another person's ideas. References should appear in the text and in a reference list at the end of the essay.

Read your draft essay and change things if you need to. Make sure everything is linked to your title.

Make it clear which ideas are yours and which belong to other people.

Edit and proof read your essay. Is everything in order and are there any mistakes you need to correct?

If your essay's ready, it's time to submit it. And if you get a good mark, that's the icing on the cake!