What can you do with a word processor?

You know most of this but it's worth remembering how versatile a tool this is:

Delete	Reduce inhibitions about being 'wrong'
Change	Try different phrasings, endings, intros; overcome repetitions
Move	Group ideas, themes. Arrange arguments, descriptions…
Insert	Add later ideas. Build from the centre, from strengths, while ideas fresh
Save	With different names, so subsequent changes don't affect the original
Copy / paste	From one document to another
Alter appearance	Font, size, alignment, spacing, style - to suit audience / purpose
Add media	Pictures, graphs, diagrams
Check	Spelling / grammar
Look up	Synonyms, antonyms

And that's just the start.   Before we go on, here are some very helpful shortcuts if you're using Word. (Do make sure you select the text first.) These are all useful things for you to know but also handy for your students, who may be computer literate but not necessarily word processor savvy.

Ctrl X	Delete / Cut
Ctrl V	Paste
Ctrl Z	Undo
Ctrl Y	Redo
Ctrl S	Save
Ctrl + Shift + <	Make smaller
Ctrl + Shift + >	Make bigger
Double click	Will select one word
Triple click	Will select a paragraph
Margin click	Will select one line – very useful
Shift + Alt + up/down arrows*	Will move selected text up or down through the rest of the document
Ctrl N	New document
Ctrl L, R, E	Align left, right, centre (think Equidistant)
Ctrl H	Find

Hints and Tips

Take a short text, e.g. a poem, a list or some prose comprising several paragraphs. Jumble the lines / paragraphs (see below for a short-cut on doing this). Students individually (or the class if using a whiteboard or other shared screen) can reassemble the text using the short-cut above*. You don't even need to select the text; just placing the cursor within the line / paragraph will work. Great for revising / investigating poems, ordering an argument or arranging statements in some kind of heirarchy.

When displaying a text and needing to draw attention to a word or phrase, select it and use Ctrl, Shift and the greater than key. Magic.

Show how a sentence can grow by adding phrases and clauses. Then take it back, bit by bit, using Undo. And then rebuild it.

Build from the centre. Many pieces of writing can begin well – or at least with lots of detail – and then tail off. Suggest students start by writing the most interesting / most important bit first. Later, they can add material before this bit and after it, however they wish.

Use the facilities of a word processor to alter appearance to annotate a text. For example, red font colour for verbs or other indications of action; underline personal feelings; italic for personal pronouns and so on.

Show the prevalence (or otherwise) of certain word classes by making all instances bold. Then 'Select all' the rest of the document and choose white as the font. (In 'Daffodils', for instance, showing the distribution of nouns, then verbs and adjectives makes the point very clearly that poetry does not rely on lots of adjectives!)

Jumbling lines. Select the lines you wish to desequence and click on the Sort icon. This will arrange the lines or paragraphs in alphabetical order of the starting letter.

Find (and Replace) can be a fun way of dealing with a lot of repetition, e.g. 'and' or 'then'. Put 'and' into the 'Find what' box and a full stop in the 'Replace with' box. You can either click 'Replace All' or go through one at a time, asking whether a full stop is appropriate. After all, some 'ands' are necessary. It's a good idea to select 'Find whole words only' from the larger dialog box which opens if you click on 'More'.

See also 'More Advanced Uses of 'Find and Replace'