Spotlight on Sentence Structure
Grades K-5
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Keys to Literacy

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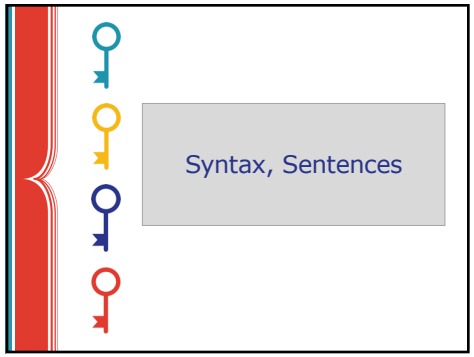
Syntax, Sentences

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Connections to State Literacy Standards
There are two language standards that are related to sentence skills in primary grades.
#1: Conventions of English Grammar
#2: Conventions of Capitalization, Punctuation, Spelling
Review the language standards!
COMMON CORE State Standards
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Syntax: the system and arrangement of words, phrases, and clauses that make up a sentence

Syntactic Awareness: understanding grammar

developing "sentence sense"

The levels of syntactic awareness students bring to kindergarten depends on exposure to oral language.

Mommy is calling Daddy. Daddy is calling Mommy.

Swims the turtle. **OR** The turtle swims.

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The Role of Sentences Within Text

Building blocks for writing and the foundation for comprehending text

One by one, sentences (oral or written) communicate the ideas that add up to make meaning

How do sentences affect…	
Comprehension	Writing

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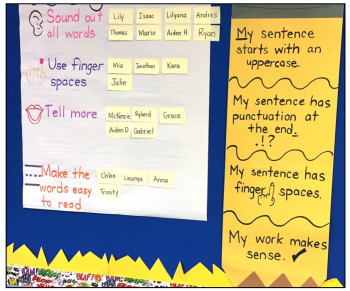
Setting Goals for Sentences



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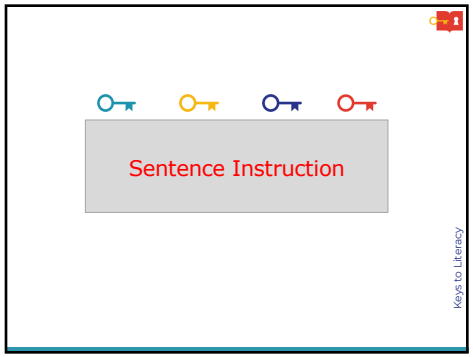
Sentence Instruction
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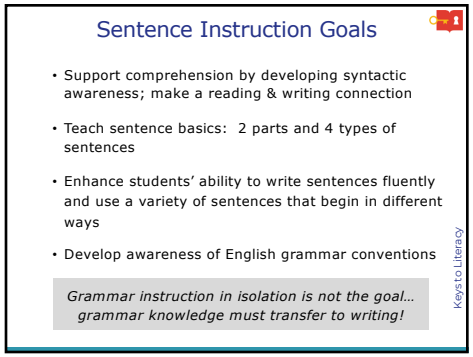
Sentence Instruction Goals
• Support comprehension by developing syntactic awareness; make a reading & writing connection
• Teach sentence basics: 2 parts and 4 types of sentences
• Enhance students' ability to write sentences fluently and use a variety of sentences that begin in different ways
• Develop awareness of English grammar conventions
Grammar instruction in isolation is not the goal… grammar knowledge must transfer to writing!
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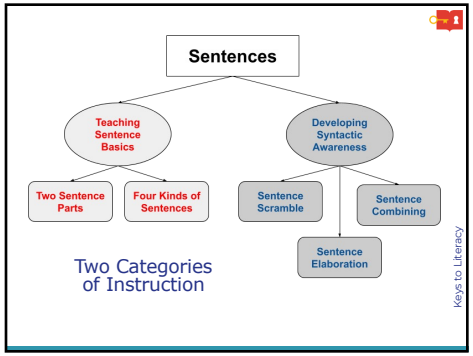
Sentences
Teaching Sentence Basics
Developing Syntactic Awareness
Two Sentence Parts
Four Kinds of Sentences
Sentence Scramble
Sentence Combining
Sentence Elaboration
Two Categories of Instruction
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Instructional Sequence

I
↓
We
↓
You

- Teacher models a sentence activity.
- Students work with the teacher and then each other to practice.
- Students apply the practice to their own sentences.

Think about your objective and the task:

What do you want students to know and be able to do as a result of each activity?

Differentiate the task based on your students' readiness.

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Sentence Basics

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Sentences

- Teaching Sentence Basics
  - Two Sentence Parts
  - Four Kinds of Sentences
- Developing Syntactic Awareness
  - Sentence Scramble
  - Sentence Combining
  - Sentence Elaboration

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Reading & Writing Connection

TEXT STRUCTURE =
how a piece of writing is built

Helping students look at sentence structure is a critical foundation of HOW a piece of writing is built…

… from the perspective of both a *reader* and a *writer.*

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Two Sentence Parts

What is a sentence?
A simple, complete sentence has two major parts:

- **"naming"** part (noun)
- **"action"** part (verb)

The turtle *swims.*
naming action

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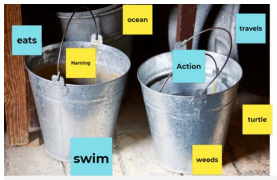
Categorizing Activity

Students sort naming or action parts.

Naming Part

Action Part



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Sentence Part Cards: Part 1

Provide one naming card and 2 action cards, students choose the appropriate match according to mentor text.

Sea turtles	is about loggerheads.
	travel thousands of miles.

Sentence Part Cards: Part 2

Match the cards with the "naming" part of a sentence to cards with the "action" part of the sentence.

Sea turtles	is about loggerhead.
This book	travel thousands of miles.

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Two Sentence Parts: Scaffolds

subjects are yellow ↓ **predicates are blue** ↓

Sea turtles	is a loggerhead.
This book	travel thousands of miles.

↑ **subjects start with a capital** ↑ **predicates end with a period**

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Activity: Add a Sentence Part

Students generate their own words to add a predicate or a subject.

The mother turtle _____.

_____ finds juicy clams.

This can be a comprehension assessment as well as an assessment of sentence construction!

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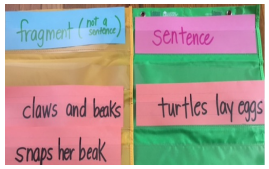
Sorting Activity: Sentence or Fragment?



Language Standard #1: By grade 4 students will be able to recognize and correct fragments.

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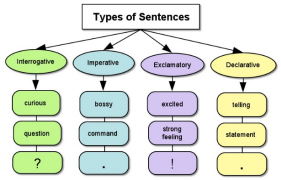
Four Types of Sentences

- Standards expect understanding by end of grade 1.
- Explicit teaching of the 4 types and end punctuation
- Goal: have students use a variety of sentence types in their writing



Can be taught during ELA and writing block.

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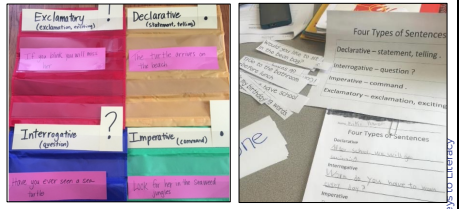
Activity 1: Sort the sentences into each type.



Good center activity!

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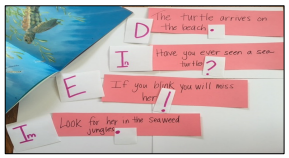
Activity 2:
Identify the sentence type and punctuation.

___*The turtle arrives on the beach*__
___*Have you ever seen a sea turtle*__
___*If you blink you will miss her*__
___*Look for her in the seaweed jungles*__



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Activity 3:
Change the sentence.

- *Turn the statement into a question. (?)*
- *Turn the question into a statement. (.)*
- *Turn the question into a command or exclamation. (!)*

The turtle arrives on the beach.
When does the turtle arrive on the beach?

Have you ever seen a sea turtle?
I saw a sea turtle in Jupiter, Florida last year.

Does a sea turtle move quickly in the water?
*Yes, sea turtles **race** through the water!*

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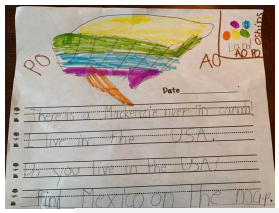
Activity 4:
Create and write sentences.



Create one of each type of sentence related to read aloud & subject-area learning

- There is Mackenzie over in Canada!
- I live in the USA.
- Do you live in the USA.?
- Find Mexico on the map.

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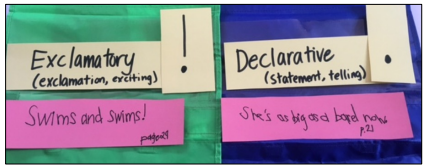
Activity 5:
Students find examples of different types of sentences in mentor text.



Swims and swims! She's as big as a barrel now.

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Sentence Frames

- Sentences with missing words
- A scaffold to help generate complete, compound, and complex sentences

Loggerhead turtles _____ and _____.

Word Bank: swim, have, dig, eat, disappear

Review the Examples:

- *Spatial location prepositional phrases*
- *Time related prepositional phrases*
- *Compound sentences with and, but*
- *Complex sentences with because*
- *Complex sentences with adverbial clauses*

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Developing Syntactic Awareness

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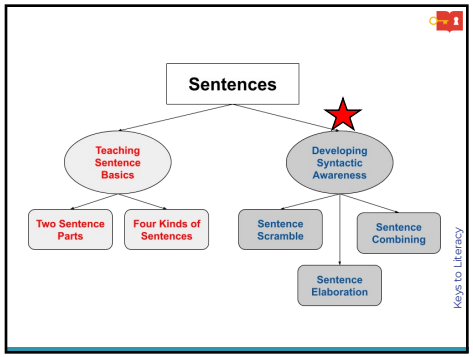
Sentences
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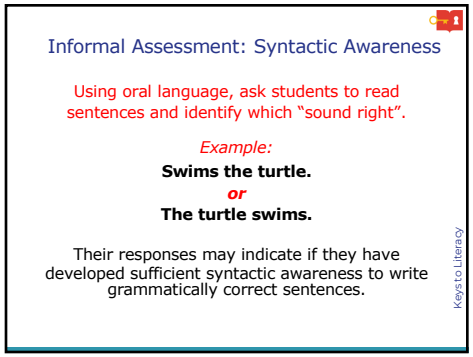
Informal Assessment: Syntactic Awareness
Using oral language, ask students to read sentences and identify which "sound right".
Example:
Swims the turtle.
or
The turtle swims.
Their responses may indicate if they have developed sufficient syntactic awareness to write grammatically correct sentences.
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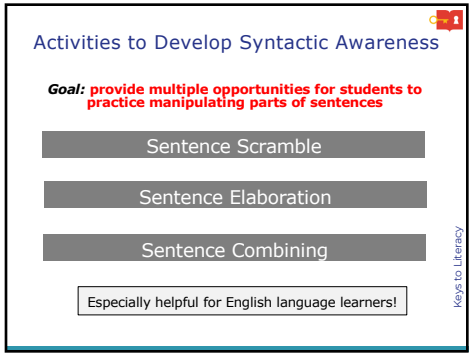
Activities to Develop Syntactic Awareness
Goal: provide multiple opportunities for students to practice manipulating parts of sentences
Sentence Scramble
Sentence Elaboration
Sentence Combining
Especially helpful for English language learners!
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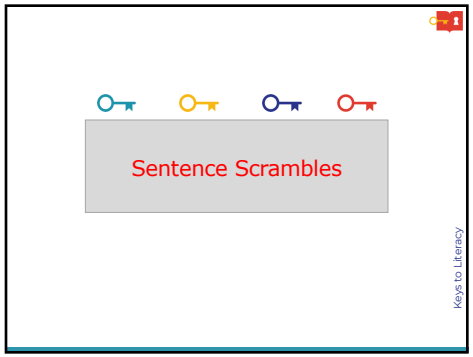
Sentence Scrambles
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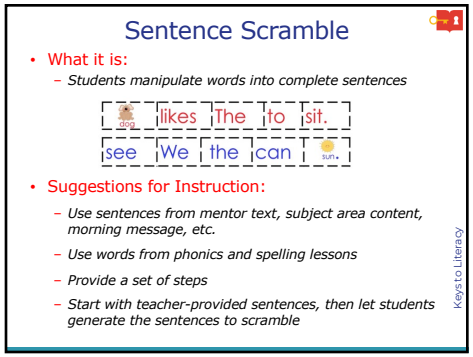
Sentence Scramble
What it is:
Students manipulate words into complete sentences
likes The to sit.
see We the can
Suggestions for Instruction:
Use sentences from mentor text, subject area content, morning message, etc.
Use words from phonics and spelling lessons
Provide a set of steps
Start with teacher-provided sentences, then let students generate the sentences to scramble
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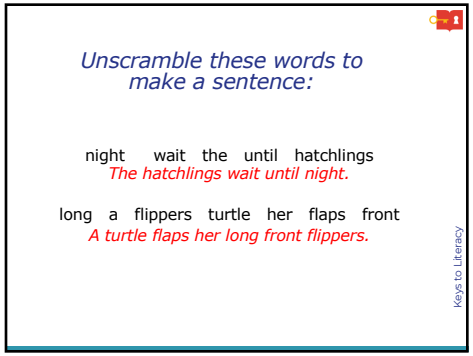
Unscramble these words to make a sentence:
night wait the until hatchlings
The hatchlings wait until night.
long a flippers turtle her flaps front
A turtle flaps her long front flippers.
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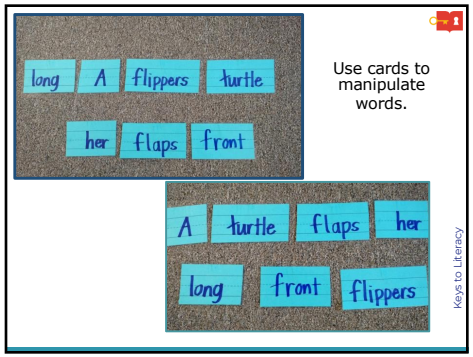
long
A
flippers
turtle
her
flaps
front
Use cards to manipulate words.
A
turtle
flaps
her
long
front
flippers
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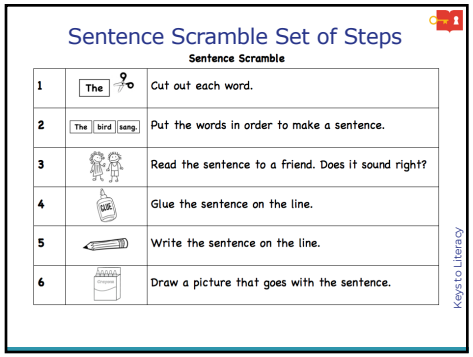
Sentence Scramble Set of Steps
Sentence Scramble
1
The
Cut out each word.
2
The bird sang.
Put the words in order to make a sentence.
3
Read the sentence to a friend. Does it sound right?
4
Glue the sentence on the line.
5
Write the sentence on the line.
6
Draw a picture that goes with the sentence.
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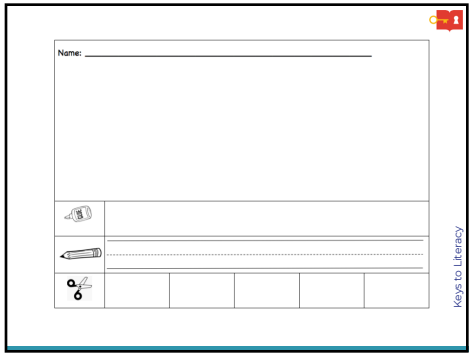
Name:
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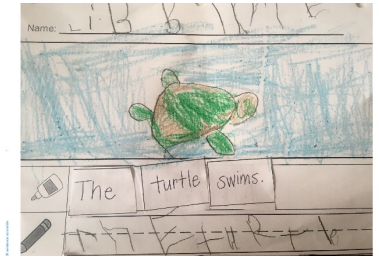
Sentence Scramble Example



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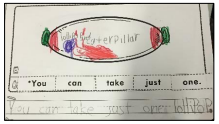
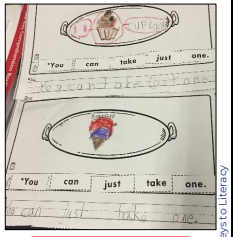
More Examples

From
The Very Hungry Caterpillar



This child expanded the sentence.



Two syntactically appropriate examples.

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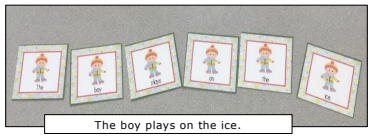

The boy plays on the ice.

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Remember!

- Use newly learned vocabulary words in content related sentences
- Start with simple sentences and move into more complex sentences
- Consider scaffolds:
  - Capital letters and punctuation
  - Color coding
  - Fonts for multi-sentence sorts

Too Difficult!

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Sentence Elaboration

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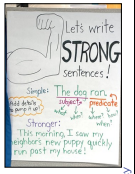
Sentence Elaboration

- What it is:
  - *Students expand and add details to a simple sentence*
- Suggestions for Instruction:
  - *Explain to students that elaboration is meant to answer any questions the reader may still have about their writing*
  - *Add detail using "W" questions*
  - *Provide word lists to expand word choice*
  - *Expand "kernel" sentences*



Sentence elaboration can be part of REVISION!

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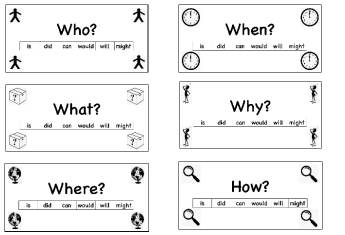
Expand Sentences Using Question Terms



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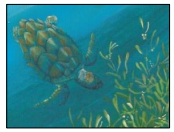
Scaffold: Use A Picture

How might you use a picture to help a student elaborate on a sentence? Use the W cards to elaborate.

The turtle swims.



The picture encourages use of academic vocabulary during oral rehearsal to elaborate before drafting or when revising.

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Expanding Sentences: W Questions

Sentence *Simple subject & predicate goes here.*	
____?	
____?	
____?	
Your sentence: *Final, completed sentence goes here.*	

- *Notes, not complete sentences*
- *1 or more W words, gradually add*

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Example

The turtle swims.	
What?	green
How?	fast
Your sentence:	
The green turtle swims fast.	

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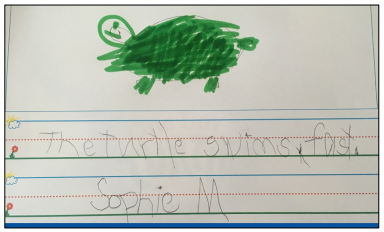
Kindergarten Example

Add a detail: How does the turtle swim?



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Example

The turtle swims.	
When?	• late at night
Where?	• in the ocean
Your sentence:	
The turtle swims late at night in the ocean. In the ocean, the turtle swims late at night. Late at night, the turtle swims in the ocean.	

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Example

The turtle swam.	
When?	• late at night
Where?	• in the ocean
Why?	• in search of food
Your sentence: Late at night, in the ocean, the turtle swam in search of food.	

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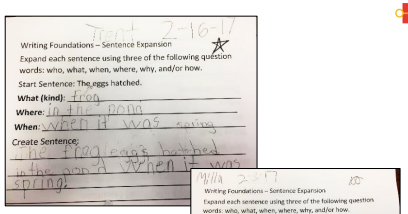

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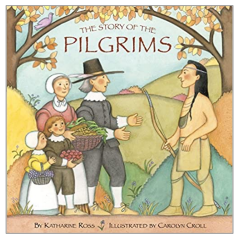
Example: Social Studies Read Aloud

- Who?
- Did what?
- Where?
- When?
- How?



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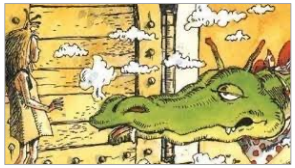
Practice:
The dragon arrived.

- Who?
- Did what?
- Where?
- When?
- How?



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Gradually Introduce Connecting Words

and	I went outside, **and** I played in the yard.
but	I want to go outside, **but** it is raining.
yet	I ate a big meal, **yet** I am still hungry.
so	It was sunny, **so** I went outside to play
because	I went outside **because** it was a nice day.
or	I can play outside **or** inside.
when	I can play outside **when** the rain stops.
if	I can eat more **if** I am hungry.

Use mentor text sample sentences, model use of these words, and introduce how commas are used.

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Expanding "Kernel" Sentences

- Basic simple sentence: Noun and verb
- Elaborate the subject - Add adjectives
  e.g. color, size, shape, number
- Elaborate the predicate - Add adverbs
  words that end in –ly
- Add phrases (where, why, how, when)
  time of day, weather, location
- Compound the subject
- Compound the predicate
- Combine two sentences into a compound sentence

Haynes & Jennings

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The turtle swims.

Elaborate the subject: adjectives

The small, green turtle swims.

Elaborate the predicate: adverbs.

The small, green turtle swims quickly.

Add a where phrase.

The small, green turtle swims quickly into the seaweed.

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The turtle swims.

Compound the subject.

The turtle and his brother swim.

Compound the predicate.

The turtle and his brother swim and float.

Combine two into a compound sentence.

The turtle and his brother swim and float as the fish dart by.

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Sentence Combining

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Sentence Combining

Improves ability to:

– manipulate and rearrange words
– expand, clarify and tighten sentences

- Developed in 1960's
- Consistent research findings: an effective method for helping students produce more syntactically mature sentences
- Effective for grade K through college levels – begin as an oral language activity

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Basic Examples

- Birds can eat baby sea turtles. Fish can eat baby sea turtles.
  Birds and fish can eat baby turtles.
- The baby turtle swims. The baby turtle dives.
  The baby turtle swims and dives.
- There are six turtle eggs. The turtle eggs are white.
  There are six, white turtle eggs.
- Turtles have shells. The shells are made of bony plates. The shells get bigger as turtles grow.
  Turtles have shells made of boy plates that get bigger as turtles grow.

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Teaching Suggestions

- Start with combining just 2 very simple sentences, then use longer or 3 sentences
- Can be done orally for younger students who can't read/write the words
- Use sentences related to read aloud or subject area content
- Let students work collaboratively and encourage them to explain how they combined the sentences
- Label basic parts of speech, but do not make this the focus of the activity
- Works best when done at least 2 - 3 times a week.

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Scaffold: Cloze Activity

Word Bank
and, so, but, however

Turtles swim in water. Turtles dive in water.
Turtles swim _____ dive in water.

Fish breathe underwater. Turtles need to come to the surface for air.
Fish breathe underwater, _____ turtles need to come to the surface for air.

Coming ashore is very risky for sea turtles. They only nest at night.
Coming ashore is very risky for sea turtles, _____ they only nest at night.

Turtle eggs in warm sand can hatch in 6 weeks. If the sand is cool, they can take 3 weeks longer.
Turtle eggs in warm sand can hatch in 6 weeks, _____ if the sand is cool, they can take 3 weeks longer.

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Revising Sentences

Sentence Number	Number of Words	First 2 Words of the Sentence	End Punctuation
1.	10	I went to Disneyland and we went through the desert.	.
2.	3	I had fun.	.
3.	5	I saw lots of rides.	.
4.	5	I went on the Matterhorn	.
5.	5	I went on the Ferris wheel.	.

What feedback would you give this student for revision of sentences?

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130-132, *Padlet*

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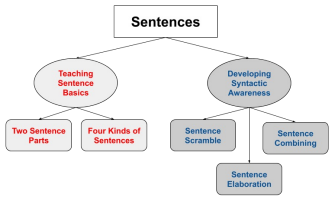
Sentence Reflection

How does improving students' sentence knowledge improve their comprehension and writing?



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Thank you!
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www.keystoliteracy.com
Email me for more information:
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