



1 On Your Marks!

Objective

To learn how words can combine to make sentences

Key definition

A sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete idea. It can be a statement, a question or an exclamation. A sentence always begins with a capital letter and ends with a punctuation mark. It must also contain a verb.

2 Get Ready

Prior knowledge

Children should have a solid understanding of the following:

- Understanding what constitutes a sentence
- Recognising a verb or 'doing word'
- Recognising the subject of a sentence

Recap on previous grammar, punctuation and spelling knowledge acquired, and touch on areas of uncertainty highlighted in the Diagnostic Check, particularly regarding the subject of a sentence and being able to recognise a verb.

Explain that this session will develop children's understanding of how to combine words carefully, which will enable them to write grammatically accurate sentences.

Terminology

A verb is sometimes called a 'doing word' and generally names an action – but can also describe an event or a state (e.g. '**It was cold.**').

The subject is the focus of a sentence. In '**The dog chased the cat**', the subject is the dog. In '**The cat was chased by the dog**', the subject is the cat. The subject does not have to be a noun or a pronoun; it can be a verb, for example: '**Sleeping was difficult in the bright moonlight.**'; '**To sing can be tricky without training.**' The subject can also be a clause: '**Whatever is making that noise must stop now!**'



(**NB:** You may find it helpful to use the term 'verb', but children do not need to learn these terms as long as they understand the concepts behind them.)

Purpose and application

Many children will be able to construct a sentence orally from a young age. It is from this early oral understanding that children are able to begin to construct written sentences. However, you should ensure that children understand a sentence must include a verb (as well as a capital letter and full stop, question mark or exclamation mark) so that they don't mistake phrases such as '**the big, black dog**' for sentences. Verbs usually describe an action, e.g. '**I went to the shop.**' However, '**to be**' is also a verb, even though it doesn't sound like an action. This is also a sentence: '**I am hungry.**'

After simple sentences have been constructed, it is important that children read back their work to ensure it makes sense, and that the combination of words they have used works well.

Sometimes, children construct sentences that have words missing or in the wrong order. Encourage them to read back their work aloud to an adult or another child, so that they can be sure that it makes sense.

3 Get Set

Resources

- The *Making Sentences* diagnostic check PDF
- This *Making Sentences* teaching sequence
- The *Making Sentences* video
- The *Making Sentences* game sequence (see below)
- The *Making Sentences* assessment PDF
- Strips of paper
- A hoop
- Various small objects
- Small slips of paper



Activities

1. Prior to the lesson, write on strips of paper some simple sentences, some nonsense sentences, e.g. '**Horse walking there hills!**' and some phrases, e.g. '**The loud little dog.**' Working in groups, children should decide which ones are proper sentences and which ones are 'silly sentences' or 'non-sentences'. Each group should read out their answers for a whole-class discussion. Make a table with columns for 'proper sentences' and 'silly/non-sentences', and stick each paper strip into the correct column.
2. Sit the children in a circle and put a hoop in the centre. Within the hoop, place various small objects. Select a child to choose an object and name it (e.g. '**the ball**'). Have the child do something with the object – for example, bounce it or pass it to someone else. Ask another child to name the action, fitting their verb to the subject (e.g. '**The ball bounces**' rather than, '**The ball bounce**'). Say the words in combination. Do they need extra words to complete the sentence? '**The ball bounces**' may not, but, for example, '**Tim gives the ball**' may need '**... to Kira**' adding. If the sentence needs an ending, have the children supply it before moving on to the next child to pick a new object. Write down the children's ideas, and show them the completed sentences. Review them, to check they're all correct sentences.
3. Prior to the lesson construct three or four sentences, using a picture or anything else visible in the classroom for their topics (e.g. '**The lamp in the corner is yellow.**'). Write each word of the sentences on a separate piece of paper and bundle the slips for each sentence together. In class, point out the subject of each sentence bundle (e.g. '**This sentence is about that lamp.**') as you give them out. In groups, children should put the words in order and rewrite the jumbled-up sentences on a mini whiteboard so that they make sense. If any could be rearranged in multiple ways (e.g. '**The yellow lamp is in the corner**'), talk about what the differences in the word order means for the sentences.
4. Using key words from a current topic or a foundation subject, create a word bank for children to use. Each child should choose a word and create a simple sentence independently, using the chosen word, on a mini whiteboard. Children should share their work with the class and ask their peers to assess whether or not the sentence makes sense.



Practising with the Bug

<i>Making Sentences Game 1</i>	Identify simple sentences over non-sentences.
<i>Making Sentences Game 2</i>	Build accurate simple sentences using the words given.
<i>Making Sentences Game 3</i>	Write a series of sentences on a given subject.

4 Go!

Noticing sentences

Encourage children to recognise good examples of simple sentences within a book they are reading or in a piece of work that they have completed. Encourage them to notice whether or not sentences have been constructed properly in the work of their peers. Reward children who become good 'sentence detectives' so that other children are inspired to do the same.

Shared reading

During shared reading, discuss how sentences have been constructed. Ensure that you ask children whether they think the sentence makes sense. Could they make it any better? Begin to look at word choice within sentences, to encourage the children to begin to pick out good vocabulary.

In some books, look out for where writers have used phrases instead of full sentences for effect (e.g. '**Then I saw it. A huge, black dog.**'). Discuss why the author might have chosen not to use a full sentence, and have the children rephrase it as one sentence (e.g. '**It was a huge, black dog.**').

Shared writing

Shared writing is a great opportunity to model how to combine words to make simple sentences effectively. Model verbally how to construct a sentence before you write it, so that children can see the importance of checking sentences make sense before writing them. Shared reading also provides a good opportunity to model using appropriately simple sentence grammar (e.g. the agreement of verb and subject).



Independent reading and writing

Children can identify good examples of simple sentences in their own work and underline or highlight their defining features: the capital letter, verb, and full stop, question mark or exclamation mark. They need to ensure that the sentences that they write make sense, so should be encouraged to read their own work aloud.