Section 5

Text structure and grammar

Grammar is a way of describing how a language works to make meaning within a particular culture (Derewianka, 1998). Students need to learn about grammar and sentence structure to be able to reflect on how the English language works, to have a shared metalanguage for talking about the main features of English and to be able to make choices in order to use language more effectively and appropriately.

Knowledge of grammar helps students to critically evaluate their own texts and those of others by identifying the grammatical choices authors have made and how appropriate they are for the purpose and audience of the text. Students use this knowledge to identify points of view, identify how language is used to manipulate for certain effects and how language is used to position the reader in a particular way.

Students experiencing difficulties need to be taught explicitly how to use both oral and written language effectively. Some students experiencing difficulties with learning often use vague language with basic, simple sentence patterns. In everyday oral language interactions, most of us join actions with simple connectives like ‘and then’. Students who rely only on the patterns of their oral language for their writing tend to write run-on sentences as they are unaware of the clause structures that are marked in written language as sentences. Successful students develop their writing by reading and by interacting with speakers who use the complex structures most often found in writing.

Emphasis in teaching text connectives and other advanced sentence structures occurs in classrooms mostly within the context of written texts. Students can, however, acquire accurate and fluent skills in writing more complex sentence structures when these are taught in isolation through oral rehearsal.

Emphasis for this approach should be on an appropriate and functional context. For example, a complex sentence pattern for a written description of a character could be developed through modelled reading and guided writing. A word bank could be developed from the text during modelled reading and the complex pattern jointly constructed; for example:

Cinderella, who… [What was she like? What did she do?]

Students could then be asked to use the information to practise the pattern orally by using the word bank and pattern.

Cinderella, who was sad, had no dress to wear to the ball.
Cinderella, who was kind, helped her stepsisters get dressed.
Cinderella, who was happy, married the prince.

To be able to use these patterns of language successfully, all students need to practise them orally and they need to have the patterns taught explicitly. The preceding example shows the use of an adjectival clause following a noun. This is a very simple way of showing students how to develop a complex sentence. If this pattern is addressed in context – for instance, as the grammatical focus of work on a narrative in an English Unit like ‘Fairy Tales’ – students will be provided with many opportunities to read, write and speak the pattern.
Establishing a ‘book talk’ framework

Purpose
The purpose of establishing ‘book talk’ is to provide a scaffold for oral rehearsal of complex sentence structures.

Description
While teachers can encourage the appropriate oral rehearsal of simple sentences and phrases within some contexts, students can be provided with a scaffold (plan) for practicing more complex book-like language structures. Students may need the framework of a strategy such as ‘book talk’. Within this framework, students are required to practice ‘talking like a book’ where they use more formal language. This practice can provide them with the skills necessary for writing more complex sentences.

For example, when responding to a teacher’s question ‘Why does the coastal taipan live near the water?’ the student’s answer ‘Because it eats frogs’ could be modified with a prompt to use ‘book talk’. The student then practises ‘The coastal taipan lives near water because it eats frogs, which are its main source of food’.

Implementation
To establish a ‘book talk’ framework the teacher provides examples of informal and formal language and explicitly identifies which type of language is being used. Written examples and audio or visual examples should be used; for example, a news reader on TV or radio, or dialogue from Home and Away.

Once the different types of language have been identified the teacher assists students to group the characteristics of formal and informal language using a chart such as the one below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>informal – like conversation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• short sentences and phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• use of non-specific words like thing, stuff, that one, over there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• use of general words and colloquial terms, e.g. big instead of large, huge, giant; sad instead of unhappy, despondent, depressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• use of gestures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• use of fillers like ‘um’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The characteristics of both types of language can be written as a wall chart. This chart provides an explicit model and visual prompt for the students to assist them to practise more complex spoken sentence structures. Constant prompting and over-practice are essential for students experiencing difficulties learning to more readily use more complex sentences structures.

The chart can also be referred to in other curriculum areas and provide the opportunity for language skills to be practised and generalised across all subject areas.

Specific lessons focusing on the development of a range of sentence structures should be introduced at an early stage and incorporated within units of work. (Refer to ‘Cued listening to stimulate writing’, page 65.)

If students experience considerable difficulties using more complex sentences, teachers can provide additional support.

- Ask students a question to extend their thoughts. The teacher then uses the 'think aloud' strategy by verbalising their own thoughts about how to combine two answers into one sentence. Alternatively, the teacher can model how to combine two comments that have been made by one or more students.

  Student 1: It's yellow and brown.
  Student 2: It lives in the desert.
  Teacher: The taipan is a yellow and brown snake that lives mainly in the desert.

- Provide a sentence starter that has a more complex structure and ask the student to use it to complete the sentence. For example, ‘Start your sentence with “The snake hissed because…”’

- Use cards with connector words printed on them to act as visual prompts to encourage students. For example, when retelling a story the students are shown how to connect two simple sentences using a connective to create a more complex sentence.

  however

  Lester decided to leave the lovely pond to find a new home of his own; however, his first night alone was very scary.
Sequencing information

Purpose
The purpose of this strategy is to:

• develop in students an understanding of the typical features of a text
• enable students to talk about the structure and language features of the text
• provide teachers with a valuable opportunity for assessing language and literacy development when students work collaboratively to sequence a scrambled text.
• provide a starting point for further activity; for example, writing a narrative.

Description

• Sequencing tasks where the text is cut into chunks and re-assembled can be used during modelled, guided and independent reading and writing.

• A scrambled text can be sequenced by groups of students as a collaborative activity and then compared with the original text. It can also be used by the teacher for demonstrating the typical features of a text.

Preparation

• Define the context and select the text related to a planned unit of work. For example, the text may be a recount of a shared experience such as an excursion, a recorded procedure from a class experiment or an explanation related to a topic that has been researched, such as Woodchipping, see page 109.

• Determine the learning focus or purpose of the sequencing activity. Page 107 provides examples of a learning focus for sequencing an explanation.

• Prepare the sequencing activity. This may involve cutting the original text into paragraphs/sentences or a mix up of paragraphs/sentences on a piece of paper to be numbered in order, see page 109.

• Decide how students will be grouped – pairs, small groups, mixed ability groups.

• Prepare a list of the typical features of this type of text on a prompt card or wall chart, see page 108.

Implementation

• State the purpose of the planned activity. Share with students the specific nature of the task, the reason for doing it and its value to their learning.

• Revisit the typical features of a sequential explanation. See page 108 for some examples.

• Invite students to work in groups or pairs to complete the sequence.
• Encourage collaborative talk about the structure and language features of the text. Refer to the list of typical features to prompt language talk. Encourage the response to questions such as:

  What is the purpose of this text?
  Where would we find this text?
  Have we read or written texts like this before?
  What part of the text would come first? Why?
  Are there any clues from the language of the text?
  What might come next?

• When the task is completed consider providing an opportunity for a group member to share with the rest of the class the decisions that challenged the group.

• Compare the completed sequence with the original text.

• Consider how this activity supported the students’ learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>An example of a learning focus related to a sequential explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The learning focus could include one or more of the following:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• text structure of a sequential explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• use of connectives and conjunctions to sequence the events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the pattern of action verbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the importance of every key event in the sequence being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>included</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the importance of researching the topic through reading,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>viewing and discussion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some strategies to develop an understanding of sequence in text

An example of a typical features chart that can be used to prompt and encourage collaborative talk about the structure and language features of the text

**Typical features of a sequential explanation**
- The first stage states the topic.
- The second stage may provide some background information (optional).
- The third stage explains the sequence where key events are written in a logical order. Each event is linked to the other.
- Time words are used to sequence events, e.g. after that, next, and then, at this stage, finally.
- There is a pattern of action verbs.

**Possible collaborative talk using the text on page 109, Woodchipping.**

‘Let’s be sure about the purpose of this text before we start. Do we have enough information about the topic?’

‘The first part needs to tell us about the topic. Here it is… Woodchipping is…’

‘This might be the part we need next. It has background information.’

‘Let’s find the parts that will explain how the woodchipping is done.’

‘Some of the time words should give us a clue. Let’s look for the time words and underline them.’

‘Here’s two, begin and finally. That part must come first and the other part last.’

‘Read this. Does it make sense? Is each event linked to the other?’

‘The pattern of action verbs could also help.’

See page 110.
Explanation sequence: Woodchipping
This text is separated for the purpose of sequencing.

Woodchipping is a process used to obtain pulp and paper products from the forest.

About 10 percent of Australia’s state owned forest land, and large areas of privately owned forest, are involved in woodchip projects.

The woodchipping process begins when the trees are cut down in a selected area of the forest called a coupe.

After that, the tops and branches are cut off and then the logs are dragged to a log landing where they are loaded onto a truck.

Next the bark of the logs is removed and the logs are then taken to a chipper which cuts them into small pieces called woodchips.

The woodchips are then screened to remove dirt and other impurities.

At this stage the woodchips are either exported to Japan in this form or converted into pulp by chemicals, heat and pressure.

The pulp is then bleached and the water content removed.

Finally it is rolled out to make paper.

From English K-6, Teaching About Texts, p.138.
The following table shows the ordering of events and could also be used to prompt the sequencing of the text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A sequential explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tops and branches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>logs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bark of logs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(logs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>woodchips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(woodchips)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pulp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>water content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pulp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Variation:**
Teachers and students work collaboratively to carry out a class experiment. They jointly construct and write the text for each step on a card. Following the experiment the students recall the steps taken and select the appropriate text card for each step. The class read the experiment to determine if it is correct.

**Helpful hints:**
- Students can write a text such as a procedure and make it into a sequencing activity for others to complete.
- Sequencing can be a useful activity for group work in learning centres.
- Sequencing can be used in a barrier game.
- Newspaper cuttings and magazine articles can provide examples for sequencing.
Text cohesion

Text cohesion refers to the way text is held or ‘glued’ together.

Students should be taught the organising principles and structures of language and how they contribute to meaning and effect. This includes such things as: the rules and conventions which govern how words are combined into phrases, clauses and sentences; how pronouns contribute to textual cohesion; and how the meaning or effect of a sentence is affected by changes made to the word order. Students also need to be taught techniques to apply this knowledge in their own writing.

In particular, in the early phases of learning to write, students will use connectives (including conjunctions and connecting adverbs), pronouns and consistency in tense to produce a piece of coherent writing that is ‘joined up’ effectively. These devices can be identified in the text below.

Young Max enjoyed exploring. This sense of adventure, however, often got him into trouble so his mother locked the garden gate. For a while, he was content to amuse himself in the backyard but soon he searched out new horizons. First, he climbed the gate and then, at last, the little explorer set off into the wide world.

Other important linking devices include words that show connections (such as synonyms and repeated words) and words that indicate structure in the text (such as similarly, finally).

Pronouns: understanding pronouns and how they contribute to producing cohesive texts

A pronoun is a word that is used in place of or that refers to a noun. Pronouns contribute to producing cohesive texts by making links between clauses and sentences; for example, he, his, him, himself – all these pronouns refer to young Max in the text above.

The pronoun may be:

- a personal pronoun, e.g. he, she, we
- a possessive pronoun, e.g. mine, yours, theirs
- a demonstrative pronoun, e.g. that, this, these
- a relative pronoun, e.g. who, whose, which, that
- an interrogative or questioning pronoun, e.g. who, whose, what.

Other types of pronouns are classified in grammatical descriptions but the above are the most useful terms for writers in the early stages.

Some sample learning to and learning about strategies

1. Prepare and display a list of what students should know and understand about pronouns. See one example on page 114.

2. During modelled or guided reading take the opportunity to focus on aspects of language such as noun-pronoun reference.
Begin with a short passage from a shared book or text on an overhead transparency or white board. Identify and circle the pronouns and ask students to locate who or what the pronouns are referring to. Page 115 provides an example of teaching points using the text from James Reece’s *Lester and Clyde*.

3. Construct a semantic map to group the pronoun references and enable students to better understand how the use of pronouns contributes to producing cohesive texts. Refer to pages 115–116 for examples.

Start by first selecting a suitable text and reading the text together.

Identify and underline who or what the text is about and find the pronouns that are used to refer to that person, place or thing.

Invite students to circle the pronouns and draw lines to show the links with the words to which they refer.

Point out that as pronouns take the place of nouns it is important to ensure that lines of reference do not become confused.

Trace the links to demonstrate how the use of pronouns contributes to producing a cohesive text.

4. Practice tracking noun-pronoun references through cloze exercises on using different text types.

Delete a selection of nouns and pronouns from these texts ensuring students are provided with adequate reference points to complete the tasks.

Complete the cloze activities individually, in groups or as a class. In a group or whole class situation, the cloze passage can be written on butchers paper or a white board. Students can be selected to write the appropriate word and justify their choice.

5. Provide students with a familiar text that has different types of pronouns. Have students locate and underline the pronouns.

Ask students to try and identify what sort of things the pronouns might be referring to; for example, a person, a thing, a group of people or a group of things.

Ask students to categorise the pronouns. Depending on the focus, consider starting with two different pronoun types; for example, personal and possessive pronouns.

Prompt students by referring to the list of reminders on page 114.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. Investigate what happens when pronouns are not used in a text. The sample below provides one example for investigation. The student was asked to produce a piece of writing that describes William Wild Thing.

William Wild Thing had horns and a jumper. As well as a curly tail, sharp teeth and scaly skin. Last but not least claws, big eyes, huge nose and a beard. Oh, and big feet!

The teacher could pose such questions as:

Does this text have pronouns?
Are the lines of reference clear?
Does each sentence have a subject?
Are the sentences successful?
Is the description well organised?

Students and teacher could jointly rework the text to make it more successful, thinking aloud as they explore the possible changes.

7. Collect a variety of pictures suitable for teaching noun-pronoun reference. Select one of the pictures and model constructing a short text. On a text card, write the first sentence referring to the noun or noun group by name, followed by second sentence replacing the noun or noun group with a suitable pronoun. For example:

The people are watching a concert.
They are having fun.

Invite students to choose a picture and work in pairs to write their own text with guided practice from the teacher.

Save the pictures and texts for use as an independent matching activity.

8. Prepare several copies of a recount, cut up into pieces. In pairs students reconstruct the recounts. Encourage them to use clues such as a pronoun referring to one or more preceding noun or noun group. This will help make links between sections of the text. Upon completion address such questions as:

Did you look for words that seem to go together?
Did you look for reference links such as pronouns?
Did you look at words to do with time?
What other links did you find?

See page 117.
Where to from here?

- Ask students to highlight the pronouns in their own writing and draw lines to locate who or what the pronouns are referring to. Perhaps students could construct their own semantic maps.
- Conference with students to improve their first drafts. Discuss the effect of overuse of pronouns when the lines of reference are not clear. Rework the text to replace personal pronouns with noun groups when this occurs.
- Show students how to edit their text by identifying the correct use of relative pronouns, such as who, which and what, when they begin an adjectival clause.
- Monitor each student’s progress and identify specific needs.

What you should know and understand about a pronoun

- A pronoun is a word that is used in place of a noun so we can avoid repetition or clumsiness.
- It may be a:
  - *personal pronoun*: referring to a person or thing, e.g. *he*, *she*, *we*, *it*, *they*, as in
    *Sue* was happy. *She* laughed.
  - *possessive pronoun*: indicating ownership, e.g. *mine*, *yours*, *hers*, as in
    The book is *mine*; it is not *yours*.
  - *demonstrative pronoun*: acting like a ‘pointer’ referring to a particular thing or process, e.g. *that*, *this*, *these*, *those*, as in
    He ate too much. *This* is what made him sick.
  - *relative pronoun*: introducing relative or adjectival clauses, e.g. *who*, *which*, *that*, as in
    He had an *apple* which was bad.
  - *interrogative pronoun*: signalling the start or focus of a question, e.g. *who*, *what*, *which*, *whose*, *whom*, as in
    Who are you? Whose daughter are you?
  - *indefinite pronoun*: referring to an unidentified person or thing, e.g. *each*, *any*, *some*, *all*, *somebody*, as in
    Do you like *fruit*? Would you like *any*?
- A pronoun can be used instead of constantly repeating the noun, e.g.
  *his*  *he*  *his*
  Ben took *Ben’s* bike when *Ben* went to visit *Ben’s* friend.
- Pronouns can be used to refer to the reader (you) or the writer (I) in order to create a relationship in the text, e.g. *I* hope *you* understand this.
**Semantic map to group noun-pronoun reference links**

This activity will show students that, by linking pronouns to the nouns they replace, they will better understand how the use of pronouns contributes to more fluent, cohesive texts. The extract is from a literary text, *Lester and Clyde* by James Reece, the story of two frogs.

Lester gazed at the pond and gulped the fresh air.
He told Clyde that his journey had been a nightmare.
The he asked Clyde, ‘Why is it, if frogs really care,
that men pollute ponds and foul up the clean air?
They say we are no beauties, the poor mixed up lot
What do they know of beauty? What cheek they have got!’

An extension of the discussion the teacher and students could engage in about text cohesion is the importance of clear lines between nouns and noun groups, for example:

‘Why is it, if frogs really care, that men pollute ponds and foul up the clean air?
They say we are no beauties, the poor mixed up lot. What do they know of beauty? What a cheek they have got.’

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**Teaching points in modelled or guided reading**

- Who or what is this text about? The answer is *Lester* (a proper noun).
- The pronouns used to refer to Lester are *he* and *his*.
- *He* is a personal pronoun referring to a person.
- *His* is a possessive pronoun that shows what belongs to Lester.
- Who or what is this text about? The answer is *frogs* (a common noun).
- The pronoun used to refer to *frogs* is *we*.
- *Frogs*, as used here, means all frogs at all times.
- The plural first person pronoun *we* is used here to establish a personal connection between the speaker (Lester) and all other members of his group ‘frogs’.
- Who or what is this text about? The answer is *men* (a common noun).
- The pronoun used to refer to *men* is *they*.
- *They* is a personal pronoun and is referred to as a ‘third person’ pronoun because it refers to the people being ‘spoken about’.

This is a progression to a more complex semantic map to group the linking pronouns to the noun John Patrick Norman McHennessy.

**John Patrick Norman McHennessy – the boy who was always late**

John Patrick Norman McHennessy set off along the road to learn.

On the way a crocodile came out of a drain and got hold of his satchel.

John Patrick Norman McHennessy pulled and pulled but the crocodile would not let go.

He threw a glove into the air and the crocodile snapped at the glove and let go of the satchel.

John Patrick Norman McHennessy hurried along the road to learn but the crocodile had made him late.

"John Patrick Norman McHennessy, you are late and where is your other glove?"

"I am late, Sir, because on the way a crocodile came out of the drain and got hold of my satchel, and would only let go when I threw my glove, which he ate."

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**Teaching points**

- The focus noun is John Patrick Norman McHennessy.
- The linking pronouns are: personal – he, him, I, you; possessive – his, your, my.
- The arrows show how the use of pronouns contributes to providing a cohesive text.

Note: he in the last line does not link to John Patrick Norman McHennessy but refers to the crocodile. It is important to ensure that lines of reference do not become confused.

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Adapted from Choosing Literacy Strategies that Work, Stage 2, p. 261.
Pronoun hunt

Prepare several copies of a text such as a recount and cut it up into pieces. In pairs students reconstruct the recount focusing on noun-pronoun references. The following is an example of a recount that could be used for such an activity.

The Sydney Royal Easter Show

My family decided to see all the different animals at the Royal Easter Show this year.

It was like visiting a farm

We looked at the huge draught horses in the Clydesdale pavilion.

Dad liked watching the blacksmiths at work there, heating and beating metal into the shape of horseshoes.

When we reached the horses marshalling area we watched some riders practising.

They were waiting to compete in either the Horse Arena or the Main Arena.

After that we walked quickly past the cattle to the farmyard nursery.

Julie fell in love with the baby lambs but Charles really liked the bantam chicks with their long feathers hanging around their feet like fluffy slippers.

We were allowed to touch these silky chickens but not hold them.

The next pavilion had goats, alpacas and pigs. Jason liked these best. Then we looked for eggs in the poultry pavilion but we couldn’t find any so we went to the sheep pavilion. While we were there one of the sheep got away and we all crowded around to help herd it back.

That made an exciting end to our tour.

Teaching points

Discuss clues for reconstructing the recount.

- The pronouns we and our take the place of my family and provides a reference point throughout the text.

Other pronoun links to nouns or noun groups to draw attention to are:

- They referring to some riders practising
- It – refers to the whole event of visiting the Easter Show
- It – the one sheep that got away
- Them – the silky chickens
- Their – the bantam chicks
- These – goats, alpacas and pigs
- Any – the eggs.

Time connectives can also be used to assist in reconstructing:

- When, next, while, end, after.

When the students have completed reconstructing the text make sure they re-read it to see if it makes sense. Some reflective questions they could ask might be: Does it make sense? Are the references clear? Are the time connectives where I would expect them to be?
Conjunctions and connectives

Conjunction and connectives are words or group of words that link words and clauses within a sentence or make connections between sentences and ideas within a text.

Conjunctions join words in the same phrase or clause and operate within a sentence:

- fish and chips
- milk or dark chocolate
- The clothes were old but stylish.

They also link together whole clauses:

- There was bread on the table but they could not find any butter.

The major conjunctions are:

- and
- but
- or
- nor
- yet
- (coordinating)
- how
- when
- where
- why
- since
- as
- before
- after
- because
- if
- (subordinating).

Text connectives form links between sentences and other longer stretches of text and provide readers with ‘signposts indicating how the text is developing’. While conjunctions are placed at the beginning of a clause, connectives can be used in various places within the sentence. (Derewianka, 1998)

Sarah, however, preferred to walk but, despite this, she was seldom late.

The following is a list of some of the commonly used text connectives:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clarifying</th>
<th>Cause/result</th>
<th>Indicating time</th>
<th>Sequencing ideas</th>
<th>Adding information</th>
<th>Condition/concession</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in other words</td>
<td>so</td>
<td>next</td>
<td>firstly</td>
<td>too</td>
<td>in that case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for example</td>
<td>therefore</td>
<td>finally</td>
<td>briefly</td>
<td>as well</td>
<td>if not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in fact</td>
<td>then</td>
<td>earlier</td>
<td>at this point</td>
<td>also</td>
<td>instead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>namely</td>
<td>consequently</td>
<td>soon</td>
<td>in short</td>
<td>similarly</td>
<td>despite this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for instance</td>
<td>in that case</td>
<td>before that</td>
<td>for a start</td>
<td>along with</td>
<td>however</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or rather</td>
<td>since</td>
<td>when</td>
<td>finally</td>
<td>what’s more</td>
<td>otherwise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I mean</td>
<td>because of this</td>
<td>as long as</td>
<td>to begin</td>
<td>moreover</td>
<td>although</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instead</td>
<td>as</td>
<td>after a while</td>
<td>after that</td>
<td>again</td>
<td>anyhow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample learning to and learning about strategies

1. Introduce the concept of ‘joining words’.

   Ask a student to carry out two consecutive actions. Write each action as a complete message on the chalk board or an overhead transparency; for example:

   - Tim went to the computer.
   - He checked the e-mails.

   Ask students to think of a suitable word to join the two sentences; for example:

   - Tim went to the computer and he checked the e-mails.
Explain that ‘and’ is a conjunction or ‘joining word’ because it connects the two sentences. Provide other examples such as:

- It was difficult to see. Leo turned on the lights in the classroom.
- Leo turned on the lights in the classroom because it was difficult to see.

Ask students to explain any difference in the meaning after the two sentences are joined.

2. Provide students with a text containing a variety of conjunctions. Jointly locate the conjunctions and explain, thinking out loud, how they link ideas or events, see page 120.

Consider what happens when the conjunctions are taken away.

- Is the text easier to read?
- Are the ideas or events linked?
- Is the text just as interesting to read?
- Are there any compound or complex sentences?

As a variation play the ‘Search and Destroy’ game. Give students a copy of a particular type of text related to a planned unit of work; for example, the Explanation sequence: Woodchipping on page 109. Ask students to work in pairs and cross out all the conjunctions/connecting words they can find. Assist the students to find them all.

Invite a student to read the text without the connecting words. Ask questions and discuss the changes.

3. Investigate what happens when three or four ‘complete messages’ are put into one sentence. For example:

**We had our swimming carnival and it started to rain and we all had to return to school and we were disappointed.**

Using the example above, with dot points jointly record the important information (or clauses in the run-on sentence) on the board:

- we had our swimming carnival
- it started to rain
- we all had to return to school
- we were disappointed

Use a dependent clause at the beginning of the sentence to help the students join the information in an interesting way.

To model and guide the students to jointly construct some complex sentences, write up a pattern like:

When __________________, __________________________.

What happened? What did we do? or How did we feel?

(Extend the pattern with a conjunction like so or because.)
Our trip to the Reptile Park

We were really excited last Friday because it was the day that we were going to the Reptile Park. We had to arrive at school early so we wouldn’t miss the bus. Some of our parents waited until we left so they could say goodbye. We sang songs on the way and the teachers just talked.

At the Reptile Park we were put into groups and we had to stay in those groups all day. We saw lots of different reptiles but my favourite was Eric the crocodile. When I first saw him he did not look real until he started to open his enormous mouth.

We had to leave the Reptile Park early so we could catch our buses back to school. I wish I could visit the Reptile Park every day.

Consider what happens to the meaning of the text when the conjunctions are taken away.

We were really excited last Friday. It was the day that we were going to the Reptile Park. We had to arrive at school early. We wouldn’t miss the bus. Some of our parents waited. We left. They said goodbye. We sang songs on the way. The teachers just talked.

At the Reptile Park we were put into groups. We had to stay in those groups all day. We saw lots of different reptiles. My favourite was Eric the crocodile. I saw him. He did not look real. He started to open his enormous mouth.

We had to leave the Reptile Park early. We caught our buses back to school. I wish I could visit the Reptile Park every day.

Consider asking these questions:

- Is the text easier to read?
- Are the events, ideas or actions linked?
- Is the text as interesting to read?
- Are there any compound or complex sentences?
Ask students to practise the pattern orally using the dot points recorded on the board.

Examples could be:

* When it started to rain, we all had to return to school.

* When it started to rain, we were disappointed because we all had to return to school.

* When we all had to return to school, we were disappointed.

By practising the pattern together, students can be supported to see how clauses are linked in a sentence. This will help students understand where to use sentence punctuation and they may be able to jointly construct a complex sentence like:

* At our swimming carnival, when it started to rain, we were disappointed because we all had to return to school.

4. Use the students’ text for guided or independent reading or a sample text constructed by a student to devise a cloze. Delete only the conjunctions.

Decide on the level of prompting you will give the students to complete the cloze. For example, giving students a copy of the conjunctions deleted, to guide appropriate choices, would be considered as high level prompting.

Ask students to work in groups or pairs to complete the cloze. Ensure the students have a plan for completing the task. One example is provided below.

### Cooperative cloze plan

* Read all the text silently or aloud. Think as you read.
* Read the text to the first deleted word.
* Decide whether it is necessary to read on or go back to work out the missing conjunction.
* Scan for clues to meaning and purpose, e.g. *Do we need a conjunction to indicate reason? Do we need a time conjunction to sequence an event? Do we need a conjunction to indicate place?*
* Suggest possible conjunctions that would make sense in this context.
* Decide on the best possible choice and give reasons for that choice.
* Continue with the cloze until the task is completed.
* Re-read the whole text for meaning and cohesion.
As a variation of the cloze activity provide students with sentence cards where the conjunctions are missing. Invite student to work in pairs to select the most appropriate conjunction card to fill the space. The text used could be taken from a recently constructed recount.

**Sentence card**

\[ \ldots \ldots \text{we were waiting for the concert to start some members of the orchestra were tuning their instruments.} \]

**Conjunction cards**

\[ \text{while, although, and} \]

5. Give students a set of pictures that depict a series of events (they could be a set of photos taken on a recent excursion using a digital camera and printed from the computer).

Ask students to sequence the pictures and then write a caption sentence under each picture reflecting that event.

Model for students how to connect these sentences using temporal conjunctions, such as *first, when, before that*, as they work in groups.

Discuss the purpose of conjunctions i.e. how they provide a cohesive text.

Discuss the variety of conjunctions in the completed text.

Write and display these for students to refer to when constructing their own recounts.

6. Consider displaying a variety of conjunctions as room print to encourage effective use and correct spellings. Add other conjunctions as they are discovered and used by students.
Constructing sentences

The simple sentence

Teaching sequence

1. The purpose of this teaching sequence is to provide students with the knowledge and understanding to recognise and construct a simple sentence that is a statement.

Start by explaining to students why we use sentences. For example, ‘so that writing makes sense and is easy to read and understand’.

or

Show and read this together and invite students to comment

William was short with a big head. All covered in fur. With sharp horns and teeth. His body was patterned all over. With a swirly curly tail and very strange look. His hands were held up high Trying to scare people out of their skins.

2. Read a brief definition of a sentence:

A sentence is a group of words that express a complete thought. The statement tells the important who or what, then tells something more about the who or what.

Mention that simple sentences can also take the form of a question, command or exclamation.

3. Present four or five short but well written examples. These examples could be taken from the student’s current text for modelled or guided reading or a sample text constructed by a student. Ensure the sentences include all the typical features of a good sentence. Use vocabulary appropriate to the reading levels of the students you are teaching; for example:

My mum and dad took us to the beach. 

The weather was fine and sunny. 

Children were playing on the beach. 

Seagulls were swooping to catch fish. 

A dog was barking at a moving crab.

Read together and point out the typical features.

Typical features:

(1) Tells the important who or what.
(2) Tells something more about the who or what.
(3) Begins with a capital letter.
(4) Ends with a full stop.
(5) Is a group of words which makes sense on its own.
4. Present a few flawed examples to point out the difficulties when a typical feature is missing. Each example should only be flawed in one way to emphasise the typical feature you want to discuss; for example:

_Took us to the beach._
(This does not tell us the important who or what).

_The weather._
(This does not tell us something more about the who or what).

_Children were playing on the beach_
(This does not end with a full stop).

_seagulls were swooping to catch fish._
(This does not start with a capital letter).

_barking at a moving crab._
(This does not make sense on its own).

5. Change the list of typical features into evaluation questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Does it tell the important who or what?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does it tell more about the who or what?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the sentence start with a capital letter?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does it end with a full stop?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will the person who reads this sentence understand it?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Mix good examples and flawed examples to test students' discrimination of good and poor sentences. These could be taken from the example provided on page 123. Use the typical features questions to evaluate each example.

7. Continue by teaching the process of writing a simple sentence as a statement. Model the planning part of the process, thinking aloud while the students observe.

8. Provide guided practice for students. This may involve joint construction. Consider using an edit checklist; for example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence edit checklist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>My sentence:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tells the important who or what</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tells more about the who or what</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>starts with a capital letter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ends with a full stop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will make sense when another person reads it.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Provide opportunities for independent practice and generalisation in a range of contexts.
Identifying and writing types of simple sentences

Students need to know that:

- the clause is the basic grammatical unit in any sentence
- a clause is a group of words built up around a process; this process can be a process of doing, feeling, thinking, saying or relating or just being or having

  *Kim opened the door.*
  *Kim loved the outdoors.*
  *Kim worried about the weather.*
  *My name is Kim.*
  *Kim has a sister.*
  *Kim is a kind girl.*

- a clause which 'stands on its own' is called an independent clause

  *Kim opened the door*

- a sentence containing one independent clause is called a simple sentence.

Preparation

- Select a suitable text for identifying simple sentences. The text could be one used in shared or guided reading. It could also be a well written text composed by a student.
- Prepare and display a list of what students need to know and understand about a simple sentence. One example is shown below. The sample sentences are from the text *John Brown, Rose and the Midnight Cat* by Jenny Wagner.

### What you need to know and understand about a simple sentence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A simple sentence:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>is a group of words which makes sense on its own (one independent clause)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tells us about an action and those involved in the action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>begins with a capital letter and ends with a punctuation mark.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A simple sentence can be:

- a statement (gives information), e.g. *John Brown went outside.*
- a question (asks for an answer), e.g. *What's in the garden, John Brown?*
- a command (tells us to do something), e.g. *Go and give it some milk.*
- an exclamation (emphasises emotion or feeling), e.g. *Look, John Brown!*

Implementation

1. Explain the purpose of the lesson.
2. Begin by introducing the whole text and reading it. (This may have already been done during the modelled or guided reading session). Attend closely to the correct punctuation and intonation to show the difference between a statement, a question, a command and an exclamation.
Point out that we use sentences so that our writing makes sense, is easy to read and understand, and doesn’t look and read like this:

(Show and read the extract from the text together as an example).

In summer he sat under the pear tree with her in the winter he watched as she dozed by the fire all year round he kept her company.

Now read the same text in sentences.

In summer he sat under the pear tree with her. In the winter he watched as she dozed by the fire. All year round he kept her company.

Invite comments from the students.

3. Refer to the list of what students need to know and understand about a simple sentence (page 125). Using a reading text, model for students how to identify a simple sentence, thinking out loud. Ask students to locate the word or word group that tells the action and who or what is involved in the action.

4. Invite students to discuss the structure of each simple sentence identified. Consider how they are alike and how they are different. Talk through the students’ responses.

Points for discussion could include:
• what each sentence does – make a statement, ask a question, give a command or exclaim
• the punctuation at the beginning and end of each sentence
• the types of verbs – action, thinking and so on
• one message for each sentence.

5. Refer to the whole text again and ask students to find other examples of a simple sentence.

Note: Students experiencing difficulties may need prompting to encourage them to be actively engaged in the task set and give the correct response. It is important, however, that the prompts are eventually withdrawn so that the student has the opportunity to perform the task independently.

Consider the benefits of working in pairs or in a small group.

Prompts may include:
• giving a clue or hint as to where to find the sentence
• reminding the students to look for one message
• rereading the text in meaningful chunks with appropriate intonation to help students know where the message begins and ends
• locating the appropriate punctuation mark; for example, ‘We are looking for a simple sentence that ends with a question mark’
• supplying the command word to locate a command sentence.
Further activities to provide practice for writing simple sentences

- Brainstorm nouns or noun groups from the text – John Brown, Rose, window, garden, cat, midnight, bowl of milk – and ask students to select three of these to write simple sentences (one noun or noun group to each sentence). Compare sentences. Refer to the example worksheet on page 128.

- Brainstorm action words (verbs) or verb groups from the text – has lived, died, watched, dozed, was looking, Go, Get – and write a simple sentence as above. Compare sentences. Refer to the sample worksheet on page 128.

- Provide sentence starters or sentence endings from the text and ask students to complete them to make each one into a simple sentence, such as
  - In summer .................................................................
  - His name was ............................................................
  - The midnight cat.......................................................

- Build a simple sentence game by providing flash cards with verb and verb groups in one colour, nouns in another colour and so on. Students construct sentences using flash cards. Students copy sentences into their books and with appropriate punctuation.

- Make a simple sentence game related to the text used for modelled or guided reading or a planned unit of work. Ask students to construct their own question and answer cards. The answers are statements. For example:
  - What is a dinosaur?
  - It is a prehistoric animal.

Invite students to share and respond to the questions by identifying the correct answer card.

- Construct a board game related to a planned unit of work, see page 38.

Where to from here?

- Help students to identify action words in sentences in their own writing by underlining them. Use these to locate simple sentences.

- Ask students to put parallel lines in their writing to show where each sentence (message) ends, e.g. We went to the Royal Easter Show. // (There is one message in this sentence.)

- Conference with students to check understanding of concepts taught. Collect anecdotal information and writing samples to show evidence of progress towards achievement of syllabus outcomes.

- Provide opportunities to construct simple sentences in other contexts. For example, the writing of a procedural type of text can provide a meaningful purpose for constructing sentences that command.

- Prepare students for building on their knowledge about simple sentences to join two or more clauses in a sentence using conjunctions and a variety of clauses.
Start with a NOUN or NOUN GROUP and write a simple sentence

A noun is a naming word for people, places, ideas and things, e.g. Rose, John Brown (proper nouns), garden, cat (common nouns).

A noun group is a group of words built around the noun that tells more information about that noun, e.g. the midnight cat.

Find or brainstorm nouns or noun groups from the text:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Now, choose three nouns or noun groups from your list and use each one of them to write a simple sentence. The sentence can be a statement (gives information), a question (asks for an answer), a command (tells us to do something) or an exclamation (for emphasis).

Remember a simple sentence makes sense on its own, begins with a capital letter and ends with a punctuation mark. ! ?

1. ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

2. ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

3. ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

Start with a VERB or VERB GROUP and write a simple sentence

A verb is a doing word, e.g. pulled (action), thought (thinking), loved (feeling), asked (saying), His name was John Brown (relating).

A verb group is a group of words built around the verb, e.g. was not looking, had to make.

Find or brainstorm verbs or verb groups from the text:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Now, choose three verbs or verb groups from your list and use each one of them to write a simple sentence. The sentence can be a statement (gives information), a question (asks for an answer), a command (tells us to do something) or an exclamation (for emphasis).

Remember a simple sentence makes sense on its own, begins with a capital letter and ends with a punctuation mark. ! ?

1. ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

2. ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

3. ____________________________________________________________
   ____________________________________________________________

Stowe (1997)
Writing sentences with more than one clause

Constructing compound sentences

- A compound sentence is a sentence which contains more than one independent clause:
  The boy hit the ball and it bounced.

- Clauses are joined by conjunctions, sometimes called ‘joining words’.

Some sample learning to and learning about strategies

1. Prepare and display a list of reminders about a compound sentence.

2. Select a suitable text for revisiting the structure of a simple sentence and introducing or identifying the structure of a compound sentence. The text could be one directly related to a planned unit of work used in modelled or guided reading or a sample text written by a student. See page 130 for one example of a student’s written text.

3. Model joining independent clauses using the conjunctions, and, but and or to construct compound sentences.
   I like apples and I eat them all the time.
   I like apples but I don’t like rock melon.
   We could walk home or we could catch the bus to town.

Young students tend to rely more heavily on compound sentences. Recount texts, in particular, typically consist of a string of independent clauses joined by ‘then’ and ‘and’. As students learn to express thoughts with more complex relationships they will need to use complex sentences (Derewianka, 1998). After Kindergarten, students should be taught how to link and order sentences and clauses using words other than ‘and’ and ‘then’.
Identifying simple and compound sentences

Text purpose – to write a recount of the excursion for the school newsletter

ZOO EXCURSION

Yesterday our class went to the Western Plains Zoo. We travelled by bus and it was fun. It took more than two hours.

When we arrived we had lunch and started to ride around the track. We hired some bikes and some people buddied up. The first thing we saw were Australian animals. We saw koalas and kangaroos. I saw a koala asleep in the fork of a tree. A kangaroo came close to the fence but then someone screamed and it hopped away.

Next we saw some Northern American animals. Some were very cute but others didn’t look so cute. My friend and I saw a deer and thought it looked strange so we had a closer look at it.

Then we went to the monkey islands. We saw monkeys all around the place. I saw a monkey sitting with his little friends. A boy in the class saw a big monkey walking and taking all the food. That was the last thing we saw because we were running out of time.

I liked that excursion so much that I would go there again with my family. On the way back we got to go on a coach because our teacher thought we would all be tired, but we weren’t.

Year 5 Primary Writing Assessment 2001, Sample Text A, page 54.
Constructing complex sentences

A complex sentence is a sentence that contains an independent clause and one or more dependent clauses, typically joined by a conjunction.

- Using conjunctions of place, time, manner, cause or concession creates dependent clauses; for example: We came home because it was getting cold. ‘because it was getting cold’ is a dependent clause. It cannot stand alone.

Such dependent clauses are called adverbial clauses.

- Dependent clauses which are adverbial clauses can be moved from the beginning to the end of a sentence (and vice versa) and the meaning is not usually altered.

Examples of conjunctions (joining words) typically used are:

Place: where, wherever
Time: when, since, before, until
Manner: by, as though
Cause: because, so that
Condition: if, unless
Concession: although, while

- Dependent clauses can also be introduced by relative pronouns (who, whose, whom, which, that). These clauses are called relative or adjectival clauses.

Kim was afraid of dogs that barked loudly.

Helpful hints:

- Support the students to add a variety of conjunctions to develop compound and complex sentences. Encourage students to manipulate, rearrange and reorder their sentences. Engage the students often in discussion about sentences, word order and the effectiveness of the sentence’s message.

- Working at the sentence level rather than a whole text level and ensuring students can write a complete complex sentence will ensure students’ writing will improve.

Some sample learning to and learning about strategies

1. Prepare and display a list of what students need to know about a complex sentence.

What you need to know and understand about a complex sentence

- A complex sentence is a sentence that contains an independent clause and one or more dependent clauses, joined by a conjunction.

  When the bell rang, Kim went home.

  *Kim went home* is the main clause. It is independent. It can ‘stand alone’.

  *When the bell rang* is the dependent clause. It cannot ‘stand alone’.

  The conjunction joining the two clauses is *when*.

  *When* is a conjunction of time.

- A complex sentence can make a text more interesting for the reader.
2. Select suitable texts with a mix of simple, compound and complex sentences.
   The text could be one directly related to a planned unit of work used in
   modelled or guided reading or a sample text composed by a student. See page 135
   for one example of a text composed by a student.

Revisit the structures of simple and compound sentences. Introduce and identify
the structure of a complex sentence. Refer to the list of what students should
know about a complex sentence when modelling the process of identifying a
complex sentence. ‘Think out aloud’. Ask students to work in pairs to identify
and underline dependent clauses in the text provided (see below) and then mark
the complex sentences containing the dependent clauses. (Consider prompting
students by providing a list of conjunctions that could begin a dependent clause,
see examples on page 118).

The following is an extract from *My Place* by Nadia Wheatley and Donna
Rawlins which could be used to identify dependent clauses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1928</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| This is a map of my place. Last year they put in poles *so now our lights are*
| *electric! It’s really exciting living here* because the aerodrome’s just nearby,
| *and sometimes aeroplanes fly over*. I climb up the tree and wave to the pilots.
| Mumma says we’re lucky here *because we’ve got good neighbours*. Miss
| Miller lets Kath and me play her piano, and *if we catch Henry’s bus* he won’t
| let us play. The Thomsons on the other side have got a wireless! Lorna
| Thomson’s my best friend. |

Talk through the students’ responses.

3. Model joining simple sentences by using a conjunction of time, place, manner
   or cause to create a complex sentence. For example:

   *It was hot. We came home.*

   becomes

   *Because it was hot we came home.*

Ask students to consider texts in which there are too many short sentences and
use conjunctions to join some of these together to make the story more
interesting.

4. Investigate with students what happens when you use a conjunction of time,
   cause or concession to begin a clause but do not combine that clause with an
   independent clause.

   For example:

   *Because it is raining* ........................

   *If I get lost* ...................................

   *When I go to the beach* ....................

   Ask students to finish each sentence so the message is complete.

   Practise the task orally before asking students to complete the message as a
   writing task. This is particularly important for those students experiencing
   language difficulties.
Introduce the variety of conjunctions or connectives. See page 118 for examples. Encourage the students to manipulate sentences from their reading texts and from their own writing using a range of sentence structures.

For example, provide the following sentence starter:

| The huge powerful golden lion roars angrily in the cold steel cage… |

Ask the students to think of a reason why the lion roars and use one of these words to complete the sentence.

| because | so | until | but… |

Ask the students to rearrange parts of the sentence to develop more interesting sentences.

The huge powerful golden lion roars angrily in the cold steel cage. (Simple sentence)

might become a complex sentence such as

Roaring angrily the huge powerful lion _________ in the cold steel cage while the tourists take photographs.

or

A huge golden lion that is trapped in the cold steel cage roars angrily.

sits sadly.

6. Ask students to complete skeleton writing examples, using dependent clauses. Link the examples to a familiar text and invite students to complete the task orally before they write the dependent clause. Consider using a picture stimulus to support the skeleton sentence, see below.

a. Before he left, he ................................................................. .

b. I......................................................................................... until you stop that.

c. While you were sleeping, a ..............................................

.........................................................................................

.........................................................................................

.........................................................................................

paces
stalks
sits (?)

paces
stalks
sits (?)
Devise a cloze, deleting only the conjunctions, to investigate the ways in which messages in a sentence are linked. Read the cloze passage together and then ask students to complete the cloze by filling in the deleted conjunctions.

**1928 (see page 132)**

We had a party last Saint Patrick’s Day. He’s the Saint of Ireland, ……….. we all wear green for him and sing and dance. Pa got a bit sad …………… he was missing home, …………… Mumma invited the Next Doors in to cheer him up.

Missing conjunctions: because, and, so

**Where to from here?**

Conference often with students to improve their own written drafts. Explain that a mix of simple, compound and complex sentences creates variety in a text. By Stage 3, students should be more able to express complex ideas in simple sentences. For instance, this is a simple sentence dealing with complex, abstract ideas: Childhood obesity is an indicator of ill health in adult life.
Understanding sentences: simple, compound, complex

This is a sample text (narrative or story recount) composed by a student in Year 5.

A mix of sentence types – simple, compound and complex – can be identified. Some examples for identification could be:

Simple sentences

Compound sentences

Complex sentences

What went wrong!

I must tell you about last Tuesday. It was one of the worst days I’d ever had.

It started when I woke up. I rolled over and hit my nose on the wall. Ouch! I got up and went to get dressed. I’d just finished dressing when my mum called me for breakfast. I ran down and tripped over the cat. I flew through the air and landed on my mum’s feet. She thought I was mucking up. Every Tuesday morning we had bacon and eggs. Unfortunately I managed to spill that down my front.

I left the house for school and just before I got to the bus stop the School Bus went past. When I arrived at school one hour later I was put on detention.

At lunchtime it started getting cold. I went to put on my scarf but it was covered in mashed pear. I took out my lunchbox to find out that my drink bottle had leaked on my lunch. It had also leaked on my books. In the swimming carnival I had a false start in every race as well as coming last. I couldn’t believe it. I was one of the best swimmers.

For homework we had spelling and had to write an information report. I hated that.

That was one of the worst days I ever had.

That evening I worked out what was wrong. I had worn different coloured socks to bed the night before. Now I am always careful with my socks.
Prepositional phrases

Prepositional phrases are used to enhance descriptive writing. They consist of a preposition followed by a noun, noun phrase or pronoun, as in:

- after lunch
- after a long journey
- after you

A preposition is a word that begins an adverbial phrase or adjectival phrase (indicating, for example, time, place, manner, causality).

e.g. in, on, after, before, by, under, over, of.

Some common prepositions we can use are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>at</th>
<th>on</th>
<th>before</th>
<th>in</th>
<th>from</th>
<th>since</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>for</td>
<td>during</td>
<td>to</td>
<td>until</td>
<td>after</td>
<td>along</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by</td>
<td>into</td>
<td>onto</td>
<td>off</td>
<td>out</td>
<td>above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over</td>
<td>under</td>
<td>below</td>
<td>across</td>
<td>down</td>
<td>around</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beside</td>
<td>between</td>
<td>without</td>
<td>past</td>
<td>near</td>
<td>through</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sample learning to and learning about strategies

1. Develop a class list of prepositional phrases that students can use when editing. Include specific language features such as prepositions of time and place.

2. Explain to students that a preposition can be used to locate things in time, place or manner.

Consider reading some familiar texts, such as *Rosie’s Walk* by Pat Hutchins, where the prepositional phrases of place or time are clearly supported by illustrations. The prepositions or prepositional phrases such as:

- for a walk
- across the yard
- around the pond
- over the haycock
- past the mill
- through the fence
- in time for dinner

could be listed as they are identified in the text.

Consider jointly constructing a text innovation and then asking students to write their own innovation, where, for example, *Rosie’s Walk* might become *Count Dracula’s night out* or *The Lion’s Escape*. See an example on page 141. The above underlined prepositional phrases could be used to prompt the students.

3. Jointly construct a wanted poster using prepositional phrases to enhance the description of the wanted character.

Following joint construction ask students to work in pairs or independently to create their own wanted poster. Students can create their own character or use a character from a familiar text. See page 140 for an example.
4. Select sentences from a procedural text related to a planned unit of work.
   Ensure the students have field knowledge of the topic.
   Divide each sentence, separating the prepositional phrase or adverbial phrases from the rest of the clause. For example, sentences related to the topic Making new glass from old could be separated like this:

   Glass containers are left out **for collection**
   on garbage days.
   Glass containers are taken **to a recycling centre**.
   The glass is scooped **off the ground**.

   Ask students, working in small groups, to identify the prepositional phrases or adverbial phrases.
   Assist students to take turns and reconstruct the sentences. Invite each group to read at least one sentence to check for accuracy.
   Discuss the importance of using prepositional phrases.

5. Construct Bingo cards, with each card consisting of sentences that have missing prepositions.
   Ensure the Bingo card each student receives is at the student’s guided or independent reading level.
   Review the important steps when completing a cloze. See page 121 and adapt for the use of prepositional phrases.
   Give the students time to read their Bingo cards before starting the game so that they can work out the prepositions they might need.
   When a suitable preposition is called out, the students write the preposition on a small card and place it in the gap on their Bingo card. The first student to finish is encouraged to read out his or her sentences to check for appropriate meaning.

   Tomorrow we are going by
   train **1.** the city of
   Sydney to see a special
   concert **2.** the Opera
   House

   The Bingo cards could also be used by students for independent practice, with answer cards to check for accuracy.
6. Jointly edit a descriptive text containing repetitive or inappropriate use of prepositions. Encourage the students to justify their responses when making changes to the use of prepositions in the text.

Examples of inappropriate use of prepositions, taken from students’ writing samples in the Year 3 and Year 5 Primary Writing Assessments, include:

- We came back at school at 2:55.
- Next off our class teacher told us we were going to the Australian Water Fowl Marsh.
- They did not get to see all for them.
- Then we saw the sheep to get sheared.
- It looks like it’s out of Mars.

Students could examine these and suggest changes.

7. During modelled reading use a shared big book and cover the prepositional phrases with ‘post-its’. Model the reading of the text and ask the students to join in and read along together to supply the covered words. Remove the ‘post-it’ to check the accuracy of the prepositional phrases supplied.

8. Enjoy a game where the teacher provides a starting sentence and invites students to work in pairs to write an event to follow, using a prepositional phrase to enhance description.

The teacher repeats the starting sentence and the students in turn read what they have written. An example is:

- On the way to school I saw:
  - a police car speeding down the road,
  - a man walking his dog along the path,
  - a cow sitting under a tree,
  - a bird sitting on the telephone wire,
  - etc. …

This could also be used as a memory game where each event is recalled in sequence by a student before adding another.
9. Provide squared paper and ask students to work in pairs to construct a puzzle using only prepositions. Encourage students to give their puzzle to another pair of students to solve.

Students can refer to a class list of prepositions if necessary.

Adapted from Linking Primary Writing Assessment 2001 to the Curriculum, pp. 24–27.
Using prepositional phrases to enhance description

Jointly construct a wanted poster using prepositional phrases to enhance the description of the wanted character. Following joint construction ask students to create their own wanted poster.

Adapted from Choosing literacy strategies that work, Stage 2, p. 213.
Using prepositional phrases in a text innovation

Consider jointly constructing a text innovation and then asking students to write their own innovation.

Students construct their own text innovation using prepositional phrases following a joint construction.

- Cut this strip of paper to make a folding book. Use both sides of the paper if needed.
- Decide on your character and draw your events in the correct order to construct a story.
- Write prepositional phrases to describe each event or location.
- Share your story with a friend or ‘writing buddy’.

Count Dracula went for a stroll into the night. past the grave yard, under the ghost tree, into the haunted house and arrived home before the break of day.
Punctuation

Punctuation is the practice or system of marking text to help readers’ understanding. The most commonly used marks are full stop, comma, apostrophe, hyphen, colon, semi-colon and quotation marks or inverted commas.

**Sample learning about and learning to strategies**

1. During shared reading point out the punctuation marks and explain their purpose. Consider displaying a punctuation guide and refer to this when explaining the purpose. See an example on page 143. (This can be adapted to suit the specific needs of students.)

2. Read a text with all punctuation removed. Talk about the effect of removing punctuation from the text. Ask questions such as:
   - **Is the meaning clear?**
   - **Does the text tell the reader where to pause as it is being read?**
   - **Does the text help the reader to create the same meaning as the writer intended?**
   Ask the students why it is important to have others read what we have written before publishing.

3. Provide a punctuation maze using text at the students’ guided or independent instructional reading level. Ask students to work in pairs to identify the most appropriate punctuation mark and justify their choice. Students may use a punctuation guide as a prompt if necessary. For example, *Anzac Day is observed on 25 April* ( , . !)

4. Select a suitable sentence from the students’ text currently being used for guided or independent reading.

   Write the sentence on cover paper and cut up the sentence so that each word and each punctuation mark is on a separate card. For example,

   - went
   - Royal
   - the
   - We
   - Easter
   - .
   - to
   - Show

   Ask students to sequence the cut up sentence.

   After sequencing invite students to read their sentence and justify the position of each card.

   Use this activity to focus on aspects of grammar as well as punctuation.
Punctuation guide

Have students monitor their use of correct punctuation, using a guide or checklist such as the one below.

| capital letters | • begin a sentence     |
|                 | • are used for the title of something, e.g. Lord of the Rings |
|                 | • are used for the names of special people and places, e.g. Rose, Count Dracula, Sydney, New South Wales |
|                 | • are used for the names of special things, e.g. Opera House, Murray River |
|                 | • begin days and months, e.g. Tuesday, May |
|                 | • are used for initials used in place of a full name, e.g. NSW; J. Smith; P.O. |
|                 | • are used for all the letters in an acronym, where the initials of the words are easily pronounced as a word, e.g. POWER – Prepare, Organise, Write, Edit, Rewrite (used to teach the writing process). |
| . full stops    | • indicate the end of a sentence. |
| , commas        | • separate items in a list |
|                 | • indicate a short pause in a sentence |
|                 | • are always used after said when using direct speech. |
| ? question marks| • indicate the end of a question. |
| ‘ apostrophes   | • show that a letter or letters have been left out of a word, e.g. has not becomes hasn’t |
|                 | • show ownership, e.g. Tom’s bike (usual singular form) e.g. birds’ wings (usual plural form). |
| ! exclamation marks | • indicate the end of a command or order |
|                 | • are used at the end of a sentence or exclamation to express such feelings as surprise, amazement and anger, or to deliver a warning or shouted call. |
| quotation marks | • are used to show direct or quoted speech in writing |
| (“…””)         | • are used to indicate titles of poems, songs, short stories or articles |
| (‘…’)          | • can draw attention to an unusual or particular sense or usage of a word. |

Adapted from Choosing literacy strategies that work, Stage 2, p. 267
5. Determine the English K–6 Syllabus outcomes the students will be working towards.

Decide on the type of text the students will be constructing and prepare a checklist to prompt students when they edit for punctuation. For example, if the students are working towards the English K–6 Syllabus outcomes WS2.14, WS2.10, and constructing a narrative, the checklist for editing punctuation could include one or more from the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A PUNCTUATION CHECKLIST FOR MY NARRATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ I have read my text for intended meaning with special attention to my use of commas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ I have checked my capital letters and full stops.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ I have used apostrophes for contractions (where letters have been left out).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ I have used apostrophes to show ownership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ I have used speech marks when my characters have been talking directly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ I have used exclamation marks to express such feelings as surprise, amazement and anger.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the students are constructing a procedure, the focus for correct punctuation could be on the use of commas to separate a list of things needed, as well as the punctuation to write commands, as below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TO FIND THINGS THAT DISSOLVE IN WATER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Materials</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You will need essence, jelly crystals, sand, salt, water, cups and a drink bottle.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Method**

1. One at a time, put some of each material in a cup.
2. Add a cup of water.
3. Watch carefully what happens.

*Adapted from English K–6 Modules, p. 127.*
A recount may provide an opportunity to focus on the correct use of capital letters to name special people, special places, special things and days of the week.

Last Sunday, David, Joe and Uncle Harry caught a ferry at Circular Quay to go to Taronga Park Zoo.

6. Examine a shared text to show students how quotation marks are used with direct speech. Discuss their function.

Have students participate by inviting them to take the role of a character to identify and read any direct speech spoken by that character as it occurs when the teacher is reading the text.

Display unpunctuated text with direct speech and model for students the use of the punctuation marks.

7. Provide opportunities for students to experiment with dialogue by asking them to work in pairs to create a scenario which requires only two people.

Refer to page 146 for an example with suggestions for planning the dialogue.
**Writing dialogue**

Examine a text to see how quotation marks are used. Discuss their function. Encourage students to experiment with dialogue.

- Work with coloured pens.
- Each student creates a line or two lines of dialogue.
- This is followed by a reply.

---

**Planning the activity**

- Who will be the two characters?
- What will be their topic?
- What will the characters be saying to each other?
- How will we edit our work and use quotation marks correctly?
- What words will we use to replace *said*? Consider *asked, answered, questioned, replied, commented, pleaded, exclaimed, complained, whispered, shouted, inquired…*

Adapted from *Choosing literacy strategies that work, Stage 2*, p. 265
1. Explore the use of the apostrophe to indicate ownership.

Encourage students to correctly identify the possessive form:

- Jack’s hat = the hat belonging to Jack
- the man’s hat = the hat belonging to the man
- the men’s hats = the hats belonging to the men

Ensure that students understand the difference between expressions such as:

- my parent’s car = the car of my parent (there is only one parent)
- my parents’ car = the car of my parents (where the parents share the car)
- my son’s car = the car of my son
- my sons’ car = the car of my sons (where the sons share the car)

Give students practice in using the regular possessive forms, encouraging them to check their answers against a chart, such as the one on the next page.

Explore some of the more common problem constructions that students encounter in using the apostrophe of possession:

- when the ‘possessor’ is already plural, it takes ‘s
  - men’s hats
  - children’s clothes
- singular words ending in s usually take ‘s
  - the boss’s office
  - the actress’s dressing room
- possessive pronouns – yours, his hers, ours, theirs, its – are not written with an apostrophe
  - This book is mine; hers is on the floor.
- confusion between the contraction it’s (= it is) and the pronoun its (The cat licked its whiskers.)
- use of the apostrophe with any nouns that end in s even if they are not possessive:
  - I have many book’s in my room.
  - He works at David Jone’s.

2. Make a chart that shows the apostrophes for contractions. Encourage students to refer to this when they are writing. See an example on the next page.
Writing and Spelling Strategies: Assisting students who have additional learning support needs

Common contractions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I have</th>
<th>I've</th>
<th>they have</th>
<th>they've</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>they had</td>
<td>they'd</td>
<td>you are</td>
<td>you're</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she is</td>
<td>she's</td>
<td>he is</td>
<td>he's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>where is</td>
<td>where's</td>
<td>I will</td>
<td>I'll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she will</td>
<td>she'll</td>
<td>who will</td>
<td>who'll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they will</td>
<td>they'll</td>
<td>is not</td>
<td>isn't</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do not</td>
<td>don't</td>
<td>should not</td>
<td>shouldn't</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we have</td>
<td>we've</td>
<td>you have</td>
<td>you've</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they are</td>
<td>they're</td>
<td>we are</td>
<td>we're</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what is</td>
<td>what's</td>
<td>it is</td>
<td>it's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>let us</td>
<td>let's</td>
<td>he will</td>
<td>he'll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>we will</td>
<td>we'll</td>
<td>you will</td>
<td>you'll</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A common error students make is that would have/could have is often written as would of/could of instead of would've/could've. Support the students by displaying this chart which shows how auxiliary or helper verbs work in English.

Auxiliary of helper verbs

To be

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>was</th>
<th>am</th>
<th>will be</th>
<th>...also would be,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>were</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>will be</td>
<td>should be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He, she, it</td>
<td>was</td>
<td>is</td>
<td>will be</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td>were</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>will be</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You (plural)</td>
<td>were</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>will be</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td>were</td>
<td>are</td>
<td>will be</td>
<td>...also been, being</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To have

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>had</th>
<th>have</th>
<th>will have</th>
<th>...also would have,</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td>had</td>
<td>have</td>
<td>will have</td>
<td>should have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He, she, it</td>
<td>had</td>
<td>has</td>
<td>will have</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We</td>
<td>had</td>
<td>have</td>
<td>will have</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You (plural)</td>
<td>had</td>
<td>have</td>
<td>will have</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They</td>
<td>had</td>
<td>have</td>
<td>will have</td>
<td>...also having</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Correct use of the apostrophe to show ownership or possession

- Add 's to the singular form of the word (even if it already ends in s)
  - the bicycle's bell
  - the girl's ponytails
  - the class's display
  - James's hat

- Add ' to plural words that already end in s
  - the bicycles' bells
  - the girls' ponytails
  - my parents' car

- Add ' to plural words that do not end in s
  - the children's game
  - the mice's nests

Note: Some words – such as sheep, fish, deer – are the same for singular and plural.

- Remember: it's = it is (It's mine.)
  - its = ownership (The dog wagged its tail.)
Conspicuous strategy instruction

Purpose
The purpose of this strategy is to clarify for students some specific steps for successfully using the big ideas in writing, such as the steps in the writing process or text structures.

Description
Conspicuous strategy instruction has been used with promising results to teach all phases of the writing process: planning (Harris & Graham, 1985), text structure (Englert et al., 1991; Graham & Harris, 1989a) and revising (MacArthur, Schwartz & Graham, 1991). The best strategies appear to be those that are not too general and not too narrow. For example, *Think before you write* is a general strategy and a good idea but it is too general to be of much practical value for many learners. On the other hand, a strategy that is too narrow may have little potential for transference.

Some examples of ‘conspicuous strategies’
Context: The student is puzzling over the following sentence while attempting to edit and revise a draft:

*All of we young people seem to like ice cream.*

Is it, the student wonders, *we* or *us* young people? In terms of grammar, for some students, this can be difficult to explain. Yet the problem can be attacked with little effort and complexity, and with relatively high potential for transference. The strategy is to deconstruct or simplify the sentence in question, and then examine the results:

*All young people seem to like ice cream.*

*All of we/us seem to like ice cream.*

A native speaker of English who does not have a severe language disorder will instantly recognise *us* as the correct choice in the simpler sentence and realise that it is therefore the choice in the original sentence.

The same general strategy can be applied to far different instances such as:

Pronoun case

*John gave Mary and I/me a new book.*

Consider:

*John gave Mary a new book.*

*John gave I/me a new book.*
Subject–verb agreement

Original sentence:
None of the boys was/were on time

First simplification:
Not one of the boys was/were on time.

Second simplification:
Not one was on time.

Designing conspicuous strategies is challenging. Whenever possible, promising strategies should be field-tested with students.

A primary characteristic of conspicuous strategy instruction is scaffolding and guided practice in various forms. (Pressley et al., 1992; Pressley et al., 1989).

The diagram on the next page demonstrates levels of scaffolding for a sentence-manipulation strategy. There are two aspects of such scaffolding:

1. It is provided on an ‘as needed’ basis and is gradually diminished over time.

2. It includes not only strategies for accomplishing writing goals but provides for self-regulation; that is, students are taught to regulate their own thinking about the use of composing strategies.
Conspicuous strategy – choosing the correct pronoun form

**Level 1: Interactive model/heavy scaffold**
Sometimes it is difficult to know when to use words such as *I* and *me* or *she* and *her*. You can usually figure out the right word to use by breaking the sentence into two simpler sentences.

Circle the correct choice in the second simpler sentence. That is the correct choice in the longer sentence.

1. Longer sentence: The doctor gave Elicia and ___ a flu shot.
   - Simpler sentences:
     - The doctor gave Elicia a flu shot
     - The doctor gave ___ a flu shot.

**Level 2: Relatively heavy scaffolding**
You can usually figure out what word to use by breaking a sentence into two simpler sentences.

For each sentence, one simpler sentence is given for you. First, write the other simple sentence. Then circle the right word in the longer sentence.

1. Longer sentence: She/Her and John lived next door to us for four years.
   - John lived next door for four years.
   - She lived next door for four years.

**Level 3: Minor prompting for scaffold**
For each sentence, write the two simpler sentences. Then circle the right word in the longer sentence.

1. Before going on our camping trip, Melinda and ___ prepared all our supplies.
   - Melinda prepared all our supplies.
   - I prepared all our supplies.

**Level 4: Only a reminder as a scaffold**
Circle the correct word in each sentence. Remember, the word that’s right in the simpler sentence is also right in the longer sentence.

1. After the team members left, ___ them and some other friends went out for burgers.

**Level 5: Independent – no scaffolding**
Circle the correct word in each sentence.

1. The movie started before Jacques and ___ arrived.

---

Two simpler sentences are provided

Student writes one simpler sentence

Student required to write both simpler sentences

Only a reminder to think of the strategy

No reminder to use the strategy
Writing and Spelling Strategies: Assisting students who have additional learning support needs