

Writing Skills- Sentences

Better Sentences – There are several common problems with sentences.

Fragments – are not complete sentences.

For example: Because I like it. Shut the door and left.

Run-on Sentences – contain too many ideas or parts for one sentence.

For example: I saw the cat and it was brown and it ran under the chair when it was playing with the ball.

Other Errors – include using an incorrect word or word order.

For example: I goes to the store. It is for me fun.

Boring Sentences – sentences that don't have interesting vocabulary, that start and end the same way, or that are all the same length.

For example: I like to play. I like sports. I like to play ball. It is fun. It is good.



If your child has trouble writing good sentences, try these activities:

Grow Your Sentence Game – This is a quick game you can play in the car, while making dinner, or even during commercial breaks.

1. You say a short sentence (The cat saw a mouse.)
2. Your child repeats the sentence (The cat saw a mouse.)
3. If they did not repeat it correctly, repeat steps 1 and 2.
4. If they repeated it correctly, they add a word or phrase (The cat saw a mouse under the couch.)
5. Now you repeat what they said (The cat saw a mouse under the couch) and you add another word or phrase (The grey cat saw a mouse under the couch.)
6. Continue taking turns until the sentence is complete, interesting, and correct, but not too long.

Once you and your child create a great sentence, have them write it down.

Sentence Repair Shop – This is a way to help your child repair a sentence that isn't correct.



Garbage Truck – is there anything you could remove to make it better?



Word Tools – is there a word that can be fixed or replaced?



Construction Zone – is there something that could be added to make it better?

Use pictures cues of repair options for sentences such as the garbage truck, word tools, or the under construction sign. Start with sentences that your child has created that are not correct.

1. Tell your child the sentence needs help.
2. Read the sentence out loud.
3. Ask if your child to try fixing the sentence with one of the Sentence Repair Shop tools.
4. Repeat the fixed sentence out loud.
5. If it's fixed, move to another sentence, if not, repeat steps 3 and 4.

For example, if your child wrote a fragment, **“Because it was wet.”** you can help them fix the sentence in several ways. First, they could use the Garbage Truck and remove the word “because” so it reads, **“It was wet.”** That is a complete sentence. Another option is to use the Under Construction tool and add to the sentence so it reads, **“Because it was wet, I did not want to sit on it.”** or **“It was wet because it had rained.”** Using the Word Tools would not help in this example since that is not the problem.

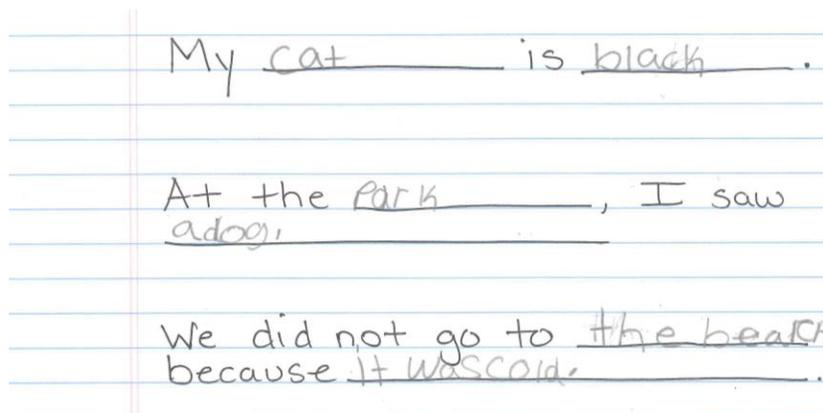
“Her got off the bus and dropped her bookbag.” is a perfect place to use Word Tools to make correct the sentence to say, **“She got off the bus and dropped her bookbag.”** Another example is, **“After I ate, I seen the mouse.”** which becomes **“After I ate, I saw the mouse.”**

Once your child knows how to play Sentence Repair Shop, you can find or create poor quality sentences or sentence fragments that have the same types of errors your child makes and help them fix them using these tools.



Sentence Framing – You can help your child develop fluency (speed and accuracy) writing different types of sentences by practicing with sentence frames.

1. You start the sentence and leave blanks in it.
For example: When I _____, I like _____.
2. Your child fills in the blanks.
For example: When I go to the park, I like to swing.
3. Work toward a variety of sentences types.
*For example: I like _____. Do you _____? The best time to _____ is when _____.
You should remember to _____ and _____ if you _____.*
4. As your child becomes more successful, you provide less and less of the sentence frame until they can create the sentences all by themselves.



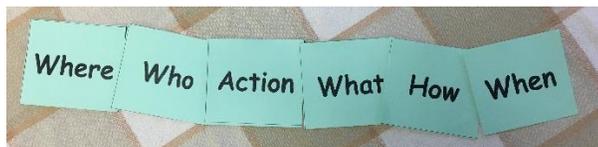
Sentence Combining - Several short sentences in a row can be hard to read.

"This sentence has five words. Here are five more words. Five-word sentences are fine. But several together become monotonous. Listen to what is happening. The writing is getting boring. The sound of it drones. It's like a stuck record. The ear demands some variety."
— Gary Provost

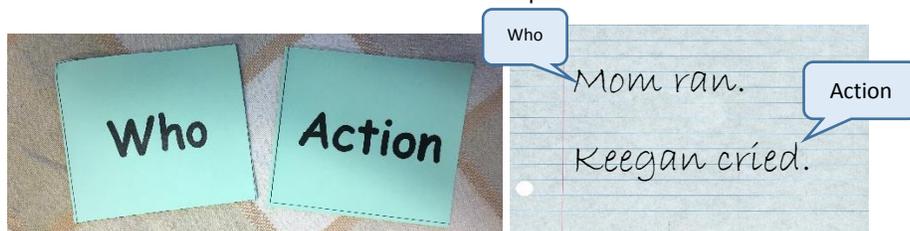
If your child writes very short or only simple sentences, you can help them write sentences that are more interesting for the reader.

1. Start by doing this verbally, meaning you'll say the sentences instead of writing them.
2. Say two short but connected sentences.
For example: The dog is brown. The dog is dirty.
3. Your child combines the two sentences into one sentence.
For example: The dog is brown and dirty.
4. Help your child come up with several choices.
For example: The dog is brown and the dog is dirty. The brown dog is dirty. The dirty dog is brown. All of these are ways to combine the two sentences into one.
5. Once they choose the "best" new sentence, they write it down.

Sentence Part Cards – Spread out index cards with sentence parts on them in front of your child and help your child practice creating sentences.



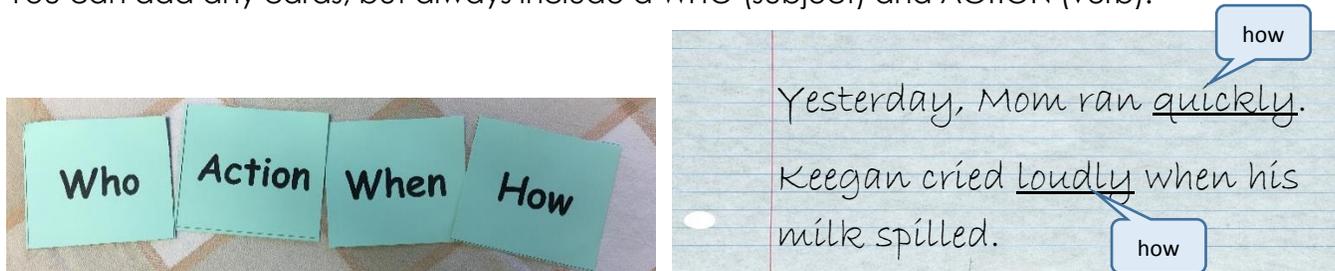
The shortest complete sentence has just two parts, a WHO (subject) and an ACTION (verb). When you put out those two cards, your child might say, “Mom ran.” or “Keegan cried.” Once they say the sentence, then they write it on a piece of paper, using a capital letter for the first word in the sentence and a period at the end.



Now add another card. Your child adds a word or phrase for each new card.



You can add any cards, but always include a WHO (subject) and ACTION (verb).



If your child creates a sentence fragment (part of a sentence, but not a complete sentence) help them to add the missing parts. Sometimes they just need article words such as the, but, or is. If they create an awkwardly worded sentence, try having your child move the order around to see if the sentence sounds better. If your child creates a run-on sentence, (too many ideas in one sentence) help them to fix it by making two sentences.

References

Auman, M. *Step Up to Writing, 4th Edition*. (2016). Dallas, TX. Voyager Sopris Learning, Inc.

Graham, S., Bollinger, A., Booth Olson, C., D’Aoust, C., MacArthur, C., McCutchen, D., & Olinghouse, N. (2012). *Teaching elementary school students to be effective writers: A practical guide* (NCEE 2012-4058). Washington DC: NCEERA, IES, USDE. Retrieved from https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications_reviews.aspx#pubsearch.

Harris, K.R., Graham, S., Mason, L.H., & Friedlander, B. (2008). *Powerful Writing Strategies for All Students*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc. September 2017