



## Step Up to Writing Strategy Spotlight

### Sentence Combining and Improving Sentence Quality

Novice writers tend to use short, simple sentences, or they combine all their ideas into one long run-on sentence. Neither is ideal. Teachers can use the “I Do, We Do, You Do” format inherent in Step Up to Writing to help students master more complex sentences. While the following are elementary examples, the process is the same for secondary students.

Perhaps a student writes:

The playground is fun. It is a good place to play. My friends have fun. We like games. We play basketball. We play tag.

Or:

The playground is fun and it is a good place to play and then my friends have fun, because we like games and we play basketball and we play tag.

The first stage in Step Up, **I Do**, models the process using a document camera, board, or overhead. (“Look at all these great ideas the writer had about the playground! Let’s try re-arranging the ideas into different types of sentences. First I’ll try a *Where or When Plus What’s Happening* sentence. The playground is the *where* so I’ll begin by writing ‘on the playground.’ Now, I need to combine the other ideas to tell what is happening. I’ll write ‘my friends and I have fun playing games such as basketball and tag’ to finish the sentence!”)

The next stage, **We Do**, involves doing one with the students. (“Let’s try another one together. Instead of saying ‘On the playground’, what could we start with to tell *when*?” Students discuss and call out ideas and agree on ‘When playing games like basketball and tag’ as the *when*. “Now, how can we tell what is happening?” After further discussion, the teacher could write ‘my friends and I have fun on the playground.’)

Finally, students practice creating *Where or When Plus What’s Happening* Sentences in teams and then independently in the **You Do** stage. The more inexperienced and novice the writer, the more time teachers need to spend on the **We Do** stage.

*I've always believed that the future of education rests with those who are willing to share ideas with others. Ideas are not owned, but by their very nature, are meant to take root, mature, and nurture new growth.*

*-Maureen Auman*

*Author, Step Up to Writing*



Where or When	Plus What's Happening
On the playground,	my friends and I have fun playing games such as basketball and tag.
When playing games like basketball and tag	my friends and I have fun on the playground.

Once students have mastered a sentence type, others can be taught using the same process:

And, But, or So		
My friends and I enjoy playing games like tag and basketball,	so	we think the playground is a good place to play.
Occasion	Position	
Since we like games such as tag and basketball,	we think the playground is a good place to play and have fun.	