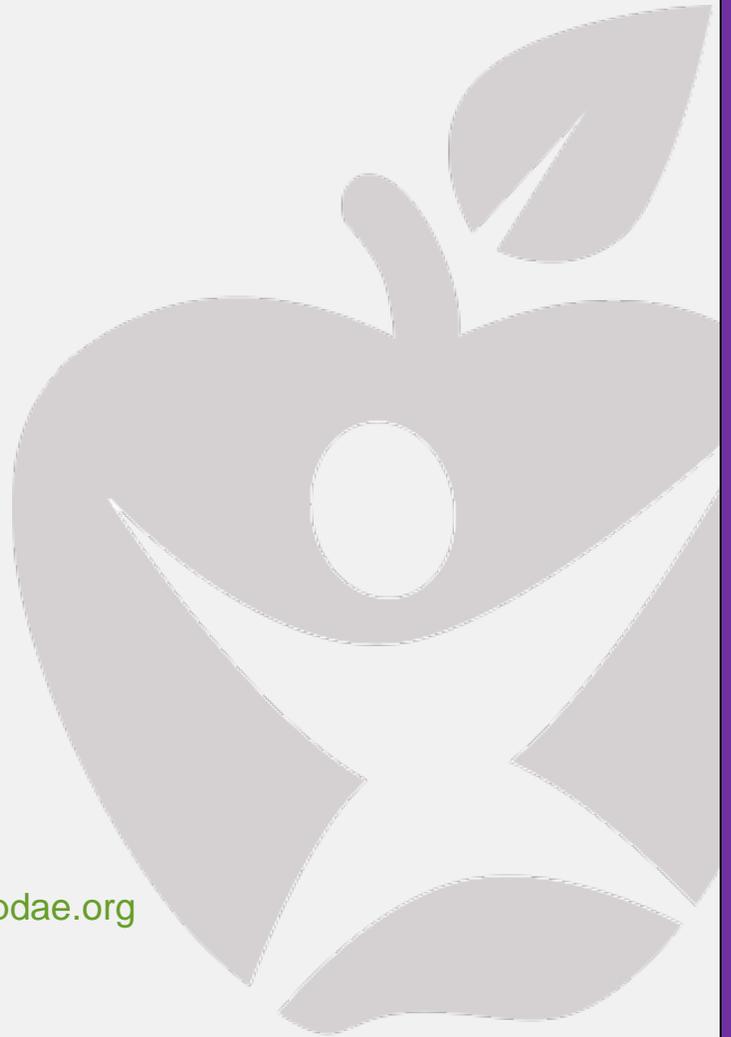


# From Words to Sentences and Beyond: Common Problems and Fixes

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Tools for the Classroom



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**Workbook**

Institute for the Professional Development of Adult Educators

TOOLS FOR THE CLASSROOM

# From Words to Sentences and Beyond: Common Problems and Fixes

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## Sentence Activities

### Is it a sentence?

On sentence strips, write phrases that are sentences and incomplete sentences. On the board or on a pocket chart, have two columns with the headings Sentence and Not a Sentence. Give each student a sentence strip. Have students place the strips under the correct heading. To extend the activity, as a class, complete the incomplete sentences together, emphasizing capitalization and punctuation.

### Silly Sentences

Create packets with subjects, verbs, and predicates. Have students choose one strip from each packet and put the strips together to form a silly sentence. Example: The big butterfly flew in a jar of jelly.

### Sentence Rummy

Sentence Rummy makes a game out of writing complete sentences.

#### Directions

Students suggest words to place into four lists:

- nouns
- adjectives
- verbs
- adverbs

There should be at least ten words for each list. Write the words on the board and then transfer them to index cards, one word per card. You may wish to have your students assist in the copying. You will need at least 52 cards. In addition to the 40 cards made from your lists, you will need five cards each for the words “the” and “a” and two for “an.”

Four students can play with one deck of cards at a time. Making multiple decks will allow all the members of a class to play.

Each student is dealt seven cards as in a regular game of Rummy. In order to win a hand, a student must be able to form a complete sentence from the seven cards in his or her hand. If a student does not have the right combination of cards to form a sentence, he/she is allowed to discard one card and choose another.

To add variety and make the game more challenging, try adding preposition and conjunction cards.

### Sentence Match-Up

Provide students with sentences cut into strips. Have them match the strips to form a complete sentence. Have students discuss what makes each sentence complete. The following are sample sentences to get started.

<b>By the time my brother arrives,</b>	<b>I'll have cleaned the whole house.</b>
<b>I didn't go out for dinner</b>	<b>because I had already eaten.</b>
<b>They go to the movies</b>	<b>every Friday night.</b>
<b>Don't call me after 11 o'clock;</b>	<b>I'll be sleeping.</b>
<b>His flight arrives</b>	<b>tomorrow at five.</b>
<b>I've been to Spain</b>	<b>four times.</b>
<b>When you get back to town,</b>	<b>we'll have a party.</b>
<b>I've been waiting here</b>	<b>for almost an hour.</b>
<b>I stayed home</b>	<b>last night and watched television.</b>
<b>I was studying</b>	<b>when the fire started.</b>
<b>I won't speak to him</b>	<b>until he apologizes.</b>

## Parts of a Sentence

Steve Peha discusses the rules of sentences in his article - *Mr. Peha's Stunningly Simple Sentence Structure System*. He states that:

- Sentences are made of parts.
- Those can parts have names.
- We can describe the structure of a sentence by describing the number and types of parts it contains, and the order in which those parts occur.

There are four kinds of sentence parts to watch for:

- **Main Parts.** These parts usually contain the main action of the sentence. Often, we refer to this as the subject and predicate or verb.
- **Lead-In Parts.** These parts lead into other parts, often into the main part.
- **In-Between Parts.** As the name implies, these parts go in between other parts.
- **Add-On Parts.** These are extra parts that convey additional information about any of the other parts and are usually used to make things more specific.

Example:

Part	Example	Part of the Sentence
Part 1	On a bitter cold winter morning,	Lead-In
Part 2	Malcolm Maxwell,	Main (Subject)
Part 3	a young man of simple means but good intentions,	In-Between
Part 4	left the quiet country town in which he'd been raised,	Main (Predicate)
Part 5	and set off on the bold errand he'd been preparing for all his life.	Add-On

Looking for Quality in Student Writing. Steve Peha.

[http://www.ttms.org/writing\\_quality/sentence\\_fluency.htm](http://www.ttms.org/writing_quality/sentence_fluency.htm)

## Expanding Sentences: Using the 5 Ws and an H

Select a phrase and have students write a sentence using the 5 Ws and an H. Provide prompts for students as they get started, such as Who? Where? When? How? Why?

The following are beginning phrases to use.

went home	left school	found money
saw a crime	bought a car	watched a movie
counted change	ate lunch	

## Sentence Pyramids

Have students write and illustrate sentence pyramids. This is a good exercise for teaching students how to add details and expand a thought. Start with simple sentences, such as The sun is setting or I saw a clown. The following is an example:

I saw a clown.  
I saw a funny clown.  
I saw a funny clown juggling.  
I saw a funny clown juggling bowling pins.  
I saw a funny clown juggling bowling pins in a parade.  
I saw a funny clown juggling bowling pins in a Christmas parade.

## Developing Sentences and Sentence Patterns

Syntax or sentence formation is the basis of written language. In order to become more effective writers, students need to have a good understanding of English syntax. Discussing and modeling sentence structures can:

- Make students aware of the sentence patterns that exist in the English language
- Give students a vocabulary for talking about elements of language and for talking about their specific writing problems
- Help students use word order patterns to make meaning as they read even if they do not understand all of the vocabulary
- Expose students to the many possibilities of English syntax beyond the basic structures.

Students need to understand that English language sentences are based on common "kernel" sentences. Three basic sentence patterns (common kernels) in English are:

- S-V (Subject-Verb): Subject and intransitive verb. *Trevor drives. He works.*
- S-V-O (Subject-Verb-Object): Subject, transitive verb, and direct object. *The driver delivered the pizza.*
- This pattern is sometimes complicated by the insertion of an indirect object (e.g., *Trevor told his boss a story.*) and by object complements (e.g., *The pizza made Trevor famous.*).
- S-LV-C (Subject-Linking Verb-Complement): Subject, linking verb, and predicate noun or predicate adjective. *Pizzas are Italian. Pizzas are nutritious.*

The following chart shows commonly used sentence patterns.

## Sentences: Basic Patterns

Basic Sentence Patterns	Examples
S + V	Customers complain <i>Angry</i> customers complain.
S + V + O	The manager helped us. The manager helped us <i>gladly</i> .
S + V + N	Her decision was a mistake. Her decision was a <i>terrible</i> mistake.
S + V + ADJ	My friend looked pale. My friend looked <i>suddenly</i> pale.
S + V + ADV	Flowers are everywhere. <i>Beautiful</i> flowers are everywhere.
S + V + IO + O	Her cousin showed visitors the capital. Her cousin <i>often</i> showed visitors the capital.
S + V + DO + OC	They called the benefactor a saint. They called the <i>anonymous</i> benefactor a saint.
S + V + DO + ADJ	We painted the house green. We painted the house green <i>for the first time</i> .

S = Subject  
V = Verb  
ADJ = Adjective  
ADV = Adverb

O = Object  
IO = Indirect Object  
OC = Object Complement

## It's Your Turn!

Create a sentence using each of the following sentence patterns.

Basic Sentence Patterns	My Sentences
S + V	
S + V + O	
S + V + N	
S + V + ADJ	
S + V + ADV	
S + V + IO + O	
S + V + DO + OC	
S + V + DO + ADJ	

## Sentence Pattern Exercise

Directions: In the blank, identify the sentence pattern according to this code:

S V (Subject – Verb)

S V DO (Subject - Verb - Direct Object)

S V IO DO (Subject - Verb - Indirect Object - Direct Object)

S V SC (Subject - Verb (Linking Verb) – Subject Complement)

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Some of my friends did come to the Christmas party.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Some of my friends gave a Christmas party at a big hotel.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Some of my friends were sorry about missing the Christmas party.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Some of my friends gave me a bon voyage party.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Some of my friends gave the office party a bad name.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The four-day work week may soon be a reality.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Many people now work a full seven-day week.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. To many people, the idea of more leisure time is appealing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Labor unions will consider the four-day work week.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Long holiday weekends now give people a taste of more leisure time.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. A reduced work week would provide more jobs for those now unemployed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. For some people, the four-day work week will remain a dream for a long time.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Some experiments will evaluate the four-day work week.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Employee dissatisfaction creates alarming conditions.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. The four-day work week could conceivably give us too much free time.

## Who? Did What? When? Where?

**Objective:** To teach early writers the basics of good sentence writing beyond simple subject/verb sentences.

**Directions:**

- On the board write the words: Who, Did What, Where, When. Leave ample space below or beside each word. Discuss the words on the board and give examples of each.
- Have sentence strips prepared with sentences that have an example of each category. Some examples are: Tom ran to the bus stop today. The dog barked loudly on the porch this morning. Sara went to the mall to buy shoes yesterday.
- Read one sentence orally and then cut the strips into words and/or short phrases that fit into the categories listed on the board.
- Give each student a word or phrase and place tape on the back. Let the student come up and tape the word/phrase on the board beside the category that it corresponds with, such as: Tom would be taped under Who, ran would be taped under Did What, to the bus would be taped under Where, and today would be taped under When. Let students decide where to put the word and let the rest of the class help. Discuss and agree with the placement. Continue with as many examples as you have prepared.
- Have students put the sentences back in order on their own paper by copying the taped words on the board to their paper. Model the first one and let them complete two or three more.

Have students create their own sentences using the following chart.

Who?	Did What?	Where?	When?

## Paragraph Activities

### Topic Sentences – Three-Part Method

Identify the item	Select a verb	Finish your thought

### Sentence Starters for Topic Sentences

Provide students with sentence starters to assist them in creating different types of topic sentences. You may wish to add additional goals for writing, as well as additional sentence starters.

Goal	Sentence Starter
Compare and Contrast	Similarities and differences exist between . . . ____ and ____ are very similar in some ways, yet opposites in other ways.
Pros and Cons	While there are multiple benefits of _____, there are also several negative consequences.  It is important to carefully examine the pros and cons of _____.
Description	There are many qualities that describe . . .  _____, _____, and _____ describe _____.
Causation	Understanding the causes of _____ can be complex.  There are numerous effects of _____.

## PEEL

<p><b>P</b></p> <p>Point</p> <p>Make your point.</p>	<p><b>E</b></p> <p>Evidence/Example</p> <p>Back it up – support your point with evidence and examples.</p>	<p><b>E</b></p> <p>Explanation</p> <p>Explain how the evidence supports your point.</p>	<p><b>L</b></p> <p>Link</p> <p>Link this point to the next point in the following paragraph or back to the main question.</p>

## **Expressing Ideas through a What – Why – How Chart**

Teach students how to express their opinions by having them first develop their ideas using a What-Why-How chart. Provide students with a writing prompt and a sample chart. Have students complete the chart by answering the following questions:

What do you think? Share with students that this is their opinion. Sometimes a single sentence will be all that is written in this column. However, sometimes students may need more than one sentence. Students may wish to think of this column as the main idea or their paragraph.

Why do you think it? Have students explain their reasons for having a specific opinion. Students should document each of their reasons in a separate box.

How do you know? In this section, have students provide the evidence or proof that they will use to support their opinion. For every reason listed, students should have a least one example or other type of proof to support the reason.

The How column is often the most difficult for students to complete. We all have opinions and reasons for those opinions. However, it is sometimes difficult to determine the evidence on which we base the opinion.

After completing the chart, show students how each row of the chart can become part of a paragraph.

# What-Why-How

<b>What</b> What do you think?	<b>Why</b> Why do you think it?	<b>How</b> How do you know?
This is your opinion or stance	This is your reason	This your evidence or examples

## Key Concepts for Sentence Combining

Retrieved from the World Wide Web at: <http://penningtonpublishing.com/writing/teaching-essay-strategies.html>

1. **Sentence construction ability is a critical skill for a writer to master.** Sentences are the structures that words are placed into in writing in order to convey meaning. While there are no set rules for what type of sentence works best in a particular situation, well-crafted sentences can improve writing, make it more enjoyable to read, and lead to higher grading of written products.
2. **Sentence combining is an effective method to directly teach sentence construction skills.** Sentence combining instruction generally begins with combining kernel, or irreducible, sentences into effective longer sentences. Students can combine the kernels in any grammatically acceptable way, and begin to explore adding or removing details, and rearranging words or phrases. This method has been found to be effective with students from elementary age to college age. Sentence combining teaches students a method of manipulating sentences that results in more mindful writing practice. Sentence combining teaches sentence structure, sentence editing, punctuation, and paragraph organization. It also provides students with practice controlling syntax, which may improve students' ability to create variety in their writing.
3. **Sentence combining has benefits on the physical demands of writing.** The activities involved in sentence combining often increase student motivation, and reduce the use of choppy or run-on sentences. Sentence combining may also increase students' willingness to experiment with syntactical variations in their writing. Sentence combining activities may also improve students' understanding and use of punctuation, and foster an increased awareness of how readers might respond to their writing, thereby prompting students to consider revision.
4. **Revision is often a sentence-combining act.** Revision is the process of taking already written sentences and transforming or manipulating them to improve them. Sentence combining gives students experience and confidence in the act of revision, and area that is often difficult.
5. **Sentence combining has benefits on the cognitive demands of writing.** Students become more familiar with the syntactic structures used in writing by experimenting with sentence combining, and can free mental energy. Students can also experiment with word order and sentence construction without focusing on generating content.

### Implications for Teachers:

1. Organize lessons to include teacher modeling, supported practices, and independent practice. Introduce: Explain to students that sentence combining is an activity that will help them write more interesting sentences that sound better to readers. Explain that good writers often work with their sentences to make them sound better. Let students know that there can and most often will be more than one right answer, and explain that when there are "mistakes" it's okay. Model: Display clusters of kernel sentences and model or collaboratively model with students how to combine: (The students are happy. The students are smart.) Be sure to explain that many combinations are possible. Discuss the different features of the different sentences. (The smart students are happy. The happy students are smart. The students are smart and happy. Happy and smart are the students.) Supported Practice: Work with students collaboratively, or have students work alone or in groups to practice. Teachers can also provide cues, such as underlining the word that should be combined, providing a cue word in parenthesis, or giving a specific direction as to what types of words to add or remove. (The girl fell over the log. She lost her balance. (because) = The girl fell over the log because she lost her balance. The cake was delicious. The cake was chocolate. = The chocolate cake was delicious.) Independent Practice: Assign activities and have students complete. Share several options at the end, and have students discuss which are the best options, and why.

2. Teach students techniques to use in their sentence combining. Suggest that students try some of the following when combining sentences. (a) Combine the kernels in any grammatically acceptable way. (b) Change the form of words (“threw” to “was throwing”). (c) Add appropriate function words (because). (d) Rearrange by moving words, phrases, and clauses around to produce the best effect. (e) Add or eliminate details.
3. Make sentence-combining activities meaningful. Sentence combining activities can be organized in set sequence, but can also be taught depending areas of need in student writing. These activities can also be organized around content areas, or used with classroom books or literature. Reduce these passages down to kernel sentence levels, and have students combine into new sentences. Compare to the author’s original work, discuss the differences, and reinforce content.
4. Sentence-combining activities must be without risk. Students should be encouraged to experiment in sentence-combining activities. If a combined sentence is grammatically acceptable, there should not be a “right” or “wrong” answer. Rather encourage students to explore and discuss what makes sentences more or less effective for different purposes.
5. Build activities and instruction that will help students’ transfer sentence combining into their own writing. Sentence combining activities must not be stand-alone skill building exercises, but rather transfer to students’ actual writing. Use student-writing examples for sentence combining and include sentence combining as a key element on rubrics for student writing pieces.

## Resources from the World Wide Web

**National Council for Teachers of English.** This site provides lessons and strategies..  
<http://www.ncte.org/Default.aspx>

**PBS Teacher Source.** Lesson plans and lots of activities are included in the teacher section of PBS.  
<http://www.pbs.org/teachers>

**Purdue University's OWL.** One of the most extensive collections of advice about writing found on the web. <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

**ReadWriteThink.** From the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English, this site has classroom resources and professional development activities in the area of integrated reading, writing, and thinking skills. <http://www.readwritethink.org/>

**ReadWorks** provides research-based units and lessons for the classroom. The ReadWorks curriculum is aligned to the Common Core State Standards and the standards of all 50 states.  
<http://www.readworks.org>

**Teach 4 Results.** A list of resources for teaching the writing process.  
[http://iteach4results.wikispaces.com/\\*Writing](http://iteach4results.wikispaces.com/*Writing)

**Teaching That Makes Sense.** A K-12 site with lots of free resources and graphic organizers from Steve Peha. <http://ttms.org/>

**Writer's Web.** Materials from the University of Richmond's Writing Center.  
<http://writing2.richmond.edu/writing/wweb.html>

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