

Grammar Fun and Activities

Tools for the ABE/ESOL Classroom

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Institute for the Professional Development of Adult Educators



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Making Grammar Fun

Students learn and retain more information if they can clearly see how it relates to real-life situations and if the activities used are fun. Use games to take the boredom out of grammar. The following are just a few games that you can use in the classroom.

Parts of Speech Quickie

This activity is designed to give students the opportunity to practice working with parts of speech in a fun way. It requires no preparation and can be done on the spur of the moment.

Directions

Have your students take a sheet of notebook paper and write the names of all the class members in a column. Make two more columns, one headed NOUNS and the other VERBS. Challenge your students to think of a noun and a verb that begin with the same letter as each class member. Later, extend the activity to include adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions. This not only teaches parts of speech but also the skill of alliteration.

Colorful Parts of Speech

To help students learn the functions of words within a sentence, diagramming has often been used. Another method to assist students in understanding how words are related within the context of a sentence is to have them employ the Colorful Parts of Speech.

Directions

Have students copy several sentences on their paper. It is preferable if they use pencil. Assign a particular color to each of the eight parts of speech, such as:

Nouns= blue

Verbs= red

Adverbs= green

Adjectives= yellow

Pronouns= purple

Prepositions= orange

Interjections= brown

Conjunctions= black

Have the students underline each of the words in the sentence according to its function.

NOTE: You may want to start with only nouns and verbs, then progressively add more parts of speech as the students become more proficient. The finished product is definitely colorful and makes a nice display. Because of its appearance, many students think of this as an art project rather than a “diagramming” process and of course everyone knows that art is fun!

Senseless Sentences

Senseless Sentences is an activity designed to give students practice in proofreading sentences for common mistakes in spelling/word usage. The difficulty level can easily be adapted for any level or ability group.

Directions

Prepare a set of cards with the sentences on the front and the correct answer on the back. The mistakes in the sentences should be words that contain the same letters as the correct word. In this manner you are presenting sentences that contain all correctly spelled words; however, the words have been incorrectly used in the context of the sentence.

The following is a list of possible sentences to utilize. The correctly written sentence is given in bold:

Be careful of the name dog.

Be careful of the mean dog.

She cooked in a nap and top.

She cooked in a pot and pan.

We caught the turtle in a ten.

We caught the turtle in a net.

The act is drinking milk again.

The cat is drinking milk again.

The next town is a lime away.

The next town is a mile away.

The cup is no the dining room bleat.

The cup is on the dining room table.

There was an low screeching in the attic.

There was an owl screeching in the attic.

A white save is on the shelf.

A white vase is on the shelf.

She tea the ripe lump.

She ate the ripe plum.

The little pig's house saw built of warts.

The little pig's house was built of straw.

The fox was caught in a part.

The fox was caught in a trap.

She watered the garden with a shoe.

She watered the garden with a hose.

John now the slat game.

John won the last game.

Leon didn't tea her doc sandwich at lunch today.
Noel didn't eat her cod sandwich at lunch today.

She has a grin on her finger.
She has a ring on her finger.

Please don't pest no the rug.
Please don't step on the rug.

Options

Prepare the cards and place them in a learning center. Individual students can use them at a specified time or as an extra activity when their class work has been completed.

Prepare the cards and present one a day to the whole class. You may designate a specific time during the day as Senseless Sentences time or allow the students to work on the activity throughout the day until a solution is reached.

Grammar Wheels

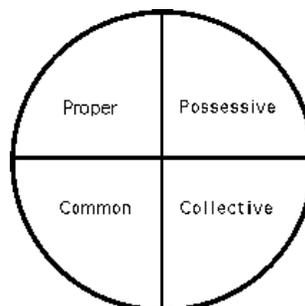
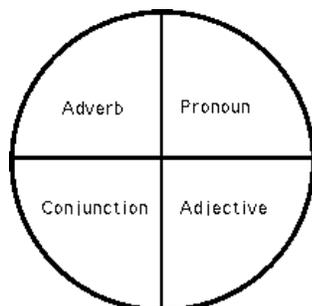
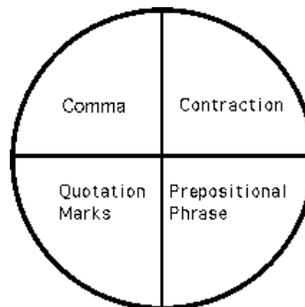
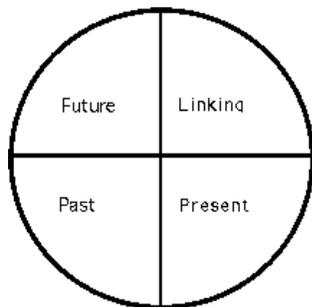
Grammar Wheels is an activity designed to give students practice writing sentences containing particular grammatical elements.

Directions

Make the following wheels on heavy cardboard or poster board. You may wish to make each wheel as a separate entity, although you may want to place all on a single poster board. Laminate the wheels for durability and place a spinner in the center of each wheel.

Direct each student to have a piece of paper and a writing utensil. You may wish to attach the wheels to a chalkboard for ease in use. Have a student come to the board and spin the first wheel. Have another student spin the second, another student the third, and a fourth student to spin the final wheel. Announce the selections and write them on the board. Have the students write a sentence that contains all of the selected grammatical elements.

Check their work and award points for the correct answers.



Variations

Begin with only one wheel and progress to additional ones. Spin the wheels to determine the students' homework for an evening. Allow students to suggest additional topics for inclusion on a wheel. Then create wheels using their suggestions.

KABOOM!!!

KABOOM!!! is designed to allow students practice in identifying the four types of sentences: interrogative, declarative, imperative, and exclamatory. It can be utilized with the entire class divided into several teams or with a small group of students each working as an individual player.

Materials

An empty *Pringle's* container with a lid, colored paper, marking pens, glue or tape, scissors, clear contact paper or laminating materials

Construction

- Clean the *Pringle's* container and set aside.
- Print the title KABOOM!!! on one 8 1/2" by 11" sheet of colored paper and glue this to the side of the container.
- Cut the colored paper into strips that will fit inside the container.
- On each strip print a sentence. Make an equal variety of declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory sentences.
- On four to five strips, print the word KABOOM!!!
- Laminate the strips or cover them with clear contact paper for durability.
- Shuffle all the strips and place them in the container.
- KABOOM!!! is now ready to play.

To Play

Divide the class into teams of four to five students. Have one member of the first team select a strip at random from the container and read it to his/her group.

The team is permitted a minimum amount of time for discussion regarding the type of sentence written on the strip. At the end of time, the team must identify the type of sentence written on its strip. If correct, the team keeps the strip. If not correct, the strip is returned to the container. However, if a team selects a KABOOM!!! strip, the team must return all its strips to the container and forfeit its turn. Play continues for a specified amount of time. At the end of time, the winner is the team with the most strips in its possession.

Variations

This activity can be used for other areas of grammar such as:

- Synonyms and antonyms, named OH NO!!!
- Similes and metaphors, named OUCH!!!
- Contractions, named BANG!!!
- End punctuation, named GOTCHA!!!
- Sentences vs. sentence fragments, named ZAP!!!

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. As your students progress in their ability to play this game, up the number of cards per hand to eight, then nine, then ten. Just remember to add more cards to the deck.

High Rollers

High Rollers is an activity designed to give students practice with necessary English or grammar skills. The directions given are for practicing sentence types. High Rollers is a simple idea that can easily be adapted to meet the needs of any grade level or ability level.

Materials

- A wooden die (about 1 1/2" per side) - These can be purchased at teacher supply stores or can be made.
- Colored circular stickers
- Fine-tipped permanent marker

Construction

- Place a different color sticker on four sides of the die.
- On the remaining two sides place a white sticker.
- On one sticker, write the abbreviation DEC.
- On another, write INT.
- On a third, write IMP.
- On the last, write EX.
- Leave the two white stickers blank.

To Play

Divide your class into teams of four to five students.

Have the first team roll the die. If they roll the DEC., the team has 15 seconds to compose a declarative sentence. If they roll the INT., the team has 15 seconds to compose an interrogative sentence. If they roll the IMP., the team has 15 seconds to compose an imperative sentence. If they roll the EX., the team has 15 seconds to compose an exclamatory sentence. If they roll a white sticker, the team has 15 seconds to compose a sentence of its choice, but they must identify the type of sentence they have just composed.

Award one point for any correct response. Continue with the next team in like manner. At the end of a specified amount of time, tally the points. Award the winners a small prize.

Grammar Dice

Similar to High Rollers, but with more ideas.

Materials

- Square blocks of wood or purchased large wooden dice with sticky dots
- Fine-tipped permanent marker
- Plastic zipper-type bag or other storage container

Assembly

- If using blocks of wood, cut them to form a cube about one inch on all sides.
- Place a sticky dot on each side of the cube.
- Determine the skill on which you will be focusing and write a symbol, word, etc. on each face.

Possible skills:

- Types of sentences (exclamatory, imperative, compound, etc.)
- Punctuation marks
- Affixes
- Parts of speech
- Store the dice in plastic zipper bags or another container.

Hints

- You may want to make multiples of each type of die. By having multiple dice, you can have students working in cooperative groups on an activity, or you can place them in a learning center and have enough for several students to be using them at one time.
- Mark one face on every cube "choice," giving the student who rolls this face an opportunity to select a response.
- Store each 'type' of die in its own plastic bag labeled with the topic.

Uses

- Roll a die and write the particular type of sentence shown on the upright face.
- Take a sentence type die and mix it with a punctuation die. Roll the dice in combination and create sentences using the two features shown.
- Use a punctuation die and a set of cards upon which are written weekly spelling words. Roll the die and draw a card. Create a sentence using the two features. For an extra challenge, add a sentence type die to this activity.
- Use a part of speech die in conjunction with punctuation and sentence type dice to create sentences.
- Use an affixes die and a set of cards upon which are written root words and base words. Create a word from your combination; use it in a sentence. Score points for correct spelling and usage.

English Acrostics

This is a fun learning activity that can be adapted to review any skill and also reinforces the concept of categorization.

Directions

Instruct the students to print the letters of a day or event on a sheet of 9" x 12" white construction paper or newsprint, one letter per row/line e.g., Thanksgiving, Happy Holidays, etc.

Have the students make three or more columns across the paper, printing the headings NOUN, VERB, ADJECTIVE, or those of your choice, at the top of each column.

Supply a newspaper or magazine for each student, plus glue and scissors. Instruct the students to locate words in their newspapers or magazines that match the column heading and beginning with the letter of each row, cut them out and glue them in the appropriate spaces. To complete the activity, have the students write a well-developed sentence that contains all of the words in each row.

Morning Message

Compose a morning message that contains many examples of what you want the students to learn. Example: pronoun-referent. Several of your sentences would include nouns that would be written as a pronoun later in the sentence.

After you have read the morning message together, ask your students:

What do you notice?

What else?

How does it sound when we read it?

What would change if we removed "this" or "that"?

Which do you prefer? Why?

Write down what your students learned about the sentences. Try to make a rule about what you and your students noticed.

Punctuation Scavenger Hunt

Print out a short paragraph of text that uses a variety of punctuation marks. Make enough copies to give one to every two students. Be sure it is large and easy to read.

Identify a mark (period, question mark, etc.) and see which team can find an example first. Let the first finders help the others locate the mark you're looking for. Next, ask if anyone knows why it is there.

Variations:

See if students can identify key words: "Who can find the word 'dog' in your paragraph? Put your finger on it when you find it."

Longest sentence? Comma? Quotation marks? Name of a person? Let students who identify an item correctly ask the next question.

Grammar Scavenger Hunt

How many grammar elements can you find in the newspaper? Here are the rules: Select one section of the newspaper. When the instructor says “go,” begin looking for an example of each element in the chart. Write each example in its appropriate box. If you finish early, find additional examples.

Scoring: Each section of the chart that has at least one example is worth 1 point.

Each section of the chart that has two or three examples is worth 2 points.

Each section of the chart that has more than three examples is worth 4 points.

Common noun	
Proper noun	
Linking verb	
Action verb	
Irregular verb	
Adjective	
Adverb	
Appositive	
Compound Sentence	
Conjunction	
Interjection	
Transition Word	

Sentence Auction: Reviewing Grammar

Holding 'Sentence Auctions' is a fun way to help students review key points in grammar and sentence construction while having fun. Basically, students in small groups are given some 'money' with which to bid on various sentences. These sentences include correct and incorrect sentences; the group which 'buys' the most correct sentences wins the game.

- Divide the class into small groups of 3 or 4 students per group.
- Talk about auctions: Do the students know what they are? Can they describe an auction? Have they ever been to an auction?
- Explain the rules of this auction.
 - The aim of the game is to buy as many correct sentences as possible
 - Each group will have \$3000 to spend
 - Bids begin at \$200
 - Bids increase by \$100 each bid
 - The sentence will be sold to the highest bidder (remember? "\$400 going once, \$400 going twice, \$400 sold to group X!")
 - The winner of the game is the group which has bought the most correct sentences
- You can make the auction more difficult by declaring the winner based on the number of correct sentences minus the number of incorrect sentences (5 correct sentences minus 3 incorrect = two correct sentences)
- Once the game has finished, go through each sentence saying whether it is correct or incorrect.
- Have a fun celebration of the winning team!
- After things have calmed down, go through each sentence explaining any grammar / usage questions that arise.

Sentence Auction

Decide which sentences you would like to buy! Collect correct masterpieces! Watch out for incorrect fakes!

1. The film is so an interesting adaptation of the novel that I highly recommend it.
2. If she had stayed in a better hotel, she would have enjoyed her vacation.
3. Not only should he study more, but also should he get more sleep.
4. I would really like to know whether she plans on joining our group.
5. John is a very horrible judge of character.
6. Look at those dark clouds on the horizon! It'll rain before long.
7. When I stopped to talk to Mary, she was picking some flowers in her garden.
8. Our family would go to the park every Sunday when we lived in London.
9. If he were in charge of the department, he would improve staff communication.
10. They had finished their work by the time we arrived.
11. Jack can't have been at home, he told me he was going to be at work.
12. Did you remember locking the door?
13. I'll finish my homework by the time you get back.
14. The number of smokers have been dropping steadily for twenty years.

Pardon Me, Your Modifier is Dangling: A Creative Way to Teach

Dangling and Misplaced Modifiers

Objectives

- To understand misplaced and dangling modifiers
- To correct misplaced and dangling modifiers
- To illustrate misplaced and dangling modifiers

Materials

- Class activities on dangling/misplaced modifiers
- White typing paper
- Strips of paper with dangling/misplaced modifiers
- Markers
- Hole puncher
- Twine

Procedures

1. Teach a standard lesson on dangling/misplaced modifiers.
2. Demonstrate how to illustrate a dangling/misplaced modifier, emphasizing the humor of the sentence.
3. Each student will pick a dangling/misplaced modifier to illustrate.
4. Each picture should include an illustration of the dangling/misplaced modifier, the actual sentence underneath it, and a corrected sentence on the back.
5. Supply students with markers to make drawings more effective.
6. After all the illustrations are collected, punch holes in the top of the picture.
7. Using the twine, string all of the illustrations together and hang them from the ceiling in the classroom – thus becoming “dangling.”

Sample Sentences to Use:

A woman passed by, leading a Springer spaniel in a long black dress.

After trying the combination several times, the lock finally opened.

After reading the paper, the telephone rang.

Eating too much, my stomach was upset.

Not seeing the pothole, the skateboard went flying.

Oswald and Hilda found the flowers hiking up the mountain.

I found my missing baseball glove cleaning my room.

Don't try to pat the dog on the porch that is growling.

The smoke alarm went off while cooking my dinner.

We saw several monkeys on vacation in Mexico.

Marin watched a radiant sunset climbing a hill.

Tense Review

Make multiple copies of this page. Cut the sentences into strips and place in an envelope. Divide the participants into groups. Give each group a complete set of all of the sentences to match. Remind the participants that combinations must be grammatically correct and logical. The sheet has a total of eleven sentences.

Once participants have found the correct matches, have them read the sentences and identify both the timeframe and the tense(s) used.

Correct Sentences

By the time my brother arrives, I'll have cleaned the whole house.

I didn't go out for dinner because I had already eaten.

They go to the movies every Friday night.

Don't call me after 11 o'clock; I'll be sleeping.

His flight arrives tomorrow at five.

I've been to Spain four times.

When you get back to town, we'll have a party.

I've been waiting here for almost an hour.

I stayed home last night and watched television.

I was studying when the fire started.

I won't speak to him until he apologizes.

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

Bingo Card

How to play: Check off each block when you hear or see these words in the classroom. When you get five blocks horizontally, vertically, or diagonally, stand up and shout **BINGO!**

Appositive	Agreement	Adverb	Subordinate Clause	Plural
Pronoun Reference	Verb	Conjunction	Noun	Predicate
Preposition	Subject	BINGO	Semicolon	Dangling Modifier
Comma Splice	Introductory Phrase	Independent Clause	Dependent Clause	Antecedent
Pronoun Shift	Homonym	Adjective	Inverted Structure	Parallelism

Conquering Punctuation

Did you know that there are fourteen punctuation marks in English grammar? The following chart will help you if you can't remember them all.

Summary of Punctuation Marks

Mark	Name	Example
.	full stop/period	I like English.
,	comma	I speak English, French, and Thai.
;	semi-colon	I don't often go swimming; I prefer to play tennis.
:	colon	You have two choices: finish the work today or lose the contract.
-	hyphen	This is a rather out-of-date book.
—	dash	In each town—London, Paris and Rome—we stayed in youth hostels.
?	question mark	Where is Shangri-La?
!	exclamation mark	"Help!" she cried. "I'm drowning!"
/	oblique/slash	Please press your browser's Refresh/Reload button.
"	quotation marks	"I love you," she said.
'	apostrophe	This is John's car.
()	round brackets	I went to Bangkok (my favorite city) and stayed there for two weeks.
[]	square brackets	The newspaper reported that the hostages [most of them French] had been released.
...	ellipsis	One happy customer wrote: "This is the best program...that I have ever seen."

Question Mark, Quotation Mark and Parentheses Quiz

Sometimes teachers need to assess just how their students are doing on specific areas of grammar. Start at the sentence level and then apply the same skills to real-world writings. A contextualized approach is the most effective way to teach grammar.

Correct any errors in the following sentences.

1. He wanted to know when you will be here?
2. "Well, she said, "you certainly didn't waste any time."
3. "Is it almost over?" he asked?
4. "I've had it up to here!", she screamed.
5. The song asks, "Would you like to swing on a star"?
6. Bob said, "She said, "I'll never leave you."
7. She requested (actually she pleaded, that her name be withheld.
8. This contract guarantees that we will 1 deliver the merchandise, 2 pay for all damaged goods, and 3 make you the exclusive carrier of our products.
9. "May I have a rain check on that lunch"? I asked.
10. Do you believe that grammar is a necessary skill for teachers' of English!

Answers

1. He wanted to know when you will be here.
2. "Well," she said, "you certainly didn't waste any time."
3. "Is it almost over?" he asked.
4. "I've had it up to here!" she screamed.
5. The song asks, "Would you like to swing on a star?"
6. Bob said, "She said, 'I'll never leave you.'"
7. She requested (actually she pleaded) that her name be withheld. (OR use commas instead of parentheses.)
8. This contract guarantees that we will 1.) deliver the merchandise, 2.) pay for all damaged goods, and 3.) make you the exclusive carrier of our products. (OR just use periods or parentheses after the numbers)
9. "May I have a rain check on that lunch?" I asked.
10. Do you believe that grammar is a necessary skill for teachers of English?