

# Teaching ideas

## Dropping in

This game teaches children how to 'drop' clauses into simple sentences to add additional information. This can be a simple skill for children to pick up and is a good way to help out children who tend to rely on using only simple and compound sentences in their writing.

Before playing this game children need to be able to confidently write simple sentences that make sense.

### How to play

This activity takes children through each step page by page with examples. Go through each step with the whole class. Discuss each step.

- 1) Write a simple sentence about a character. Remind children that this sentence will need to have a verb in it.
- 2) Discuss some other ways that you could describe the character.
- 3) Drop the extra bit of information into the sentence and put commas around this information.

Click on **Get Character** to get a new character to write about. As a class, work through the above steps.

When children are more confident ask them to work in pairs on a whiteboard. Click **Get Character** and ask each pair to work together through the three steps to write a new sentence. It can be helpful if children have two different coloured whiteboard pens so that they can write the dropped in clause in a different colour.

Ask all pairs to hold up their whiteboards. Walk around the class and read out the sentences that children have written. Don't point out any mistakes yet. It will be more powerful if children identify any problems themselves.

Ask children to pass their boards to another pair. Ask them all to check for:

- sense
- capital letter
- full stop
- two commas in the right places.

Ask children to hand the boards back and feed back to the children that wrote the sentence.

### Differentiation

Working in mixed ability pairs can be effective. You could ask the children to work like a tag team with the less able child writing the simple sentence and then passing it over to their partner for the dropping in.

Encourage all children to be involved in discussing ways to describe the characters. Children's descriptive skills often outstrip their recording skills.

You could make sure that you use characters that have phonically simple names e.g. pig, rat, dog. You could also ensure that children have access to word banks, displays etc that show useful words e.g. colours, body parts etc.

Encourage more able children to be very thorough in checking and improving their own sentences.

# Teaching ideas

Challenge them to move away from very obvious descriptions and make more subtle observations.

You could try banning certain descriptive words e.g. big, tall, short, nice, happy etc. You could do this by telling the children what the banned words are. Alternatively, you could secretly put four or five banned words in an envelope. After the children have written their sentences, open the envelope and see if any of the children have used the illegal words. This should encourage the children to think about which words you might have included in the banned list and get into the habit of trying to avoid using them.