

Teaching ideas

Sentence Laboratory

This game helps children to write in full sentences and remember to use capital letters and full stops. It encourages them to go through the steps below whenever they write sentences.

Talk it - Write it - Check it

There are 3 different game options.

1 word - Children are given one word to put into a simple sentence.

2 word - Children have to put two words into a simple sentence.

3 word - Children are given three words one of which is a connective. They have to make a compound or complex sentence.

How to play

Obviously you can use this game in any way you wish but what follows is one idea which has worked well in many classroom environments

Ask children to work in pairs or small groups. Mixed ability pairings are most effective. They will need one whiteboard and a pen between the pair/group.

- 1) Click **Get Word** to get a random word. If you don't like the one you get or you've had it before keep clicking until you get one you are happy with. Alternatively, type in a word of your choice.
 - 2) Ask the children to **TALK IT**. They must say a sentence, containing the selected word. that makes sense. Both partners need to be happy with the sentence
 - 3) Ask the children to pick up their whiteboard pens and explain that when you press **Play** the test tube will start to fill up. Before the test tube overflows, each pair must write their sentence down on their whiteboard (**WRITE IT**) and check that it makes sense (**CHECK IT**).
 - 4) Ask children to show you their whiteboards. Walk around the class reading out the sentences and noting for yourself any pairs who have struggled but don't comment yet on any mistakes that have been made (it will be more powerful if the children identify mistakes).
 - 5) Ask all pairs to pass their whiteboard to another pair of children. Ask those children to check the sentence using the checklist on screen. Encourage them to make corrections and give a score out of 3. You may need to help out pairs that have tricky errors to correct.
 - 6) Ask children to pass the whiteboards back and verbally feed back to each other about how they did.
- NB Some classes/children find this very difficult and may need prior training to enable them to give and receive negative feedback without arguing or getting upset. If this is the case, it can be useful to give them stock phrases to use. E.g. You did really well to get the capital letters and full stops but you missed out a word here. It will also help if you can get the children to see that making mistakes is a good thing as we learn lots when we make mistakes. Try to really celebrate pairs who make mistakes pointing out that they probably made mistakes because they stretched themselves to try something tricky. It can also help to get children to say thank you and shake hands with the pair who gave them feedback.
- 7) Ask children to put their hands up and share the mistakes they made that they have now learned from and won't make again.

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Repeat with a new word. In a 15 minute starter session you can generally get through 4 or 5 words.

Differentiation

Mixed ability pairings are very effective.

Ensure that any children who find reading and/or writing difficult are working with a partner who can read and write. Insist however, that both partners are equally involved in the TALK IT part of creating the sentence. It can also help to give these children the task of being capital letter and full stop detectives and making certain that their partner includes these.

More able children will generally choose to write more complicated sentences and therefore often make lots of mistakes. Celebrate their attempts and make sure that they don't become disheartened.