

# Teaching ideas

## Sentence Magic

This game helps children to take simple sentences and experiment with changing and improving them in a wide variety of ways.

To really benefit from this game children need to be able to write simple and complex sentences independently.

Remind children that whenever they write sentences they should remember to:

### Talk it - Write it - Check it

There are three different options in this game.

**Starting Sentences** - This section encourages children to experiment with a range of different ways of starting sentences.

**Adding bits in** - Children experiment with adding information into the middle or end of a sentence in different ways.

**Using your senses** - Children explore the effects of using their senses to add detail to their sentences.

### How to play

Obviously you can use this game in any way you wish. The following steps are simply ideas. These steps work equally well for any of the three options above.

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

- 1) Click on one of the bottles of potion on the right hand side of the screen. This will bring up a page detailing a particular way in which you can improve a dull sentence. It will give three examples and some pages will include additional tips.
- 2) Read through the page as a class and ensure children are clear about what has been done to the basic sentences.
- 3) Click on the **Back** button.
- 4) Generate a simple sentence by clicking on **Get Sentence**. If you don't like the sentence or you have used it before just keep clicking until you get one you like. Alternatively, enter one of your own in the box provided.
- 5) Model altering this sentence in the way that was illustrated when you clicked on the potion bottle. Discuss ideas, suggestions and possibilities as a class.
- 6) When you feel that the children are confident, select a new sentence and get them to make the improvement in pairs and record their ideas on whiteboards.
- 7) Ask all children to hold up their whiteboards. Read out a selection and discuss how different all the sentences have now become.

Repeat with a new sentence. Initially it is best to stick to one potion bottle (technique) in one session to allow children to really become familiar with that skill. However, as children become more confident you may like to stick to one sentence for the whole session and try altering it with various different potion bottles.

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## Differentiation

Mixed ability pairings can be very effective. Children who are not yet ready to write at this level may be able to offer valuable ideas orally. It is important that children who have descriptive skills that are more advanced than their recording skills have an opportunity to hone these skills.

Children who need more work on writing simple sentences could work independently whilst the rest of the class are playing this game. They could be challenged to write the simple sentences that the class will be trying to enhance in a subsequent session.

Occasionally, children who need to work on specific elements of sentence writing e.g. using capital letters and full stops could be given the job of being 'sentence police'. They can then prowl the room whilst other children are writing sentences and pounce whenever they see missing or misplaced capital letters and full stops. Beware - some children really relish this role and become quite fanatical about it in all lessons. It dramatically improves their punctuation but drives the rest of the class round the bend.

Make explicit the expectation that everybody (but especially the most able children) will challenge themselves to write the most imaginative sentences that they can. You may want to set specific challenges depending on the technique that is being worked on. It is a good idea to tell certain of the most able children that they have to tackle this challenge but encourage the rest of the class to have a go too. They may surprise you.

The challenges would be different for each potion (technique) but here are a few possible examples:

Starting Sentences > When - Try to use more than one word to say when (ie they can't just use later or yesterday to start their sentence).

Adding bits in > Adverbs - Try not to use the more obvious adjectives - slowly, quickly, happily, angrily.

Using your senses > Sight - Try to include tiny details that you can see not just the big obvious things.

A further challenge for more able children is to get them to use more than one potion (technique) on the same sentence.