

GRAMMAR ESSENTIALS

This pack of resources is designed to provide ideas and approaches for bedding grammar into your teaching.

All of the resources I use today will be available on my website: www.geoffbarton.co.uk.

If there's anything you can't find, email me at geoffbarton@mac.com.

Geoff Barton
October, 06

WHAT ARE THE ESSENTIAL GRAMMAR/WRITING POINTS NEEDED FOR FICTION AND NON-FICTION ...?

Writing techniques (fiction):

- Sentence variety for effect: simple, compound, complex*
- Multiple narration
- Plot - dialogue - description
- Location of the speech verb
- Direct / indirect speech
- Figurative language
- Descriptive detail
- Point of view

Writing techniques (Non-fiction):

- Topic sentences
- Headlines / subheadings / puns
- Paragraph organisation - main point ... illustration ... contrast
- Connectives
- Tense
- Sentence functions: statement, command, question, exclamation
- Formality / impersonal tones
- Layout features
- Building an argument: generalisation, supporting points, statistics, facts, quotation

THE GRAMMAR BASICS:

- 1 – simple sentences
- 2 – modifying simple sentences
- 3 – compound sentences
- 4 – complex sentences
- 5 – punctuation

1 HOW TO ... CREATE SIMPLE SENTENCES

Simple sentences may be very short:

a) The cat has fleas.

Or longer:

b) The cat on the neighbouring housing estate has developed a nasty case of flea infection.

Example (b) is much longer than (a), but it is still a simple sentence because:

- It has a single subject (“the cat”)
- It contains a single verb or verb phrase (eg has developed)
- It makes sense on its own
- It is not joined to another clause

Plus: in writing it has a capital letter at the start and a full stop at the end.

Glossary

Verb chain

Sometimes we use a number of verbs together to add detail, for example about tense (when something happened).

For example:

I eat

Eat = main verb

I have eaten = verb phrase (eaten = main verb, have = auxiliary verb)

I will eat = verb phrase (eat = main verb, will = auxiliary verb)

I would have eaten = verb phrase (eaten = main verb, would = auxiliary verb, have = auxiliary verb)

ACTIVE WRITING

Many books for young children use simple sentences to teach children to read, like this:

Peter is here. Jane is here. Here they are in the water. They like the water. Here is Pat, the dog. Pat likes the water. Pat likes fun.

These are short simple sentences aimed at helping children to recognise a small number of key words. To an older reader it can feel babyish.

What happens when you use short simple sentences for different contexts?

- 1 Choose one of the story contexts below.
- 2 Then write one paragraph using short simple sentences.
- 3 Then discuss or write about the effect of using short simple sentences in that context. Do they:

- Add drama? Make it feel childish? Give impact? Add clarity? Make it easy to follow? Feel repetitive?

Story contexts:

A storm at sea: a small fishing-boat is caught in the middle of it.

OR

An earthquake in a large city: people narrowly escape from a tall tower-block.

Use short simple sentences, as used in the Peter and Jane books, and see what the effect is. You might start like this:

The sea grew wild. The sky was ...

Or

People screamed. The floor

We can add details to simple sentences using a number of techniques:

Adjectives to describe the noun (eg slimy + monster)

Phrases to describe place and manner (eg in a ditch)

Adverbs to describe the manner of something (eg loudly)

Adding features like this to a sentence is known as **modification**.

The sentences are still simple because they have one subject and one verb. But the extra detail makes them more precise and interesting to read.

Glossary

Modification

Modification allows us to add detail to texts. For example, we can ...:

Modify a noun with an adjective: the **ugly** animal

Modify a noun with a phrase: the animal **on the car-park**

Modify a noun with a clause: the animal **which I hated to look at**

Modify an adjective with an adverb: the **very** ugly animal

Modify a verb with an adverb: the house was **slowly** collapsing

Modify a verb with a phrase: the house was collapsing **before our eyes**

Modify a verb with a clause: the house was collapsing, **which I had first noticed** at noon

PRACTISING THE SKILL

Modifying simple sentences in this way is useful because it can make your sentences more interesting. But you can also be tempted to add too many details.

Take this simple sentence.

The wind was howling.

Add three adjectives about the tree.

Add two adverbs about how the wind howled.

Add a phrase about where it happened (eg in the woods) or when (yesterday/last week).

Does your sentence feel too clogged up with details?

Add another adjective or adverb or phrase.

Look at these densely-written sentences. Which of them have too much detail in your opinion?

- A The cold, grey, damp snow lay sparkling brightly and attractively on the long, flat, barren field.
- B Ageing ex-hippy Ron Wallace yesterday bought a large bottle of raspberry-flavoured medicine in his local chemist's shop.
- C Happy-go-lucky brain surgeon Veronica Nettleton rested for a moment on her luxury 4-berth yacht off Lowestoft pier near the Magpie chip

CORE KNOWLEDGE

Sentences can be joined together using conjunctions and, or or but. This makes simple sentences into compound sentences. For example:

[A/w arrows to label and explain here]:

2 simple sentences ...

Mobile phones are a menace. They drive me mad.

...can become one compound sentence:

Mobile phones are a menace and they drive me mad.

PRACTISING THE SKILL

Take these pairs of simple sentences and make them into compound sentences using and, but or or.

1. The clouds look dark. It might rain.
2. The rain seems heavy. There is bright sky ahead.
3. You could stay indoors. You could go outside.
4. It's certainly warm in here. We'll have to leave eventually.
5. I used to hate wet weather. I thought I did.

In that activity how did you decide whether to use and, but or or? Could you have used any of the three coordinators?

Choose one of the topics below. Write all three of your sentences on this topic. Use the sentence models to get you started, if you wish.

Write down three coordinated sentences of your own – one using and, one using but and one using or.

Topics

- A visit to town – describe which shops you went to.
- Something that happened on the way to school this morning.
- A description of the classroom you are in at the moment.

Sentence models

Last week I and/but/or I

Today my friend and/but/or the bus

The room is and/but/or it is

In theory you could use the conjunctions and, but and or to join simple sentences together endlessly. You sometimes find young children do this ...

I am four and my sister is three and she is often cross but today she is happy and we are going for a picnic but I am taking my bucket and spade and we will play on the beach but not if it's raining and then we will come home and I will watch Tweenies and ...

A/W: child's hand-written signature
George, age 4

Take Katie's long compound sentence. Make it more controlled by leaving some sentences as compound sentences and making others into simple sentences.

Rewrite her paragraph for her so that it becomes clearer for a reader to follow..

4 HOW TO CREATE COMPLEX SENTENCES

CORE KNOWLEDGE

Using complex sentences in your writing can really improve your written style.

You can create complex sentences in a number of ways:

a) Use conjunctions between clauses:

Until:	he kept playing until everyone had left the room
Although	he kept playing although no one was listening
Before	he kept playing before finally giving up
Since	he kept paying since they were paying him well

b) Use conjunctions at the start of sentences:

Although	although everyone had left the room, he kept playing
Because	because everyone had left the room, he stopped playing
Even though	no one was listening, he kept playing

c) Use relative pronouns to pack more information into a sentence:

The piano, WHICH had been tuned that morning, was in perfect condition.
The piano was in perfect condition, WHICH made a nice change.
The music THAT he brought was pretty basic.
The boss WHO paid him seemed happy enough.

C: PRACTISING THE SKILL

The grid below contains lots of information about a subject. Practise making different types of sentence which contain all of the information about the subject.

Here's an example.

Subject	Information
My uncle	42 very funny

	works in an office broke his leg skiing last year
--	--

A: Simple sentence version:

- My 42-year old uncle is very funny. He works in an office. He was skiing last year. He broke his leg.

B: Compound sentence version:

- My 42-year old uncle is very funny and he works in an office, and he was skiing last year but he broke his leg.

C: Complex sentence version:

- My uncle, who is 42 and works in an office, broke his leg skiing last year.

- Which sounds most like spoken English?
- Which sounds most like a report?
- Which sounds most fluent?

Practise writing the three sentence types yourself.

For each subject, write a simple sentence version; a compound sentence version; and a complex sentence version – as in activity 6.

1:

Subject	Information
Mr Hall	41 teacher born in Harrogate never loses his temper

2:

Subject	Information
The wind	Fierce Very cold Started blowing this morning before daylight will probably carry on all day

3

Subject	Information
Annette	14 away from school today

	feeling ill with stomach ache feels worse after watching daytime television
--	--

4

Subject	Information
The water	Just poured from the jug Bit murky Has a small worm floating in it

5

Subject	Information
The computer	Just bought Showing strange behaviour Screen keeps freezing Probably has a problem with the hard drive Needs to go back to the supplier

When do complex sentences begin to get overloaded with information? Is it possible to try to cram in too many details?

a) Try making a complex sentence from this:

Subject	Information
My sister	Jane 12 likes music has a best friend called Lisa has gone into town this afternoon hoping to buy new CD worried she can't afford it asked if she could borrow money from me I said – only if you pay me interest

Is it impossible to get all this information into one sentence?

SPEECH PUNCTUATION CHECKLIST

A: CORE KNOWLEDGE

Here are the essential rules of direct speech. The example on the right gives you more hints on making speech clear.

1. Use speech marks around the words a person actually says
2. Place each new speaker's words on a different line, as if you were beginning a new paragraph.
3. Start their spoken words with a capital letters
4. Always place a punctuation mark at the end of the speech marks, on the inside. This might be a full stop, question mark, exclamation mark or comma.

Example

"I feel sick," said my brother.
I replied, "You're kidding?"
"Afraid not," he said.
"Well," I said, "that'll teach you to watch daytime TV. "

Note:

- New speaker, new line.
- Capital letter at the start of the speaker's words
- Punctuation marks at the end of the words - on the inside
- Comma shows that the sentence continues.
- If the sentence carries on, use a small letter, even after a question mark.
- If the speaker's words fall into two sections, the second section does not need a capital letter.

PUNCTUATION CHECKLIST

Capital letters:

- 1 show the start of sentences.
- 2 show the names of people (Fred), places (Halifax), and products (Pepsi).

Full stops:

- 1 show the end of sentences.
Eg This sentence ends now.

Commas:

- 1 break up items in a list
Eg The house was quiet, cold and eerie.
- 2 separate clauses
eg the cat, which was looking awful, collapsed on the carpet.
Looking awful, the cat collapsed on the carpet.
- 3 introduces a name when we are addressing someone
eg: Hello, Mum.
- 4 in direct speech, they separate the words someone says from the speech verb
eg "Nice car," she said.
He replied, "Thanks"

Question marks:

- 1 show questions
Eg What on earth is that?

Exclamation marks:

- 1 show emotion or excitement
eg get out of here!

The colon (:):

- 1 introduces a list, quotation or statement:
Eg Please bring the following: a raincoat, some boots and some sandwiches
There were many times he regretted his behaviour: this was the first

The semi-colon (;):

- 1 separates longer items (usually phrases or clauses) in a list, to give clarity.
Eg Please bring the following: a raincoat or waterproof jacket; some good quality walking boots (but not wellingtons); something to eat, preferably sandwiches
- 2 Sometimes we use it within sentences to separate clauses on a similar topic
eg My mum likes my pet rat; my dad prefers my pirhana

TEXT TYPES: A SUMMARY OF KEY FEATURES

Instructions

Purpose: to instruct how something should be done through a series of sequenced steps

Structure (Text level)

Opening statement should indicate *How to.....*

Written in order that it should happen (chronological order)

Clear sequence marked by bullet points, numbers, letters

Often there is a diagram or illustration

Language Features (Word and Sentence level)

Imperative verbs in present tense

Sentences should be short and each one cover one instruction only.

Any connective words will relate to the order in which things happen e.g. *next, then, when*

Focuses on generalised human agents rather than on named individuals

Adjectives/adverbs used only to be specific: e.g. connect the *brown* wire to the battery

Explanation

Purpose: to explain how or why something works/happens

Structure (Text level)

General statement to introduce the topic

Written step-by-step until explanation is finished

Paragraphs constructed with an opening point and then further details or evidence to illustrate or support the opening point

Final statement sums up the main points that have been made

Language Features (Word and Sentence level)

Can be written in past or present tense

Connectives will relate to time, cause or comparison (see connectives chart)
e.g. *at first, from that point, as a result, similarly*

Use adjectives/adverbs only to be specific e.g. their ships were *smaller* and *more manoeuvrable*

Information (Non-chronological)

Purpose: to describe the way things are

Structure (Text level)

Opening statement should give a general classification e.g. *Mammals are animals with fur or hair* followed by further technical classification if required e.g. *Like birds, they are warm-blooded..*

Sequence is dictated by category of information

Sentences giving similar information are organised in the same paragraph or series of paragraphs

Sections containing one or several paragraphs can be divided by headings/sub-headings

Sections might include: description of phenomena including some or all of its qualities
parts and functions
habits/behaviour or uses

Language features (Word and Sentence level)

Written in present tense

Connectives of adding or sequencing used to join sentences or paragraphs giving similar information e.g. *in addition, also, furthermore*

Connectives of comparing and contrasting used to join sentences or paragraphs giving different types of information e.g. *compared with, unlike, in a similar manner*

Adjectives and adverbs used to aid categorisation

Discursive writing – analysis including essay writing

Purpose: to present arguments and information from differing viewpoints

Structure (Text level)

Opening statement of the issue with a preview of the main arguments

Each paragraph contains the statement of one argument for or against followed by supporting evidence

Or

Each paragraph contains one argument with some supporting evidence followed by a counter argument and supporting evidence

Quotations used to support arguments/points

Final statement will sum up and draw conclusions from arguments made and may include writer's own recommendation or opinion

Language Features (Word and Sentence level)

Written in present tense

Connectives relate to logic e.g. *however, therefore, for example*

Connectives relate to contrast/comparison e.g. *whereas, compared with, similarly, moreover*

Phrases to indicate the use of evidence e.g. *This is supported by the fact that..., this shows that....., as in.....*

Adjectives and adverbs will be used when value judgements are being made

Persuasion

Purpose: to argue the case for a point of view

Structure (Text level)

Thesis – opening statement e.g. *Vegetables are good for you*

Arguments –one per paragraph, often in the form of a point of view plus further elaboration e.g. *they contain vitamins. Vitamin C is vital for.....*

Summary of main arguments and restatement of opening position e.g. *We have seen that....., so.....*

Language features (Word and Sentence level)

Written in present tense

Focus is on generic participants not on individuals

Connectives are related to logic, e.g. *this shows, because, therefore, in fact*

Adjectives and adverbs are used for emotive/rhetorical effect