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ABSTRACT

This group of three leaflets summarizes the grammatical content of England's National Literacy Strategy course "Grammar for Writing." The leaflets are entitled: (1) "From Word to Text"; (2) "From Sentence to Text"; and (3) "From Grammar to Writing." The first leaflet notes that today teaching grammar is about how people put words together to make meaning--to explore and express ideas. The second leaflet describes how people put language together by constructing sentences. It states that if writing is to be intelligible, it must be produced in coherent sentences, clearly linked together to produce a "joined up" message. The third leaflet looks at ways of using grammatical knowledge from the first and second leaflets to improve children's writing, noting that teachers should help students cultivate a feeling for grammar, varying and controlling sentence structure with ease, to create different language effects. The third leaflet offers this teaching sequence for writing: shared reading; sentence level work--defining principles; shared writing; independent and guided writing; and review. (NKA)

Grammar for Writing Grammar Fliers

Grammar 1: From Word to Sentence [and] Grammar 2: From Sentence to Text [and] Grammar 3: From Grammar to Writing

National Literacy Strategy

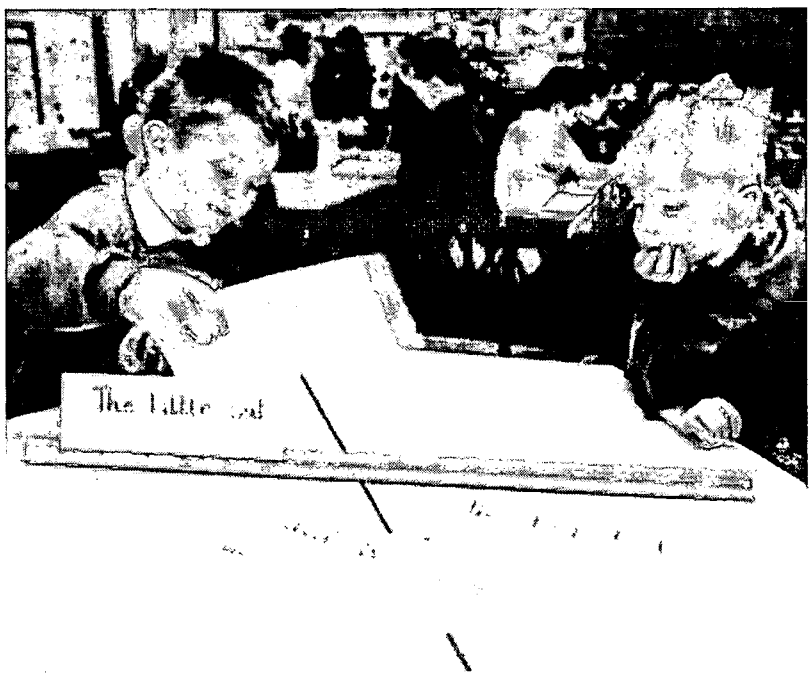
Grammar 1

from WORD *to* SENTENCE

Language is fundamental to thinking and learning. Our aim as teachers is to give children control over their use of language for writing. The more we ourselves know about it, the better equipped we are to:

- draw attention to how writers use language to influence us as readers
- demonstrate how pupils can use language to create the effects they want in writing.

Teaching grammar today is far from the old-fashioned 'naming of parts'. It's about how we put words together to make meaning – to explore and express our ideas. Grammatical terminology provides a shared vocabulary with which to talk with pupils about the language we use.



One important aspect of grammatical awareness is an understanding of **word classes** – the various jobs words can do in a sentence. These are explained on pages 2–3.

But words don't work in isolation. We put them together to create **phrases**, **clauses** and **complex sentences** (see page 4).

Punctuation is all about awareness of grammatical chunks. **T**o split up text into sentences, indicating clearly where each major chunk of meaning begins and ends, we use capital letters and full stops. **W**ithin the sentence, we use a variety of punctuation marks to show breaks between phrases, clauses and, sometimes, words.

Grammar and punctuation

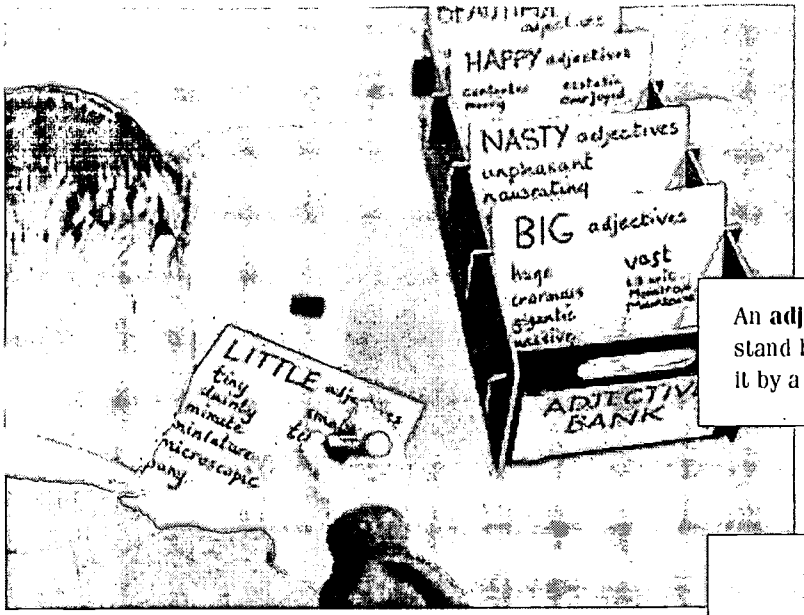
Punctuation shows the reader how the information in a text is 'chunked up' to make sense. Those chunks will be words, phrases, clauses and sentences. If we can develop a feeling for grammar in our pupils, we develop their ability to express meaning clearly and coherently.

'Grammar is the study of how we make sentences.'

David Crystal

This flier summarises the grammatical content of Session 1 of the National Literacy Strategy course *Grammar for writing*. There is more information on grammatical terminology in the updated NLS Glossary (http://www.standards.dfee.gov.uk/literacy/glossary).

WORD C



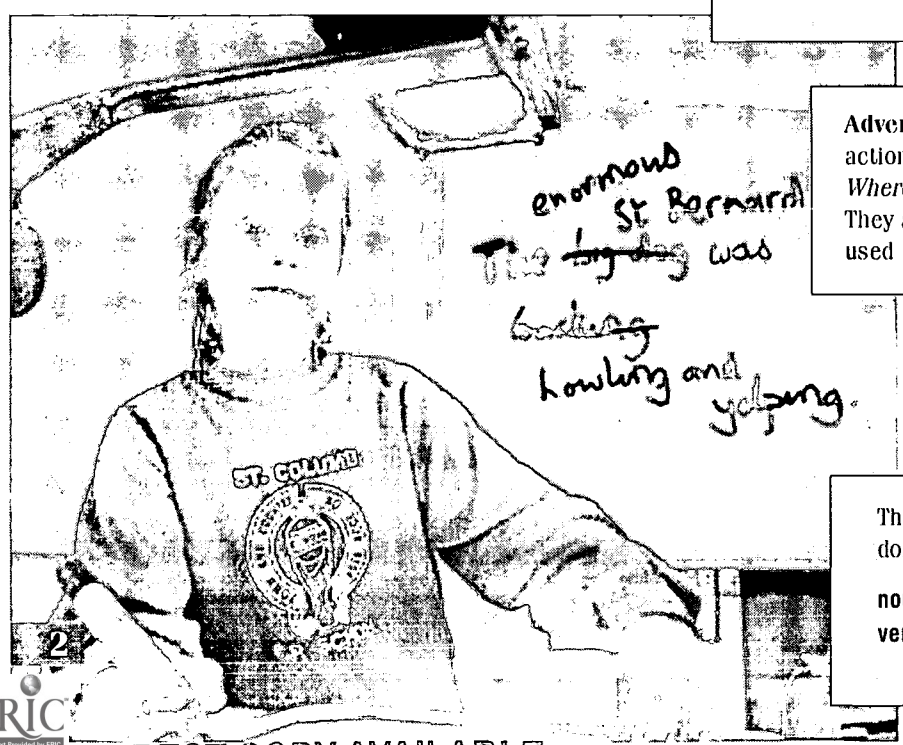
An **adjective** gives more information about a noun. It can stand before the noun (*the big dog*) or it can be linked to it by a verb, eg *be* (*The dog is big.*).

Determiners include many of the most frequent English words, eg *the, a, my, this.* They are used with nouns and they limit (ie determine) the reference of the noun in some way. You will usually find a determiner at the beginning of a noun phrase, eg ***the*** *big dog.*

determiner	adjective
the	big
a	

verb	adverb
barked	slowly
	then
	away

A **verb** is a word that expresses an action, a happening, a process or a state.



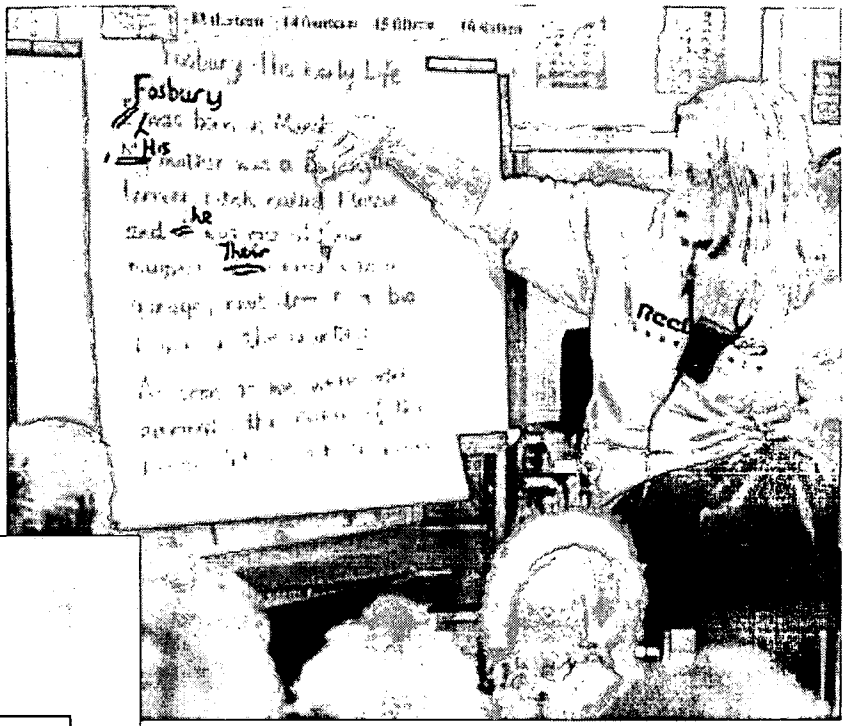
Adverbs provide background detail to the action. They can answer questions like *How? Where?* and *When?*
They are also very mobile words, which can be used in a variety of positions in a sentence.

The same word may be used in different ways in differe
doing in a particular sentence.

noun	*I cut a* **round** *of bread.*
verb	*The cars* **round** *the bend at an incredible speed.*

CLASSES

A **noun** is a word which denotes somebody or something.



noun	pronoun
dog	it
Rover	which
preposition	**conjunction**
with	and
at	when
in	because

Pronouns replace a noun or noun phrase and enable us to avoid repetition.

Conjunctions are words used to link clauses within a sentence. There are two kinds:

- coordinating conjunctions (*and, but, or*). These join two main clauses to make a compound sentence (see Flier 2). They can also join words or phrases
- subordinating conjunctions (eg *when, while, before, after, since, until, if, because, although*). These go at the beginning of a subordinate clause in a complex sentence (see page 4).

A **preposition** is a word like *at, over, by* and *with*. It is usually followed by a noun phrase.
These phrases can be used adjectivally to give more information about a noun, eg *the big dog **in the garden**.*
They can also be used adverbially, to answer questions such as How? When? or Where?, eg *The big dog was barking **in the garden**.*

nt contexts. The classification depends upon the job it's

adjective	*The Millennium Dome is* **round**.
adverb	*She looked* **round**. *(Where?)*
preposition	*She looked* round *the corner.*

CHUNKS OF MEANING

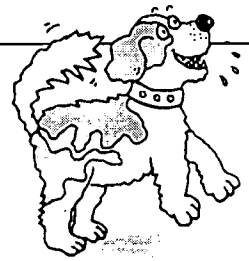
Words

From a child's point of view the simplest chunk of meaning is a word.

dog

barked

big



Phrases

Words go together to make phrases.

was barking

in the garden

the big dog

A group of words acting together like a single verb is known as a **verb chain.**

- **Adverbial phrases** work like adverbs.
- **Adjectival phrases** work like adjectives.

See note on prepositions on page 3.

A **noun phrase** works in a sentence in the same way as a single noun (you could substitute a pronoun).

Clauses

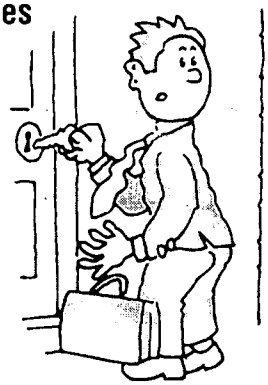
Words and phrases go together to make clauses. A clause has a **subject** and a **verb**.

It may also have other chunks, but as long as there's only one verb (or verb chain) it's a single clause.

subject	verb
the big dog	was barking

At midnight last Wednesday, **the big dog was barking** *the Hallelujah Chorus, rather wistfully, in the garden behind Buckingham Palace.*

Sentences



A **simple sentence** consists of one clause.

But we can link clauses together in ways which show the inter-relationships between ideas.

A **complex sentence** consists of one **main clause** and one or more **subordinate clauses.**

subordinate clause	main clause	subordinate clause
When I arrived,	the big dog was barking	because it was lonely.

A main clause can stand on its own and still make sense.

A subordinate clause doesn't make sense on its own. It needs to be linked to a main clause.

Photographs by John Redman. With thanks to the children and staff of St Columb Major School, Cornwall.

National Literacy Strategy

Grammar 2

from SENTENCE *to* TEXT

SIMPLE SENTENCES AND CLAUSES

A simple sentence consists of a single clause. Most people probably could not define a clause, even though we all produce them easily when speaking and writing. But, to teach well, we need to be **aware** of the ways we put language together.

Every clause has a **subject** and a **verb**.

S	V
The queen	was eating.
Teachers	teach.
I	sleep.

The subject might be a noun phrase, a single noun, or a pronoun.

The verb might be a single word or a verb chain.

These are known as **SV** sentences.

But there might be other elements in the clause. One common element is called an **object**.

S	V	O
The queen	was eating	a jam sandwich.
Teachers	teach	children.
I	sleep.	

Not all verbs take objects (eg *sleep*).

The first two examples are **SVO** sentences.

Word order is important in grammar. Most of the time we take it for granted that certain words come before or after others in order to make sense (eg in an English noun phrase, we say *The big dog*, not *The dog big*). The way we order words in a clause is important for conveying our meaning (*The queen ate the jam sandwich.* has a very different meaning from *The jam sandwich ate the queen.*)

In a simple statement, the **subject**, **verb** and **object** (if there is one) always come in that order.

Word order changes, according to grammatical rules, when you change a statement into a question.

Another common clause structure is the **SVC** – Subject Verb Complement. This structure occurs with the verb *to be* and other verbs indicating state rather than action, such as *seem*, *look* and *feel*.

S	V	C
The queen	was	a friendly person.
Teachers	are	wonderful.

Adverbial chunks (answering questions like *how?* *where?* or *when?*) might be single adverbs or adverbial phrases, including those common phrases that begin with prepositions. Unlike other elements of a clause, which tend to be bound by word order, the adverbial has **mobility**.

A	S	V	O
Very daintily,	the queen	was eating	a jam sandwich.

S	V	O	A
The queen	was eating	a jam sandwich	very daintily.

Awareness of this can help us to help children vary their sentence construction.

A good way to alert children to the possibilities of word order is to create 'concrete sentences' which can be moved around. You can do this by writing words, phrases or clauses on strips of card, which can be stuck on a magnetic board, velcro strip or washing line, or held by children to create human sentences.

This flier summarises the grammatical content of Sessions 2 and 3 of the National Literacy Strategy course *Grammar for writing* (Years 5/6). There is more information on grammatical terminology in the updated NLS Glossary (http://www.standards.dfee.gov.uk/literacy/glossary).

JOINED-UP

Compound sentences

The simplest way to link clauses together is to use one of the coordinating conjunctions: **and**, **but**, **or**. This is called a compound sentence, and the clauses on either side of the conjunction have equal weight – they're both main clauses:

The dog barked **and** *the baby woke up.*

Children often produce compound sentences in which the subject of each clause is the same:

The dog barked and the dog whined.
or
The dog barked and it whined.

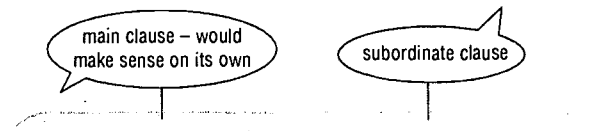
You can sometimes improve the sentence by deleting the second subject:

The dog barked and whined.

Compound sentences are common in speech, where we don't have much time to think things through, and where we can use intonation patterns and gesture to show how we link our ideas together.

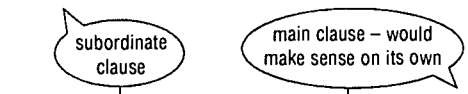
However, we want children to explore and express the possible relationships between ideas – this aids their development not just in writing, but in thinking logically. So they need to learn about more sophisticated conjunctions which encapsulate those inter-relationships.

Complex sentences



The dog barked **until** *the baby woke up.*
The dog barked **so that** *the baby woke up.*

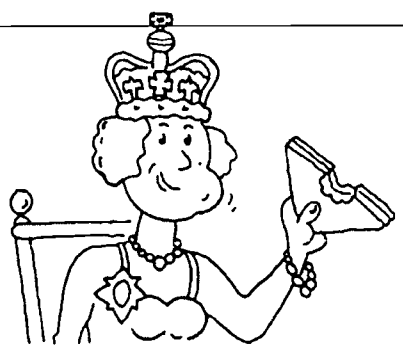
The words in bold are **subordinating conjunctions** – when you put one at the front of a clause you automatically make it subordinate to the main clause.



Because *the dog barked, the baby woke up.*
Whenever *the dog barked, the baby woke up.*

Subordinate clauses starting with a conjunction are **adverbial** ... and this means they're mobile. In some of our examples, we could reverse the order of the clauses:

Whenever *the dog barked, the baby woke up.*
The baby woke up **whenever** *the dog barked.*



S V O
The queen was eating a jam sandwich.

This is an active sentence. The subject – the queen – is actively tucking into her jam sandwich. But we could express the same event with the jam sandwich as the subject:

S V
The jam sandwich was being eaten by the queen.

WHODUNNIT? ACT

The new version is a passive sentence. The subject – the jam sandwich – is 'passively' having something done to it. It is being eaten.

In a passive construction we can remove the 'agent' of the action:

The jam sandwich was being eaten.

We don't have to say Whodunnit.

There are many reasons why you may not want to say Whodunnit. For instance, you may not know:

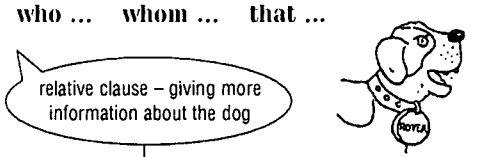
The house was burgled on Saturday.
A box of chocolates was left on the doorstep.

? WRITING

When you open a sentence with a subordinate clause, you need a comma before the main clause to signal to your reader that you've reached a grammatical boundary. You don't necessarily need a comma if the subordinate clause comes after the main clause because the conjunction signals the grammatical boundary.

Relative clauses

A **relative clause** gives more information about a noun. You can help children extend their sentences in this way by showing them how to open clauses with **which ... who ... whom ... that ...**



The dog, **which was called Rover**, *was barking*.

In this example, the relative clause (in bold) has been 'dropped into' the main clause. When a subordinate clause is embedded within another clause, we often need to separate it off with commas to indicate where the extra grammatical unit has been inserted.

But not always!

The dog that barked in the night woke me up.

Your intonation when you read the sentence aloud is the best guide to whether commas are required.

Non-finite clauses

Smiling to himself, *Robin at last returned to the forest*.

Tired of waiting, *Marian had already gone to bed*.

In these complex sentences, the subordinate clauses (in bold), which have **non-finite** (or incomplete) verbs, are separated off by a comma. In both cases, the non-finite clause could also be embedded within the main clause – again, with implications for punctuation.

Robin, **smiling to himself,** *at last returned to the forest*.

Marian, **tired of waiting,** *had already gone to bed*.

These non-finite clauses are a feature of mature, fluent writing. They can sound less cumbersome than the other subordinate clauses we have investigated, and with the added advantage of mobility, they are very versatile.

A non-finite clause (beginning with an *-ing* or *-ed* word) can be a useful starting point for composing a sentence in shared writing.

'IVE AND PASSIVE

Or you may not wish to mention:

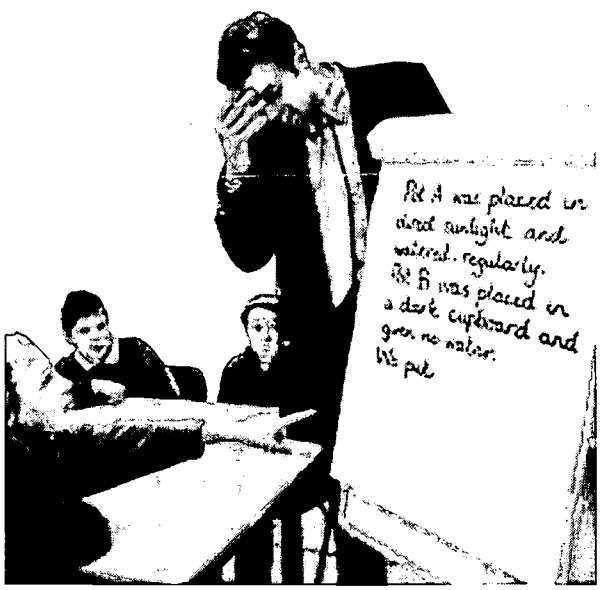
'This ruler got broken, Miss.'

It may also be more polite, less confrontational:

I wasn't given a pencil.

If you don't mention the agent, you don't hurt anyone's feelings.

In Year 6, one important function of the passive is in the construction of certain types of formal, impersonal texts. In science reports, for instance, the point is to record what happened, not Whodunnit. So children need to be aware of impersonal styles, including the passive voice.



Shared writing: a member of Year 6 spots a deliberate mistake. (A deliberate mistake is spotted by a member of Year 6.)

THE COMMA SPLICE

The comma is the 'weakest' of the punctuation marks, used *within a sentence*, to help the reader notice where one chunk of meaning ends and another starts.

Children often use commas incorrectly to mark **any** grammatical boundary. When a comma is placed between two main clauses, it is known as 'the comma splice', eg:

She turned round but there was no one there except a painting, all of a sudden the people in the painting moved and started talking again, Jade couldn't believe her eyes.

Commas are not strong enough to separate main clauses in this way, so this punctuation is incorrect.

You could always substitute a full stop for a comma splice, but this might lead to very staccato sentences. Sometimes you may wish to suggest a closer link between the clauses. In this case, you could try a punctuation mark which is 'stronger' than a comma – a dash, a semi-colon or possibly a colon. Or you could link the clauses by inserting a conjunction.

There are several acceptable ways of correcting the example. This probably captures the writer's intention:

She turned round but there was no one there except a painting. All of a sudden, the people in the painting moved and started talking again – Jade couldn't believe her eyes.

A simple rule of thumb to tell whether you've got a comma splice is to see **if you could substitute a full stop**. In each case in the example in the left-hand column above, a full stop would work ... so both the commas must be splices, and therefore incorrect.

MAKING IT ALL HANG TOGETHER: COHESION

If writing is to be intelligible, it must be produced in coherent sentences, clearly linked together to produce a 'joined up' message. Writers create **cohesion** in a text in many ways and, once we share a grammatical vocabulary, we can help children recognise these cohesive devices so they are aware of them in their own writing.

There are examples of all the cohesive devices described here in the short text at the bottom of the page.

Connectives

A connective is a word or phrase that links clauses or sentences. Connectives can be:

- **conjunctions** (eg in the example text: *and, so, until*)
- connecting **adverbs** or adverbial phrases (eg *moreover, however, eventually, at last*).

Conjunctions and connecting adverbs function differently:

- Conjunctions join clauses within a sentence.
- Connecting adverbs connect ideas but the clauses remain separate sentences.

As children's writing grows more sophisticated, connectives become increasingly important. Adverbial connectives act as 'linguistic signposts' to the reader, indicating a change of direction between sentences. As adverbs, they are also mobile and varying their position can lead to an increasingly 'writerly' style.

Pronouns

Pronouns help the cohesion of a text by making references between sentences. In our example below, the pronouns *he* and *himself* refer back to the noun phrase *the big dog*, creating links between a number of sentences.

Tense

Consistency of tense (in our example, the past tense) is another important aspect of cohesion. Experienced writers may use changes of tense for effect, but children tend to fluctuate inadvertently.

It's important that children learn to reread as they write in order to achieve cohesion. If they don't reread, they lose the thread and fail to realise that they haven't made these essential connections.

The big dog enjoyed barking. Moreover, **he** *was very good at it and very loud. The baby, however, needed some sleep, so the dog was despatched to the garden.* **He** *barked and yelped for some time, until* **he** *grew sleepy* **himself**. *Eventually,* **he** *stretched out under the stars and fell into a deep sleep.*

The big dog – at last – stopped barking.

Photographs by John Redman. With thanks to the children and staff of St Columb Major School, Cornwall.

National Literacy Strategy

Grammar 3

from GRAMMAR *to* WRITING

To equip our pupils to write for different audiences and purposes, we must cover a wide range of skills and knowledge. Our teaching must help them to:

- read with a writer's eye, noticing the effects a writer creates and asking how he or she did it
- master handwriting and spelling – until these lower order skills are automatic, pupils are too preoccupied with them to concentrate on composition
- know what they want to say – pupils need reasons to write, and suitable content to write about
- internalise the different stages of the writing process: planning, drafting and revising their work
- write with a reader's eye, constantly rereading work to check that it makes sense and that the message is effectively conveyed
- know how different sorts of texts are structured, so that ultimately they can create their own structures appropriate to audience and purpose
- have a feeling for grammar, varying and controlling sentence structure with ease, in order to create different language effects.

This flier is concerned with this final point. It looks at ways of using grammatical knowledge from Fliers 1 and 2 to improve children's writing:

WORD MODIFICATION:
selecting and varying words to enhance writing for different text types

SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION:
constructing and varying sentences according to text type, and punctuating them to make meaning clear

TEXT COHESION:
using connectives and other cohesive devices to provide a logical flow to writing.

FIVE WAYS TO MAKE A SENTENCE MORE INTERESTING

You could insert adjectives to describe the nouns, or adverbs to tell more about the verb.

The **fat hairy** *man went* **slowly** *down the* **long** *road.*

The **tramp shuffled** *down* **Piccadilly.**

You could use a more precise common noun, or a proper noun. And you could choose a 'powerful verb'.

The man went down the road.

You could add a clause or a phrase to provide more background information.

While the house was burning, *the man went down the road* **to the phone box.**

Down the road went the man.

Varying word order (eg moving an adverbial) can create a literary effect.

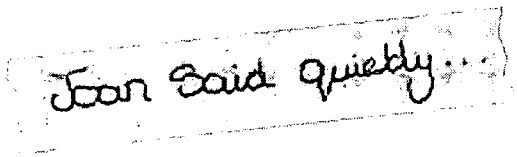
For starkness, you could reduce the sentence to its bare essentials (and perhaps change a noun to a pronoun).

He went.

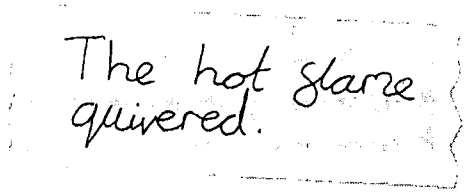
This flier summarises suggested teaching techniques in Sessions 1 and 2 of the National Literacy Strategy course *Grammar for writing*. There are further ideas on the accompanying video.

SOME SUITABLE CASES F

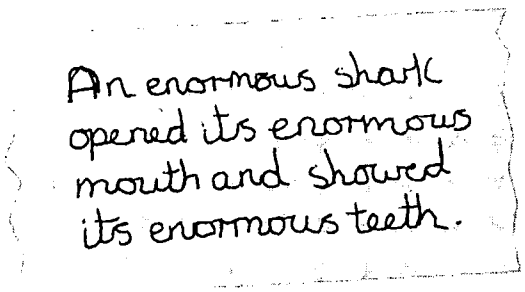
in fiction...



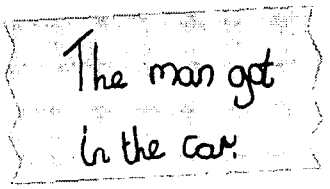
It may be better (and more economical) to strengthen the verb, eg *whispered.*



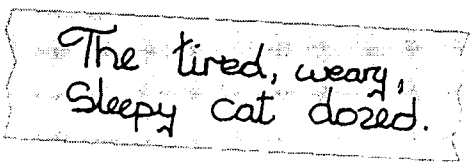
Avoid tautology (flames are always hot).



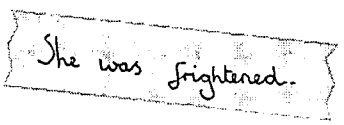
Repetition of the same word can sometimes be effective, but usually children do it because they haven't thought of a different word.



Mr Blobby squeezed into a Skoda.
Precise nouns and powerful verbs create stronger pictures for the reader.



These adjectives all mean the same, and so does the verb *dozed.*



It's often better to imply feelings by indicating an action or reaction, eg *Her lip trembled* or *'Keep away,' she stammered.*

When children are learning to
inappropriately or inelegantly.
pitfalls by:

- pointing out examples of ap
  shared reading
- demonstrating how to expre
  shared writing.

In this way, we can prevent so
inappropriately when they con

IN SHARED WRITING, draw

- using precise nouns and p
- using adjectives and adver
- avoiding telling the reader
- using repetition for effect
- balancing 'telling' (eg *She*
  (eg *Her lip trembled*)
- selecting and limiting word
  and audience
- selecting stylistic devices s
  onomatopoeia, simile, met

VARYING SENTENC

Sentence openings

Show how to bring different adverbials to the fore.

John hurried down the street carefully with a box of eggs in his hands.

With a box of eggs in his hands, John carefully hurried down the street.

Down the street John hurried, carefully, with a box of eggs in his hands.

Carefully, with a box of eggs in his hands, John hurried down the street.

Sentence types

Show how to use questions to draw the reader in.

Have you ever flown a kite?

Why be the only teacher without a laptop?

What had Darren heard?

Demonstrate that imperatives can add impact.

Buy now!

Take care! The wiring is dangerous.

'Stop!' they yelled.

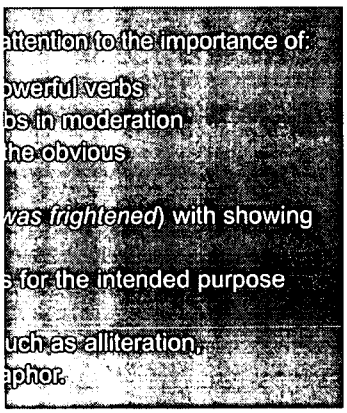
OR WORD MODIFICATION

write they often use words
We can help them avoid such

propriate word modification in

ss ideas successfully in

me children using words
e to write themselves.



and non-fiction...

Attach the beautiful blue string to the stick.

Instructions should contain necessary adjectives and adverbs only. The value-laden adjective *beautiful* is not characteristic of an instructional text.

The reason why Smoking is harmful is because it can give you Cancer.

Avoid the overuse of explanation devices: it should be *the reason* **or** *because* (and not *the reason why...*).

Buy this house. It has nice views.

In persuasive writing, superlatives may be needed.

Henry VIII had two of his wives killed.

In recount, report and explanatory writing, the 'powerful' verb is the conventionally accepted one. Steer children towards accepted or technical vocabulary (eg *executed*).

Camels are sort of large animals.

Precision is essential in report writing. It requires accurate descriptive detail and no spoken language patterns like *sort of.*

The tiny little pieces of water in the air join together & make raindrops.

An incorrect noun (*'**pieces** of water'*) contributes to an imprecise phrase. Scientific writing employs technical terminology – *molecules.*

CE CONSTRUCTION

Sentence voice

Show how you can use the passive voice to hide the source of the action.

The gun had been removed from the cabinet.

Demonstrate how the passive voice contributes to an impersonal writing style.

The substance was extracted from the pipes.

Sentence length

Show how short sentences give emphasis and clarity, and can be used for dramatic impact.

Plants need water.

She stopped.

Demonstrate how longer sentences contain information economically and can move narrative action along. Illustrate how complex sentences can make inter-relationships between ideas more explicit, and can increase the formality of a piece of writing.

HOLDING TEXT TOGETHER

Written language must be coherent. There is a wide range of cohesive devices which help writers express ideas coherently and logically in both chronological and non-chronological texts.

Cohesion can be lost if tenses fluctuate. While experienced writers sometimes change tense for effect, this example probably happened by accident.

Mr Peters was digging his potatoes when a dreadful din started up round the corner of his house. Suddenly his dog dashed past, followed by a black creature in hot pursuit. He gets his spade and hurls it at the animal, but it misses.

Instructions should be in the imperative (implied second person: *[You] mix...*). These instructions slip into a first person past tense recount.

Put the butter in the bowl and then add the sugar.
Mix together until it seems creamy.
Then we separated the eggs.

Lack of connectives leads to loss of cohesion and also to repetitive, staccato sentence construction.

A tramp shuffled down Piccadilly. A robbery was discovered in one of the shops. The police arrested the tramp. He protested his innocence. Evidence came to light suggesting his guilt.

In non-fiction, certain types of connectives are characteristic of different text types, for instance:

- recount, instruction and explanation texts tend to be rich in sequential time connectives
- report, explanation, persuasion and discussion texts usually contain causal connectives.

IN SHARED WRITING, draw attention to the importance of:

- linking sentences with appropriate connectives
- judicious and consistent use of pronouns
- maintaining consistency of tense.

A TEACHING SEQUENCE FOR WRITING

1 **Shared reading**
Reading and discussing examples of the text type.

2 **Sentence level work – defining principles**
Helping children understand the principles behind the sentence level objective.

3 **Shared writing**
- **Demonstration**
  Teacher models the process of writing.
- **Scribing**
  Teacher and children collaborate to compose.
- **Supported composition**
  Children compose, write and show to teacher.

4 **Independent and guided writing**
Children write – independently or in a guided group – focusing on using sentence level features effectively within their composition.

5 **Review**
How well have the objectives been achieved and how might the writing be improved?

Photographs by John Redman. With thanks to the children and staff of St Columb Major School, Cornwall.

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