

IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION:

High School English Language Arts

➤ **Approaches to
Teaching Grammar
and Language Usage**



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Introduction

The 1999 version of the *North Carolina English Language Arts Standard Course of Study (SCS)* marks a significant change to English Language Arts education in North Carolina. While previous versions of the SCS have included general communication skills standards for all students, the 1999 revision specifies grade-by-grade standards for students in grades K-12. Additionally, the 1999 SCS emphasizes the need for students to understand diverse print and non-print texts and to use language effectively for different purposes, to different audiences, and in different contexts.

While all of these changes present challenges to high school English Language Arts teachers across the state, the SCS has been well-received. Educators feel that it more directly addresses the needs of all students whether they are preparing for additional studies or for entering the workforce after graduation. As our society becomes increasingly media-oriented and culturally diverse, the inclusion of different types of texts and products meets student interests as well. In general, teachers feel that the new state standards are moving us in the right direction (hence the title for this handbook).

As a complement to the SCS, *In the Right Direction* is intended to help teachers take the next steps. Teachers approaching the implementation of the state standards, perhaps in conjunction with their local standards, will face many decisions about how to teach students most effectively. **While not comprehensive or prescriptive, this document should help teachers make thoughtful decisions by suggesting and encouraging sound pedagogy, instructional practices, and models.**

In the Right Direction will be published as a series of documents as each section is developed. The first three installments are described below:

VOLUME I: PLANNING AND UNIT SAMPLES

This section addresses yearly planning guides and unit development. Teacher-designed units and planning guides are included as models for the integration of goals and the addressing of student needs. A list of works commonly taught in North Carolina high school English Language Arts classes is included as an appendix.

VOLUME II: SAMPLE ACTIVITY PLANS

This document includes sample plans for activities in each course. Written by North Carolina teachers, these activities have been developed to highlight both the integration of objectives within the classroom and the use of sound instructional practices.

VOLUME III: APPROACHES TO TEACHING GRAMMAR AND LANGUAGE USAGE

This document contains an overview of research on effective instruction of grammar and language usage, a step-by-step outline of teaching grammar and language usage within the context of student writing, and a selection of activity plans targeting some of the most common concerns in teaching grammar and language usage. Written by North Carolina teachers, these strategies and activities have been developed to highlight both the integration of objectives within the classroom and the use of sound instructional practices.

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Overview of Research

The North Carolina Standard Course of Study intends grammar and language usage to be taught in the context of writing because English research for decades has shown that grammar taught in the context of writing is more effectively retained and carried over into students' writing. Even so, many teachers still rely on traditional approaches to grammar instruction while struggling with the how and why of teaching grammar and language usage.

TRADITIONAL APPROACHES TO TEACHING GRAMMAR

“The study of traditional school grammar has no effect on raising the quality of student writing. . . . Taught in certain ways, grammar and mechanics instruction has a deleterious effect on student writing.”
(Hillocks, 1986)

In general, teachers believe that teaching grammar will make students better writers. However, research into the value of grammar for improving writing has not confirmed its efficacy. Research questioning the value of teaching grammar to improve writing dates back as early as 1906. (Hoyt) More recently Braddock and his colleagues (1963) summarizing the research contend that “In view of the widespread agreement of research studies . . . the conclusion can be stated in strong and unqualified terms: the teaching of formal grammar has a negligible, or because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing.” (37-38)

Hillocks (1986) provides a more thorough meta-analysis of the research and still concludes:

“The study of traditional school grammar (i.e., the definition of part of speech, the parsing of sentences, etc.) has no effect on raising the quality of student writing. . . . Taught in certain ways, grammar and mechanics instruction has a deleterious effect on student writing. In some studies a heavy emphasis on mechanics and usage (e.g., marking every error) resulted in significant losses in overall quality. . . . We need to learn how to teach standard usage and mechanics after careful task analysis and with minimal grammar.”
(248-49)

TEACHING GRAMMAR AND LANGUAGE USAGE IN THE CONTEXT OF WRITING

The answer is not eliminating grammar but teaching it with relevance in the context of writing.

Given the research evidence, what is a teacher to do? The problems are clear. Without any grammar instruction, students and teachers lack a common language for discussing writing. Moreover, we are aware of people's judgments of others based on their ability to use the standard conventions of spoken and written English. Clearly the answer is not eliminating grammar but teaching it with relevance in the context of writing as indicated by the Standard Course of Study and as tested in the English I End of Course test.

Writing forms the heart of the English curriculum. Four of the six Environments focus on various modes of writing: Expressive, Informational, Argumentative, and Critical. The other two Environments, Literary and Conventions, are integrated into all the others. Literature is not merely an end in itself but also provides models of effective writing and generates reasons to write. The two are inseparable.

Grammar taught in the context of writing becomes a tool for talking about writing – the writing we create as well as read in literature books. Harry Noden, (1999) in *Image Grammar: Using Grammatical Structures to Teach Writing*, describes the fundamental elements of grammar as the brushstrokes that a writer uses to paint images of life. (1) He cites many examples showing how famous authors have used constructions such as

participial phrases to create tension and action. Our understanding of the power of language increases when students come to recognize that syntax and diction work together to awaken the senses, bringing literature to life. Noden, drawing from classic and popular writing, sees literature as the model of a set of grammatical constructions that students can learn to imitate and then appropriate to enliven their own writing.

WHAT TO TEACH

The errors give us a window into the students' processing and thus a place to begin.

Teaching grammar in the context of writing requires teachers to be much more generative in their lesson design than teaching a set of structural components delineated by a text or curriculum. Teachers struggle with what to teach and how to ensure that students have all the skills they need. Two important studies provide some insight into the types of high leverage grammatical structures. Connors and Lunsford (1988) studied 3000 graded college essays to determine the errors that occurred most frequently as well as those most frequently marked by teachers. It will come as no surprise to high school teachers that spelling errors were the most frequent. But spelling errors are also the most idiosyncratic errors as well as one of the easiest to correct. The remaining errors give us a window into the students' processing, and thus a place to begin.

- No comma after an introductory element
- Vague pronoun reference
- No comma in compound sentence
- Wrong word
- No comma in nonrestrictive element
- Wrong/missing inflected endings
- Wrong or missing preposition
- Comma splice
- Possessive apostrophe error
- Tense shift
- Unnecessary shift in person
- Sentence fragment
- Wrong tense or verb form
- Subject-verb agreement
- Lack of comma in series
- Pronoun agreement error
- Unnecessary comma with restrictive element
- Run-on or fused sentence
- Dangling or misplaced modifier
- Its/It's error

Looking at this list and grouping it provide some basic categories that may indicate high leverage issues for grammar instruction. For example, errors 3, 8, 12, and 18 deal with sentence and clause boundaries and their correct punctuation. Related to those errors are the comma errors that arise from confusion about clauses. In Noguchi's analysis, sentence or clause boundary errors make up seven of the top twenty stylistic errors and four of the top ten, a grouping not exceeded by any other category. (21-22) A teacher focusing on sentence and clause formation and usage would be addressing many of these errors without extended tedious traditional drill. By using the technique of sentence combining, students can expand their capacity to write varied sentence types while coming to understand the functions and boundaries of clauses. The student-generated sentences would provide practice for exploring the effect of punctuation on meaning, providing practical ways to connect students' use of commas to the intent of the sentence.

THE NON-EDUCATORS VIEW OF GRAMMATICAL ERRORS

While Connors and Lundsford's study provides an interesting starting place for teachers, it is still an insider's look at its own profession, an analysis of student errors and teacher-marking of those errors. To get outside the educator's world and see how non-educators judge grammatical expression, we look at Maxine Hairston's (1981) study of the attitudes of other professionals toward writing errors. Hairston sent out sixty-five sentences containing a different grammatical error to 101 professional people and received 84 responses from professionals in fields such as business, law, newspapers, real estate, finance, and architecture. The professionals indicated the degree to which the error bothered them and Hairston classified them into groups from the most serious to the least serious in these people's estimations. Those responding reacted very strongly to the group of errors marked "Status Marking" and less strongly toward those classed as "Very Serious," "Serious," "Moderately Serious," and "Minor or Unimportant."

STATUS MARKING

- Nonstandard verb forms in past or past participle: *brung* instead of *brought*; *had went* instead of *had gone*
- Lack of subject-verb agreement: *We was* instead of *We were*; *Jones don't think it's acceptable* instead of *Jones doesn't think it is acceptable*
- Double negatives
- Objective pronoun as the subject: *Him and Richard were the last one hired.*

VERY SERIOUS

- Sentence fragments
- Run-on sentences
- Noncapitalization of proper nouns
- *Would of* instead of *Would have*
- Lack of subject-verb agreement (non-status marking)
- Insertion of comma between the verb and its complement
- Nonparallelism
- Faulty adverb forms: *He treats his men bad.*
- Use of transitive verb *set* for intransitive *sit*

SERIOUS

- Predication errors: *The policy intimidates hiring.*
- Dangling modifiers
- *I* as an objective pronoun
- Lack of commas to set of interrupters like *however*
- Lack of commas in a series
- Tense switching
- Use of a plural modifier with a singular noun: *These kind of errors*

MODERATELY SERIOUS

- Lack of possessive form before a gerund
- Lack of commas to set of an appositive
- Inappropriate use of quotation marks
- Lack of subjunctive mood
- Writing *That is her across the street*
- Use of *whoever* instead of *whomever*
- Use of the construction *The situation is . . .when*
- Failure to distinguish between *among* and *between*
- Comma splices

MINOR OR UNIMPORTANT

- Use of a qualifier before *Unique*: *That is the most unique city*
- *Writing different* than instead of *different from*
- Use of a singular verb with *data*
- Use of a colon after a linking verb: *Three causes of inflation are:*
- Omission of the apostrophe in the contraction *it's*

Chart as presented in Noguchi (1991) p. 25

It is important for us to remember that our students will be judged by their writing in the outside world.

While these classifications are based on the reader's perceptions of the seriousness of the error and as English teachers our perceptions may differ, it is important for us to remember that our students will be judged by their writing in the outside world and that as English-language enthusiasts/experts we may be more interested in the intricacies of language usage than the professional communities that our students will enter once they leave our classrooms. It is also important for us to remember that what is considered "correct" grammar is a moving, if slow-moving, target. While Hairston's respondents in 1981 considered the lack of a possessive form before a gerund to be a "Moderately Serious" error, several current usage sources no longer consider this an error at all. Still, Hairston concluded her study by reminding us that "Although there seem to be some signs of change, and on some usage items the public may be ahead of the professions, I think that we cannot afford to let students leave our classrooms thinking that surface features of discourse do not matter. They do." (799)

INSTRUCTIONAL IMPLICATIONS

Instead the most critical concepts are better taught during writing workshop within the context of individual student writing

Both Constance Weaver and Noguchi agree that few of the frequently occurring errors or even the status-marking errors from Hairston's study need to be addressed by the formal structural grammar or drills that are frequently taught in English classes. Instead the most critical concepts are better taught during writing workshop within the context of individual student writing. The crucial concepts seem to be:

- Sentence and clause (dependent and independent)
- Non-sentence (fragment and phrase)
- The concept of modification (by words, phrases, clauses).

(These concepts allow issues such as run-on sentences and comma splices to be addressed.) With this restricted set of basic concepts, teachers have the opportunity to begin to tailor instruction to the specific needs of the class and the individual student.

GRAMMAR MINI-LESSONS

The essence of the mini-lesson is its connection to the observational assessment of need that the teacher draws from observation of student writing.

The key technique for teaching grammar in the context of writing is the mini-lesson. Many teachers believe that they are teaching grammar in context because they have broken up their grammar instruction into a series of small lessons spaced out across the year rather than teaching a unit on grammar. A series of randomly occurring lessons is not the same as teaching grammar in the context of writing. The essence of the mini-lesson is its connection to the observational assessment of need that the teacher draws from analysis of student writing. Rather than teaching from a list of grammar skills or a curriculum designed by a textbook company, the teacher observes in student writing certain problems that occur frequently. These observations lead the teacher to frame objectives that are shared with students as hints for improving their writing or areas to work on drawn from their own work. The teacher provides a demonstration and explanation of the objective. Students have some time for guided application of the concept by writing, not by completing a series of exercises or drills. Further observation of student writing assesses understanding. When students next use the concept independently in their writing, the teacher continues to monitor that the lesson has been incorporated into their repertoires of writing skills. The entire lesson can be individualized for groups of students whose writing indicates specific needs. The following chart compares a traditional grammar lesson to grammar taught in the context of writing:

TRADITIONAL GRAMMAR LESSON

1. Anticipatory set or statement of objective from predetermined curriculum
2. Instruction and modeling
3. Checking for understanding
4. Guided practice (often a set of sentences for identification or correction of the problem)
5. Independent practice (more sentences for drill)
6. Assessment

GRAMMAR IN THE CONTEXT OF WRITING

1. Objective drawn from teacher observation of student writing and phased as helpful hints or ideas
2. Demonstration of the concept and explanations of reasoning
3. Guided application (generating sentences demonstrating the topic or finding examples in their writing)
4. Assessment through further observation of writing by teacher and/or peer groups
5. Independent application of the concept if subsequent writing
6. Further assessment through observation.

(Adapted from Weaver, *Grammar in Context*, p. 156)

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Everyone who takes any risks with writing makes errors. Since the heart of a dynamic English classroom is the collaborative community of writers and readers of writing created and facilitated by a teacher who reads and writes as part of that community, it is crucial that the classroom feel like a safe place for students to take risks in their writing. If we speculate on why traditional grammar instruction has a tendency to decrease the quality of writing, it might be that students become so intent on correctness that they are unwilling to risk making grammatical errors that might arise as they push their writing past their comfort zones of style and syntax. For all of us to grow as writers, we must take those risks and feel safe in doing so. Even so, students must become aware of their own set of errors and the thinking that reinforces making those mistakes. Our job as teachers is to lead students into that awareness and help them build a toolkit of ways to resolve the problems without losing the voice and style that makes writing come to life.

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Goal VI: Grammar and Language Usage in the NC English Language Arts Standard Course of Study

Grammar and Language Usage is a goal that focuses on students' developing increasing proficiency in the understanding and control of their language, including vocabulary development, word choice and syntax, and oral and written communication. Students should learn how to use effective and interesting language including:

- standard English for clarity.
- technical language for specificity.
- informal usage for effect.

Students should also continue to develop increasing control over grammatical conventions, including sentence formation, conventional usage, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. Most students do **not** learn grammatical conventions efficiently through memorizing the parts of speech and practicing correct usage and mechanics only through drills and exercises, with the assumption that students will transfer what they learn in grammar study to their own writing and speaking.

Grammar conventions are most efficiently learned when they are learned as part of a practical, functional grammar that:

- is concerned with how the language works in context to achieve a particular purpose with a specified audience.
- uses a minimum number of grammatical terms and a maximum number of examples. (The goals of each course specify the important terminology which students should know.)
- focuses on grammatical components that relate to meaningful sentences in speaking and writing.
- teaches both correct, standard usage and effective sentence sense and style (e.g., the power of dialects in literature and film, the conventions of technical writing).
- teaches appropriate usage in the context of the students' writing and speaking, through:
 - focused, short lessons based on the demonstrated needs of the students.
 - discussions of the syntax of student-generated sentences.
 - activities such as sentence combining, sentence imitating, sentence expanding.
 - self-editing, peer editing and teacher conferences.

NC ELA SCS (1999), p. 75

The following chart displays the course-by-course expectations for students in Goal VI (Grammar and Language Usage) from Grade 8 through English IV:

Competency Goal 6:

The learner will apply conventions of grammar and language usage.

	GRADE 8	ENGLISH I	ENGLISH II	ENGLISH III	ENGLISH IV
6.01	<p>Model an understanding of conventional written and spoken expression by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using a variety of sentence types, punctuating properly, and avoiding fragments and run-ons. Using subject-verb agreement and verb tense that are appropriate for the meaning of the sentence. Applying the parts of speech to clarify language usage. Using pronouns correctly, including clear antecedents and case. Using phrases and clauses correctly, including proper punctuation. 	<p>Demonstrate an understanding of conventional written and spoken expression that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses varying sentence types (e.g., simple, compound, complex, compound-complex) purposefully, correctly, and for specific effect. Selects verb tense to show an appropriate sense of time. Applies parts of speech to clarify and edit language. <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employing varying sentence structures (e.g., inversion, introductory phrases) and sentence types (e.g., simple, compound, complex, compound-complex) <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revising writing to reflect voice and style, sentence variety, subtlety of meaning, and tone in consideration of questions being addressed, purpose, audience, and genres. <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p>	<p>Apply knowledge of literary terms, grammar, and rhetoric in order to write clearly,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revising writing to reflect voice and style, sentence variety, subtlety of meaning, and tone in consideration of questions being addressed, purpose, audience, and genres. <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addresses clarity and styles through such strategies as parallelism; appropriate coordination and subordination; variety and details; appropriate and exact words; and conciseness. <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p>	<p><i>Continue to refine</i></p>	<p><i>Continue to refine</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizing how to use different language conventions (such as loose or periodic sentences, effective use of passive voice, or the importance of strong verbs).

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determining the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary words using context clues, a dictionary, a glossary, a thesaurus, and/or structural analysis (roots, prefixes, suffixes) of words. • Extending vocabulary knowledge by learning and using new words. • Evaluating the use and power of dialects in standard/nonstandard English usage. • Applying correct language conventions and usage during formal oral presentations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses vocabulary strategies such as roots and affixes, word maps, and context clues to discern the meanings of words. <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using word recognition strategies to understand vocabulary and exact word choice (Greek, Latin roots and affixes, analogies, idioms, denotation, connotation). <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decoding vocabulary using knowledge of Anglo-Saxon, Greek, and Latin bases and affixes. • Discerning the relationship of word meanings between pairs of words in analogies (synonyms/antonyms, connotation/denotation). <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p>	<p><i>Continue to refine</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzing the place and role of dialect and standard/nonstandard English. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examining textual and classroom language for elements such as idioms, denotation, and connotation to apply effectively in own writing/speaking. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzing authors' choice of words, sentence structure, and use of language. • Using correct form/format for essays, business letters, research papers, bibliographies. • Using language effectively to create mood and tone. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzing the power of standard usage over nonstandard usage in formal interviews, academic environment, or public speaking events. <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyzing the power of standard usage over nonstandard usage in formal interviews, academic presentations, or public speaking events. • Understanding how to use and apply grammatical, metaphorical, or rhetorical devices. <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contrasting use of language conventions of authors in different time periods of United States literature. <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contrasting use of language conventions of authors in different time periods of British literature. <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p>

6.02	Grade 8	English I	English II	English III	English IV
<p>Continue to identify and edit errors in spoken and written English by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using correct spelling of words appropriate in difficulty for eighth graders and refining mastery of an individualized list of commonly misspelled words. Producing final drafts/presentations that demonstrate accurate spelling and the correct use of punctuation, capitalization, and format. Self correcting errors in everyday speech. Independently practicing formal oral presentations. 	<p>Discern and correct errors in spoken and written English by:</p> <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Editing for spelling and mechanics. Avoiding fragments, run-ons, and comma splices. <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p> <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selecting correct subject-verb agreement, consistent verb tense, and appropriate verbs. Using and placing modifiers correctly. 	<p>Edit for:</p> <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spelling Appropriate and correct mechanics (commas, italics, underlining, semi-colon, colon, apostrophe, quotation marks). <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p> <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Subject-verb agreement, tense choice, pronoun usage, clear antecedents, correct case, and complete sentences. <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cliches, trite expressions. Parallel structure. 	<p>Discern and correct errors in speaking and writing at a level appropriate to eleventh grade by:</p> <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Editing for correct spelling and mechanics. Reviewing and refining purposeful use of varying sentence types with correct punctuation. <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p> <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refining subject-verb agreement and choice of tense. Reviewing and refining correct pronoun usage, antecedents, and case. Extending effective use of phrases and clauses. <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p> <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussing parts of speech as they relate to writing. 	<p>Discern and correct errors in speaking and writing by:</p> <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Editing for correct punctuation, spelling, mechanics, and standard edited American English. Reviewing and refining purposeful use of various sentence types <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p> <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p> <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p> <p><i>Continue to refine</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using appropriate transitional words and phrases. 	

Step by Step: Teaching Grammar and Language Usage in the Context of Writing

ASSIGN WRITING TASK AND GATHER DIAGNOSTIC INFORMATION

The first step in grammar instruction is to assign students a non-threatening writing task that does not require them to struggle to generate content. The students need to focus on writing well. The teacher will analyze errors in this writing sample, compiling a list of common class-wide errors as well as those of each student. This information will help the teacher decide which methods of instruction would be appropriate for a particular class and student.

SCENARIO:

At the beginning of the school year, Mrs. Smith, who teaches an academic 10th grade class, asks students to write an expressive “getting-to-know-you” paper. They are supposed to finish the statement: I am like a _____ and then explain their comparison. Mrs. Smith uses the paper to learn more about her students and to see what they know about grammar. After reading the papers, she uses Checklist #1 to record those errors shared by the majority of her students: comma usage, fragments, pronoun antecedents, spelling, and no variation in sentence structure.

Mrs. Smith then uses Checklist #2 to record information about each student’s writing sample. After grading John’s paper, she highlights three areas of concern: varied sentence structure, semi-colons, and parallelism. She also records three of his strengths: few spelling errors, no fragments, good vocabulary.

CHECKLIST #1	CHECKLIST #2
Class-Wide Targeted Areas for English II	_____’s Targeted Areas for English II
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Varied sentence structure <input type="checkbox"/> Parallel structure <input type="checkbox"/> Subject-verb agreement <input type="checkbox"/> Verb tense <input type="checkbox"/> Pronoun usage <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Antecedents <input type="checkbox"/> Case <input type="checkbox"/> Punctuation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commas <input type="checkbox"/> Semi-colons <input type="checkbox"/> Apostrophes <input type="checkbox"/> Quotation marks <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Spelling <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other: fragments <input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Varied sentence structure <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Parallel structure <input type="checkbox"/> Subject-verb agreement <input type="checkbox"/> Verb tense <input type="checkbox"/> Pronoun usage <input type="checkbox"/> Antecedents <input type="checkbox"/> Case <input type="checkbox"/> Punctuation <input type="checkbox"/> Commas <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Semi-colons <input type="checkbox"/> Apostrophes <input type="checkbox"/> Quotation marks <input type="checkbox"/> Spelling <input type="checkbox"/> Other: no fragments <input type="checkbox"/> Other: good vocabulary

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES AND ASSESSMENT

After gathering diagnostic class-wide and individual student information, the teacher can make informed decisions about instruction. Five strategies to teach and assess grammar in context include conferences, mini-lessons, daily oral practice, peer coaching, and rubrics.

CONFERENCES

Conferences are used for individualized instruction and are used to help students with grammar needs specific to their own writing. At each conference, the teacher can help each student set goals for his or her next writing assignment. Halfway through the class, students can complete a self-evaluation of the progress they have made and state one or two goals they want to accomplish before the end of the course.

To make conferences effective the teacher and the student need a way of recording what is discussed. Nancy Atwell recommends using the forms below which are suitable for all types of writing. (In the Middle, 1987) The first form is for teacher use—the title and date of the piece go in the first column, what the student has done well in the next, and areas for improvement in the last. The other form is for student use. During or after the conference, the student uses the form to record the skills she is learning as a writer.

SCENARIO:

*Ms. Simms, a ninth grade teacher, has a conference with Jeff three times during first semester. The first meeting is about a literary paragraph he has written on Atticus from *To Kill A Mockingbird*; the second is an argumentative speech Juliet might give to a group of parents raising teenagers; the third is an informational piece on *How to Give a Facial*. During each conference Ms. Simms uses the form below to record what they discuss.*

Teacher's Conference Record for Jeff :

Title of Piece & Date (Comments)	Skills Used Correctly	Focus Skills to Learn (No more than 2)
9/20 Atticus's Wisdom (paragraph/literary)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • caps on title • apostrophes on possessives • comma between compound sentence with conjunction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there: place • their: belongs to them • they're: they are • comma only between 2 sentences (comma splice)
11/1 Juliet Speaks to Teens' Parents (speech/argumentative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there/their/they're • comma after introductory dependent clause • comma between items in series • stays in character's voice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use really short paragraphs (1-2 sentences to stress a point) • use of colon
12/7 How to Give A Facial (informational)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consistent verb tense • transitional words • colon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parallelism • precise wording

SCENARIO

Karen is a 12th grade Honors English student. During the writing conferences she has had throughout the school year, she has recorded the skills she has learned. These are specific to the papers she has written and do not necessarily reflect the skill level of her classmates.

SKILLS LIST

THINGS THAT Karen CAN DO AS A WRITER

- Use a metaphor in the introduction and then continue it in the conclusion.
- Check all “to be” verbs to see if I’ve used passive voice.
- Remember that effect is a noun and affect is a verb.
- Use single quotes when quoting inside a quote.
- When using MLA format, the period goes outside the page number in parenthesis.
- When I proofread look for unnecessary words and phrases.
- Check for too many compound or compound-complex sentences. Break these up with simple sentences.
- Poetry doesn’t have to rhyme.
- When describing watch for cliches.
- Stream of consciousness is when I write like I am thinking. It may not be logical and may be interrupted by fleeting thoughts.
- Don’t overuse a semicolon.
- A person can lie down, but a hen lays an egg.
- “in lieu of” means “in the place of”
- An isolated quotation is a quotation that is by itself without any of my words with it.

MINI-LESSONS

Mini-Lessons are used for whole-group instruction on a periodic, as needed basis. They are often used in the following situations:

- before the students use the concept in writing;
- before students are to peer or self edit;
- when a classroom set of essays indicates a need for individuals, small groups or the entire class;
- during a literature lesson as students examine a paragraph or excerpt for author’s style.

Before starting a new writing task, for example, a teacher might take 15 minutes of class time to discuss one comma rule, such as a comma to separate two independent clauses joined by a conjunction. Students record the grammatical rule and several examples of how it is used. The teacher then gives guided and independent practice.

Several times during the stages of the writing task, the teacher reviews the grammatical rule. No new rules are introduced although the teacher could “sneak in” mini-lessons the class had already covered. For example, if the class had already learned two other comma rules before this one a sample sentence might test one or more of the rules. When it is time to peer or self edit, the editing guidelines focus on the grammatical skill introduced in the mini-lesson.

SCENARIO:

Mr. Griffin, who works with struggling writers, has asked his students to write a paragraph on the following prompt: Use one adjective to describe a character in _____ and then give examples to support your choice.

Mr. Griffin's grammatical class-wide focus since the beginning of the year has been commas. So far he has covered two rules: commas are used to separate items in a series and a comma is used after introductory material, such as a dependent clause or prepositional phrase. When the class began prewriting for their prompt on _____, Mr. Griffin added the third comma rule—use a comma to separate two independent clauses joined by a conjunction. In the first lesson at the beginning of the week, he gave the grammatical rule, examples, and practice sentences. During the second lesson, two days later, he had the lyrics to a popular song printed on a piece of paper, but he had taken out the commas. As students listened to the song, they were asked to find three places where a comma should go, based on their lesson earlier in the week. During the third lesson at the end of the week, the teacher had sentences written on large strips of paper and posted in the corners of the room; most of the sentences tested understanding of the three comma rules the class had studied although some were error free. Students were divided into four groups. Each group was given six laminated, ready-to-stick commas and told they wouldn't necessarily use all of them. After each group was finished and seated, the teacher—with the aid of the class—assessed the sentences.

DAILY LANGUAGE PRACTICE

Daily language practice, often called Daily Oral Language (DOL), is similar to the grammar mini-lesson in its focus on a specific skill, such as varying sentences, but it is a daily part of the class structure often done at the beginning of the period.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

- Create your own DOLs rather than using published ones which often include more than one grammatical error in each example. This is the only way each lesson can be tailored to fit the needs of a particular group of students.
- Have each lesson focus on the same grammatical concept until students have mastered it. This might mean two weeks of subject-verb agreement, but it is better for students to learn a few concepts rather than cover ten they do not understand and cannot apply to their own writing.
- Avoid presenting DOLs the same way each day; instead, look for opportunities to use manipulatives, let students work in pairs or groups, have students get up and move, or try unexpected text sources.
- Look for ways to assess learning on a regular basis. Rather than give a traditional grammar test, ask students to write a sentence on an index card that shows a specific skill or let students work in groups to edit a sample paragraph. Ultimately, their writing is the only real test of what they have learned.

When planning a DOL, try—

- a spontaneous lesson; ask students questions that will generate sentences that demonstrate a grammatical focus. For example, “Jessie, what is your favorite food? Sam, what is your least favorite.” In constructing the responses the teacher can write one sentence about Jessie and one about Sam, connected by the conjunction “but.” From there, she can discuss compound sentences.
- a magazine ad
- art
- sentence or paragraph from the literature being read
- song lyrics
- cartoons

- errors in print--either from students or the teacher, look for grammatical errors on bill boards, in handouts, on signs, etc.
- candy or other objects--have students write a sentence about the object showing their knowledge of a specific skill
- “Exit Pass”—rather than completing the DOL at the beginning of class, have students show a particular skill in a sentence or sentences they have written. When the teacher says it is correct, they are free to “pack up.” Students could also exchange cards. If the peer thinks the other person’s work is okay, he can show the teacher. If it isn’t, he can offer corrective feedback.
- Multiple-choice items. Students can identify and explain the correct answer or explain why one of the wrong choices is incorrect.

SCENARIO:

Day 1

Mr. Dunbar, a 12th grade academic English teacher, has been focusing on varying sentence structure with his students. When his students enter the classroom, they see the following sentences which have been “pulled from” one original sentence in Eudora Welty’s “A Worn Path:”

She wore a rag on her head.

Her hair came down on her neck.

It was in the frailest of ringlets.

It was still black.

It had the odor of copper.

Students are told to combine the sentences—the number and the way it’s done is up to them. After students share their examples, the teacher posts the original sentence:

Under the rag her hair came down on her neck in the frailest of ringlets, still black, and with an odor like copper.

The teacher guides the students in a discussion of why their sentences and Ms. Welty’s are an improvement over the five sentences they were given. The teacher asks students what pattern had to be eliminated from most of the sentences (the students will probably note, it was, it was, it had = subject/verb) and helps them identify the main subject and verb in Welty’s sentence. The teacher then asks students to look at their own sample sentence(s). He writes a few examples from those who avoided starting with a subject and verb.

Mr. Dunbar would continue to focus on sentence variety in his daily language practice while students began working on a writing task. He would reinforce this focus at different points in the writing process, including peer editing and his assessment of the final draft.

Day 2

Wanting to vary the way he presents DOLs, Mr. Dunbar decides to put a different kind of candy on each of the three desks in a row. The student in desk one writes one sentence describing his candy while the students in desks two and three do the same. After each one is finished, they decide as a group how they can combine all three sentences, attempting to eliminate unnecessary words and show variety. Mr. Dunbar asks for volunteers to share their work.

TRACKING STUDENT PROGRESS

PEER COACHING

Peer coaching or peer editing allows students, with the aid of teacher-structured materials, to give feedback to other students about their writing. Clearly, putting this ownership in the hands of students has its advantages and disadvantages. However, the disadvantages are reduced if the teacher models how to edit by using a student's paper and the materials she has created for student use.

Another way of reducing the chance for mistakes in peer editing is to identify the "Student Experts" in the class. As the year begins, notice students who are strong in specific grammatical skills, such as commas, verbs, complete sentences, dialogue, spelling. Create grammar groups using one of each of these students; therefore, each group will have one comma student expert, one verb student expert, etc. When the students in this group exchange papers and edit, they will only look for errors in their area of strength. The comma editor, for example, could use a blue colored pencil. He would underline where the mistake was made and then put a "C" above it to indicate that a comma needs to be inserted.

In the scenarios below, three types of peer editing are used to help track student errors: Underlining & Abbreviations, Sticky Notes, and Color-Coding.

SCENARIO #1: UNDERLINING & ABBREVIATIONS

Through whole-group instruction, Mrs. Helms has focused on five grammatical errors: subject-verb agreement, verb tense, commas, fragments, and spelling. Before asking students to edit a classmate's paper, she passes out the editing sheet below, discussing the directions. Then she gives out the writing sample. The teacher reads the student paper aloud once. The second time she stops to do a "think aloud," explaining why she stops at certain points. Sometimes when she stops, she asks the students why they think she has underlined a specific part of the paper. After "marking" the writing sample, the class completes the editing sheet.

WRITING SAMPLE	
When the man discovered his cable <u>costed</u> too much, he decided to have a	V
plan. He disconnected his phone line from his <u>satellite</u> box and thought the	sp
company could never stop his service. What he did not know was that the company	???
would send a person to his door <u>who would come to what had gone on</u> . When the	
representative <u>come up on the porch, he said, sir I am here to check your cable</u>	V
service. <u>Oh no the man said. The party is over now.</u>	C

PEER EDITING SHEET

Writer's Name Sam Jones

Name of Evaluator Liz Ferns

Directions:

If you find one of the grammatical errors we have focused on in class, put an **X** in the space provided and write the abbreviations on the paper.

If you find other errors, underline those that are obvious to you and put a question mark above them.

<input type="checkbox"/> subject-verb agreement	S-V
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> verb tense	V
<input type="checkbox"/> comma	C
<input type="checkbox"/> fragment	SF
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> spelling	Sp
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> punctuating dialogue	



State at least one strength and one weakness this writer has in grammar/style.

One of your strengths is: *you don't have any comma errors*

One of your weaknesses is: *using the right verb*

SCENARIO #2: STICKY NOTES

Mrs. Jeffries has learned that manipulatives help students in her 3rd period class understand what she is teaching and stay on task. When her students enter class, they have small sticky notes often used for marking pages in a book on their desks. She has placed a writing sample on the overhead and will model, with the aid of student volunteers, how to edit using sticky notes.

STICKY NOTE RECORDS

The teacher or the student places a sticky note over the area where the error occurs. The student writer reexamines the area, writes the correction to the problem on the sticky note, and places the sticky note in his/her grammar file folder. The student arranges the notes in categories. After each targeted mini-lesson, the student should no longer make the error. Each time the student does not make an error in a category, he may move one sticker to the right side of his file. When all notes in a category have been moved to the right, the student is declared an "expert" in that category.

Writing Sample

When the man discovered his cable cost too much, he decided to have a plan. He disconnected his phone line from his satellite box and thought the company could never stop his service. What he did not know was that the company would send a person to his door door to find out what had happened. When the representative came up on the porch, he said "I'm sorry about your service. Oh, the man said. The

<p>I Must Conquer:</p> <p>Verbs <input type="text" value="cost"/> <input type="text" value="had gone"/> <input type="text" value="came"/></p> <p>Dialogue <input type="text" value="Rules for dialogue"/></p> <p>Spelling <input type="text" value="know"/></p>	<p>I Have Conquered:</p> <p>Verbs</p> <p>Dialogue</p> <p>Spelling <input type="text" value="satellite"/></p>
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SCENARIO #3: COLOR-CODING

Students in Mr. Adams class have been using underlining and abbreviations during peer editing. Since it is mid-year, Mr. Adams knows what grammatical strengths each student has, so he has filled out one Editing Tag for each student and assigned them a color. Beth, for example, is an excellent speller, and the teacher gave her the blue tag. Robert was given a green tag for punctuating dialogue well, and Andrea received the pink which indicates she uses verbs correctly.

B

_____’s paper was
checked by _____
for spelling.

Comment : _____

(BLUE)

G

_____’s paper was
checked by _____
for dialogue.

Comment: _____

(GREEN)

P

_____’s paper was
checked by _____
for verbs.

Comment: _____

(PINK)

COLOR-CODING

Peer readers use different color markers to place dots in the left margin on lines where grammar errors occur. The writers then reexamine their own works to determine what errors they can find and fix. The teacher may also use the colors to determine which students are effective proofreaders and which proofreaders may need to participate in mini-lessons along with student writers who cannot find and fix their own errors.

- P** When the man discovered his cable costed too much, he decided to
- G** have a plan. He disconnected his phone line from his satalite box
- B** and thought the company could never stop his service. What he
- B** **P** did not no was that the company would send a person to his door
- G** **P** to find out what had went on. When the representative come up on
- G** the porch, he said sir I am here to check your cable service. Oh
- G** no, the man said. The party is over now.

RUBRICS

Another strategy for tracking student progress is the use of rubrics. Just as the teacher has been using her instruction to focus on specific grammatical areas, so should the rubric.

SCENARIO

The students in Ms. Davenport's class have been asked to select a character they have studied during the year and then research a topic that would interest that character. During their research, Ms. Davenport has been using mini-lessons and daily language practice to teach semicolons. As the students finish a draft of a speech that their character might give on his topic, she creates a peer editing sheet for them to use. The peer editor has been instructed to either 1 - check to see if the writer has used semicolons correctly or 2 - suggest at least one place where a semicolon might be used.

On the rubric, the teacher has included two sections that focus on grammar and language usage. The first allows the student to select an area for teacher assessment and write it in the blank provided; the second lets the teacher choose.

Student-Selected Grammar or Writing Focus _____

1	2	3	4	5
No evidence you learned how to improve this area.		Some improvement in this area of writing; continue to work on it.		Paper shows mastery in this area.

Teacher-Selected Grammar or Writing Focus _____

1	2	3	4	5
No evidence you learned how to improve this area.		Some improvement in this area of writing; continue to work on it.		Paper shows mastery in this area.

SCENARIO

Mr. Potts' students have been writing short stories for the past month. Students are at different stages in their writing; some are finished while others have started over after throwing away several drafts. The teacher encourages these differences and uses daily language practice to teach students elements that make effective stories. One of the lessons is on improving nouns. Others include use of semicolon, colon or dashes, adding sensory descriptions, including a preface that thematically relates to the story.

To improve nouns, Mr. Potts explains that a writer can give a noun a name brand to make it more effective. To give an example, Mr. Potts writes the noun, jeans, on the overhead. He then asks students to give him several brand names of jeans—Levi's, Tommy Hilfiger, Lee. Students are then directed to look in their own drafts and find a noun that can easily be improved using the brand name method. He takes volunteers and students offer suggestions to one another.

Knowing that creative writing can be difficult to grade, Mr. Potts creates his rubric based on his daily language practices. Students are asked to mark on a final draft of their paper where they made specific revisions. For example, a student might circle the word Levi's and write, "specific noun" in the margin.

Examples from Short Story Rubric

___/3	added three effective and specific nouns
___/10	added two new forms of punctuation: dashes, colon, and/or semicolon
___/10	stated & incorporated three effective sensory images
___/10	selected a preface that thematically relates to story

GATHER EXIT INFORMATION

Just as the teacher gathered diagnostic information at the beginning of the course, the ending of it requires similar assessment. One way to monitor student growth is to ask the student to look back through his writing portfolio and then complete a self-evaluation.

SCENARIO

Ms. Davis, a 10th grade teacher, pulls out the diagnostic checklist she followed at the beginning of the course. Now she will use it to create an evaluation tool so the students can assess the grammatical skills they have targeted as a class and as individuals.

Sample Activity Plans for Teaching Grammar and Language Usage

ABOUT THE SAMPLE ACTIVITY PLANS

This section includes sample grammar and language usage instructional activities created by North Carolina high school English Language Arts teachers and supervisors. Within these examples, the writers have taken a variety of approaches and developed activities for varying amounts of time. As stated in the forward, these activity plans are intended to be suggestive rather than prescriptive or comprehensive. Since all of these activities target aspects of Goal VI, and since students in any grade may need instruction on a variety of grammar and language usage skills, specific SCS correlations have not been delineated. Each of these activities is designed to be used in direct connection with student writing, not in isolation. Teachers are strongly encouraged to view these plans as models or suggestions and to be guided in their instruction by examining their own students' needs.

ORGANIZATION OF THE ACTIVITY PLANS

Each activity plan begins with points to consider while planning, including approximate time needed, the teacher's description of objectives, and materials needed. The writers then described the activity as clearly as possible for another teacher to be able to replicate or adapt in the classroom. Assessment information is provided as appropriate, and the Additional Notes section allows the writer to add tips, suggestions for extensions, etc. Teacher's Notes provides space for the classroom teacher to write reactions, ideas, and reflection in response to the activity plans, especially as they try them out in their own classrooms. In some cases, supplemental handouts have been included to help teachers implement the activity.

Unless otherwise noted in the plan, all activities were written and submitted by the members of the development team. As teachers choose to use these activities, they may wish to adapt them to meet their own students' needs.

- Approaching Dialect
- Consistency of Verb Tense: General Guidelines
- Context Clues & Vocabulary Words
- Eliminate the Unnecessary
- Four Ways to Vary Sentences
- GUM Racing
- Learning Vocabulary Words
- Patterns of Author's Craft
- Punctuation Puzzles
- Stretch the Sentence: Extend a Noun or Verb
- Teaching Spelling: Commonly Confused Words
- Understanding the Use of a Colon & Parallelism

Approaching Dialect

➤ Planning Points

Approximate Time Needed: 15-20 minutes first day, 30 minutes for follow-up day(s)

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will demonstrate understanding of dialect
- Students will note examples of dialect they encounter within and outside of class
- Students will discuss and analyze dialects for authenticity
- Students will use examples of authentic dialect in a character sketch.

Materials Needed: Excerpt from *Who can tell my story* by Jacqueline Woodson (see attached)

➤ Description

Students are creating a character sketch about a person who has had a positive influence on their lives. As one method to reveal aspects of that person, students will incorporate appropriate dialect into their compositions.

Have students create a chart about the language they use with the friends, their families, and their teachers, principals, and/or supervisors. If they need help generating ideas, suggest specific sentences or scenarios (You like what... is wearing. What do you say? ... asks how you are doing. How do you respond?) You might also want to share your own informal language with the students, perhaps even words that were popular among your friends when you were in school.

Read the Woodson passage. Discuss issues that she raises. Do students agree with her interpretation of “standard English”? Have students ever felt that their language has been portrayed stereotypically or not authentically? What do they think about the authors, singers, actors, etc. who use inauthentic dialect?

Have students keep a dialect log for a week (longer if you wish). Ask them to record language they see or hear that appears to be “non-Standard.” Have them note the words used and the context of the dialect.

After they have completed their logs, have them share their notes in small groups and discuss which examples appeared authentic to them and why the director/author/speaker etc. might have used the dialect.

Students should draft the dialect portion of their character sketches and peer respond to the portraits created by the use of that dialect.

➤ Teacher’s Notes

FROM *WHO CAN TELL MY STORY*. (AFRICAN AMERICANS IN LITERATURE AND AS AUTHORS)
JACQUELINE WOODSON. **THE HORN BOOK MAGAZINE**, JAN-FEB 1998 V74 N1 P34(5)

We speak a different language in my grandmother's house. When the family is alone together or with close friends, our language flows into a southern dialect essenced with my younger brother's (and sometimes my own) hip-hop of-the-moment idioms--what was once good became fresh and is now the bomb. What was once great was then hype and now phat and so on. My younger brother and I listen to music that plays with language, that pushes against grammatical and linguistic walls. We speak this language to those who understand and then we come home and this language gets blended into the language that is spoken in my grandmother's house. What is spoken in her house is the language of a long time ago, before we were shipped off to college, before my exposure to Chaucer and James and the Brontes. It is not the stereotypical "I be, you be" that has made its derogatory way into others' perception of 'black dialect.' And it is more complex and less frustrating than the whole ebonics argument, although the seed of the argument is truly the essence of our language. It tells its own story, our language does, and woven through it are all the places we've been, all that we've seen, experiences held close, good and bad. You don't have to be a part of my family to understand what my grandmother means when she turns a phrase in a way that makes some friends knit their eyebrows and glance at me for help. You just need to have been a part of the experience.

A friend once asked if it was hard to speak "standard" English. I had never thought of standard English as that. I had always thought of it as the language spoken on the outside, the language one used to procure scholarships, employment, promotions. Like putting on a nice suit--one that you feel good in in the outside world but wouldn't choose for a lazy Sunday afternoon. Having majored in English with a concentration in British Literature and Middle English, I have come to love all aspects of the English language--have come to love sitting down with the writings of James and Pound as much as I love sitting down to Sunday dinner at my grandmother's house. Each event is buttered thick with experience and language. But at my grandmother's house, her experiences and the memories have filtered through her to us and by extension become our own. James's Portrait of a Lady doesn't do this. Nor does Pound's version of The Seafarer. But if I take the beauty of these works and filter my own experience through them, I can create something that is mine. And by this means, through the different, complicated elements of language and experience, through being and reading and listening and re-creating, I have come to understand the world around me--and myself as a writer.

Jacqueline Woodson is the author of several books for young readers including I Hadn't Meant to Tell You This and The House You Pass on the Way. Her forthcoming novel, If You Come Softly, will be published by Putnam in the fall of 1998.

(Full Article available through NCWiseOwl: Mag.Coll.: 92C1933; Article A20258576)

Consistency of Verb Tense: General Guidelines

➤ Planning Points

Approximate Time Needed: 15 minutes for each mini lesson

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will learn 3 general rules about verb tense
- Students will apply these by writing sample sentences
- Students will identify which rule(s) apply to their current writing assignment

Materials Needed:

- Overheads of the first chart
- Handouts of other charts
- Student writing assignment

➤ Description

Show students the first chart below. Depending on what type of writing assignment your students are currently doing, you might wish to focus on the verb tense guidelines appropriate for that paper. For example, if students are working on autobiographies, present a mini-lesson on guidelines 2 and 3, events that occur at the same time and events that occur at different times. If students are writing about a piece of literature, focus on guideline 1, using literary present tense.

After students see the general guideline, complete the first sample sentence in the appropriate chart as a class. After the sentence is written, *identify the verb(s) and decide if they are past, present, or future. Highlight past in red, future in yellow, and present in green. Then let students, independently or in pairs, complete the other sentences. Share responses with the class.

*It helps some students if they only highlight the main verbs. Some get confused, for example, if “Juliet is dead.” They think is means present and dead means past. Rather than get into a discussion of the present perfect tense, tell them to focus on the main verb.

Have students take out their own papers. Ask them to choose one paragraph and highlight verbs in different colors. If they “get stuck” on a sentence, tell them to put a dot beside it. These sentences can be used in a follow-up activity.

➤ Teacher’s Notes

WHEN WE WRITE ABOUT . .	WE USE . .
literature or film	present tense
events that occur at the same time	same tense
events that occur at different times	different tenses

LITERATURE OR FILM

TITLE	ACTION(S)	SAMPLE SENTENCE(S)
<i>Romeo & Juliet</i>	Juliet—took potion Romeo—thought Juliet was dead Romeo committed suicide Juliet committed suicide	Juliet takes the potion, and Romeo thinks she is dead. This causes Romeo and then Juliet to commit suicide.
<i>Wizard of Oz</i>	Dorothy lived in Kansas Dorothy was taken to Oz	
<i>The Cat in the Hat</i>	Mother left Cat comes over Cat made a mess Cat will clean up Cat will leave	

EVENTS THAT OCCUR AT THE SAME TIME

EVENT #1	EVENT #2	SAMPLE SENTENCE(S)
Vickie, born 1967	time of Vietnam War when her uncle was serving	Vickie was born in 1968 while her uncle was serving in the war.
Sam brushes teeth after supper (it is lunch time)	Mom does dishes after supper (it is lunch time)	
Yesterday's homework in Math was 10 word problems	Yesterday's homework in English was studying for a vocabulary quiz	
Jack climbs the hill	Jill fetches water	

EVENTS THAT OCCUR AT DIFFERENT TIMES

EVENT #1	EVENT #2	SAMPLE SENTENCE(S)
When I was in kindergarten	Now I'm in high school	When I was in kindergarten, I believed in the tooth fairy. Now that I am in high school, I still do.
I used to be single	currently dating	
At 10, moved to LA (Now 18)	Age 20, move to MA	

Context Clues & Vocabulary Words

➤ Planning Points

Approximate Time Needed: 30-45 minutes

Lesson Objectives: Students will learn how to analyze the meaning of vocabulary words based on their context

Materials Needed:

- Handout with excerpt from “Harrison Bergeron” by Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. (from “Harrison thrust his thumbs...” to “‘I forget,’ she said, ‘Something real sad on television.’”)
- Handout with questions about vocabulary in “Harrison Bergeron”
- Colored pencils

➤ Description

Tell students the context of the attached selection.

This short story is written in the future, around 2081. During this time, all people are supposed to be treated equally. However, equality in this society is defined as “not different.” If you are beautiful, you must be given a handicap, such as a mask, in order to be considered normal. If you are smart, you will wear headphones that emit loud noise to interrupt your train of thought. If you can dance, you must wear weights. Harrison Bergeron, the main character of the story, is exceedingly gifted and, therefore, exceedingly handicapped. As the story begins, he has decided that he will not tolerate his limitation any longer.

Ask students as the excerpt is read aloud to circle any words they do not know.

Explain to students that there are three ways to figure out unknown words.

Look at word clues in the sentence with the vocabulary word.

1. Look at word clues in the paragraph.
2. Look at word clues throughout the selection.

As a class example, use a colored pencil to highlight the word cowering. Ask students to find places in the text that hint at the meaning of the word and highlight these in the same color. Then, push them to defend their choices. After all clues are identified, have students predict the word’s meaning and write it in the margin. A chart like the one below could also be used.

VOCABULARY WORD	CONTEXT CLUES	PARAGRAPH #	WHY IT’S A CLUE
cowering	Thor, god of thunder	2	if he’s being compared to Thor, the god of thunder, he must be impressive—not like people around him
	I shall now select my Empress	3	HB must view himself as an Emperor, the leader of the people
	looking down on the . . . people	3	shows condescension
	Music! he commanded.	7	he told others what to do
	waved them like batons	9	he was powerful in all ways

What I think this word means: _____

6. Either as a whole class or individually, have students continue the activity above. The teacher should decide how many words and/or which ones students should cover.
7. In groups or individually, have students answer the following questions to assess how well they determined the meaning of certain vocabulary words.

➤ Teacher's Notes

VOCABULARY QUESTIONS

1. Based on the context of paragraph 3 and the selection itself, what does the word cowering mean?
 - A. fearful
 - B. powerful
 - C. embarrassed
 - D. excited

Which clue or clues helped you most in reaching your conclusion? Why?

2. Based on the context of paragraphs 9-11, what does the word synchronizing most likely mean?
 - A. contrasting
 - B. stopping
 - C. counting
 - D. matching

Explain what details in paragraphs 9 & 10 help the reader understand a vocabulary word in paragraph 11.

3. Based on the context of paragraphs 16-18, what does the word capered mean?
 - A. suspended
 - B. excited
 - C. hopping
 - D. dancing

Choose one of the answers above and explain why it was not a correct choice based on the details in the selection.

4. Based on the context of paragraphs 14-21, what is the best meaning of the word neutralizing?
 - A. maintaining
 - B. overpowering
 - C. reducing
 - D. destroying

Pick a clue that is not in paragraph 21 and explain how it hints at the meaning of neutralizing.

Eliminate the Unnecessary

➤ Planning Points

Approximate Time Needed: 20-30 minutes for Day 1; 5-10 minutes for Days 2 and 3

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will learn to eliminate unnecessary words and combine sentences
- Students will learn to omit “empty” words
- Students will learn how to reduce wordy phrases

Materials Needed:

- For Day 1, individual words written on index cards or printed on a computer; tape
- For Day 2, overhead transparency of sample paragraph
- For Day 3, overhead transparency or chart paper

➤ Description

Day 1

The teacher puts each word and punctuation mark in the sentences below on an index card and tapes them on the wall.* Working in groups, students are instructed to reduce the wording of the paragraph, keeping what is essential and taking away what is repetitive and unneeded. As students discuss what to remove, a group secretary records the new sentences on paper.

Each group counts the number of words left in their revision. The group with the least number of words is asked to choose a representative to come to the wall. First, the representative explains what the group noticed about the paragraph—what was unnecessary and unneeded. For example, she might say, “The writer repeats the word noise in every sentence.” Then, the representative removes index cards and punctuation, revealing their revision.

*The teacher may want each group to have their own set of index cards. These can be taped to the wall in the corners of the room as students enter the class. Also, the teacher may choose to not include punctuation marks and instead let students add those with sticky notes.

When the human mind is made to work harder than normal because of things out of its control, the result is stress. One such example of the mind working because of things out of its control is noise. Noise is everywhere we go, and is something we can never seem to get away from. Noise is found at home, in school, at work, and everywhere in public. Excessive and continuous noise causes our minds to work much, much harder than necessary, and this is the cause of a lot of stress.

After completing the revision activity, students should apply what they have learned to their own writing. The teacher can either: 1- take up a draft the day before this activity and put a box around two or three places where the student can easily eliminate unnecessary words and combine sentences or 2- have the students select a section or sections of their own writing, put a box around them, and revise. These revisions can be completed in class or for homework.

Honor the revision process by allowing several volunteers to write their original sentence and then their revised sentence or sentences on the overhead or board. Have the student and/or the class verbalize how the writer eliminated unnecessary words.

Day 2

1. The teacher puts the following paragraph on an overhead transparency. Students are asked if they can figure out a pattern in the piece of writing. (The teacher may want to underline the word Well and tell the students that this word is part of the pattern.)

2. Either individually or in pairs ask students to revise the writing. Ask for volunteers to read one of their new sentences. On the overhead, write the revision above the original.

My Trip to the Mall

Well, I went to the mall to buy some stuff, and I bought a lot. When I got home, I showed my Mom my things. She said they looked neat. I decided, although it was a bunch, I didn't really like it. Anyway, it was okay.

After completing this activity, students should exchange papers and color-code "empty words" in a peer's paper.

When the writer receives his edited paper, he should state at the top of the paper how many words he is going to change. (I would give a minimum number, and if a student says he doesn't have that many to revise, I would highlight several for him). The student should write the revisions on the draft.

Day 3

The teacher puts the following list of wordy phrases on the overhead or sentence strips that can be posted in the classroom. Students are asked to revise them in the right-hand column.

Before writing student revisions, ask who reduced the phrase to the least number of words. When appropriate ask for examples of three words, two words, one word. Write these down so students can see how to "cut" and then cut some more. Ask a student who volunteers and gives an effective revision to write it on a sentence strip. Post these in the classroom beside the original phrases for future reference.

PHRASES THAT ARE WORDY OR HAVE TOO MANY WORDS IN THEM . . .

One type of people	_____
There are a lot	_____
A lot of students	_____
This day and time	_____
In today's schools	_____
Today's society	_____
Teenagers nowadays	_____
In my opinion, stress is inevitable	_____
Due to the fact that	_____
For the purpose of	_____
Past history	_____
Alone by myself	_____
A bunch of parents	_____

Ask students to find, circle, and revise wordy phrases in their own writing. If anyone finds a phrase not listed above, add it.

➤ Assessment

On the rubric, give credit for students completing the activities above. Have a separate section that assesses the quality of their revisions.

Points Possible	Points Earned	
___ / ___	___	a draft has a box around sentences for revision; on that draft or a separate sheet of paper the revisions are written
___ / ___	___	a draft has "empty words" color-coded; these revisions are clearly written near the originals
___ / ___	___	a draft has wordy phrases circled; these are revised above the original

➤ Teacher's Notes

Four Ways to Vary Sentences

➤ Planning Points

Approximate Time Needed: 10-15 minutes at the beginning of five class periods.

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will learn three strategies for varying their sentences.
- Students will learn the difference between a simple, compound, or complex sentence.
- Students will revise their writing, showing four ways to vary sentences.

Materials Needed:

- an overhead for each mini-lesson
- blank transparencies
- transparency markers
- each student must have a draft of a writing assignment

➤ Description

MINI-LESSON #1

After the students have started working on a writing assignment, the teacher gives a mini-lesson using a transparency with the following:

Writing Sample

I bought the wagon. It was on sale at Walmart.
It cost \$9.99. The wagon broke. It bought it on a Tuesday.
It broke on Wednesday.

- What's wrong with the paragraph above?
- Each of this writer's sentences is called a simple sentence. How would you describe a simple sentence?
- Count the # of words in each sentence and write the # beside the sentence. What does this reveal about the writer's style?
- Re-write the paragraph above. Your goal is to eliminate as many unnecessary words as possible.

Before students share their paragraph revisions, ask some leading questions about how they revised. As they explain the process, mark it on the transparency. For example, a student might say, "you don't have to repeat the word it over and over." With the overhead marker, mark out each it except the first one.

Before students share their revisions, poll the class: "Who was able to change the paragraph into 3 sentences? 2? 1?"

Have the students who were able to revise using the least number of sentences share their revisions. Ask these students to count the # of words in each sentence. Is the number close each time or does it vary?

- Referring to the original writing sample, tell students that this time when they revise the paragraph, they must use at least one prepositional phrase at the beginning of a sentence.
- Have students count the # of words in each sentence. Ask, "Who would say that their sentences vary in length?" Have these students read their revisions and share the # of words in each sentence.

MINI-LESSON #4, PART I

- Remind students that they have learned two new ways to vary sentences: 1- eliminate unnecessary words and combine; 2- use a prepositional phrase at the beginning of sentence. Now they will learn one more strategy: start the sentence with a clause that starts with a dependent word.
- Share the list below with students. Have them write a sentence beginning with a dependent word.

DEPENDENT WORDS

after	although	as
because	before	even though
if	rather than	since
since	though	unless
until	when	whereas
whether	while	while

- The teacher should ask three students to write their sentences on the board. Using guiding questions, help the students figure out why these are called dependent words. For example, as you put brackets around the dependent clause, ask, "What do the beginnings of all the sentences have in common?" "Could I take this part of the sentence and put a period after it?" Why not? As you put brackets around the second part of the sentence ask, "What does the last section of each sentence have in common? Could I take this part of the sentence and put a period after it?" Write the word Dependent over the first brackets and Independent over the second. Explain that the sentences the students wrote are called complex sentences. How do they differ from the simple sentences studied in the first lesson? Write the students explanations on the board.
- Tell the students their homework is to make up a way to memorize at least ten dependent words. They will present them to the class and each student will pick one of the mnemonic devices.

MINI-LESSON #4, PART II

- After students have memorized at least ten dependent words, have them revise the original paragraph given in lesson #1. They should use at least one clause at the beginning of the sentence that starts with a dependent word.
- Have students count the # of words in each sentence. Ask, "Who would say that their sentences vary in length?" Have these students read their revisions and share the # of words in each sentence.

MINI-LESSON #5

After students have practiced the three strategies for varying sentences, have them revise their own writing, following the directions below:

How many words are in your paper? _____ How many sentences? _____

Avg sentence length _____

How long is your longest sentence? _____ The sentence before it _____ The sentence after it? _____

Find at least 2 examples of the following kinds of sentences and mark them in the margins:

Simple S Compound CD Complex (with dependent clause) CX

Pick 3 places in your writing where you will make the following revisions. Highlight the original section and then put your revision above it or in the margin. State which strategy # you used.

strategy #1: eliminate unnecessary words

strategy #2: combine sentences using a conjunction

strategy #3: prepositional phrase at sentence beginning

strategy #4: dependent clause at sentence beginning

➤ Teacher's Notes

GUM (Grammar, Usage, Mechanics) Racing

➤ Planning Points

Approximate Time Needed: 25-30 minutes (depending on passage)

Lesson Objectives: As a warm-up activity before proof-reading peers' papers, students will edit passages for appropriate grammar and language usage.

Materials Needed:

- Laminated passages (copied from student work)
- Transparency pens

➤ Description

Divide class into groups of 2-3 students (mixed-ability groups work well for this assignment) and give each student a laminated passage from a student or teacher draft and a transparency pen.

After each group has its materials, a race begins to see which group can find and correct the grammar, punctuation, and usage errors. As the students edit, they should write in the margin the skill being assessed (spelling, subject/verb agreement, comma usage, etc.) Because this is an informal assessment, students can use handbooks and notes to find the rules; however, as the students became more familiar with the skills, certain rules should come from practice and memory.

The group members share answers in order to check that all errors were edited.

When group members feel they have found all errors, they raise their hands. Choose one laminated passage from the group (if they worked as a team, the sheets should be identical).

The other group members are asked to put down their pens and look at their sheets to go over the passage together. Allow time for discussion of the corrections so that the other groups are able to ask questions for complete understanding.

➤ Teacher's Notes

Learning Vocabulary Words

➤ Planning Points

Approximate Time Needed: One class period to complete the graphic organizer; extra time if the collage is completed in class.

Lesson Objectives: Students will use a graphic organizer to learn new vocabulary.

Materials Needed:

- a piece of text
- list of vocabulary words from text
- poster board & markers (optional)
- magazines (optional)

➤ Description

Before reading a piece of text, the teacher can make a list of target words for the students to learn. Another alternative is to ask students to generate a list of any words they do not know while they are reading. Then break the students into small groups, asking them to compile a master list of all the words the people in their group did not know.

Assign one vocabulary word to one student or a pair of students.

On notebook paper or poster board, have the students complete a *graphic organizer like the one below that centers around the new word.

The word map could also include a box for pronunciation, root words and its meaning, personal application, literary application. For example, eccentric would be *ik-sen-trik*, comes from Greek word *ek* (out) and *kentron* (center); my next door neighbor is eccentric because he wears shorts year round; Boo Radley in *To Kill A Mockingbird* is an eccentric character because he rarely leaves his house.

After completing the graphic organizer, students could make a collage that shows the meaning of their vocabulary word.

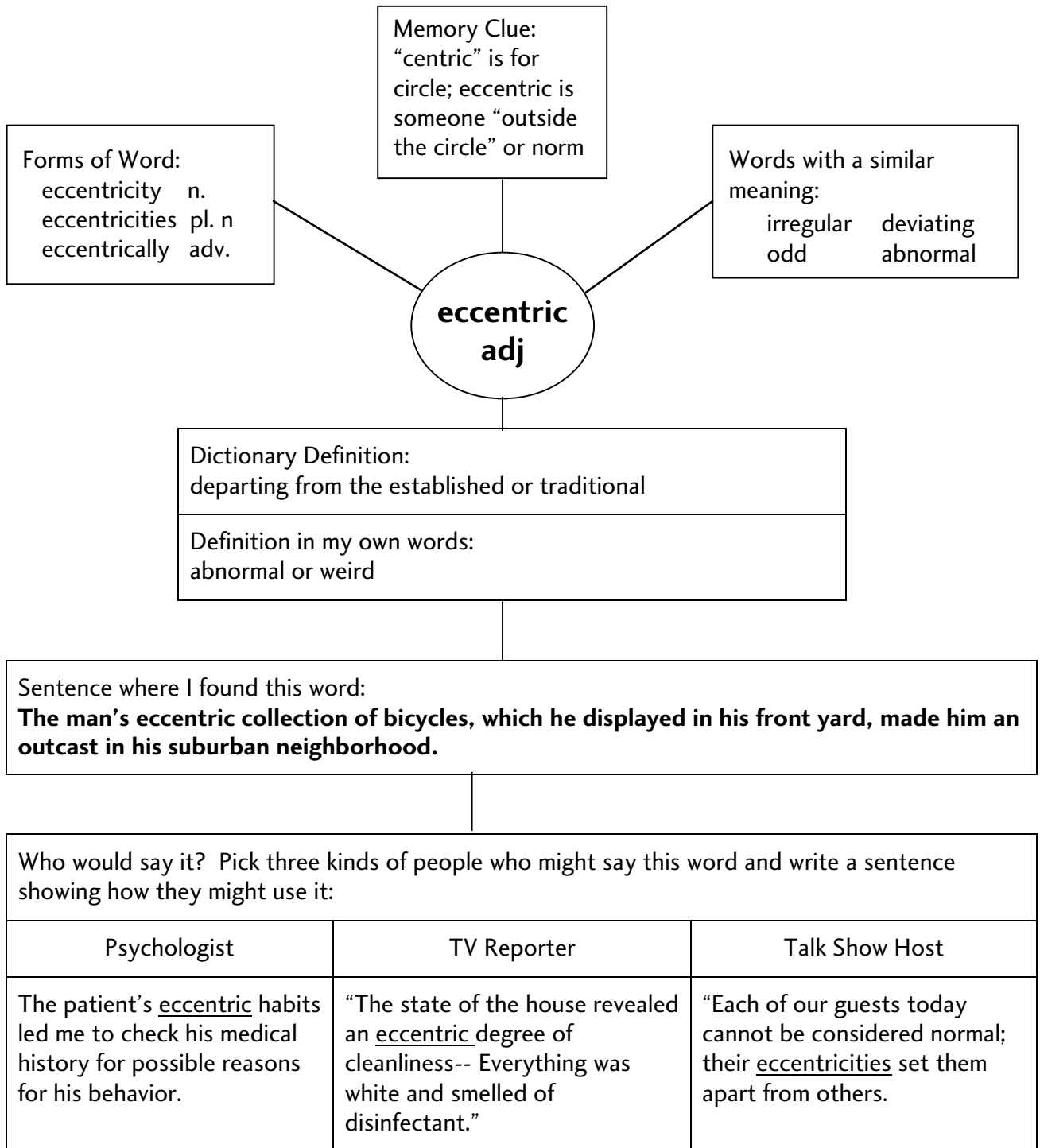
To conclude the activity, have students share their mappings and collages with the members of their small group. Each person should write down all the words that are shared and any key information that will help him remember it.

*Buehl, Douglas R., Irvin, Judith L., and Klemp, Ronald M. Reading and the High School Student. Boston: Pearson, 2003, pg. 135.

➤ Assessment

The teacher can create a rubric, outlining her expectations for the graphic organizer and collages. A quiz can be given on each small group's list of words.

➤ Teacher's Notes



Patterns of Author's Craft

➤ Planning Points

Approximate Time Needed: 30 minutes for color-coding and one mini-lesson

Lesson Objectives: Students will color-code a passage in literature looking for patterns. Students will discuss and analyze these patterns.

Materials Needed:

- Handout with copy of passage
- Colored-pencils

➤ Description

- Photocopy the following excerpt for each student in the class. Using colored pencils, ask the students to mark any patterns—any item that is repeated more than once. Then create a legend at the bottom of the page that gives all words of that color a label. In green, for example, they might highlight the words live deliberately, essential facts of life, had not lived, live what was not life, living is so dear, live deep, suck out the marrow of life, live sturdily and Spartanlike, etc. At the bottom of the page, the student could make a green box and label it “pursuit of life.”
- Ask students to share the patterns they identified and make a list of these, with examples, on the overhead or blackboard.
- Select one or more patterns for a focused mini-lesson. Some examples might include diction, parallelism, semi-colons, infinitives.
- A chart like the one below can help the class analyze why Thoreau made certain stylistic choices.

PATTERN	EXAMPLES FROM TEXT	ANALYSIS (Ask question, Why is the pattern significant? What point or purpose is the author trying to achieve?)

➤ Additional Notes

*Adapted from Payne, Lucile. *The Lively Art of Writing*. Newton, Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon, 1982.

➤ Teacher's Notes

Excerpt from *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau

1 (A) I went to the wood because I wished to live deliberately, to front only
2 the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach,
3 and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. (B) I did not wish
4 to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice
5 resignation, unless it was quite necessary. (C) I wanted to live deep and
6 suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartanlike as to put
7 to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life
8 into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean,
9 why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its
10 meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience and
11 be able to give a true account of my next excursion.

Punctuation Puzzles

➤ Planning Points

Approximate Time Needed: 25-35 minutes

Lesson Objectives: Students will consider the importance of punctuation and its impact on understanding meaning.

Materials Needed: student work ready for proof-reading

➤ Descriptions

- For students struggling with punctuation, share the following scenarios:
 - An English professor wrote the words, "Woman without her man is nothing" on the blackboard and directed his students to punctuate it correctly. The men wrote: "Woman, without her man, is nothing." The women wrote: "Woman! Without her, man is nothing." (from an urban myth)
 - A governor was taping a campaign ad and said "Do you hate New York? Drug dealers put me in office." (Spin City)
- Give students the following letter and have them add the punctuation and determine the author's intent.

Dear John:

I want a man who knows what love is all about you are generous kind thoughtful people who are not like you admit to being useless and inferior you have ruined me for other men I yearn for you I have no feelings whatsoever when we're apart I can be forever happy will you let me be yours Gloria

Two versions of what students might create:

Dear John:

I want a man who knows what love is all about. You are generous, kind, thoughtful. People who are not like you admit to being useless and inferior. You have ruined me for other men. I yearn for you. I have no feelings whatsoever when we're apart. I can be forever happy--will you let me be yours?
Gloria

Dear John:

I want a man who knows what love is. All about you are generous, kind, thoughtful people, who are not like you. Admit to being useless and inferior. You have ruined me. For other men, I yearn. For you, I have no feelings whatsoever. When we're apart, I can be forever happy. Will you let me be?
Yours,
Gloria

- As students proof-read and edit each others' papers, have them pay close attention to punctuation and clarity.

➤ Additional Notes

Punctuation Takes a Vacation, by Robin Pulver, is an engaging picture book about life without punctuation.

➤ Teacher's Notes

Stretch the Sentence: Extend a Noun or Verb

➤ Planning Points

Approximate Time Needed: 30-45 minutes for steps 1-4; 15 minutes for step 5. (The steps could be divided into several 10-15 minute mini lessons.)

Lesson Objectives: Students will learn how to add details to a basic statement to achieve sentence variety. Students will revise four sentences in their own writing to show sentence variety.

Materials Needed:

- Transparencies of sample sentences (Step 1, Step 2, Step 3)
- Blank transparencies
- Overhead markers

➤ Description

STEP 1

- Every sentence, no matter how long, can be reduced to a basic or core statement. Put the following examples on an overhead and ask students to identify the core of each sentence. Underline the core in one color marker and the extension in another.
 - Bells rang, filling the air with their clanging, startling pigeons into flight, bringing people into the streets to hear the news.
 - Love, as everyone knows except those who happen to be afflicted with it, is blind.
 - After trying unsuccessfully to divert Mr. Dunwiddy into a discussion of the football game, the class took a quiz.

Ask students to explain how the basic statement was extended in each example. Use their wording to label each sentence above. For example, one student might say, "Words were added at the end, in the middle, or at the beginning." Guide students to see that in each example a noun or a verb was extended.

STEP 2

- Let students practice the three types of sentences they have identified using the following basic statements. When you start with the first sentence, for example, ask which type of sentence revision was used. Write the type of revision, the sentence, and then mark its basic statement in one color and its extension in another. Then ask if someone used another type of revision. Again, write the revision type, the sentence, and mark it. If no one used the second type of revision, have the class create one and mark it together.
 - Sally grabbed the cat.
 - Fred ate all his supper.
 - The class read the day's assignment.
 - My mother explained why I couldn't go to the concert.

STEP 3

1. Before asking students to vary their own sentences, show the basic statements above again without their revisions. Underline the key words in each statement where it would be easiest to add details, make extensions. Probably students will note the nouns. If they do not offer the verbs as a suggestion, ask them how they would extend *grabbed* in sentence 1. How might Sally grab the cat?" In sentence 2, how might Fred eat his supper? Guide students to see that several adverbs could be stacked together to extend the verb.
2. Review with students the two ways you've learned to vary sentences.
 - Extend a verb
 - Extend a noun

STEP 4

Ask students to pick four sentences in their current writing. Transfer these to a new sheet of notebook paper. Tell them to underline the part or parts of each sentence they want to extend and then write their revisions.

STEP 5

The following class period, ask for volunteers. Hand them each an overhead transparency and marker. Tell them to write one of their revised sentences. Have the student place it on the overhead and see if the class can identify where the extensions were added. Push them to identify the addition as a verb or noun extension.

➤ Additional Notes

*Adapted from Payne, Lucile. The Lively Art of Writing. Newton, Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon, 1982.

➤ Teacher's Notes

Teaching Spelling: Commonly Confused Words

➤ Planning Points

Approximate Time Needed: Five to ten minutes at the beginning of class each day for a week

Lesson Objectives: Students will learn the spellings of commonly confused words, such as homonyms.

Materials Needed:

- an overhead
- writing sample with commonly confused words

➤ Description

Students should be working on a writing assignment while the teacher completes the following steps, so they can apply the concept to their own paper.

The teacher presents a five-minute lesson on commonly confused words. First, she puts a list like the one below on the overhead. Students are asked to fill in the blanks with words that sound like the first one but have a different spelling and meaning.

Common Spelling Errors: Confused Words

your	_____	
to	_____	_____
its	_____	
their	_____	_____
college	_____	
effect	_____	
chose	_____	
lead	_____	
than	_____	
want	_____	

After completing the list, ask students why a spell-check on a computer would not “catch” these words.

At the beginning of class each day for several days, the teacher can put the following

examples of homonym misspellings on the overhead.* Students are asked to underline the homonym, explain what it means, the correct spelling that’s needed, and its meaning.

Full coarse meals

No bear feet allowed.

The pistol of a flower is its only protection against insects.

On Thanksgiving morning we could smell the foul cooking.

Carats, 2 for 39 cents

Our sauce compliments our salad.

Panel Agree To Much Sex on Television

Mr. & Mrs. Garth Robinson request the honor of your presents at the marriage of their daughter Holly to Mr. James Stockman.

Lederer, Richard. Anguished English: An Anthology of Accidental Assaults Upon Our Language. Charleston: Wyrick: 1987.

In the next mini-lesson, the teacher should handout a sample writing assignment that has commonly misspelled words and place a transparency of the handout on the overhead. The teacher instructs the students to skim the assignment backwards, starting with the last word and skimming their finger under each word until they reach the beginning of the piece. They are told to circle any word that is a homonym, and if it is misspelled, to fill in the correct meaning. The teacher records the class' answer on the overhead.

In the next mini-lesson, students are instructed to exchange papers, so they can peer edit for one another. They should follow the same instructions above as well as circle any words they know are misspelled, regardless of whether they are homonyms.

Other ideas for spelling mini-lessons can be found in Nancie Atwell's Lessons that Change Writers. She includes "The Truth about I before E," "Root Words and Prefixes," "Suffixes: To Double or Not?," "Other Suffix Rules That Mostly Work."

She also has a useful checklist students can use to proofread for spelling errors.

➤ Assessment

Students could choose five to seven of the commonly confused words they tend to misspell. On a given date, a partner can test them. Atwell suggests the following format:

Tester: Say the word, use it in a sentence, and say it again.

Speller: Print the word.

---Do the whole list, then:

Tester: Spell each word out loud slowly, so the speller can proofread.

The teacher can use a rubric with a designated section for grading spelling only.

GRAMMAR OR WRITING FOCUS: SPELLING COMMONLY CONFUSED WORDS CORRECTLY

1	2	3	4	5
No evidence you learned how to improve this area.		Some improvement in this area of writing; continue to work on it.		Paper shows mastery in this area.

➤ Teacher's Notes

Understanding the Use of a Colon & Parallelism

➤ Planning Points

Approximate Time Needed: 15-20 minutes

Lesson Objectives:

- Students will analyze a section of Amy Tan's writing in *The Hundred Secret Senses*
- Students will learn how to use a colon.
- Students will learn how to use parallelism.

Materials Needed:

- A handout or overhead transparency of the writing sample below
- Each student should have his own writing sample (narratives work well, but doesn't have to be limited to this mode of writing)

➤ Description

- Before reading the following passage aloud, tell students that the writer uses two grammatical/stylistic features effectively, colons and parallelism. While the passage is read the first time, ask students to figure out how Tan is using the colon.

I taught her to point and call out the five elements that make up the physical world: metal, wood, water, fire, earth.

I taught her what makes the world a living place: sunrise and sunset, heat and cold, dust and heat, dust and wind, dust and rain.

I taught her what is worth listening to in this world: wind, thunder, horses galloping in the dust, pebbles falling in the water. I taught her what is frightening to hear: fast footsteps at night, soft cloth slowly ripping, dogs barking, the silence of crickets.

I taught her two things mixed together produce another: water and dirt make mud, heat and water make tea, foreigners and opium make trouble.

I taught her the five tastes that give us the memories of life: sweet, sour, bitter, pungent, and salty.

Amy Tan, *The Hundred Secret Senses*, pgs. 53-54

- Put the following sentence starter on the board:
You use a colon when . . .

Using the student's wording, write the rule for colon usage.

- Before the passage is read a second time, underline the areas marked below with an overhead marker. Use color if possible. Ask students to decide what they have in common. Using students' word choice, label each colored pattern in the margin.

I taught her to point and call out the five elements that make up the physical world: metal, wood, water, fire, earth.

I taught her what makes the world a living place: sunrise and sunset, heat and cold, dust and heat, dust and wind, dust and rain.

I taught her what is worth listening to in this world: wind, thunder, horses galloping in the dust, pebbles falling in the water. I taught her what is frightening to hear: fast footsteps at night, soft cloth slowly ripping, dogs barking, the silence of crickets.

I taught her two things mixed together produce another: water and dirt make mud, heat and water make tea, foreigners and opium make trouble.

I taught her the five tastes that give us the memories of life: sweet, sour, bitter, pungent, and salty.

Amy Tan, *The Hundred Secret Senses*, pgs. 53-54

- On an index card or piece of paper, ask students to “mimic” one of Tan’s sentences. They should use her wording before the colon, but then add their own after it. For example, a student might choose, I taught her what makes the world a living place, and then add his own list of five noun pairs connected by “and” with the third through fifth pairs each starting with the same noun.
- Put students in groups and let them share their sentences. Have the group vote on one winner to be placed in the “Language Hall of Fame.” Post the winning sentences in the classroom.
- Ask students to look through the paper they are currently writing for an appropriate place to use a colon and parallelism. Mark the selected sentence and write the revision above it or in the margin. (If a student says he cannot find a logical place for a colon, have him look through past writing assignments.)

➤ Teacher’s Notes