

Variety of sentence structure

Objective

Y5. T2. S8.

To construct sentences in different ways, while retaining meaning, through: combining two or more sentences; reordering them; deleting or substituting words; writing them in more telegraphic ways.

Guided work

1. Before the lesson, split the children into four groups. Write in bold, clear writing, onto separate sheets of paper, a prompt for each group, as follows:

- Add more information, creating a longer sentence.
- Re-order the sentence so that it still makes sense.
- Improve the vocabulary.
- Delete some words from the sentence.

2. Begin the lesson by explaining to the children that they will be investigating and experimenting with sentences. Point out that every sentence can be written in a variety of ways, still making sense and still revealing the same information but in different and possibly more interesting ways.

3. Remind the children that as writers they should always consider how to make their work more interesting to read. Use the example: The teacher shouted at the children, as they were not listening. Explain that this sentence can be changed in several ways while retaining its meaning:

- It can be added to: The teacher shouted at the children, as they were not listening to the instructions she was giving them.
- It can be re-ordered: As they were not listening, the teacher shouted at the children.
- The vocabulary can be improved: The teacher bellowed at her pupils, as they refused to pay attention.
- Some of the words can be deleted to leave a brief statement in note form: Teacher shouted; children not listening.

Independent work

- Distribute copies of photocopiable page 21, plus one of the four prompts listed above. Allow the children ten minutes to alter a selection of the sentences according to the prompt given to them. Let the children self-select the sentences that they use to respond to each prompt. The children may ignore the fact that the sentences are numbered; for example, they may begin with sentence three if they choose.
- After ten minutes, move the prompts to different tables so that the children all have a different prompt. Time permitting, move the prompts again after a further ten minutes.

Plenary

- To end the lesson, take the sentences in order and ask the children to share with the whole class ways in which this sentence has been altered. Praise examples where the children have selected particularly adventurous vocabulary or where the word order works well. Look for children who split the main clause by dropping the subordinate clause in the middle, for example: The footballer, who was not selected for the team, was very angry. Explore with the children the shift in meaning created by the use or omission of commas in this sentence.

Further challenge

- Ask the children to select sentences from their own work (in English or in another subject, such as science) and improve upon some of them, using the methods discussed in this lesson. Encourage variety of sentence structure across all genres of writing.