

Grammar and Syntax

Grammar consists of set rules regarding language and sentence structure, such as no splitting infinitives, no hanging prepositions and the importance of subject-verb agreement.

Grammar relies on the learner understanding the different parts of speech, the common name for a word class or category into which words are placed according to the work they do in a sentence. There are eight traditional parts of speech: noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, conjunction, preposition, and interjection.

Syntax is how a sentence is worded and structured, the order of the words that must be utilized to convey meaning. It consists of the type of sentence: declarative, interrogative, exclamatory, imperative. For example, syntax would refer to the sentence being declarative: stating a wish that the boy had. It would also refer to the length of the sentence mimicking the long twisted paths in the mountain and the long time the boy had been wishing to walk them. Syntax can also describe the “voice” of the sentence and whether it is passive or active. For example, He wants to run down the trail (passive) vs. He runs down the trail (active).

Syntax has literary meaning and use, while grammar just shows good form. They are two different things that can be easily confused.

Syntax can be used as a literary device to add extra meaning to your sentences, whereas grammar adds no greater meaning to your sentences.

This “kit” has been designed to provide you with activities that will promote youth’s understanding of both grammar and syntax. The Word Box has library pockets full of words categorized by part of speech. There are activity cards that will share ways to use these different library pockets. Grammar Minutes are games, complete with a variety of game boards and game cards, labeled with the name of the game, as well as activities that you can use to help youth become more proficient in identifying the part of speech in context. Punctuating sentences correctly can also be challenging for youth. Sometimes it seems that when a young person learns about a new punctuation mark, he/she over-use it just to practice. Activities to support correct punctuation can be found in Grammar Minutes. The Syntax Challenge helps youth to work on correct syntax. Without syntax, language would be gibberish. Changing word order changes the meaning. “I can go,” for example, is very different from “Can I go?” And we all know that “Go I can” is meaningless. English language syntax is different from Spanish language syntax, so for our English Learners, increased opportunities to intentionally practice syntax is important.

Finally, in this “kit” you will find poems, songs, and books to share with youth to activate different learning modalities. These poems, songs and books could also serve as a “model” for a youth writing process.

The Word Box

The purpose of the Word Box is to provide you with activities that you can do with youth that do not require a lot of preparation on your part and that utilize a minimal number of materials that can be used in a variety of ways.

The words in this box represent the parts of speech:

- Nouns—person, place, thing, or idea
- Pronouns—words that take the place of nouns
- Verbs—action (jump, skip, eat) or state of being (is, are, etc.)
- Adverbs—describe and can modify anything but nouns or words that are used as nouns. Adverbs express how, when, where, how often, and how much.
- Adjectives—describe nouns
- Conjunctions—words that combine other parts of speech or sentences in a particular relationship
- Interjections—words or phrases that show strong emotions
- Prepositions—prepositions work with nouns and pronouns to form a phrase that can act as an adjective or adverb.
- Articles—a, an, the

Your Word Box has library pockets by grade level. If you work in an elementary program, you will have access to library pockets for Kindergarten through 6th grade (5th if that is the highest grade level on your campus. Middle school programs will receive 6th through 8th grade materials, unless they also serve 5th grade.

In your Word Box you will find individual library pockets that have a particular part of speech within. However, you may have more than one library pocket with nouns included because each pocket represents different types of nouns. For example, you will have one library pocket for Common Nouns and one for Proper Nouns at all grade levels. However, as youth mature, you may also have library pockets of Collective Nouns, Countable and Uncountable Nouns, Possessive Nouns, and Concrete and Abstract Nouns.

In your Word Box you will also find this ring of information which includes basic things about the Word Box, and also a variety of activities that you can do with the different library pockets of words. You will discover that basic activities include “sorts”. A sort asks a youth to look at a library pocket of words and then sort them into categories. These categories can be ones that you identify, such as common and proper, or ones that the youth determine such as people, animals, things, and places. Or the youth might also categorize words by color, living or non-living, or any other category that seems to make sense to them.

While all activities can be done by the whole class, we recommend that you have the youth work in pairs, triad, and groups of four. (This is why you will have multiple library pockets that are exactly alike.) Activities that are best done with the entire group are labeled as Group Activities.

In addition to the library pockets of words by part of speech, you will discover a library pocket of punctuation marks, Frye’s Fast Phrases. These two pockets can be used when you are working with the class to form sentences.

Word Box Activities

Give an individual youth a set of cards and ask him/her to put them in alphabetical order by the first letter of each word (remember, if the first letters are the same, you continue to the second letter, then the third and so on). This is appropriate for grades 3rd and up.

Give youth (groups of 2 work best) a set of cards and ask them to categorize them and label the categories they have placed the words under. (Help youth look for the bigger picture and certainly beyond alphabetizing the words.) Have them explain the rationale to another student.

Give youth the adverb cards and ask them to categorize them and then label the categories. Have them explain the rationale to another student. (Remember, adverbs identify how, when, where, how often, how much.)

Give each student an interjection card. Have the group walk around to music. When the music stops, students pair up. Each member of the pair needs to make a sentence to which the other person replies with his/her interjection. (Example: I am going to pet my cat. BAM!) You might want 3-4 sample cards.

Give youth the adverb and verb cards, ask them to combine a verb and an adverb that makes sense.

Randomly give out three word cards to each student. Have them find a "group" of others that can help make a sentence. (Be sure to distribute some punctuation cards.)

Give teams of two a preposition card. Have them act out the prepositional phrase for the group. Note: Before you have youth do this activity on their own, demonstrate several phrases for them. Also consider reading the book, **Rosie's Walk** to them and act out the prepositional phrases in the book.

Give youth the noun and conjunction cards. Ask them to use the conjunction cards to combine two nouns. Most common conjunctions are and, not, but, or, yet. (Examples: This cookie contains neither chocolate not nuts. This cookie contains both chocolate and nuts. This cookie contains either chocolate or nuts. The cookie contains not only chocolate but also nuts. This cookie contains chocolate whether it contains nuts or not.)

Divide the class into three groups. Give cards to each group randomly. Be sure that each group has several conjunctions. As a team the groups use the cards to create sentences. Ask the groups to read the sentences they've created aloud for everyone to hear. Then ask groups to combine sentences using a conjunction.

Distribute the Frye's Fast Phrases. Ask youth to use the phrase in a sentence. Have groups read the sentence they wrote aloud to the group.

Create a word wall or word chart. Have students write sentences with any of the word cards that you have distributed to them. These can be original sentences that use one or more words. Have them place the word(s) on the word wall. Note: Word walls have spaces for words to be placed in alphabetical order or by categories.

Randomly distribute words to the group. Call on one student at a time to come up and help create a sentence. When there are enough words to complete the first sentence, students should begin making a second sentence.

Nouns:

Nouns: Nouns are either common (which does not start with a capital letter unless it is at the beginning of a sentence) and names a person, place or thing generically. A proper noun names a specific person, place or thing

and always begins with a capital letter. You can play the game **I Spy** with the students. Ask youth to change between identifying common or proper nouns (maybe have the words common and proper can be written on popsicle sticks and then youth can pick a stick and then identify the type of noun that is on the stick.

Give youth (groups of 2 work best) a set of cards and ask them to categorize them and label the categories they have placed the words under. (Help youth look for the bigger picture and certainly beyond alphabetizing the words.) Have them explain the rationale to another student.

Give youth the nouns and ask them to classify the words as person, place, thing or idea; or ask them to pair up common and proper nouns.

Give youth the noun and pronouns cards, ask them to match the nouns with a pronoun that could take the noun's place in a sentence.

Give youth the verbs and the nouns. Ask them to create two word sentences. Ask them to write the sentences on a white board. Ask them what they know about how sentences begin and how they end.

Give youth the adjective and noun cards. Ask them to pair an adjective with the noun. Ask them to add two different adjectives to the noun that make sense. (Yes—The large brown dog, No—The big tiny cat)

Sorts: There are a number of different sorts that you can ask youth to complete:

Assigned Common Noun Sorts:

- Person—Place—Thing—Animal—Idea
- Plural nouns and singular nouns

Assigned Proper Noun Sorts:

- Names of people, pets, etc.
- Names of places
- Names of days, months
- Names of holidays
- Matching common nouns with proper nouns

Adjectives: Have youth select a noun and then describe it with two adjectives—these do not have to be from the Word Box. For example, I have a yellow, folded napkin.

Verbs: Have youth act out a verb that you call out (use the cards to keep the action moving). Move quickly to keep them engaged, perhaps calling out a new verb every 3 seconds. Example: breathe...eat...think...stand...flap...sit...turn...dance...sing...clean...drum...and so on. You can not act out state of being verbs s select the verbs you will use in advance.

Adverbs: Create cards that state: how, when, where, how often, how much under what circumstances. Then give youth a verb and have them draw one of the cards you created above and find an adverb to answer that question. For example, if the verb is “eat” and the card states “how often”, the sentence or phrase could be “John eats daily.”

Instructions

Model correct syntax. Learning & Teaching suggests that rather than correcting, you rephrase the sentence as it should have been constructed. If a child says, "Home I went today," reply, "Oh, you went home today. What did you do there?"

Use sentence completion exercises to improve syntax. Give **students** open-ended sentences, such as "The duck waddled..." or "The man went..." and have them complete the sentences so that they make sense. These exercises can be done orally or as written assignments.

Write words on cards and have the students arrange them to form complete simple sentences. As with the modeling exercise, read the sentence and ask whether it makes sense. Students sometimes hear a syntax error that they do not see.

Develop basic skills. Teach **students** that sentences start with capital letters and that they end with periods.

Teach how sentences often use a noun-verb-direct object pattern. Build on the earlier sentence exercise and make flashcard piles of nouns, verbs and direct objects, identifying the categories with different-colored markers, and have the students construct more complex sentences by adding adjectives and pronouns.

Perform verb exercises. Write "yesterday," "today" and "tomorrow" on the whiteboard, Have the students conjugate a list of verbs using the past, present and future tenses, then have them construct short sentences such as, "Yesterday I went to school. Today I go to school. Tomorrow I will come to school." This short exercise can easily be done when you have five minutes before recess.

Use songs and nursery rhymes to help children improve their syntax. Repetition is essential to language learning, and singing helps make learning correct word order automatic.

Praise students when they get it right. Say quietly, "Oh, I'm so pleased that you got the word order right." A little positive reinforcement goes a long way toward improving language skills, particularly at the primary level.

Word Box Kindergarten

Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives	Adverbs	Pronouns
ball bat bed book boy bun can cake cap car cat cow cub cup dad day dog doll dust fan feet girl gun hall hat hen jar kite man map men mom pan pet pie pig pot rat son sun toe tub van	cry eat jump play read run sit swim	big black blue cold dry gray green happy hot little old orange purple red sad wet white yellow young	today tomorrow yesterday	he her him I me she they us we you you

Prepositions	Interjections	Articles	Conjunctions	
across around for in on over past through to under	wow yipee	a an the	and but or	

Word Box

Business card size

Need library pockets

Labels

5-10 sorting activities with n, v, adj, adv

Rosie's Walk—prepositions—across, around, over, under, past, through

Sorts for nouns:

- Common and proper
- Person, place, thing, animal, idea
- Singular-plural
- Noun—not a noun
- In a classroom, home, garden, etc.

Proper Noun Sorts:

- Names of people, pets, etc.
- Names of places
- Names of days, months
- Names of holidays
- Matching common nouns with proper nouns

Adjective Sort

- Color
- Number
- Shape
- Size
- Feelings
- Silly or Serious
- Looks
- Behaves
- Sounds
- Noun + adj.

Verbs

- To Root, To Toot, To Parachute
- Action—regular
- Action—irregular
- Present-past-future tense
- Regular –irregular
- Action, helping, linking
- Charades