TIPS & TOOLS: SENTENCES

The sentence lies at the heart of communicating thought and meaning whether you are the writer or the reader.
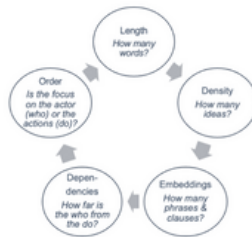**Scott, 2004**

Syntax and Sentence Comprehension Knowledge

- Syntax provides the structure or order for combining words into phrases, clauses and ultimately sentences.
- It is the key to understanding who did what , when, where, how in a sentence.
- The building blocks- words (parts of speech), phrases, & clauses make up the content of sentences then, paragraphs and overall text.
- Each carry meaning within the sentence by providing answers to the critical questions such as who or what, did what, when, where, and how.
- How well we use this knowledge to comprehend sentences within text is dependent on both indirect interactions with oral & written language & explicit instructional experiences.

Be on the Lookout for Potential Troublemakers!

These sentences are challenging because they are long, contain multiple ideas, phrases and clauses, separate the who from the do, and are found in read-alouds to complex academic texts.

(Cycle diagram: Length - How many words?; Density - How many ideas?; Embeddings - How many phrases & clauses?; Dependencies - How far is the who from the do?; Order - Is the focus on the actor (who) or the actions (do)?)
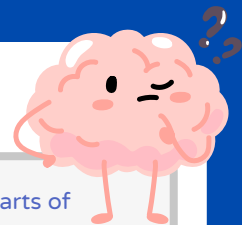
Sentence Comprehension Instruction

The science of sentence comprehension instruction tells us that the ability to parse the structure of the sentence and to integrate the meaning of the words and phrases is essential to comprehension.

Critical tools include:
- Explicit instruction that explains how parts of speech, phrases, clauses, and sentence types build & convey meaning.
- Explicit instruction that includes modeling and practicing strategies and activities to support parsing basic to more complex text-based sentences.
- Explicit instruction that explains how cohesive devices (cohesive ties & connectives) integrate meaning within and between sentences.
- Explicit instruction that includes modeling and practicing strategies and activities to support integrating meaning within and between sentences.

Guiding Questions

- How will you directly teach the function of the building blocks of a sentence-parts of speech, phrases & clauses?
- How and when will you directly teach varied sentence structures & how they convey meaning comprehension?
- How and when will you directly teach students to work with challenging sentences?
- How will you directly teach f the integration of ideas within and between sentences, e.g. the use of cohesive ties and connectives? How and when will you directly teach students to work with these within text?
- How & when will you provide oral & written opportunities to use sentence comprehension to construct & express meaning?
- How will you differentiate instruction to meet diverse needs of your students

Instructional Framework for Sentence Comprehension

Instructional Focus	Explicit Instructional Activities
Building Blocks of Sentences • Parts of Speech & their Jobs • Phrases & their Jobs • Clauses & their Jobs	**Oral & Written Connections:** -Questioning/Parsing -Sorts (e.g., pictures, words) -Visual Representations -Structured Sentence Organizer
The Sentence • The Sentence & their Jobs • Troublemaker Sentences	**Oral & Written Connections:** -Questioning/Parsing -Sentence Frames -Structured Sentence Organizer -Diagramming & other Visual Representations -Anagrams -Sentence Building: Combining & Expansion **Fluency Integration:** Prosody & Parsing
Sentence Integration • The Role of Cohesive Ties • The Role of Connectives	**Oral & Written Connections:** -Questioning -Coding

Questioning and **parsing** activities tap into the integration of **oral and written modalities.** These instructional opportunities offer learners the opportunity to engage with different building blocks of sentences while speaking and writing.

Activities such as **sentence combining** and **expansion** enhance student understanding of sentence structure by capitalizing on the **reading and writing connection** to improve students' sentence comprehension and composition skills.

Making **cohesive ties** and **connectives** visible through coding and highlighting helps students see how **ideas link within and across sentences**, supporting their ability to **integrate meaning** and track relationships in the text

Explicit Instruction Continuum in Action

Stage	Student Actions	Teacher Actions
Acquisition	The student is just learning to complete an anagram activity and cannot reliably complete the activity on their own.	The teacher models the completion of an anagram activity using sentence patterns students are familiar with. The use of teacher-modeled think-aloud makes the thought process visible to learners (*see example below). When completing an anagram activity, students receive immediate feedback and/or prompts & cues to help them through the task.
Fluency	The student uses the anagram actively accurately but needs extra time or support to do so.	The teacher structures learning activities to allow students to complete anagrams starting with simple sentence structures (e.g., noun + verb) to more complex ones (e.g., adjective + noun + verb + adverb). Opportunities to practice are provided frequently and students receive feedback on their performance. Scaffolding can include the use of an instructional routine/protocol of suggested steps.
Generalization/ Application	The student can complete the anagram activity accurately and flexibly across contexts.	The teacher structures learning activities that ask students to regularly complete anagrams (e.g., as part of a warm-up or centers). Students have the opportunity to practice completing anagrams with some modifications (e.g., increased complexity). Based on the work of VanDerHeyden & Burns, 2023

1. First, I can identify the verbs or the actions. These words answer the question: "Is/was doing?" (*gather, prepare*).	gather prepare
2. Is there a word that makes sense as the subject, or "doers," for both actions (*gather, prepare*)? The *mice* are the "doers" of both actions here.	mice → gather / prepare
3. Now, I am going to link my actions with the conjunction *and*. I will also ask myself: "What are the mice gathering?" The word that fits here is *supplies*.	mice gather supplies and prepare
4. Next, I want to ask myself: "What are the mice preparing for?" (*for the winter*). I will combine those ideas.	mice gather supplies and prepare / for the winter
5. I also have my describer, *long*. It answers the question, "Which one?" This describes the word winter.	mice gather supplies and prepare / for the long winter
6. Finally, I will unscramble the rest of the sentence.	The mice gather supplies and / prepare for the long winter ahead.