



Sentence Order

Visually representing how words are combined to form sentences gives students a clear picture of how we organize language, and why it matters.

DECONSTRUCTING THE WORDS IN A SENTENCE

This exercise demonstrates for students that the meaning and clarity of a sentence depends entirely on how the words are organized. Allowing students to work out the right word order themselves makes the process more dynamic, and seeing what the wrong combinations look like will drive home the importance of the lesson. This approach is ideal for small group work with grades K-3, and ESL/ELL students.

01

Select the sentence or sentences that you'll be working through with students. Since the object of the lesson is about word order, challenging vocabulary may be unnecessarily distracting. Write out each word in the sentence on an individual Post-it® Note.



02

Arrange the sentence in order so students can see it, and read it aloud once to the group.



03

Mix up the words and pass one out to each student.



04

Let the group work together to arrange the sentence in the correct order. Allow students to disagree, and refrain from coaching them until they have decided on a final order.

05

Read the sentence aloud as it appears. Ask students if there are any changes they would like to make. Use errors as a starting point to discuss specific issues with word order, and rearrange the Post-it® Notes as you resolve each issue.

This technique is a perfect way to introduce basic concepts in syntax for students who don't yet know the names of the parts of speech. It is more engaging than a traditional quiz style approach to grammar, because it puts students in control of the process, and encourages them to discuss with each other why they think certain combinations are right or wrong.