

# Learning together

## What is a Sentence?

ACTIVITY #6

SEQUENCE: SPELLING AND SENTENCE  
STRUCTURE 3<sup>RD</sup> CYCLE — PRIMARY

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### Purpose of the activity

The goal of this activity is to help your child understand the components of a simple written sentence.



### Relevance of the activity

Your child has reached the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle of primary school. They are still learning many things about reading and writing. It is often at this time that difficulties are observed in children, despite constant efforts. For example, your child may have difficulty formulating sentences correctly. They know that a sentence is organized into groups of words that are usually placed in a certain order. This activity clarifies this organization of a sentence: It is used to give names to the written components of a sentence.



### Supplies

- sheets of paper and colored pencils
- a book with simple sentences
- a table to help structure sentences (see appendix)



## LET'S GO!

### Explain the activity:







You may have already heard of the simple sentence. In this activity, we will try to answer the question "What is a sentence?".

### Explain why:



Here are four statements:



-  My family and I love doing outdoor activities.
-  He sometimes goes to his grandparents' during vacation time.
-  Tomorrow I will go to my basketball practice and eat lunch at a restaurant and play with my friends.
-  My mother and my brother's favourite sport.

What if I told you that "My family and I love doing outdoor activities." is a simple sentence while the other three are sentences that are not well constructed. Yet you may have seen or written similar statements before. So, what questions should we ask ourselves? What do we need to check to be sure that what we have written corresponds to a well-constructed sentence? This is extremely important when learning to write texts: It's a winning strategy for life!

### Explain when:



You have to learn to question yourself every time you write:

-  **Is my sentence clear?**
-  **Is it well constructed?**

It can seem difficult, even time-consuming, especially if you have long texts to write. But asking yourself the right questions on a regular basis will help you formulate well-constructed sentences. Then it will be easier for you to compose more complex sentences.

### Try it together:



To know if what I wrote or what my friend wrote is a well-constructed sentence, I need to be able to explain what a sentence is.

In writing as well as orally, a sentence is used to express an idea. To determine if a sentence is complete, we must examine three aspects.

#### 1 It must make sense. For example, in the statement:

✗ He sometimes goes to his grandparents' during vacation time.

I wonder what is meant. I can't get a clear picture of it in my head. Therefore, a word or words are missing to complete the idea. Here are different examples of sentences that could represent the starting idea

✓ He sometimes goes **to his grandparents' house** during vacation time.  
He sometimes goes **to visit** his grandparents during vacation time.  
He sometimes goes **to sleep at his grandparents' house** during vacation time.

#### 2 It must be punctuated. We use a capital letter and a period to mark the start and end of a sentence. I also need to use other punctuation marks, such as the comma. For example:

✗ Tomorrow I will go play *basketball* **and** have lunch at a restaurant **and** play with my friends.  
In this statement, the words are well organized, the idea makes sense and there is a capital letter and a period. On the other hand, I notice that the word *AND* appears twice in the sentence. So that means I have at least three different groups of words listed. Since there are more than two groups of words listed, I must therefore use a comma to separate the first two groups of words I name to keep only one *AND*.

\*We often use the comma at the beginning of a sentence to separate a word or group of words that gives us an indication of time or place, but this is not mandatory. So, I have to adjust the punctuation in this sentence:  
Tomorrow, I will go play basketball, eat lunch at a restaurant and play with my friends.

#### 3 It must be complete. For example, this statement is incomplete:

✗ My mother and my brother's favourite sport.

The words are organized well, the idea makes sense, but it is missing an important part to complete the idea. In a well-constructed sentence, you must be able to answer the following questions:

- Who or what are we talking about?
- What are we saying about it?

Let's take our example again with the statement **"My mother and my brother's favourite sport."**

### My mother and my brother's favourite sport

Who or what are we talking about?	What are we saying about it?	And this is happening? (where, when, why, how...)
My mother and my brother's favourite sport	x	(not required)

Here, I realize that an important part is missing. My idea is incomplete. What could I say about my mother and brother's favourite sport? I could say that my mother and brother's favourite sport is *baseball*. I could also say that *baseball* is my mother and my brother's favourite sport. Look carefully at the difference between the two sentences:

### My mother and brother's favourite sport is baseball.

Who or what are we talking about?	What are we saying about it?	And this is happening? (where, when, why, how...)
My mother and my brother's favourite sport	is baseball.	x

### Baseball is my mother and my brother's favourite sport.

Who or what are we talking about?	What are we saying about it?	And this is happening? (where, when, why, how...)
Baseball	is my mother and my brother's favourite sport.	x

Now, let's go back to the last statement: **"My family and I love doing outdoor activities."** Earlier, I told you that it is a sentence. Let's check if you have understood correctly.

- 1 Does my idea make sense? My family and I love doing outdoor activities. It works.
- 2 Is my sentence punctuated correctly? There is a capital letter and a period, so it works.
- 3 Can I answer the following questions:
  - a. Who or what are we talking about? My family and I
  - b. What are we saying about it? love doing outdoor activities
  - c. *Not required*: and this is happening (where, when, why, how)? X

So, I can confirm that this sentence is well constructed!



### Quick tips!

You can ask your child to read their sentence out loud. If it sounds strange or difficult to understand, it may be missing a word or might not be well-structured. Rephrasing it orally often helps identify mistakes more easily!



### Examples of how to use the table

Who or what are we talking about?	What are we saying about it?	And this is happening? (where, when, why, how...)
My family and I	love doing outdoor activities.	x
he	goes to his grandparents' during vacation time	Sometimes,
I	will go play basketball, eat lunch at a restaurant and play with my friends.	during vacation time.
My mother and my brother's favourite sport	is baseball.	x
Baseball	is my mother and my brother's favourite sport.	x

### Table that you can use at home

Who or what are we talking about?	What are we saying about it?	And this is happening? (where, when, why, how...)