

Learning together

What Is a Sentence?

ACTIVITY #6

SEQUENCE: SPELLING AND SENTENCE STRUCTURE
1ST 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

At the early elementary level, your child is learning to read and write. They are discovering how to form sentences by putting words in the correct order. This can sometimes be challenging. Understanding how a sentence is organized helps them better express their ideas. This activity allows them to observe how words come together to form a sentence that makes sense.



Supplies

- Sheets of paper and coloured pencils
- A book with simple sentences
- A chart (included as an appendix) to help structure sentences



What?

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

Why?

Look at these sentences:

- ✓ The cat is sleeping.
- ✗ My neighbour his dog barks all night.
- ✗ My mother makes my bed.
- ✗ My dad's car.

What if I told you that “The cat is sleeping” is a basic sentence, while the other three are not well-constructed sentences? Yet, you may have already seen or written similar statements. So, what questions should we ask ourselves? What should we check to be sure that what we wrote is a well-constructed sentence? It's very important when learning to write texts—it's a winning strategy for life!

When?

Every time you write, ask yourself these questions:

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

At first, it may seem difficult, even tiring. Asking yourself the right questions will help you form well-constructed sentences. Then, it will become easier for you to write sentences with more details.

How?



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 both writing and speaking, a sentence is used to express an idea. We need to look at three aspects to decide if something is a sentence.

1 It must be punctuated. We use a capital letter and a period to mark the beginning and the end of a sentence. For example:

✗ my mother makes my bed

The words are well organized and the idea makes sense, but the punctuation is missing to show the beginning and the end of the idea. I need to add the correct punctuation:

✓ **My** mother makes my **bed.**

2 It must make sense. For example:

✗ My neighbour his dog barks all night.

The sentence has punctuation: there is a capital letter at the beginning and a period at the end. However, the words are not in the right order, so the sentence does not make sense. I need to reorganize it:

✓ My neighbour's dog barks all night.

3 It must be complete. A well-constructed sentence must answer these two questions:

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

There is also a third optional question: Where or when does it happen?
For example, this sentence is incomplete:

✗ My dad's car.

We do not know what is being said about it. We need to add more information:

✓ My dad's car is grey.

Let us go back to our example: "My dad's car."

My dad's car.

Who or what are we talking about?	What are we saying about it?	And this is happening (where, why, how)
My dad's car	x	(not required)

Here, I realize that an important part is missing. My idea is incomplete. What could I say about my dad's car? I could say that it is grey, for example. That would result in:

My dad's car is grey.

Who or what are we talking about?	What are we saying about it?	And this is happening (where, why, how)
My dad's car	is grey	x

Now, let's go back to the last statement: "The cat sleeps." Earlier, I told you that it's a well-constructed sentence. Let's check if you have understood correctly.

- A** Does my idea make sense? A cat can sleep. It works.
- B** Is my sentence punctuated correctly? There is a capital letter and a period, so it works.
- C** Can I answer the following questions:

The cat sleeps.

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

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

You can now practise this strategy with sentences adapted to your child's writing level.



Don't forget!

You can ask your child to read their sentence out loud. If it sounds strange or is hard to understand, it may be missing a word or may not be well constructed. Saying it out loud often helps to spot mistakes more easily!



Examples of using the table

Who or what are we talking about?	What are we saying about it?	And this is happening (where, why, how)?
Le chat	dort.	
Le chien de mon voisin	jappe	toute la nuit.
Ma mère	fait mon lit.	
La voiture de mon frère	est rouge.	

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, why, how)?