

Helping Your Child Build Better Sentences



Parent Workshop
Thursday 6th November 2025

Why Sentences Matter

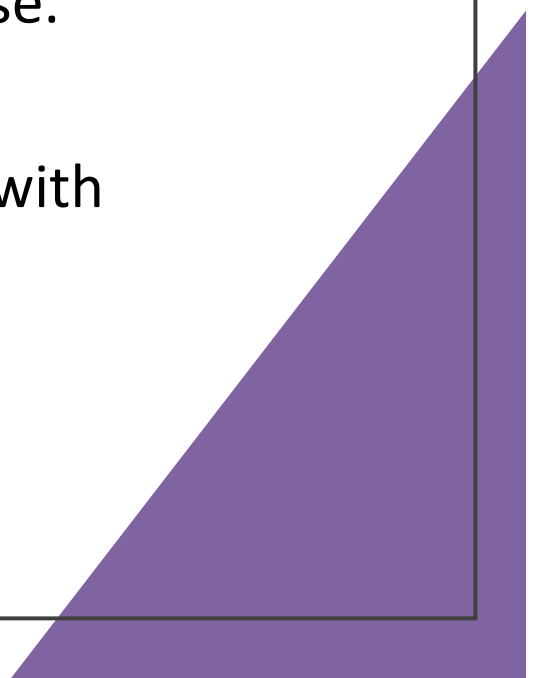
- Sentences are the building blocks of writing.
- Strong sentences = clearer thinking and better communication.
- They help children communicate clearly.
- Opens the curriculum: develops understanding of sentence structure, grammar, and apply these in writing.



What is a Sentence?

A group of words that makes complete sense.

- Must have a subject and verb.
- Begins with a capital letter and ends with punctuation.



Where Parents Fit In

Learning begins at home
through talk, reading and
everyday writing.



Parents support sentence
building by modelling full
sentences and
encouraging practice.

Sentence Types

Simple sentence – one idea:
The cat slept.

Compound sentence – two
ideas joined: The cat slept and
the dog barked.

Complex sentence – joined with
because, when, although: The
cat slept because it was tired.



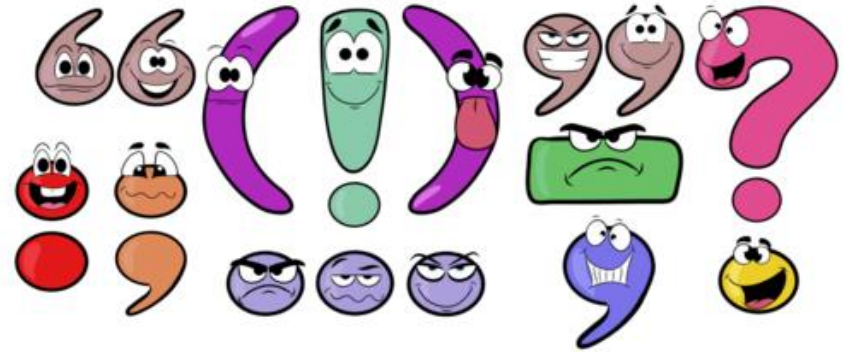
Clauses Made Easy

- Main clause: makes sense on its own.

I went home.

- Subordinate clause: adds to the main clause and does not make sense on its own.
 - Example: I went home (main) because it was raining (subordinate).
-

Punctuation Progression



- EYFS/Year 1: Capital letters, full stops.
- Year 2: Question marks, exclamation marks, commas in lists.
- Y3–4: Commas in sentences, inverted commas (speech marks).
- Y5–6: Colons, semicolons, dashes.

Progression in Sentence Skills

Reception – Speaking in full sentences, oral storytelling.

Year 1 – Simple sentences, capital letters/full stops, 'and'.
Begin to use question marks and exclamation marks.

Year 2 – Use commas in lists, Use adjectives to add detail.
Join sentences with because, when, but.

Years 3–4 – Organise writing into paragraphs.
Use adverbials: After lunch, In the morning, etc.
Write expanded noun phrases.

Years 5–6 – Use relative clauses with who, which, that.
Vary sentence structures and clause order.
Ensure cohesion across paragraphs.

What This Looks Like

Reception: I like cats.

Year 1: I like cats and dogs.

Year 2: I like cats because they are soft.

Year 3: Most of the time, I like cats because they are soft and playful.

Year 6: Although I prefer dogs, I like cats because they are soft, playful and independent.

Common Challenges Children Face

Run-on sentences

(I went to the park it was fun I had an ice cream).

Overusing 'and'.

Writing very short sentences only.

Forgetting punctuation.

Struggling to choose precise or ambiguous words.

Adjectives

An adjective is a word that describes a noun (the name of a thing or a place).

It was a **terrible** book.

The word 'terrible' is an adjective. It tells us what the book (the noun) was like.

The book she read on holiday was terrible.

or

She read a terrible book on holiday.

Adjectives can come before or after a noun.

Try putting adjectives in different places in sentences to make writing more interesting.

She had a **mouldy, smelly, overpriced** sandwich.

If you want to describe a noun in detail, you can use more than one adjective.

When you have a list of adjectives like this, separate them with commas.

Happy

captivated	gleeful	pretty
cheerful	jolly	stunning
content	lively	superb
eager	lovely	terrific
ecstatic	overjoyed	thrilled
enjoyable	pleasant	tremendous
fantastic	pleased	

twinkl.com

Sad

alone	distressed	horrible
angry	dreadful	hurting
awful	empty	ignored
bewildered	gloomy	sorrowful
bitter	glum	terrible
bored	grumpy	
cheerless	heartbroken	

twinkl.com

Big

boundless	grand	mighty
colossal	great	monumental
enormous	immense	stupendous
expansive	jumbo	substantial
giant	mammoth	tremendous
gigantic	massive	vast

twinkl.com


Small

bitty	mini	scant
compact	minor	short
dinky	minute	slight
diminutive	modest	tiny
little	petite	
measly	puny	

twinkl.com

Weak vs Strong Sentences

Weak: I went to the park it was fun I had an ice cream.



Strong: I went to the park. It was fun because I had an ice cream.

if	since	as	when	although	while	after	before	until	because
I	S	A	W	A	W	A	B	U	B

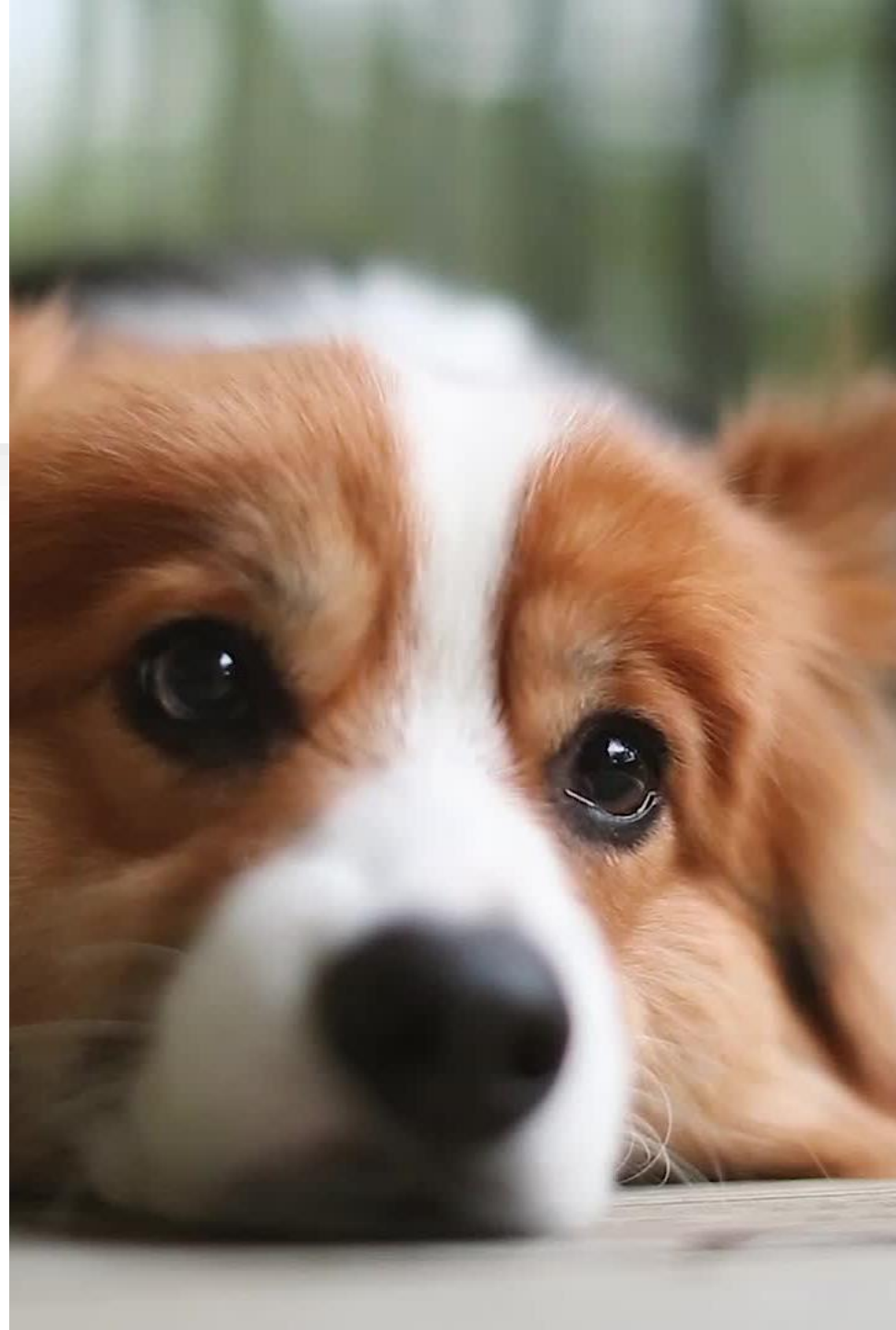
Conjunctions

- Common joining words children learn:

for	and	nor	but	or	yet	so
F	A	N	B	O	Y	S













Parent Activity 1: Stretch the Sentence

- Start with: My dog is big.
- Add an adjective: My big dog is friendly.
- Use a conjunction: My dog is big and fluffy.
- Add a phrase: My dog is big because he eats a lot.
- Expand: My dog is big and sleeps on the sofa all day.




Supporting resources

The Lion Inside

 mouse	 lion	 important
 strong tough	 weak ignored	 roar
 visit	 scared	 friends
 Africa	 rock	 frightened

Seaside Word Mat

 lifebelt	 ice cream	 deck chair	 bucket and spade	 seagull
 sunglasses	 rockpool	 beach ball	 shells	 windmill
 lighthouse	 waves	 beach	 sandals	 lifeguard
	 ice cream van	 sandcastle	 boat	

Phonics and spelling



How Parents Can Help (EYFS & KS1)



Encourage children to speak in full sentences.



Play 'Who? What? Where? When?' games.



Use sentence starters: 'I like... because...'



Oral storytelling at bedtime.

How Parents Can Help (KS2)

Play

Play 'Improve this sentence' game.

Encourage

Encourage adjectives/adverbs: The tired cat slept lazily.

Combine

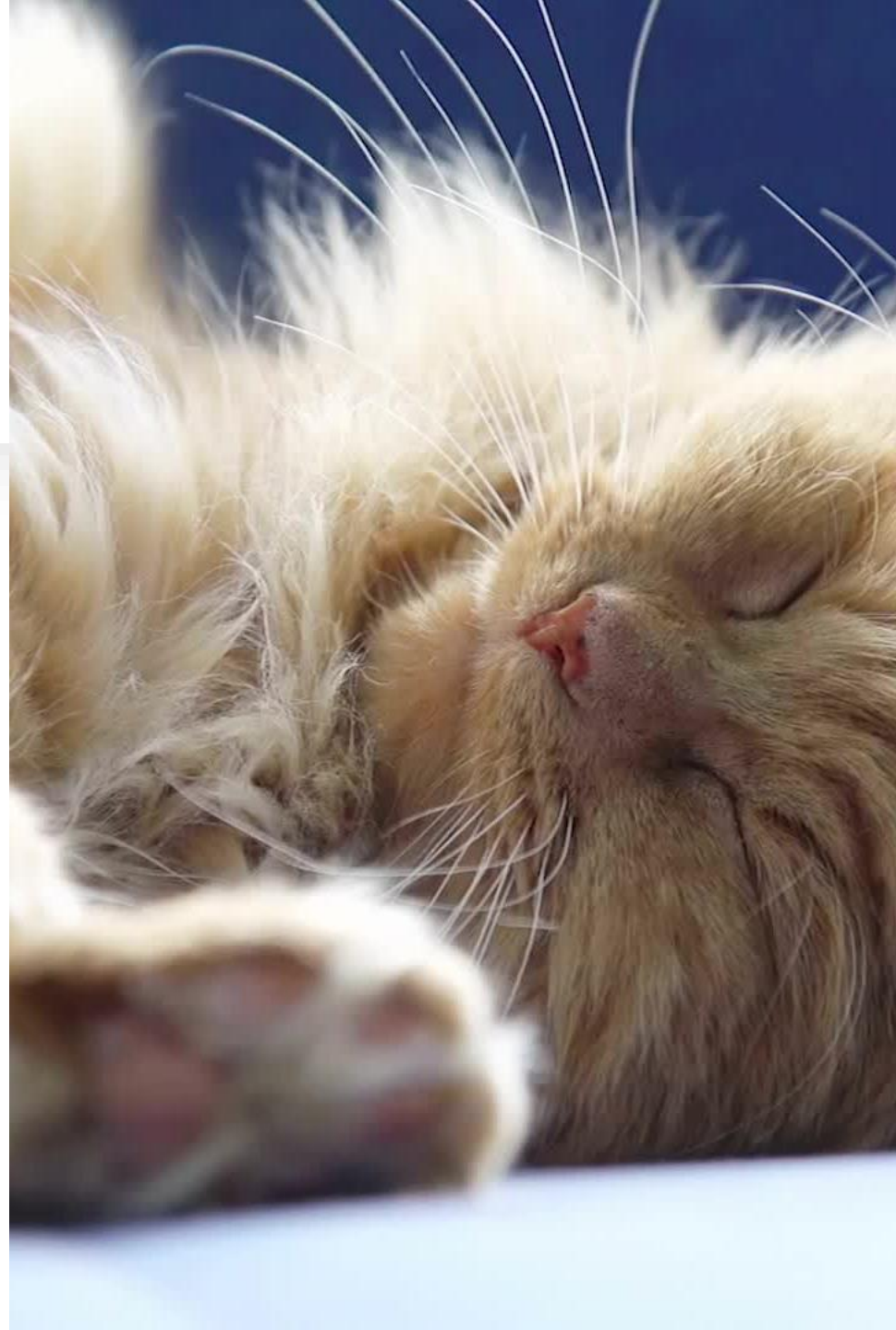
Combine sentences: We stayed inside because it was raining.

Spot

Spot interesting sentences in books together.

Activity 2: Who/What/Where/When Game

- Start with: The cat...
- Add who/what/where/when.
 - Example result: The tired cat slept lazily on the sofa after dinner.



Link to the National Curriculum

Spoken language → builds vocabulary and grammar.

Reading → shows different sentence styles.

Writing → develops grammar, punctuation, and structure.

This sentence has five words. Here are five more words. Five-word sentences are fine. But several together become monotonous. Listen to what is happening. The writing is getting boring. The sound of it drones. It's like a stuck record. The ear demands some variety.

Now listen. I vary the sentence length, and I create music. Music. The writing sings. It has a pleasant rhythm, a lilt, a harmony. I use short sentences. And I use sentences of medium length. And sometimes when I am certain the reader is rested, I will engage him with a sentence of considerable length, a sentence that burns with energy and builds with all the impetus of a crescendo, the roll of the drums, the crash of the cymbals—sounds that say listen to this, it is important.

So write with a combination of short, medium, and long sentences. Create a sound that pleases the reader's ear. Don't just write words. Write music.

- Gary Provost, *100 Ways to Improve Your Writing*

Top 10 Things Parents Can Do

1. Model full sentences.
2. Encourage sentence stretching.
3. Play word and sentence games.
4. Read aloud together daily.
5. Talk about books and stories.
6. Write for real purposes.
7. Celebrate all attempts.
8. Ask 'why' questions.
9. Help spot punctuation in books.
10. Keep it fun!

Questions & Resources



- BBC Bitesize – KS1 & KS2 English.
- Purple Mash
- [SentencePlay - Games for teaching sentence structure.](#)
- <https://www.thenational.academy/>
- <https://www.topmarks.co.uk/>

[Sentence Doctor](#)