

Sentence Fluency Activities for Newcomer ELs

GRADES K-12

ELA	
AREA OF FOCUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> II Sustained Language and Content Support III Learner Awareness (Metacognitive Strategies) IV Leveraging Students' Assets V Formative Assessment
GUIDELINE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 Materials reflect the understanding that students learn language through prolonged exposure and opportunities to negotiate content and ideas in the target language, with scaffolds and supports for further development as needed. 7 Writing activities explicitly and cumulatively build a nexus of college- and career-ready skills (e.g. analysis of texts, gathering evidence, making and supporting claims) as the curriculum progresses. 9 Materials guide teachers to engage students in classroom activities that bring awareness to the ways that they can improve their communication (writing, reading, speaking, listening) practices over time. 13 Materials for teachers and students promote student agency and learner autonomy. 14 Materials provide teacher guidance for consistent formative assessment and feedback strategies that support students' language proficiencies and content understandings
SPECIFICATIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7b Students are guided to revise and then edit their writing through an iterative process, focusing on specific issues each time rather than trying to address all content and editing issues simultaneously. 9a Teacher materials provide guidance on how to draw students' attention to the ways that language choices are related to the purpose of the text and the intended audience (meta-awareness). This includes explicitly pointing to the linguistic and rhetorical patterns typified in specific genres. 13e Writing tasks avoid relying heavily on fill-in-the-blank writing templates and formulaic guidelines (e.g. write a 5 paragraph letter requesting x, y, z).



Description of resource and intended audience:

Very often, writing instruction for ELs is overly focused on precision and accuracy instead of meaning. Furthermore, the use of sentence frames and starters, when not integrated with content that ELs are learning, do not support students with expressing increasingly complex ideas.

The following sentence-level content-integrated writing strategies are meant to support emerging and newcomer ELs in simultaneously developing sentence fluency, content knowledge, and analytical thinking. They should be used when evidence from student work suggests that students are struggling with sentence fluency in academic and disciplinary writing.

The strategies can be used across content areas and should be designed to target content and academic concepts, as well as Tier 2 and Tier 3 vocabulary, that ELs are learning in subject area instruction. ELs will need models of how to use these strategies at first. Teachers should implement guided instruction when beginning to use them, first with close to home content and transitioning to academic content. The strategies can be rolled out over time to progressively build students' language and writing skills. Home language should be leveraged as well to support students in the use of these strategies, or tasks can be provided in home language entirely.

Materials needed: Text, graphic organizer

Approximate time needed: Varies depending on activity.

Instructions:

Sentence Scramble
This strategy supports students developing fluency with English syntax through receptive tasks, using content they are learning
Design a Task for Students
<ol style="list-style-type: none">Using content from your curriculum, write a complete sentence that expresses an important idea in your unit.Scramble the sentence. Put the scrambled sentence either on manipulatives (one word per card) or on a handout. Note: If the anticipated response leads to multiple possibilities for word order, change the scramble so that there is only one way the scramble can be done. This enables students to focus on the connection between word order and meaning and does not confuse them.Students unscramble the sentence by sequencing the words in the right order.Students read aloud the unscrambled sentence to check for accuracy.
<p><i>Directions: Put the words in the right order to unscramble the sentence. Write the unscrambled sentence in the lines below. Provide the correct capitalization and punctuation.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">are unicellular typically amoebas</p> <hr/> <hr/>



Word Pairs

This strategy supports students with building basic sentences using content vocabulary. It provides the “bricks” and students need to use the “mortar” to construct sentences.

Design a Task for Students

1. Using content from your curriculum, identify word pairs that connect to an important idea in your unit. Choose at least one noun plus either a verb or adjective.
2. Give the word pairs to students. Make sure they know what the words mean.
3. Students write a complete sentence for each word pair. You can provide a bank of sight words, or high frequency transitions, or connecting words.
4. Students read their sentences aloud to a partner.

Directions: Write a complete sentence using the two given words. Provide the correct capitalization and punctuation.

triangle **congruent**

square **angle**

side **equal**

Word Substitution

This strategy gets students to improve writing by making linguistic choices based on meaning, and by using academic and content vocabulary.

Design a Task for Students

1. Using content from your curriculum, write a series of short sentences. Each sentence should contain one word/phrase using plain language that students will have to replace using academic language.
2. Underline or bold the target word/phrase.
3. Students must improve the given sentences by substituting the underlined/bolded target language with content vocabulary, and language of the discipline.
4. Students discuss, in home language or English, the word choices they made in their revised sentences.



Word Substitution

Directions: Improve the sentences below by replacing the red word or phrase using content vocabulary you have learned.

Greenhouse gas emissions lead to bad things.

Anticipated Response:

Greenhouse gas emissions lead to dire consequences like global warming.

The gases trap heat in the atmosphere.

Anticipated Response:

Carbon dioxide and methane trap heat in the atmosphere.

The Appositive

This strategy teaches students to build complex sentences using content they are learning.
An appositive is a noun/noun phrase that refers to or renames another noun in the sentence.

Design a Task for Students

1. Using content from your curriculum, design writing tasks that require students to write appositives for sentences about the content.
2. Use content vocabulary in the tasks.
3. Choose a type of task based on where students are in their mastery of writing appositives in sentences.
4. After students have had sufficient practice writing appositives within a variety of controlled tasks, they should be required to use appositives in their independent writing.

Example 1

Directions: Select the best phrase that fits the given sentence.

Gel electrophoresis, _____, separates macromolecules into fragments.

- the thing we did in class the other day
- a laboratory method to sort DNA by molecular size
- a method that uses gel and an electric field
- a process first developed in the 1930s



The Appositive

Example 2

Directions: Complete the sentence frame, using an appositive.

Natural selection, _____, was a theory developed by Charles Darwin in 1859.

Example 3

Directions: Write a complete sentence with the given appositive:

...a laboratory method to sort macromolecules by size...

Example 4

Directions: Pair the appositive with the noun that it matches.

allele	the organic compounds found in DNA
amino acids	a variation of a given gene

Then, write two sentences using each noun and its appositive.



The Appositive

Example 5

Directions: Choose which appositive DOES NOT fit the sentence frame below.

Protein synthesis, _____, is when a cell generates new proteins.

- also called protein biosynthesis
- a one-step process
- a series of steps that requires the translation of amino acid

Example 6

Directions: Write a complete sentence using an appositive about amino acids.

Starting Sentences with Subordinating Conjunctions

This strategy requires students to express complex relationships and analytical thinking about key content related concepts.

Design a Task for Students

1. Prepare a model: Students can analyze sentences that start with subordinating conjunctions within content-based texts that they are reading. This provides a model of the form in the context of the content they are learning, and provides students the chance to discuss the function of the form before using it to generate their own sentences.
2. Using content from your curriculum, provide students with sentence stems that BEGIN with a subordinating conjunction, transition word, or preposition. (Using the form at the start of a sentence pulls for a complex sentence with a dependent/dependent clause.)
3. Students should complete the sentence using knowledge and language from the content they are learning.
4. The tasks can be engineered to address students' specific skill gaps.
5. Once students have had sufficient practice with scaffolded and controlled tasks using the conjunctions, they should use them in their independent writing.

List of sentence starters using subordinating conjunctions, transition words, or prepositions

(Red words are high-frequency conjunctions in academic writing)

After	Before	In order to	Unless	As long as	Not only... but also	Unlike
Although	For	Once	Until	During	Either... or...	Through
As	Even though/ Even if	Rather than	When	At	Neither... nor....	Over/Under/ Underneath
While	If	Since	Whenever/ Wherever	Wether	Without/ Within	Despite



Starting Sentences with Subordinating Conjunctions

Example 1

Directions: Complete the following sentence stems to write a complete sentence, using your knowledge of the Pythagorean Theorem. Remember to add correct punctuation.

When $a^2 + b^2$ is a perfect square _____

Whenever a triangle is obtuse _____

If one side length of Triangle A is missing _____

Example 2

Directions: Write a sentence with the given conjunction and word.

While / greenhouse gas emissions

Although / carbon footprint

Example 3

Directions: Complete the following sentence stems to write a complete sentence, using your knowledge of the Boxer Rebellion. Remember to add correct punctuation.

After the Boxer Rebellion _____

As a result of the Boxer Rebellion _____

Starting Sentences with Subordinating Conjunctions

Example 4

Directions: Complete the following sentence stems to write a complete sentence, using your knowledge of homeostasis. Remember to add correct punctuation.

The Hypothalamus Detects Blood Osmolality

Figure 7.5



Sodium and fluid balance are intertwined.

After homeostasis is restored _____

When the osmoreceptors are stimulated _____

Since the hypothalamus detects blood osmolality _____

Works Cited

Hochman & Wexler. (2017). *The Writing Revolution: A Guide to Advancing Thinking Through Writing in All Subjects and Grades*.