

Getting More out of the Grammar Boxes

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Suggestions from the Workshop

Utah Montessori Conference Ogden, Utah 20012

Nouns and Articles

1. Arrange to have card stock cut into command cards (5.5"x 2.75") in brown, red, and purple and word tickets (2" x 1.4") in black, tan, brown, red, and purple.
2. Prepare long paper strips by taping 8.5"x 11" papers together.
3. At news time, with the children, identify naming words from their stories. Write them on a long paper list, leaving room to the left of the words for the article, and space between words for the noun symbol. Introduce the **noun**, the **black triangle**, and the **symbol box**, noting there are 9 parts of speech.
4. Encourage children to add naming words to the big paper list, always starting a hand width from the left edge of the paper, and drawing the noun symbol over each noun. (Teacher adds the words "apple" "egg" "oval" "umbrella".) Encourage children to make their own lists by copying their favorite nouns from the big list and adding their own naming words with symbols.
5. One day, note that in ordinary speech, these nouns often have a little word before them. Use the nouns in oral sentences to illustrate this. Accordingly, add "a" "an" or "the" to each noun on the big list. Introduce articles and the **article symbol- a light blue triangle**. Note that there are only three articles. Just state that we use "a" for one of many of the thing, "an" when it sounds better, and "the" when we know which particular thing we mean. What do articles do? They tell us a noun is coming.
6. Write easy to read **noun tickets on black** and **article tickets on tan** for sorting with "a" "an" and "the". Use some words from the children's big list. Sample:

a girl	an apple	the floor
a boy	an egg	the sky
a dog	an inch	the bell
a glove	an oval	the world
a giraffe	an umbrella	the president

7. Help children **read and sort just the first 2 columns**. Add symbols. **Demonstrate** making a key. Then do all three columns with the children. Encourage reading, copying, and symbolizing. Make a key.

Adjectives

1. Introduce adjectives, either with different colored flowers or different kinds of paper (lined, blue, dirty, torn, crumpled.) Introduce dark blue triangle symbol, same shape as noun symbol, because adjectives go with nouns.
2. To one or a few children, introduce the adjective sorting tray, filler box IIIA, and reintroduce the symbol box. Follow the **Steps for Grammar Box Work**. (Easy starter: the black pencils/the colored pencils)
3. Get a special box for **Individualized Adjective Grammar Box Work**, or use one of the brown boxes. Sit with a child or with a few children. Have the special box, your blank cards, the regular adjective sorting tray, the symbol box, and the **Steps for Grammar Box Work**. Ask children questions about their own words that **they contributed** to the noun list. Keep in mind you want to come up with two noun phrases, the 2nd one only changing the adjective. Example:
a funny movie
a scary movie.
With the children, write the card, make the tickets, and then follow the **Steps for Grammar Box Work**. Much personalized work can be made this way. Keep the cards and word tickets in the special box.
4. **Adjective Grammar Command Box Cards** - tailored to your class. For these, you write only the **command card** and the **adjective tickets**. Children only read, do, put out the adjective tickets with symbol. Example: Find **two** pencils. Write a note with the **shorter** pencil.
Find **three** pencils. Write a note with the **shortest** pencil.

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Verbs

1. **Introduce action verbs** by contrasting words that tell actions with words that name things. Introduce the red circle verb symbol, representing a ball which indicates lots of action and the energy of the sun.

2. Make **Verb Command Box Cards** of observed classroom activities. Example:

Ask a friend for help with this grammar card. **Find** an empty table. Without disturbing anyone else on the planet, **move** the table one foot in a safe direction. **Return** it to its original position.

Place the verb tickets on the table. **Put** verb symbols over the verbs. **Show** a teacher.

Only write the command card and the verb tickets. Do not require writing.

3. Make **Individualized Verb Grammar Box Work** by asking children about their activities and using the children's words to make sentence pairs that differ only by the verb. Example: Kim watches the movie.

Kim likes the movie.

With the child(ren), write the phrase cards and the word tickets on the correct colors. Then follow the **Steps for Grammar Box Work**.

Prepositions

1. Introduce the preposition (the green pencil in the clear box) and the **preposition green bridge symbol**. The preposition is a bridge between the two noun phrases.

2. Introduce the **Preposition Grammar Box**, with the preposition sorting tray, the symbol box, and either a card from the set or an individualized Preposition Grammar Box (see sample below). If children are able to work independently, make sure they know to stop at the **transpose** step, because that will be slightly different. When transposing, **demonstrate** how to **keep the prepositional phrase together**.

3. Listen for Prepositional Phrases in the children's and your own speech, and in the stories at news time. (Consult the list of Prepositions for help with identifying prepositional phrases if needed.) Make a big list of Prepositional Phrases. Examples of identifying prepositional phrases:

Where did you go? **to the zoo** How? **by car** When? **after breakfast** Alone? **with my family**

Where was the giraffe? **behind the fence**

Derek brought a crystal **to school**. He took it **out of the pouch**. He told us **about the crystal**. We passed it **around the circle**. On the big list, write whole phrases, and highlight the prepositions (or write darker).

2. Example of **Preposition Command Card Box** card: (card and preposition tickets only)

Find all the scraps **of** paper **on** the floor. Put them **in** the trash or **with** the scrap paper. Place the preposition tickets **on** a table. Put the preposition symbol **over** the prepositions.

3. Have the blank cards and blank tickets lined up. With the child(ren), using their words and topics of interest, write sentences (only the preposition changes) and all the words on tickets of the right color.

Example of **Individualized Preposition Grammar Box**:

Put the crystal on the pouch.

Put the crystal under the pouch.

Put the crystal in the pouch.

Follow Steps for Grammar Box Work, guide the "transpose" step - keep the prepositional phrases together.

Adverbs

1. One introduction to adverbs is like charades. Give a child the word "Walk" and ask her to do it. Other children guess what the word was. Then "Walk quickly", then "Walk slowly". These words add meaning to the verb. The symbol for adverbs is a small orange circle (ball), because it can be on either side of the verb but stays near it, like the earth around the sun. The verb and the adverb form the Verb Family.

2. After introducing a new part of speech, listen to the children's own words to make **Individualized Command Cards** (command card and target word tickets only), and **Grammar Box Work** (sentences that vary only by the target part of speech, and all the words in the sentences on the right color tickets.)

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Pronouns

1. Possible introduction to pronouns - a long strip that says the following:

“Bring a box. Put the box on the table. Open the box. Empty the box. Clean the box. Refill the box.”

Do we really say that? What would you say? (Bring a box, open **it**, empty **it**, clean **it**, refill **it**.)

Replace the words “the box” with **it**. What task does this word do for us? It replaces the noun.

Its called a pronoun and the symbol is a tall purple pyramid because it can push out a noun.

2. Allow children to change the nouns in the preposition box cards. Example:

A Pronoun Grammar Box Card says The children gave their mother a surprise.

They wrote **her** a letter.

One child changed this to

My father brought my little sister a surprise.

He gave **her** a dog.

Conjunctions

1. Classic introduction to conjunctions: Match these noun phrases to three pencils.

the green pencil the red pencil the blue pencil

Tie the three pencils together with a pink ribbon. We can link the three noun phrases together with the word “and”. Place the word “and” between each phrase. This word is a connecting word called a conjunction, and its symbol is a short pink line, like a piece of the ribbon (or like a hyphen, meaning more is coming.)

Since conjunctions have a number of functions, one way to deal with the difficulty of identifying them is to have a chart with the most common conjunctions listed already made. As long as we do that, we may as well list them by type, giving an idea of more levels of inquiry to come later.

Conjunctions

Coordinate Conjunctions

and
or
but
nor
yet
however
indeed

Subordinate Conjunctions

if
that
although
while
when
because
as
as long as
as soon as
often
since
why
unless
so
that
in order that
then

Correlative Conjunctions

both...and
either...or
neither...nor

Interjections

1. All the children I know who get to this last grammar box do not need help teaching themselves about interjections. They can just follow the Steps for Grammar Box Work with the Interjection Boxes.