

Teaching Children to Build a Sentence Starting with the Verb



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So many children today cannot construct a simple sentence let alone write an interesting sentence. It is not difficult to teach children to construct a noteworthy sentence, but some preliminary work must first be completed.

To begin, let's look at the key items that make up basic sentences.

I'm going to list these items in the order in which they would be added to a sentence if you were teaching a child to build a sentence starting with the verb.

- Verb
- Subject (noun or pronoun)
- Preposition
- Prepositional phrase
- Adjective
- Adverb
- The answer to the question: What kind?
- The answer to the question: Where?
- The answer to the question: When?
- The answer to the question: How?

Preliminary Work for Children to do BEFORE Writing Sentences

Before building a sentence that contains any of the following, have children memorize (or review if previously memorized) the definitions of all the items you will be introducing into that sentence. This will enable you to teach memorization skills and put the information learned into practice immediately:

Noun – a person, place, thing or idea

Proper Noun – a particular person, place, thing, or idea

Verb – shows action or being or helps another verb

Action verbs – tell us something that a person or thing can do!

Being Verbs (also called linking verbs) – show a state of “being” and link the subject of the sentence with the rest of the sentence but do not show action.

Adjectives – Describe nouns or pronouns and answer the questions: Which one? What kind? How many? How much? Whose?

Adverbs – Describe verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs and answer the questions: Where? When? Why? How? How often? To what Extent?

Articles are everywhere – a, an, the

Conjunctions join words together – and, but, for, nor, yet

Interjections show surprise – Whew! Look out! Ouch! Wow!

Prepositions love children and chairs –To teach a child about prepositions, set a chair in front of him and ask him to sit **on** the chair, to stand **behind** the chair, to jump **over** the chair, to run **around** the chair, and to crawl **under** the chair.

Prepositions tell us what relationship one thing has to another thing.

Lists for Children to Memorize

Memorize the list of being (linking) verbs: **am, is, are, was, were, be, being, been.**

Memorize the list of helping verbs: **have, has, had, do, does, did, shall, will, should, could, may, might, must, can, could.**

Memorize the list of linking verbs that can function as either an action verb or as a linking verb: **appear, feel, get, grow, look, prove, remain, stay, smell, sound, taste, turn.**

Memorize this list of prepositions. There are more prepositions than the ones on this list, but these represent the basic ones and will give children enough knowledge to find the other prepositions. Children as young as kindergarten can learn to recite this list of prepositions with just one breath. It's a fun game, especially if the parent/teacher plays, too!

| | | | |
|---------|---------|--------|------------|
| aboard | before | from | through |
| about | behind | in | throughout |
| above | below | inside | to |
| across | beneath | into | toward |
| after | beside | like | under |
| against | between | near | underneath |
| along | beyond | of | until |
| amid | but | off | unto |
| among | by | on | up |
| around | down | out | upon |
| as | during | over | with |
| as to | except | past | within |
| at | for | since | without |

**Only two skills remain to be taught
before children can learn to construct a basic sentence:**

1) Learning how to conjugate verbs

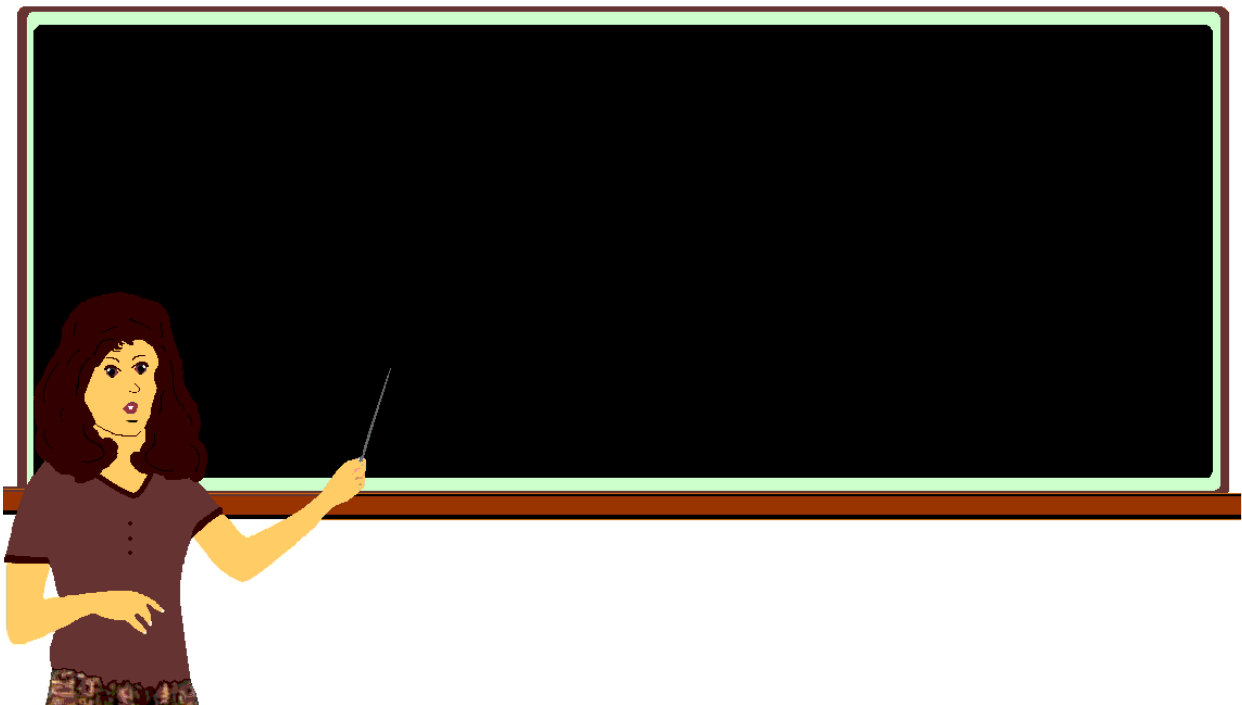
(Simple conjugation of past, present and future verbs, **because if you
can't conjugate the word, then the word is not a verb**)

Yesterday I swam Today I swim Tomorrow I will swim

2) Looking up words in a dictionary and in a thesaurus

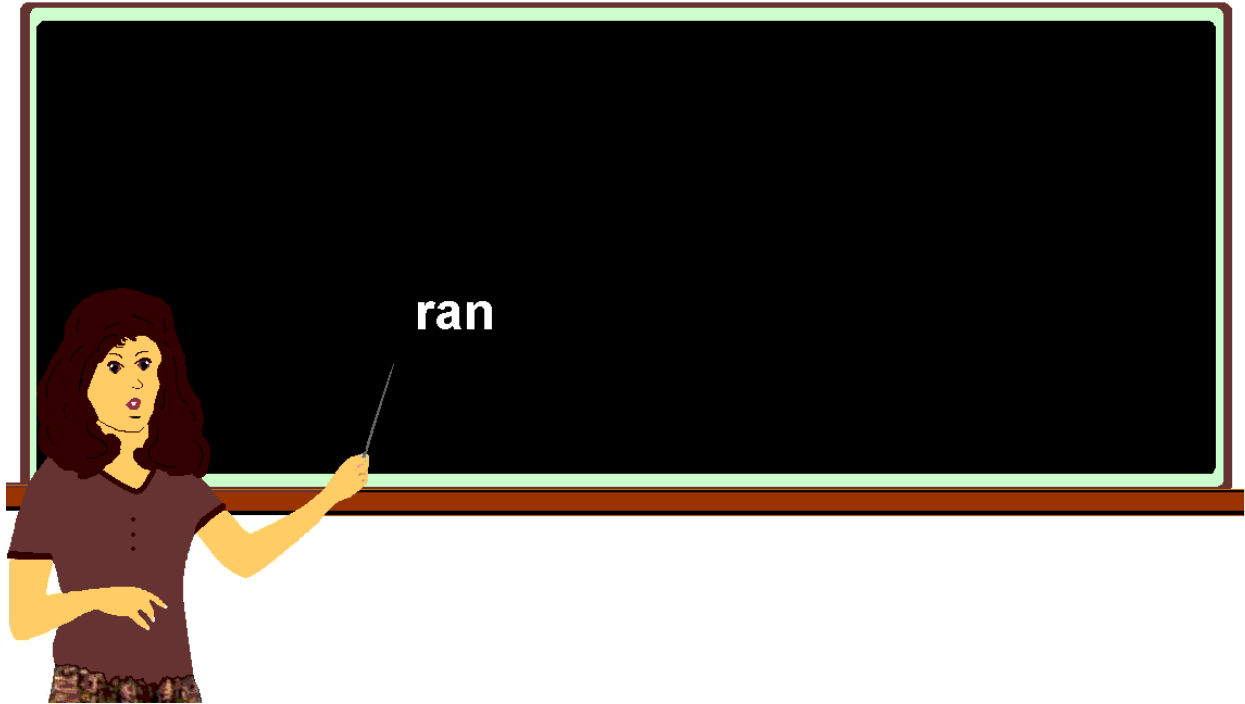
**Once all the Memory Work has been mastered,
if you'll use a blackboard or a dry eraser board, children can
learn to build a sentence starting with the verb.**

Here's the blackboard. Let's get started.

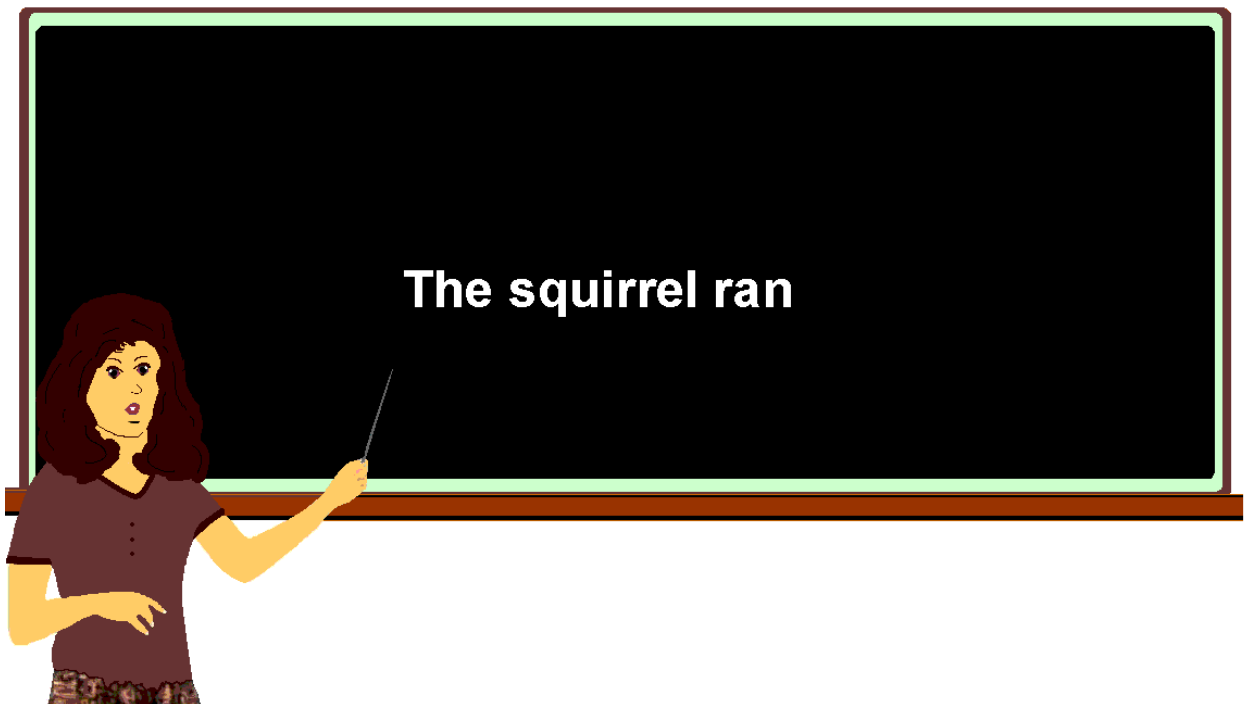


“Hello, children.

Will someone please give me a past-tense verb.”



Good! Now let's question the verb.
Who or what ran?



Excellent! Now choose a preposition and tell me where the squirrel ran.

The squirrel ran inside the log.



Good job! Now choose another preposition and tell me when the squirrel ran inside the log. We'll put that phrase at the beginning of the sentence.

After the storm, the squirrel ran inside the log.



Wow! What a good basic sentence! Let's make the sentence even better.

Can you tell me what kind of a squirrel it was?

After the storm, the bushy-tailed squirrel ran inside the log.



Great! Now tell me what kind of a storm it was.

After the terrible storm, the bushy-tailed squirrel ran inside the log.



Alright! Now tell me what kind of a log it was.

After the terrible storm, the bushy-tailed squirrel ran inside the hollow log.



That's great! Now let's add an adverb that ends in -ly.

How did the squirrel run?

After the terrible storm, the bushy-tailed squirrel quickly ran inside the hollow log.



Fantastic! Let's keep going. I like the adjectives "bushy-tailed" and "hollow."

However, take out your thesaurus, and find a better adjective for "terrible."

After the dreadful storm, the bushy-tailed squirrel quickly ran inside the hollow log.



Good job! Now tell me, what is the present tense for the verb we've used? Now, using your thesaurus, look up the present tense of the verb and find a better verb. Now give me the past tense of the new verb you'd like to use.

After the dreadful storm, the bushy-tailed squirrel quickly scurried inside the hollow log.



Wow, that's great! I only see one more way that we can make this a better sentence. Using your thesaurus one more time, find a better adverb.

After the dreadful storm, the bushy-tailed squirrel swiftly scurried inside the hollow log.



That is one fantastic sentence!

Now go on back to your desk and write down some ideas for what happened after the squirrel swiftly scurried inside the hollow log.

Teaching the Complements Using a Blackboard and Starting with the Verb

When children are ready to learn the rest of the sentence “completers” (direct objects, predicate adjectives, predicate nominatives, and indirect objects) just begin with the verb and guide them through the type of sentence you want them to build. We most likely will be offering a more detailed resource for the Blackboard Teaching Starting with the Verb for all the Complements in our future teaching resources.

Sincerely, Carol Kay, President
Candy 4WAY Phonics



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