

**EDUCATION GUIDANCE**

**GUIDANCE on: Punctuation & Grammar**

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*This document should be read in conjunction with the Argyll and Bute Guidance on Spelling*

Punctuation

Like spelling, punctuation needs to be explicitly taught. However, the following key points should be observed:

**Small, frequent sessions, constantly reinforced.**

Little and often is a more effective approach than long periods of time focusing on punctuation. For example, you could have a punctuation mark of the week which has some initial input, but which is then reinforced through small activities every day. These activities can be incorporated into any aspect of learning e.g. drawing attention to a comma where it’s used in an IDL text, asking pupils what punctuation mark they’d use if they had to write down the list of instructions given during PE.

It is important that pupils see literacy as it happens in all areas of their learning.

**Punctuation taught within context**

While it can be difficult to fit a systematic approach to the teaching of punctuation into meaningful contexts, some flexibility can be assumed. For example, if you have a clear idea of the overarching elements of punctuation to be taught over a term, you can then have a bit of flexibility over which aspect to focus on at any given time. If therefore you are using a text with lots of speech, it might be useful to focus on speech marks. In fact, a wide range of punctuation is used in most texts so you should be able to link most things to context.

Contexts can be oral as well as written – tone of voice can be a very useful way to introduce exclamation marks for example.

**What should we cover?**

The Benchmarks outline the following progression of punctuation, with new elements for each stage in red:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Early | * 1st
 | * 2nd
 | * 3rd
 | * 4th
 |
|  PUNCTUATION | *Makes an attempt* to use a capital letter and full stop *in at least one sentence* | * Writes independently
* Capital letters
* Full stops
* Question mark
* Exclamation mark
 | * Mainly accurate
* Capital letters
* full stops
* exclamation marks
* question marks
* commas
* inverted commas (speech marks)
* apostrophes
 | * Mainly accurate
* Attempts to enhance communication
* varied
* colons
* parentheses
* ellipses
 | * Accurate
* Clarifies meaning & enhances writing
* varied
* As 3 &
* Semi-colons
* Dashes
 |

**Ideas for teaching punctuation**

***Kung fu punctuation***

Kung fu type actions and sounds can be used for children to signal which punctuation mark should be used in any given sentence.

For example (you can make up your own):

* FULL-STOP: Punch – ‘HUH’.
* QUESTION MARK: Swish-punch – ‘WOO-POW’.
* EXCLAMATION MARK: Slice-punch – ‘HUH-HA’.
* COMMA: Low-slice – ‘HOOOOR’.
* APOSTROPHE: High-slice – ‘HA’.

You can focus on one punctuation mark at a time or, for more accomplished pupils, use the full range. You can display sentences which you read together and then pupils have to produce the appropriate sound.

For example:

* Where is the potato**\_\_**
* However **\_\_** the sun didn **\_\_**t stop shining **\_\_**
* What time did you eat lunch yesterday **\_\_**
* I \_\_m so excited **\_\_**
* How are you **\_\_**
* The children **\_\_**s ball kept rolling away**\_\_**

Many ideas for teaching punctuation can be found at [www.teachit.co.uk](http://www.teachit.co.uk) (Resource no. 22889) You need to create an account but you can do this for free.

Some of these ideas include:

***Get up and go game***

Working in groups, students have to find and copy six hidden, numbered sentences around the classroom, each of which is missing a particular punctuation mark. The winners are the first group to identify which punctuation mark is missing from each sentence.

***Supersized sentences***

Using any sentence, put each word on a separate sheet of paper on the floor / held up by students. Have a variety of punctuation marks on separate sheets. Ask students to come up with as many ways as they can to use the words in different sentences, punctuated appropriately. For example: Harry jumped feeling suddenly scared, afraid and alone when he heard the bell ring loudly and suddenly as the dark night fell.

***Punctuation drama***

Pupils, in groups, create a 50 word story. One student then narrates it and the other students are punctuation performers, giving different body shapes for each punctuation mark used.

***Choral reading***

A problem with reading aloud is that pupils often miss meaning because they don’t take account of punctuation. Practise whole class or small group choral reading, where you all read together with exaggerated notice of the punctuation. If you hear reading in groups you could do this for a paragraph every time you hear the reading. This helps children internalise the rhythms of language which they need in their own writing.

***Punctuation Dice***

Use the punctuation dice template below. Students roll the dice, name the punctuation mark and race to come up with an example sentence.



“ ”

;

?

,

:

!

Grammar

More than any other area, the teaching of grammar should be taught within context. It is difficult for pupils to transfer standalone grammar learning into impact on their own writing.

If pupils are taught too many rules, particularly within isolation, they are in danger of viewing their own language as a foreign language and confidence in themselves as a writer is stifled.

The Benchmarks support the view that pupils do not need to be taught a wide range of grammar terminology:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Early | 1st | 2nd | 3rd | 4th |
| GENERAL GRAMMAR |  |  | Most sentences written in a grammatically accurate way | Almost all sentences accurate | Grammatically accurate |
| SENTENCES | * Leaves a space between words when writing
* Writes words from left to right
 | Starts sentences in a variety of ways to engage reader | * Different lengths used
* Different types used
* Varies sentence beginnings
 | * Variety of sentence structures
* Varies sentence openings and lengths e.g.
* Simple
* Complex
* Lists
* Repetition
 | * Structures clarify meaning & enhance writing
* As 3 & Minor sentences
 |
| LINKAGE |  | Uses common conjunctions e.g.and, because, but, so | Range of conjunctions used to link sentences | Uses linking phrases / topic sentences to signpost basic structure / line of thought / argument | Uses a variety of linking phrases / topic sentences to signpost a clear structure, line of thought or argument  |

**Some key points to note:**

While 2nd level suggests that ‘most’ sentences are written in a grammatically accurate way, 3rd level suggests that ‘almost all’ should be so. ‘Most’ does not therefore mean ‘almost all.’

It might be worth using the old 5-14’s outline of appropriate grammar knowledge. There is certainly no necessity to go beyond this:

*5-14 requirements for grammar:*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A | B | C | D |
|  | LetterWordSentence | NounVerb | VowelConsonantAdjectiveAdverbPronounConjunctionMasculineFeminineSingularPluralTense  |

By combining both the Benchmarks and what some might perceive as the more rigorous 5-14 English Language document, the language of grammar input across primary schools might reasonably be expected to cover no more than the following:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Early | 1st | 2nd |
| Finger spacesLeft to right writingConcept of letterConcept of wordConcept of sentence (not the individual terminology for parts of the sentence) | Sentence openersBasic conjunctions (and, but, so ,because)NounVerb | More complex conjunctionsParagraphsStatementsExclamationsQuestionsCommandsMinor sentencesSentence patternsVowelConsonantAdjectiveAdverbPronounSingularPluralTense Verb + subject creates a sentence. |

**Context Led Learning**

Many elements of grammar can be taught, revised and reinforced through naturally occurring contexts.

For example:

**Non fiction reading**

This provides the perfect opportunity to look at writing which uses particular types of sentences.

* Many factual pieces use a lot of statements
* Persuasive pieces including adverts use a lot of exclamations, commands & rhetorical questions (questions which don’t require an answer)
* Personal pieces often include exclamations and questions
* Stories often have minor sentences to show extreme reactions such as shock or anger

**IDL**

Work on paragraphing should be done through focusing on a wide variety of texts for different purposes and for different audiences so that pupils get a sense of the different ways in which writing can be structured according to purpose. When accessing a text for IDL – or any area of the curriculum - a few minutes can be taken to examine the layout and structure of the text and work out why it has been set out in such a manner.

**Creative writing**

Looking at examples of other people’s creativity and playing with creativity themselves is a great opportunity to look at different types of sentences and the way they’re used to create different effects. The types of sentences and their specific structures (adverbial clause etc) don’t have to be specifically named: a lot of work can be done around getting pupils used to the rhythms of the language (see further ideas below).

This is also the ideal context to explore adjectives, adverbs etc, looking at how they are used for a purpose.

**Spelling**

It is likely that concepts of singular and plural will be covered as pupils begin to look at the patterns for creating plurals in spelling.

**A starting point**

A good starting point for thinking about teaching punctuation and grammar is to begin with our spoken language. Then you can discuss with pupils what needs to be done to turn it into written language. A fun task can be to take pirate-speak and translate it into Standard English.

In general, written language is:

* More explicit – you have to set the scene, give background detail
* More organised – you need to follow conventions such as punctuation and spelling
* More coherent – it needs to hold together, have a clear structure and rhythm

**A quick grammar recap**

 NB pupils do not need to know all of these terms / all the detail surrounding the terms. You might wish to share them however, if, in your professional judgement, it will enhance pupils’ knowledge and skills rather than confuse them

There are essentially 8 parts of speech that do all the jobs:

* noun – a naming word
* verb – the word that tells you what’s happening in a sentence (traditionally called doing words – see note below). Verbs can work on their own or be continuous (the monster eats = on its own. The monster is eating / might have been eating / used to be eating = continuous)
* adjective- a word that tells you more about a noun (traditionally called describing words – see note below)
* adverb- the how, when, why words. They describe the verb.
* conjunction – linking word
* preposition – a word which indicates direction / location / time (at, by, far, with, in, to, on etc)
* pronoun – takes the place of any noun (I, they, he, she, it etc)
* determiner – the (definite article), a (indefinite article)

***A warning!***

Don’t call verbs doing words. The most common verb is ‘to be’ e.g. I am, he is – where nothing is ‘being done.’ If you refer to a verb as the word which tells you what’s happening in a sentence, it immediately links the function of the verb to the sentence.

Don’t call adjectives describing words. Verbs and nouns can also be very descriptive. If the focus for description is placed on adjectives, children’s descriptive writing becomes very list like (the old, frail man sat down on the fragile, bent chair) and lacks the real rhythms of language.

**Ideas for teaching grammar**

In all cases, context is key. Pupils will engage far more with grammatical terminology if it is presented within an engaging context, relevant to their wider learning.

Having said that, many of the activities below can be used as fun games in the last 5 minutes of a lesson as reinforcement of previous discussions.

Noun

 **‘Stop the Bus’**

Pupils work together / in teams. They have 4 columns in front of them, labelled

Person Place Thing Idea

Give them a letter and teams / pupils race to be the first to have something in each column which begins with that letter. For example, actor, America, apple, admiration (NB you can swap ‘idea’ for something more concrete (e.g. animal) if they’re struggling - but it’s worth having the conversation about why they’re struggling.

The 1st to have all 4 calls out “Stop the bus!” and they get 3 points. You then go round each category – if any team has something written down which another team hasn’t, they get an extra point.

**Guess the sport**

Each pupil picks a sport they enjoy (or an activity). They write a list of nouns relating to that activity e.g. court, racquet, trainers, net, balls, umpire etc. The other pupils have to guess the sport from the nouns (tennis)

Verb

**Charades** – pupils act out verbs and the others have to guess.

**Daily verb tenses**

Every day, start the day by saying a verb, e.g. I go Ask pupils to tell you:

* the past tense - I went
* the future tense - I will go
* the present continuous - I am going
* the past continuous – I was going
* the past perfect - I have gone
* the future perfect - I will have gone

NB pupils don’t need to know all these terms, but they are always useful to know and you’ll be surprised how quickly they pick up the terms if you do it every day for 2 minutes. You could have the list written down with the verb for the day next to it as a settler as they come in from break etc. This should be a low stakes, low stress activity.

**Descriptive verbs**

Focus on how the right verb can create a really good description. Think of all the verbs you can use instead of something e.g. I walked / I ate / I smiled. This can be as complex as you like – e.g. I stumbled, I strolled etc or I grinned with joy, I beamed with happiness, I smiled as if I had swallowed sunlight.

If appropriate, have pupils act out one word / phrase from the list and have the others try to guess what it is.

This is a good way to explain that adjectives aren’t the only way of adding description to your writing.

Adjective

**Alphabetical adjectives** – Mrs Grant’s cat is an active cat . . . .

* each pupil adds another a e.g. Mrs G’s cat is an amazing cat OR
* each pupil goes onto the next letter in the alphabet e.g. Mrs G‘s cat is a brainy cat OR
* each pupil adds another as well as saying the ones that came before, e.g. Mrs G’s cat is an active, brainy, careful cat

**Adjective art** – each pupil picks an adjective and draws a picture to represent it.

**Opposites -** You say an adjective (e.g. big) and the children suggest an opposite. You could also ask for words which mean the same / similar – very good for discussing shades of meaning (e.g. why does skinny feel different from slim?)

Adverb

The great thing about adverbs is that they can move around in a sentence. Pupils can physically represent them in class to demonstrate this.

Ask different pupils to be different parts of a sentence:

* the dog howled (what happened)
* slowly and mournfully (how it happened)
* at midnight (when it happened)
* in the deserted graveyard (where it happened)

Ask them to move around and comment on the effect it has on the tone and atmosphere of the sentence.

Conjunctions

**Verbal modelling**

A good idea is to embed the conjunctions you want pupils to use within talk structures first. For example:

First I got out of bed

Then I fell down the stairs

Next my mum found me

Finally I was taken to hospital

Ask pupils to use the same structures to talk about real or imagined experiences. When pupils have internalised the structures through talk they will be able to use them in their writing.

Pronouns

**Pronounless story**

Create a story in which you don’t use any pronouns. For example: The children went down the street. The children went into the sweetie shop where the shopkeeper looked at the children etc

Ask them to think of the appropriate pronouns

**Sentence Patterns**

See notes under adverbs above.

To teach relative clauses (remember you don’t have to use the terminology!) you could divide children into groups and ask them to work out where the extra piece of information should go:

 Group 1 says the phrase “ The knight killed the dragon.”

Group 2 says the phrase “who was wearing shining armour.”

Pupils have to work out where a break should take place so one part of the sentence can be inserted.

Prepositions

**Mixed up room**

Move things in your classroom to the wrong place. Ask children to go around and make a list of where the things are. Then ask them to identify the prepositions. e.g. The hat is **in** the bin, the teddy is **behind** the chair, the bin is **on** the shelf.

**Directions**

Combine prepositions of place with teaching about writing directions: take a photo of a place in your school / local area. Children have to write directions to it. Identify the prepositions e.g. Walk **towards** Mr Birn’s room. Walk **through** the door.

**Team players**

Write a list of prepositions on the board e.g. under, in, before, into, in front of etc.

In teams of 4, pupils say how many accurate sentences they think they can create in a given time, using more than one of these prepositions in each sentence. The estimate is written on the board.

Teams must try to write / say that number of sentences – they get points according to the number they manage and bonus points if they achieve their target.

**Timetables**

Draw attention to **from, to, at** during numeracy work on timetables.

Pulling it all together

**Daily grammar challenge** – can be used as a starter

Every day write a sentence on the board, e.g. The cat falls out of the tall tree with the green leaves.

Have the following on the wall for pupils to work through (adapted from Alpha to Omega 5th edition)

1. Replace a pronoun
2. Scale it down (to the shortest sentence it can be)
3. Make it future
4. Make it past
5. Make it past continuous
6. Make it present continuous
7. Make it a question in 2 different ways
8. Make it passive
9. Make it a future question
10. Make it a more interesting sentence

**Creating a grammar book**

You can model making an information book about grammar, based on a topic appropriate to the interests of your class – e.g. Grammar for cats / robots / dinosaurs etc. Every example has to be cat / robot / dinosaur related.

Pupils then choose their own theme (ghosts, Little Mix, football etc) and create their own which they keep with them as they move through school.

**Assessing punctuation & grammar**

**Individual pieces**

Individual writing pieces (from any context of learning) should be assessed against the success criteria for that task.

In order to avoid having long lists of success criteria, it is appropriate to have general expectations for any pieces of writing that include elements of punctuation and grammar.

Rather than covering pupil work in red pen for every error, it is effective to give as much feedback as possible during the writing process.

Until technical skills are internalised, you are likely to find that pupils’ accuracy decreases when they are focusing on the content of their writing, due to the demands of working memory. As appropriate to purpose, time should be built in to enable pupils to revise their work and focus on technical accuracy during the editing process.

**Evaluating a range of evidence against the Benchmarks**

Time should be built into the school year to enable you to evaluate a pupil’s progress against the standard of the Benchmarks.

When using the Benchmarks the following points should be borne in mind:

1. The tools for writing organiser is of equal status with enjoyment and choice, organisation and using information and creating texts. Avoid any process which makes judgements primarily on technical accuracy.
2. The Benchmark expectations should not be used to cap pupil progress. Pupils in P1 may well be introduced to question marks and exclamation marks. Pupils in P2-4 will probably be introduced to inverted commas and apostrophes as appropriate. Pupils at any primary level may begin to look at how writers use punctuation to create certain effects such as tension or excitement and use this in their own writing.
3. However, pupils do not have to be excellent at using any element before they are allowed to achieve a level. It is not until 2nd level that pupils are expected to be ‘mainly accurate’ and it should be remembered that they do not have to be ‘accurate’ until they reach 4th level.

The following sheet can be used to evaluate the general expectations for punctuation, spelling & grammar, and can be adapted for use with any level class (e.g. other punctuation might be question marks or it might be the use of parenthesis). It also allows space for pupil and teacher to evaluate the specific success criteria for the task.

**Writing**

**Pupil name**:

**Date**:

**Title of Task:**

|  |
| --- |
| **Success Criteria** |
| *
*
*
 |
| I am doing well with: | I still need to improve: |

|  |
| --- |
| **Teacher Feedback** |
| You are coping well with: | Your next steps are: |

|  |
| --- |
| **My Literacy Skills** |
| You are coping well with:* Spelling
* Capital letters
* Full stops
* Other punctuation
* Paragraphing
* Ambitious vocabulary
* Making sense at first reading
 | Your next steps are:* Spelling
* Capital letters
* Full stops
* Other punctuation
* Paragraphing
* Ambitious vocabulary
* Making sense at first reading
 |