KEEPING Grammar WEIRD!

Kinesthetic Learning Activities
on Sentence Structure
“Word People”
Acting Out Sentence Structure

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Rationale for Hands-on Learning

*Hands-on activities serve as effective learning strategies because they:*

- Engage students and create an open atmosphere for optimum learning
- Encourage students to use multiple intelligences and learning modes
- Access multiple pathways in the brain for integration, retention, and retrieval of concepts
Kinesthetic activities allow students to use multiple intelligences to grasp concepts

- Start with visual / kinesthetic concepts of structures
- Have fun with the process!
- Guide students as they gain ownership
- THEN transfer knowledge to printed text
Access Multiple Learning Styles

*Present material so students can use preferred learning modes in combination:*

- **Visual:** Use colored cards and markers for text and punctuation symbols
- **Kinesthetic:** Act out sentence parts, using movement and spatial awareness to learn
- **Auditory:** Facilitate with directions, explanations, encouragement, humor, and questions that elicit student responses
The Human Sentence

Use this activity to explore simple, compound, and complex sentence structure.

In practice, separate activities are used
- First for simple sentences
- Then simple to compound sentences
- And later, compound to complex sentences
Anne (Subject) listens (Verb).
The students acting out the sentence stand facing the class with the Subject at stage left and Verb to his/her right, so they can be “read” left to right.

The rest of the class “reads” the sentence being performed, guessing what the action is.
Another Simple Sentence

Nancy (Subject) texts (Verb).
Exact verb form is not important—focus on communicating an idea

Students may “read” this sentence as “Nancy texts” [simple present] OR “Nancy is texting” [present progressive]
Two simple sentences stand side by side

Anne listens.  Nancy texts.

These two sentences are about to become one…
Two simple sentences stand side by side …

Ideally, groups should choose related sentences. But student engagement and ownership are more important than perfectly coordinate ideas!
The two simple sentences move closer, with no punctuation between them--audience reads them as one run-on sentence.

Anne listens Nancy texts--??
Students add a coordinating conjunction and punctuation where needed, creating one compound sentence.

Anne listens, but Nancy texts.
Adding a subordinating conjunction changes the sentence from compound to complex, demonstrating in/dependent clause structure.

While Anne listens, Nancy texts.
### Kinesthetic subordination:

- The group selects a fitting subordinating conjunction
- The card holder steps onto the edge of the seesaw
- The subordinate clause is now lower in position

#### Subordinating conjunctions

- Although
- After
- As
- While
- When
- Until
- Unless
- Because
- Before
- If
- Since
Clauses switch places as units, reinforcing the concept of *clause*, and demonstrating changes in complex sentence punctuation.

Nancy texts *while* Anne listens.
Start with the skeleton of sentence structure—Subject and Verb

Once students can recognize the “bare bones” of the underlying subject/verb structure, they can begin to identify “the rest of the sentence.”

But just locating S & V helps with writing skills.
When students can identify the roles of Subject and Verb

- they can use X-ray vision to see the basic sentence structure beneath the modifiers that flesh out the sentence …
- and work with punctuation patterns that go with compound and complex structures!
If you want to build your own see-saw, note details of construction below:

- Doubled planks hold 350+ lbs. on each side!
- Wedge planks within fulcrum to minimize swivel danger!
The see-saw is fun but optional – subordinate clauses can be demonstrated in other creative ways (such as dependent clause group kneeling or sitting, or independent clause group standing on chairs).

Doubled planks hold 350+ lbs. on each side!

Wedge planks within fulcrum to minimize swivel danger!
Create a ladder to scale the print barrier ~ scaffolding from hands-on activity to text

Å Use a 7-step progression, consolidating knowledge along the way

Å Like a ladder, each rung is essential, and too much of a gap makes the climb unwieldy
Scaffolding from activity to text

Step 1: Perform kinesthetic activity, with text and/or symbols designed with colored cards or markers.

Step 2: As a group, post text on board or wall; discuss, manipulate, copy to notes (sketches / cell phone photos are helpful too)
Move from visual / kinesthetic to reading / writing mode…

- **Step 3:** Identify structures, punctuation, and/or words from the activity in sentence level printed text

- **Step 4:** Practice writing and/or editing text using concepts and skills from the activity, at the sentence level
Move from sentence to paragraph level...

- **Step 5:** Identify structures, punctuation, and/or words from the activity in paragraph level printed text

- **Step 6:** Practice writing and/or editing text using concepts and skills from the activity, now at the paragraph level
Always apply knowledge to the “real thing” – students’ own written texts

**Step 7:** Students use concepts and skills from the activity to write and edit their own printed texts at the paragraph level or beyond

- Composing
- Self-editing
- Engaging in peer review
- Consolidating knowledge by communicating
On the middle rungs of the ladder, students have left the ground but have not yet arrived at their destination.

Students need encouragement and steady support on rungs 3 through 6 of the climb:

- Positive reinforcement for understanding
- Explanations and examples for unclear areas

Understanding + Explanation = Reward Zone
Build knowledge securely with scaffolded steps along the way…

Don’t leave students hanging in midair!

- Encourage questions and model asking
- Foster experimentation and explain problematic results from a positive view
- Praise and support steps of improvement
Bridge back to the kinesthetic to integrate concepts

Nancy texts while Anne listens.

Students will refer to visual / kinesthetic / auditory memory later, when studying and writing
Involve students in activity prep and designing activities

- Getting students to participate in prep increases their engagement and ownership.
- Students come up with creative ideas for activities, and they know what works! Let them help you develop and adapt activities.
- Build on student ideas during class—allow spontaneity, and discovery will happen!
“Reading People” References

• Human Sentence photos taken by Tony Bennett Photography (2012). Used with formal written permission of students at San Juan College, Farmington, NM.

• See-saw photo used with generous permission of students in the Carpentry/Building Trades program at San Juan College, Farmington, NM. Taken February 2009 (individual permission forms on file).
“Reading People” References


• No Subjects or Verbs were harmed in the creation of this PowerPoint presentation.

• Plank and fulcrum donated to students at Greenbriar Homeschool, Elgin, TX.
• What questions or comments do you have about the weird activities demonstrated here today?
• Do you use hands-on activities in your writing classrooms, or do you have ideas for an activity you might like to try?
• Hands-on learning keeps students engaged — the weirder the better!
Please feel free to write with questions, ideas, exciting new activities that work!

My email is: WalterJ@sanjuancollege.edu
(no ‘s’ on my last name, Walter, or your message will be forever lost in cyberspace)

Thank you for your interest!