



TEACHING IDEAS

IDEAS AND ACTIVITIES FOR TEACHING

GRAMMAR

Below are some examples of concrete, hands-on activities that may be appropriate to do with children at different ages and stages of learning grammar.

A. Noticing

This is to do with children observing, paying attention to input and becoming aware of patterns in language.

1. Horse and cart

A hands-on, visual way of noticing how word order changes in affirmative sentences, negative sentences and questions e.g. *David has got a sister. / Has David got a sister? / David hasn't got a sister.* In this case 'has' is the horse and changes position depending on whether it is a sentence or question. In the case of a negative sentence, the 'cart' (n't or not) comes too. This can be demonstrated either with word and picture cards or words and drawings on the board.

2. Colour-coded grammar cards

Have a set of colour-coded grammar cards e.g. red for verbs, orange for auxiliaries, blue for nouns, green for adjectives, yellow for adverbs, purple for pronouns, pink for Wh-question words, brown for conjunctions, black for articles etc.. Use the cards and visual patterns to draw children's attention to different aspects of grammar e.g. green words (adjectives) come before blue words (nouns); purple words (pronouns) can replace blue words (nouns) etc..

3. Grammar word display

Keep a colour-coded, ongoing word display, using the same colours as the grammar cards, of e.g. nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs that children learn on the classroom notice board. The different word categories can be displayed inside e.g. stars, circles, fish, flowers, monsters etc. and be referred to during lessons as appropriate.

4. Stories and texts

As follow up work on (extracts of) stories and other texts, use the same colour code system to get children to notice and underline or circle words in the grammatical category you wish to focus on.

5. Beep!

Dictate a set of six sentences to the class with a target point of grammar e.g. 'got' e.g. *I've got a computer. / Mary's got two brothers. / Ron's got a cat. / Jane and Dave have got their books* etc.. Personalise the sentences by making them refer to children in the class. Say 'Beep!' instead of 'got' as you dictate each sentence. In pairs children identify the missing word and notice how it stays the same in the sentences and the situations and vocabulary with which it can be used.

6. Language puzzles and discovery activities

Give children input and data about a particular grammar point. Children work in pairs and logically deduce and 'discover' the rule e.g. *a banana, an orange, an elephant, a lion, an apple, a cake, an icecream, an umbrella, a coat* etc.. Rule: we say 'a' before nouns with consonants and 'an' before nouns with vowels.

7. Count the words

Help children to decode sounds so that they can produce grammar more accurately when they write. Say sentences e.g. *We're hungry. / I've got a computer. / She's nine year old / What's your address?* Children count and tell you how many words. Use fingers or cuisenaire rods to show the way that full forms become contractions when we speak.

8. Stop!

Children listen to a story or text and say *Stop!* every time they hear the target grammar point you want them to notice e.g. past tense verbs.

9. Guided questions and classroom talk

Choose appropriate moments to ask questions, draw attention to grammar patterns, encourage comparisons with L1 and use familiar metalanguage to guide children's noticing.

B. Structuring

This is to do with giving children the opportunity to manipulate form in order to practise and discover how the grammar works to express specific meanings.

10. Grammar card games

Use colour-coded grammar cards to play a range of grammar games e.g. grammar scramble, sentence hangman, sentence switchboard.

11. Information gap activities

Use information gap activities for a wide range of combined communicative and grammar practice goals. The 'information gap' is created by giving one

child information that another child doesn't know. By asking questions or exchanging information the 'gap' is closed.

12. Guessing games

Use a variety of guessing games to practise a wide range of questions and short form answers e.g. *Is it ...? Has it got ...? Does it ...? Do you ...?* etc..

13. Memory games

Use a variety of memory games to practise different language structures e.g. *I like ..., he likes ..., She likes ...; I went to the market and I bought ...*

14. Questionnaires and surveys

Use questionnaires and surveys to provide focussed and personalised grammar practice. Reporting back and presentation of results provide further opportunities for using and internalising grammar.

15. Find someone who ...

Use 'Find someone who ...' activities to provide variety in focussed and personalised grammar practice. The kinaesthetic element can be particularly motivating for some children.

16. Grammar poem machines

Within a topic you are doing e.g. wild animals give the children a grammatical pattern using meta-language that they know. Children choose an animal and write a poem e.g.

Adjective – noun	Big lion
Adjective – noun	Hungry lion
Adjective – noun	Fierce lion
Verb	Run!

17. Online activities

If you have access to the Internet, there are many grammar practice activities that children can do online, or worksheets that you can download e.g.

<http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/>

<http://www.onestopenglish.com/children/>

18. Interactive chants and songs

Use interactive chants and songs for getting children to practise turn-taking using grammatically correct language patterns.

19. Learning routines and classroom language

Regular learning routines and openers to lessons e.g. taking the register, correcting homework, asking about the weather etc. as well as classroom

instructions and responses can all provide focussed practice on meaning as well as language form.

C. Proceduralising

This is to do with giving children opportunities to use language fluently in real communicative situations in a variety of contexts.

20. Plenary time

Provide children with opportunities to present or perform work they have prepared and/or practised in groups to the whole class. This gives them an opportunity to use language again that they have previously rehearsed or practised and helps to make it more automatic and fluent as well as boosting confidence. Encourage other children to listen, respond, interact and ask questions as appropriate during this time.

21. Dialogues, improvisations and role plays

Provide opportunities for dialogues and role plays which have been practised in one context in a more controlled way and can then be extended, added to and improvised in another context calling on all the children's language resources.

22. Story building or reconstruction

Provide opportunities for children to invent, build or reconstruct stories from pictures or objects, or from a different point of view or perspective, using all their language resources. This can be done collaboratively in groups or with the whole class.

23. Talking with the children

Provide as many regular opportunities as you can for real talk in which children are expressing and negotiating their own meanings and intentions both with you and with others in the group. This may be in response to a topic, story, film, music, local, national or international news, or in relation to their own experience and knowledge of the world. Be ready to actively listen and to support and extend children's language in ways that are appropriate.

Note: The concepts of noticing, structuring and proceduralising are from Batstone R. (1994) *Grammar* Oxford University Press.