

Sentence Syntax Grids

1. What do you think keeps students *and* teachers from practising writing in the classroom?
2. How important is it that your students understand the metalanguage of grammar?
3. What underpins writing skills?

1. Teaching writing can be time-consuming.

Feedback can be pointless if teacher doesn't correct with student one-on-one.

The class might have mixed abilities.

Individuals might have specific grammar and vocabulary gaps in knowledge and this might not be consistent with the rest of the class.

Students might find writing boring, irrelevant, frustrating.

2. Students don't need to remember the name of every grammar point, but a basic understanding of structure and word form is essential.

3. Grammar knowledge; vocabulary; syntax; control; productivity; desire to express in words...

How do you make writing more inclusive, and perhaps more fun?

	Subject	Verb	Object
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			

How to set up:

- Whiteboard and markers
- Divide class into manageable teams (groups of up to 5 or 6 in each)
- If short of room space or board size, use printouts of grid on A3 paper on desks
- Draw grid/s on board
- Tell students they are going to create perfect sentences

	Subject	Verb	Object
1		m	
2		a	
3		c	
4		u	
5		n	
6		i	

1. Present Simple
2. Present Passive
3. Past Simple
4. Past Passive
5. Present Perfect
6. Future Forms (any)

Sentences must include 10 or more words

Don't use names of people or personal pronouns as the subject

[Grammar points can be adjusted to level]

[letters help students think of verbs which will 'control' the sentence]

What do you do?

Monitor students' work closely as they write and ask them questions about any mistakes they may be making:

eg "Is the subject singular or plural?
What verb form should it be?"
or say, "You've forgotten articles!";
"Spelling!"

Or, wait until the students have completed the grid. With a marker write the number of mistakes on the side of each line. Students then have to find the errors and correct them.

This usually works better after a round of correction as they go.

Students will have varying knowledge of grammar and vocab and can help one another.

Structuring an introduction

	Subject	Verb	Object
1			
2			
3	For instance,		
4	This essay	will	

1: Introduce broad topic

2: Address question

3: Expand on the idea

4: Statement of intent

<<IELTS Writing Task 2 Question>>

Give students time to brainstorm

Structuring a Body Paragraph for Compare/Contrast Essay

	Subject	Verb	Object
1			
2	For instance,		
3	While,		
4	Therefore,		

1. Topic sentence
2. Topic one, point one
3. Topic one, point two
4. Conclusive sentence

You can scaffold as much or as little as you think is necessary for the class!

	Subject	Verb	Object
1	Once upon a time		
2	Suddenly,		
3	Meanwhile,		
4	Then the horse	said,	"

You could scaffold a creative story!

Any grammar point or vocabulary can be the focus.

Paraphrasing practice

The still waters of the Caribbean were teal in colour.

Subject

Verb

Object

The majority of consumers prefer imported cars.

Subject

Verb

Object

This one could be a handout for individual or pair work...

Write sample sentences the students give you on the board or project on screen *without* the grid lines.

Summary:

Using the board and/or giving students a structure to follow on paper increases participation better than a blank slate.

The exercise can be a diagnostic test for common grammar errors to teach the class later.

The exercise is flexible. The teacher scaffolds as much or little as is relevant to the class' skill level, or the grammar point/vocab being taught.

Students learn from each other and are active participants. Rules challenge students to create sentences they don't usually attempt.

The exercise can run for as long as students are engaged. This is usually after 40-50 minutes, depending on difficulty.

The goal of the exercise is accuracy, but it also makes students 'see' sentence/paragraph structure and understand the process of building them. SVO sections take students out of L1 (for a lesson).

Thank you