



Helping Students Write Strong Sentences

Strong Sentences

Strong sentences enable students to convey their intended meaning and engage readers. Students need to first understand how mechanics, such as punctuation and capitalization, interact to form strong sentences. Students can then gradually move from writing with a series of simple sentences to including more complex and interesting sentences in their compositions.

The practice guide *Teaching Elementary School Students to Be Effective Writers* recommends teaching students different types of sentence construction with a variety of activities, as well as providing students with **criteria for evaluating** sentences based on meaning, style, and grammar.

Tip: Use sentence construction activities to help students learn and practice different types of sentence structures.

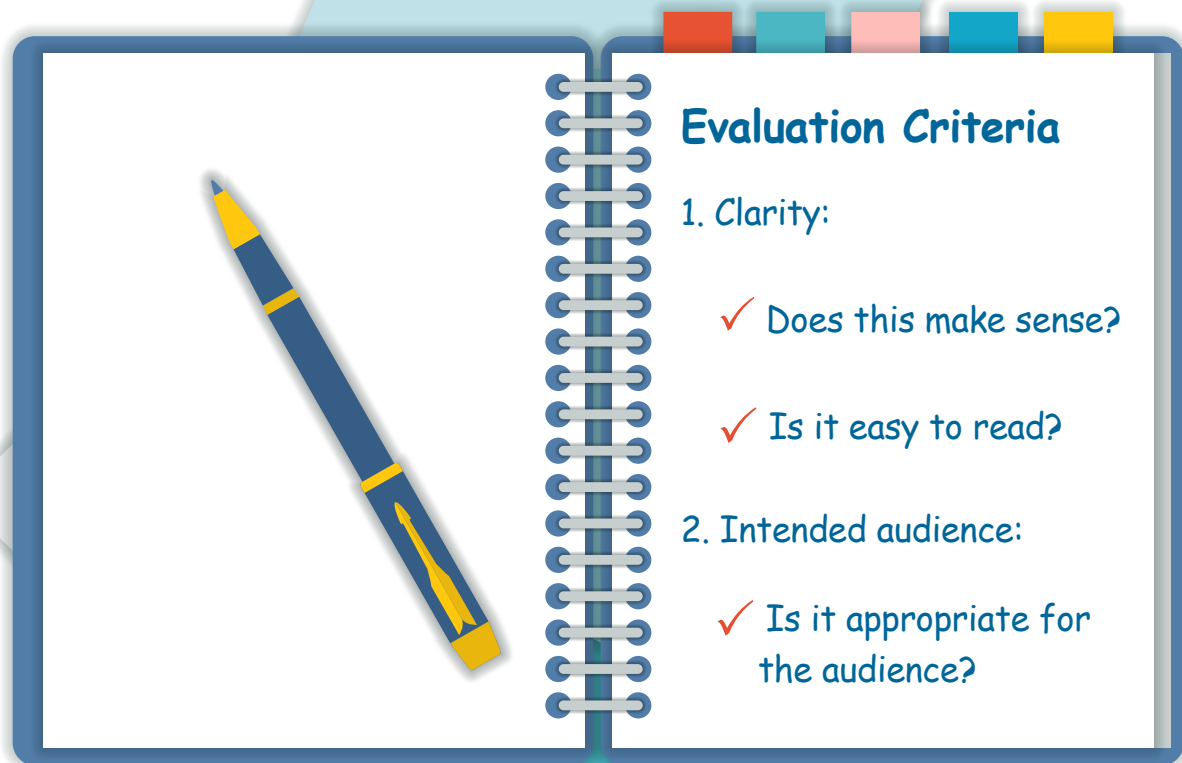
- **Introduce** a sentence construction activity to teach students how to use different sentence structures. Students should learn the following sentence types:
 1. *Compound sentences* have at least two independent clauses that are joined. For example: Jane reads novels, but Tom reads comics.
 2. *Complex sentences* have an independent clause and at least one dependent clause. For example: Although Jane reads novels, Tom reads comics.
 3. *Compound-complex sentences* have at least two independent clauses and at least one dependent clause. For example: Jane reads novels, but Tom reads comics because he likes the pictures.
- **Use** books in the classroom, activities in the lives of students, school events, newspaper or magazine articles, or students’ own writing to engage students in the activity.
- **Model** how to construct different types of sentences with the selected activity.
- **Provide** students with opportunities to practice the sentence construction activity on their own.
- **Ask** students to discuss their sentences in pairs or small groups.

Activity	Example
Sentence framing	I like _____. I like to _____ and _____. When I _____, I like to _____.
Sentence expanding	The dog napped. The brown dog napped. The brown dog napped on the couch. The lazy, brown dog napped on the couch.
Sentence combining	The boy was riding his bike. The boy was careless. The boy ran into a tree. The boy was careless while riding his bike, so he ran into a tree.

Source: Adapted from Saddler, Behforooz, and Asaro (2008); Saddler (2005); Saddler and Graham (2005).

 **Tip: Provide a list of evaluation criteria to help students review and revise their sentences.**

- **Introduce** students to evaluation criteria to help them assess sentences based on meaning, style, and grammar. For example:
 - Clarity
 - Intended audience
- **Demonstrate** how to revise a sentence if it does not meet the evaluation criteria. For example, identify missing parts, incorrect punctuation, wordiness, or words that are too simple or complex for the intended audience.
- **Review** students' work using these criteria. For older students, ask them to use these criteria to review one another's work.



Source: Adapted from Neman (1995).