A Sentence A Day for Grade One
by Barbara Mariconda

A fun way to learn sentence structure, the conventions of story, and vivid vocabulary — in ten minutes a day!
As young children learn to write, there are many varied skills they need. They need to recognize letters, learn sound-symbol connections, and begin to express their thoughts, memories, and intentions on paper. At the same time, they begin to learn the basic pattern of story.

As children mature they are encouraged to use their basic sound-symbol skills to begin to craft simple stories. However, for some students, writing a series of connected sentences is challenging. So often, children are expected to produce stories before they understand what it takes to write a sentence. How are sentences constructed? What do sentences need? Can this be taught to our youngest writers?

Often, we assume that as students begin to read, they will naturally learn to write sentences as well. But, for many, without direct instruction, this is difficult. When faced with the expectation that they will write entire stories, students feel overwhelmed.

What Happens in Ten Minutes a Day?
In ten minutes a day, students can learn how sentences are constructed, recognize the parts of simple sentences, while reinforcing the basic characteristics of story. Included in the kit: a week-at-a-glance, day-by-day teacher guide, a laminated dry erase chart, and related coloring pages to inspire thematic thinking. There are enough weekly themes for 38 weeks of school.

• Each week has a theme, with a story that is read dramatically, in short daily installments. The story ends with a question that, in a predictable way, inspires a simple sentence.

• The teacher writes the simple sentence on the dry-erase chart which is divided to emphasize the subject/predicate parts of the sentence and helps students outline the “who/what” part of the sentence (subject) and the “doing/describing” (predicate) part of the sentence. The “Words of the Week,” necessary for sentence construction, are written on the designated place on the chart for student reference.

• Then students write the sentence on their paper. They trace the initial capital letter and end punctuation in blue, they underline the subject in red and predicate in green. On each of the next four days the story continues. Day Five features “Friday Free for All” in which students write their own sentence.

• As students write their sentence each day, the teacher circulates and “dots” their work – a quick dot beside each sentence element emphasizing the elements they’ve demonstrated correctly.

Review and Reinforcement
In addition to the whole class, ten-minute-a-day process, an optional follow-up activity sheet is included that follows the theme of the week. Here, children cut out and assemble words into simple sentence patterns, gluing these into their “sentence notebooks.” Additional related words are included so that students who need a challenge can incorporate these into the sentences they create.

Additional Idea — Create a Sentence Learning Station:
• Put together a “kit” including paper and pencils, and a collection of these word cards which are added to week after week. Students can use them to form new sentences. (Word card packs are available for easy implementation.)

• Students can sort word cards by word “types” (nouns, proper nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs).

• Students use paper and pencils to create new sentences using combinations of words from their collection.

REMEMBER: As in all learning situations, consistency is key. Commit to the ten minutes a day, every day, and you will see students learn sentence structure and become accustomed to the language and style of story. The daily exposure will allow students to assimilate and apply this learning and begin to apply it to their own writing!

* See sample, page 2
Sample: Note the way the student indicates subject/predicate with the slash.

Teacher “dots” correct elements.

Here, teacher “dots” and offers a correction.
Week 1: GOING TO SCHOOL

Words of the Week:
Dan / Jan / Mom
Pam / ran

DAY 1
TEACHER READS: It was the first day of school, and, “Oh no!” Dan’s alarm clock never went off! He got up late, and got dressed in a rush. His mom handed him an English muffin as he headed out the door to the bus stop. Off in the distance he could see the yellow flash of the school bus rounding the bend. What did Dan do?
CHART: Dan / ran.

DAY 2
TEACHER READS: Dan wasn’t the only one who was late! His big sister Jan couldn’t find her backpack! She looked in her room, she searched in the closet, she tore through the shelves in the kitchen. “I can’t go to school without my backpack!” she wailed. HONK! HONK! Her bus was rounding the bend. “GO!” her mom said. What did Jan do?
CHART: Jan / ran.

DAY 3
TEACHER READS: Dan flew down the hill toward the bus stop. Suddenly, he heard his mother calling after him. “Dan, honey, WAIT! You forgot your lunchbox!” Dan turned around. His mom needed to get that lunchbox to him in a hurry! What did mom do?
CHART: Mom / ran.

DAY 4
TEACHER READS: The school bus screeched to a halt at Dan’s stop. He waited, huffing and puffing, for the door to open and climbed up the steps, carrying his lunchbox. As he made his way to his seat, the bus lurched forward. “Stop!” yelled some girls in the back. “Wait for Pam!” they shouted. “She’s coming around the corner now!” The bus stopped short. The brakes squealed. What did Pam do?
CHART: Pam / ran.

DAY 5 – Friday Free For All
TEACHER READS: The bus still had one more stop to make. There’s someone else frantically heading toward the bus stop. Dan, Jan, and Pam anxiously peer out the windows of the bus. Will this last passenger make it to the bus in time? Imagine someone you know who is sometimes late! Write a sentence about how this person made their way to the bus!
TEACHER WAITS, THEN ASKS: Who can come up and write their sentence on the chart? A student comes up, writes, diagrams their simple sentence.

LESSON FORMAT: After charting each day ALWAYS ask:
How do I know it’s a sentence?
Point out the ‘who’ part and the ‘doing’ part. Ask:
1) How does it begin? (With a capital!)
2) How does it end? (With a period.)
3) Now, you write the sentence on your paper. (WAIT)
4) Underline the WHO part of your sentence in RED. (WAIT)
5) Underline the DOING part of the sentence in GREEN. (WAIT)
6) Trace the capital letter and the period in BLUE. (WAIT)
Walk around and “dot” elements students get correct.
Dan, Jan, Mom, Pam, ran, and we, they, skip.
**Weekly Focus:**

**Groundhog Day**

**Words of the Week:**
- Mr. Groundhog
- looked
- at
- the
- sky
- people
- snow
- shadow
- his

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**Day 1**

**Teacher Reads:** Mr. Groundhog was rolling over in his den, snoring lightly. It was warm and cozy in there under the ground and he dreamed about spring. Suddenly, he felt a poke and a prod! A beam of light flashed into his burrow. He groaned. It must be Groundhog Day, he thought. He stretched and waddled out of his burrow. Outside a crowd of people gathered. They were bundled up in warm coats and scarves. Mr. Groundhog looked up. What did he look at?

**Chart:** Mr. Groundhog / looked / at / the / sky.

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**Day 2**

**Teacher Reads:** It was sunny outside of Mr. Groundhog’s burrow. The people cheered and clapped. This made Mr. Groundhog nervous. He shrugged and shivered. It was cold out there! Mr. Groundhog squinted at the men, women, and children in their warm clothes and thought of his warm winter bed. Who did he look at?

**Chart:** Mr. Groundhog / looked / at / the / people.

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**Day 3**

**Teacher Reads:** Mr. Groundhog turned this way. He turned that way. He sniffed at the air hoping to detect the scent of a spring flower or fresh green grass. But all he smelled was winter! Suddenly, he noticed something white on the ground. He shivered again! What did Mr. Groundhog look at?

**Chart:** Mr. Groundhog / looked / at / the / snow.

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**Day 4**

**Teacher Reads:** The crowd around Mr. Groundhog was getting anxious. They stamped their feet and rubbed their hands together in the cold. Mr. Groundhog suddenly felt very sleepy. He longed for the warmth of his bed. He turned around and glanced at the entrance to his burrow. But wait! What was that huge dark shape leaning toward him? He gasped and got ready to run. What did Mr. Groundhog look at?

**Chart:** Mr. Groundhog / looked / at / his / shadow.

**Teacher Reads:** Mr. Groundhog didn’t waste a moment. He took off on his short little legs and dove for the entrance to his burrow. The warm dark tunnel felt welcoming and he could hardly wait to go back to sleep in his cozy bed. What did Mr. Groundhog look at longingly?

**Teacher Waits, Then Asks:** Who can come up and write their sentence on the chart? A student comes up, writes, diagrams their simple sentence.

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**Lesson Format:** After charting each day ALWAYS ask:

How do I know it’s a sentence?

**Point out the ‘who’ part and the ‘doing’ part. Ask:**

1) How does it begin? (With a capital!)
2) How does it end? (With a period.)
3) Now, you write the sentence on your paper. (WAIT)
4) Underline the WHO part of your sentence in RED. (WAIT)
5) Underline the DOING part of the sentence in GREEN. (WAIT)
6) Trace the capital letter and the period in BLUE. (WAIT)

Walk around and “dot” elements students get correct.
Mr. Groundhog looked at the snow shadow at the sky people snow shadow his