

Expanding sentences

Reader what a teacher says about this activity

‘Creating something yourself is very motivating. This activity allows learners to create interesting sentences, explore different ways of describing and practise new vocabulary in a real situation. The pattern gives learners a framework to follow, which makes it easier. I can adapt this activity to review grammar, link to books we are studying and to prepare for writing.’

Stage 1: Prepare	<p>Write a simple sentence on the board, e.g. ‘The cat sat on the mat.’ Help learners to identify the nouns and verbs in the sentence. Use ‘wh-’ questions. Ask: ‘What is the sentence about?’ Underline cat. Ask: ‘What was the cat doing?’ Underline sat. Ask: ‘Where was the cat sitting?’ Underline mat. Read the sentence together.</p>
Stage 2: Explain	<p>Say: ‘We are going to make this sentence more interesting and descriptive. We will add describing words and phrases to the nouns and the verbs.’ Ask: ‘What could we say about the cat?’ Brainstorm some ideas and write them on the board. With higher-level learners talk about adjectives, adverbs and adverbials. Explain that you will do this for all the key words in the sentence.</p>
Stage 3: Do class work	<p>Brainstorm words to describe all the key words. Write all answers on the board. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• one learner may suggest adding ‘fat’ before ‘cat’• another may suggest ‘nicely’ after ‘sat’• another may suggest ‘outside the classroom door’ after ‘mat’. <p>Anything grammatically correct and which makes sense may be added. Allow the class to vote on the words they like the most, and write the new sentence on the board. For example: The fat, grumpy black cat sat nicely on the wide, red mat outside the classroom door.</p>
Stage 4: Do individual work	<p>Write a new sentence on the board. This could be linked to a story or subject that the class is studying. Make sure the sentence is at the right level for the learners.</p>

	Say: 'Find the key words and underline them. Now think of ways to describe these words. Write a new, longer sentence.' Circulate and assist where necessary.
Stage 5: Extend the lesson	Once the sentence cannot be extended any more, it can be used as the start of a story. Learners can add more sentences.

For younger learners, extend the lesson by asking them to draw a picture to illustrate their sentence.

Author: British Council