Sentence Practice Activities

The objective for all of these activities is for students to practice writing more sophisticated sentences as they write to learn. Instead of using random topics, integrate the content your students are learning into their sentence practice.

Use the gradual release process to give your students lots of modeling and supported practice with sentence writing. You can lead these activities as an oral shared writing activity with students who aren't yet ready to write more complex sentences on their own. Look at the resource section at the end of this document for more ideas and concrete examples you can use in your class.

The 4 Types of Sentences	
Teach:	Teach students the 4 types of sentences: declarative, question, command, and exclamation. Practice writing each type of sentence with a given subject and verb and using the correct punctuation for each type.
Example:	**Given subject:** dog **Given verb:** bark **Declarative:** *The dog is barking.* **Question:** *Is the dog barking?* **Command:** *Tell the dog to stop barking.* **Exclamation:** *The dog is barking too loud!*
Prompt for students:	**Given subject:** frogs **Given verb:** lay **Declarative:** _____ **Question:** _____ **Command:** _____ **Exclamation:** _____

COX Campus
coxcampus.org

Sentence Fragments	
Teach:	Teach students to identify and complete sentence fragments. Show them that fragments are missing either the "who" or the "do" and give them practice finding and completing fragments in isolation and connected text.
Example:	the noble dog **Is this a fragment or a complete sentence?** *Fragment* **Is it missing the who or the do?** *Missing the do* **Completed sentence:** *The noble dog lays in the sun.*
Prompt for students:	Harriet Tubman bravely **Is this a fragment or a complete sentence?**_____ **Is it missing the who or the do?** _____ **Complete the sentence:** _____

COX Campus
coxcampus.org

Run-On Sentences	
Teach:	Students also need to learn to identify and revise run-on sentences. Have them apply their learning about complete sentences to locate and correct run-ons that have more than one who and do without a joining word or sentences with too many joining words. Use lots of modeling and practice that repeats over the school year.
Example:	**Directions:** Change each run-on sentence into two or more sentences or add conjunctions, punctuation or pronouns to fix the run-on. **Example run-on:** We went to the store to get milk my mom got ice cream too. **Example corrections:** *We went to the store to get milk. My mom got ice cream too.* *We went to the store to get milk, but my mom got ice cream too.*
Prompt for students:	**Run-on:** I wish I could go to the moon the sun other planets I want to see what it's like up in space. **Correction:** _____

Sentence Expansion	
Teach:	Start with a kernel sentence, such as "she went," then add who, what, when, where, why and how. Start with just two or three questions and then add more as students grow more adept. You can also display a corresponding image for additional scaffolding.
Example:	**Kernel sentence:** They sleep. **Who sleeps?** *Dogs.* **Where do they sleep?** *On the floor.* **Why do they sleep?** *They barked all day.* **Example expanded sentence:** *The dogs are sleeping on the floor, tired from barking all day.*
Prompt for students:	**Kernel sentence:** Sequoyah made. **Made what?** _____ **When?** _____ **Why?** _____ **Expanded sentence:** _____

COX Campus
coxcampus.org

Sentence Combining	
Teach:	Sentence combining has been found to teach grammatical concepts effectively. Give students multiple short declarative sentences and have them combine them into one sentence. Start with 2 then add more as students master the skill.
Example:	**Short sentence 1:** Dogs bark. **Short sentence 2:** Bikers pass. **Example combined sentence:** *When bikers pass my house, the dogs bark.*
Prompt for students:	**Short sentence 1:** Seasons change. **Short sentence 2:** Leaves fall. **Combined sentence:** _____

COX Campus
coxcampus.org

Sentence Imitation	
Teach:	Students can learn to write a variety of sentences by imitating a mentor text at the sentence level. Help students with their reading comprehension as they learn sentence formation specific to written text that we don't tend to use in spoken language. They'll also practice reading closely and experimenting with their writing. Sentence imitation helps them read like writers and write for readers.
Example:	**Directions:** Write a sentence that is similar in form to the mentor sentence. **Mentor sentence:** Steven likes puppies, kittens, bunnies, and other cute baby animals. **Sentence frame:** (Subject) likes (noun), (noun), (noun) and other (general noun). **Imitation sentence:** *Tabitha likes soccer, football, volleyball, and other team sports.*
Prompt for students:	**Mentor sentence**: "Deep, secret brown. Like the subtly churning river currents playfully beckoning me through my grandmother's kitchen window…" **Sentence frame: "(**Adjective), (adjective) (color). Like _____." **Imitation sentence:** _____

COX Campus
coxcampus.org

Because, But, So (Varied Conjunctions)	
Teach:	Practice using joining words will push your students to write more complex and precise sentences. Start with because, but and so to bolster their comprehension skills. Try this activity from *The Writing Revolution* where they have the same sentence stem ending in *because*, *but* and *so* and they need to complete the sentence appropriately for each of the three conjunctions.
Example:	People immigrated to the United States **because** *they thought they could make life better for their children.* People immigrated to the United States **but** *they were sad to leave their homes and cultures and families.* People immigrated to the United States **so** *there are people with many different ancestors, cultures and traditions in the United States today.*
Prompt for students:	Fossils can teach us about the past **because**_____ Fossils can teach us about the past **but**_____ Fossils can teach us about the past **so**_____

COX Campus
coxcampus.org

Sentence Slams	
Teach:	For another fun and fruitful way to work with conjunctions to create more complex sentences, try sentence slams. Create in advance or with students a list of whos (subjects), a list of "did what" (predicates) related to something they're learning about and a list of joiners (conjunctions). Set the timer and have students write as many different sentences as they can.
Example:	**Who:** tuning fork, bell, music, people, drums, waves **Did what:** vibrate, laugh, sing, hear, move, travel **Joiners:** but, because, so, and, then, if, when **Example sentences:** *The tuning fork vibrates when you hit it.* *Sound waves move through the air and go into your ear.*
Prompt for students:	**Who:** Dolores Huerta, farmworkers, Cesar Chavez, parents, teacher **Did what:** migrate, harvest, organize, listen, learn, speak **Joiners:** but, because, so, and, then, if, when **Sentences:** _____

COX Campus
coxcampus.org

Additional (Amazing!) Resources for Sentence-Level Practice

William Van Cleave's From Words to Works Writing Handbook

Wonderful and informative guide to helping students move from the sentence to the essay level with lots of excellent exercises and examples
https://www.wvced.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/From-Words-to-Works-Writing-Handout-4-1-19.pdf

The Writing Revolution

An outgrowth of the Hochman method. This resource bank has great webinars and fillable printable resources for sentence-level work that accompany the Writing Revolution book (create a login for free access).
https://www.thewritingrevolution.org/book-resources/

Project Read's Written Expression Program

Very structured and highly scaffolded approach for students who need more support.
https://www.projectread.com/wp-content/uploads/written-expression-preview-011921.pdf