



Success In Reading and Writing: **Mastering Meaning through Grammar Play**

Key points to take away:

The true purpose of learning about grammar is the mastery of language – the mastery of communication.

Grammar games are a low-stakes way of children developing control over meaning, and developing greater grammatical accuracy.

Grammatical terminology – part of ‘the language to talk about language’ – may be developed alongside the mastering of meaning.

Dice games, such as our *Every Word Counts*, are effective for teaching children the power and function of word choices. They may be used to teach the function of every word class, the choice of near-synonyms (e.g. dragon – beast – reptile – creature), as well as control over mood, or atmosphere.

Vivid and contrasting images provide excellent stimuli for the teaching of descriptive language; related-but-different pictures are particularly good for developing precision and specificity in language.

Thumbs up/down games are a quick way of working on any form of

grammatical accuracy, and can be used to tackle misconceptions and to assess children’s understanding of taught grammar, whenever there are spare moments.

Questions for you and your team

Where might you fit a dice game like our *Every Word Counts*, or *Mood Maker*? Would you make it a standalone activity, or attach it to the story or topic you’re currently teaching?

In which aspects of grammar are your children currently strong, and which would be worth exploring with such games?

How confident are you with grammatical terminology? If you have any areas for development, how might these be addressed?

Do your children use adjectives with precision in their writing? Do they also use *post-modifiers* (e.g. the woman with *wavy hair*)?

Which aspects of grammatical accuracy might you target with the thumbs up/down game?

When could you use this activity? How often?



Putting it into practice

Create a six-word sentence that uses each word class only once. A good trick here is to use a pronoun and a noun; alternatively, refer to them as the 'subject' and 'object'. It's likely that you'll be able to use an adjective or an adverb, rather than both, in a six-word sentence.

(If you want to try this activity with very young children, you might use three- or four-word sentences; in which case, rather than a dice, use a spinner or other random number generator!)

In your sentence, practise changing each word and think about the meaning.

Plan for using this technique: decide whether you want to introduce it as a standalone game, or to attach it to a current story or area of study.

If your children need to develop greater precision in their noun phrases – whether using adjectives before or

prepositions after the noun – choose a selection of vivid images that relate to the current story or area of study. It is very powerful to have images of things that are in the same category, but are distinct: the Roman soldier with bow and arrows / with the crest on his helmet / in the bear-skin...

Before playing thumbs up/down, compile a list of the kinds of errors your children make in speech or in their writing; add correct sentences to this list. Keep the list on you so that you are ready to play the game whenever there is a spare moment!