

Love still exist.  
Grammar not.

# Some ideas on how to teach the more tricky grammar for the 2016 SPAG tests and beyond

Julia Strong and Pie Corbett  
[www.talk4writing.com](http://www.talk4writing.com)

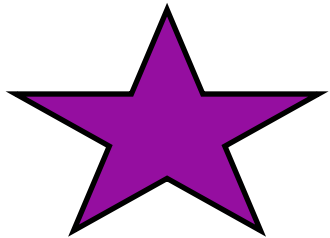


# A little test to warm you up ...

Handout 1

## The Great Never-Heard-the-Word Grammar Test

	X Never heard before	??? Heard – not sure of meaning – don't want to stand up and explain	Know what it means: can stand up and explain its function giving an example within a sentence
1. subordinate clause			
2. possessive pronoun			
3. adverbial			
13. subjunctive			



# We know more than we thought

1. The old man jumped quickly over the rusty fence.
2. He jumped over it.

Where are the nouns – what is their job?

Where are the adjectives – what is their job?

Where is the verb – what is its job?

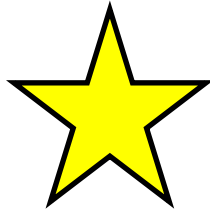
Where is the adverb – what is its job?

Where are the pronouns – what is their job

Where is the preposition – what is its job?

And 'the' is a ...?

Is subject, verb, object the typical order of a sentence in English?



# We know more than we thought

1. The old man jumped quickly over the rusty fence.

2.        He                jumped                                over                                it.  
             (subject)                (verb)    (object)

nouns – name the things talked about

adjectives – describe the nouns

verbs – say what the action is

adverbs – describe the verb

pronouns – stand in the place of a noun

prepositions – tell you the position of the action

determiners – pin down the noun precisely

Typical sentence order in English is subject (carries out action), verb, object (action is done to it).



# We know more than we thought

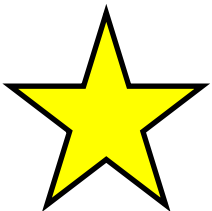
- the old man
- bright red
- across the road

*Which is the noun phrase?*

*Which is the adjectival phrase?*

*Which is the prepositional phrase?*

*Now turn the noun phrase into an extended noun phrase!*

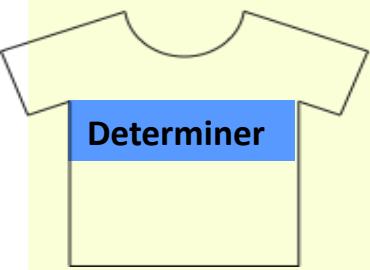


# Building confidence with the trickier bits

Discussion of function is the key to confidence with the naming of parts

Use the “investigate and define” approach to enable the children to have the confidence to explain to someone else the function of the different word classes or the nature of various grammar features.





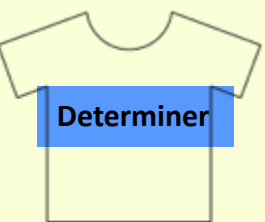
# Using discussion to build confidence with understanding the terminology

## What are determiners?

Determiners ...

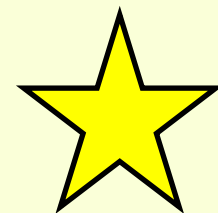
For example, ...





The determiners below have all been highlighted and the nouns underlined.

- What is the function of determiners?
- Where are they positioned?



1. I saw **his** dog eat **six** sandwiches.
2. I saw **your** dog eat **several** sandwiches.
3. **That** dog ate **those** sandwiches.
4. **Some** dogs like eating **a few** sandwiches.
5. I like **this** dog better than **that** one.



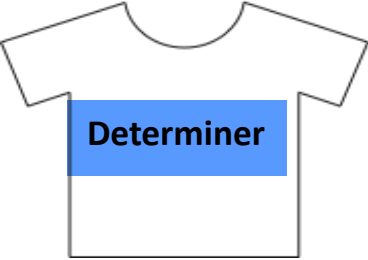


# What's the difference in meaning between *a* & *the*?

1. I have just seen *a* dog.
2. I have just seen *the* dog.

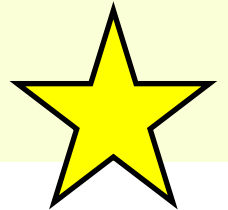
**(Definite & indefinite articles are determiners)**





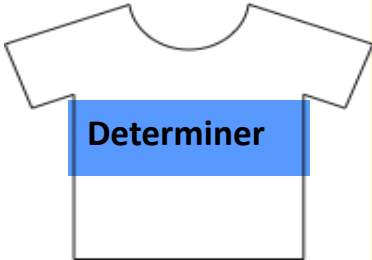
Some words can be determiners or pronouns. It all depends on their function in the sentence.

Discuss which of the underlined words below are determiners and which are pronouns. How you would explain the difference



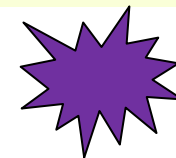
1. Put that box over there.
2. Put that over there.
3. That box is his box.
4. That is his.





# Is it a pronoun or a determiner? Remember function

Put **that** box over there.



Put **that** over there.

**That** box is **his** box.

**That** is **his**.

**Pronouns** stand in the place of nouns/noun phrases

**Determiners** define nouns and are always placed right in front of them



# *The pronoun/ determiner challenge*

All the pronouns and determiners below have been highlighted in blue. Identify all the pronouns.

*"Hey!" shouted a neighbour from a few houses down our street. "Leave my cat alone."*

*"What do you mean, your cat? This is my cat, Kipper. I've been feeding her each morning and evening for ten years," I yelled back.*

*"Look, that's Tiddles," insisted the neighbour, and she's not yours. She sleeps on my bed every night. That cat is mine."*



# The pronoun/determiner challenge

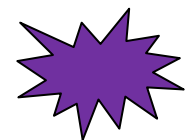
**Pronouns:** stand in the place of nouns

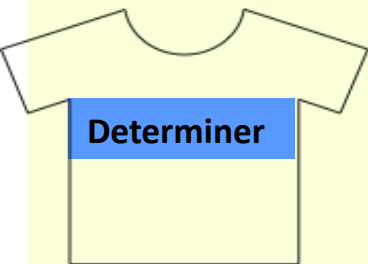
**Determiners:** are placed in front of the noun they define

"Hey!" shouted a neighbour from a few houses down our street. "Leave my cat alone."

"What do you mean, your cat? **This** is my cat, Kipper. **I've** been feeding **her** each morning and evening for ten years," **I** yelled back.

"Look, **that's** Tiddles," insisted the neighbour, and **she's** not **yours**. **She** sleeps on my bed every night. That cat is **mine**."





# What are determiners?



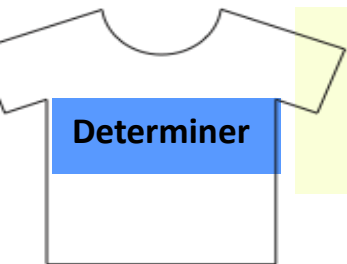
Determiners ...

For example, ...

and **pronouns** ...

For example, ...





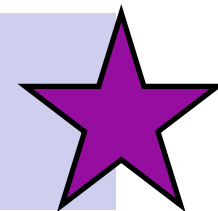
# ***The determiner challenge***

See if you can reorder the determiners in this passage so it makes good sense:

***Each** baker grinned as he turned **a** pies over. They were cooked on **a** sides. **Three** pie had **the** beautiful crust. **The two** cat sidled up to **our** safe hiding place, **the** eyes scanning for scraps. **All** passing dog stared in at **that** door. **Its** cook glared at **his** animals.*



# What is grammar?



- “Grammar is the business of taking a language to pieces to see how it works.” – Professor David Crystal

Grammar provides the ‘rules’ for joining words and phrases into sentences. The function of a word or phrase within a sentence is key to understanding grammar so a good place to start is to encourage children to love reading and to experience quality written language.



## Grammatical knowledge:

- Knowing the function of words in sentences and how sentences work and are tied together.

## Grammatical skills:

- Choosing the right words and phrases
- Constructing and varying sentences
- Linking texts together (cohesion)

**Teach the knowledge through the skills**



# The Test

- In 2014 approx 20% name and identify. By 2016 this rises to approx 45%.
- In 2014 approx 80% grammatical accuracy (making sentences correct). By 2016 this sinks to approx 55%.
- Focus: function – word classes, features of sentences (including punctuation), complex sentences, standard English, levels of formality.
- From 2016 includes subjunctive, past progressive, selecting which tense is the most definite, identifying when a word is used as a subordinating conjunction/preposition, & explaining how a comma can change meaning.



# Teaching grammatical skill and knowledge effectively within a Talk-for-Writing unit

- **use assessment** to identify grammar skills needed in a unit (**cold task**)
- **ensure your model text** includes these features
- **introduce** grammar through games and activities linked to text type and progress (warming-up)
- **demonstrate** how to use grammar features in shared writing and investigate in shared reading
- **application** – expect children to use the features in their own writing
- **Help the children to discuss these features** so that they can lead the discussion
- use **feedback** to check on how effectively it was used and what you need to teach
- Build in **progression** across the years



# Bringing out the grammar in exemplar text

- Decide which features you want to focus on and devise games that help the pupils see how it functions within meaningful text.
- Build the grammar features you are focusing on into the model text to increase understanding of, and confidence in using, these features.



# Spot the odd ones out: Which 2 highlighted words are not prepositions? What is the function of prepositions?

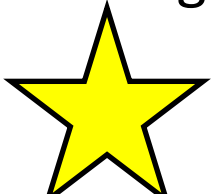
## The Hodja and the grapes

One day, the Hodja put two big baskets of grapes **on** his donkey and set off **to** the market.

**On** his way, he stopped to rest **under** the shade of a large plane tree, **beside** a stream, **near** where other men and their donkeys were **also** resting. While the men were dozing, the Hodja started to take grapes **from** their baskets and transfer them **into** his. One of the men woke up and angrily demanded to know what he thought he was doing. The Hodja **quickly** explained, “Don’t mind me. I’m a bit mad and often do strange things.”

“**In** that case”, retorted the man, “why don’t you take grapes **out** of your basket and put them **in** someone else’s?”

Looking **up** quizzically, the Hodja replied. “I’m not that mad!”



# What word class has been highlighted?

## The Hodja and the grapes

One day, the Hodja **put** two big baskets of grapes on his donkey and **set off** to the market.

On his way, he **stopped** to rest under the shade of a large plane tree, beside a stream, near where other men and their donkeys **were resting**. While the men **were dozing**, the Hodja **started** to take grapes from their baskets and **transfer** them into his. One of the men **woke up** and angrily **demanding to know** what he **thought** he **was doing**. The Hodja quickly **explained**, “**Don’t mind** me. I’m a bit mad and often **do** strange things.”

“In that case”, **retorted** the man, “why **don’t** you **take** grapes out of your basket and **put** them in someone else’s?”

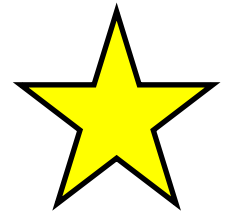
Looking up quizzically, the Hodja **replied**. “I’m not that mad!”



# Alternative words for *said* games

- **By alphabetical order**

- A. answered, asked, added, advised ...
- B. babbled, boomed, blurted, booed
- C. cried, croaked, commanded, claimed ...
- D. demanded, denied, derided, described ...



- **By categories**

- **Loud:** shouted, screamed; bellowed, hooted ...
- **Soft:** whispered, muttered, mouthed ...
- **Sad:** cried, sobbed, moaned ...
- **Questioning:** asked, demanded, enquired ...
- **Answering:** replied, retorted, explained



## What is highlighted this time? Blue = ...? Pink = ...?

One day, the Hodja put two big baskets of grapes on his donkey and set off to the market.

On his way, he stopped to rest under the shade of a large plane tree, beside a stream, near where other men and their donkeys were resting. While the men were dozing, the Hodja started to take grapes from their baskets and transferred them into his. One of the men woke up and angrily demanded to know what he thought he was doing. The Hodja quickly explained, “Don’t mind me. I’m a bit mad and often do strange things.”

“In that case”, retorted the man, “why don’t you take grapes out of your basket and put them in someone else’s?”

Looking up quizzically, the Hodja replied. “I’m not that mad!”

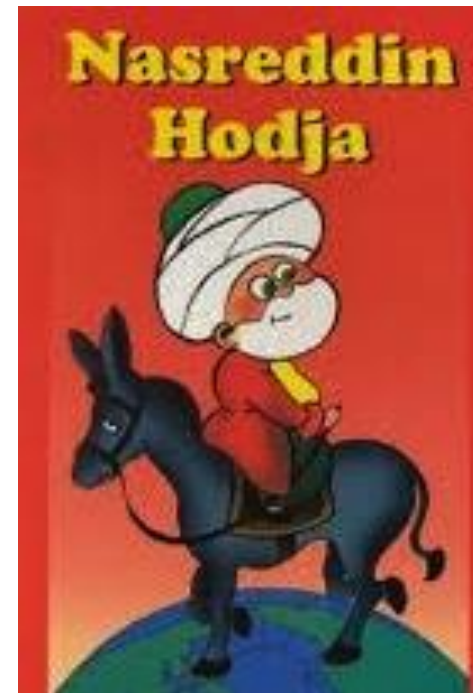


# Independent embellishing


Once children have internalised the underlying pattern of storytelling and innovation, try extending their confidence with independent embellishment of stories.

- Tell the story
- Class listens and turns into text map
- Children in pairs retell the story embellishing it as they go.

eg. *The Hodja and the grapes*



Tick one box in each row to show whether the word before is used as a subordinating conjunction or as a preposition.

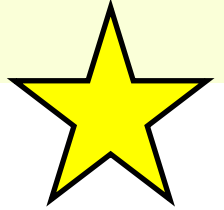
Sentence	<u>before</u> used as a subordinating conjunction	<u>before</u> used as a preposition
We left the cinema <u>before</u> the end of the film.		
The train ticket is cheaper <u>before</u> 9.00 in the morning.		
I brush my teeth <u>before</u> I have breakfast.		

Source: Sample 2016 KS2 grammar test

© Pie Corbett & Julia Strong - [www.talk4writing.com](http://www.talk4writing.com)



Is the highlighted word in each pair of sentences a **preposition** or a **subordinating conjunction**? How would you explain this?



1a. I was in the queue **before** you.

1b. **Before** you go to bed, you should brush your teeth.

2a. I added my name **after** yours.

2b. **After** he saw the dragon, he felt afraid.

3a. Do not open the door, **until** the train has stopped.

3b. She read the book **until** breaktime.

4a. **When** it stops raining, we will go.

4b. **When** will it stop?



Is the highlighted word in each pair of sentences a **preposition** or a **subordinating conjunction**? How would you explain this?

1a. I was in the queue **before** you.

1b. **Before** you go to bed, you should brush your teeth.

2a. I added my name **after** yours.

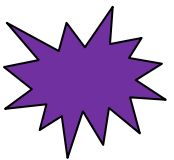
2b. **After** he saw the dragon, he felt afraid.

3a. Do not open the door, **until** the train has stopped.

3b. She read the book **until** breaktime.

4a. **When** it stops raining, we will go.

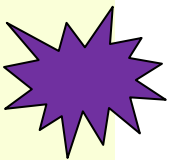
4b. **When** will it stop?



*When, after, until, before and since* can function as subordinating conjunctions or prepositions

- If the underlined word introduces a clause (ie a clump of meaningful words with a verb in it), it's functioning as a subordinating conjunction.
- If it just tells you the position of something, it's functioning as a preposition.

Warning! They can both spin the sentences round because prepositional phrases are adverbials and adverbials can rove around sentences.

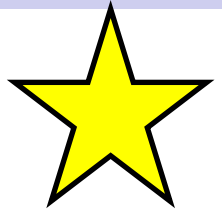


Tick one box in each row to show whether the word before is used as a subordinating conjunction or as a preposition.

Sentence	<u>before</u> used as a subordinating conjunction	<u>before</u> used as a preposition
We left the cinema <u>before</u> the end of the film.		
The train ticket is cheaper <u>before</u> 9.00 in the morning.		
I brush my teeth <u>before</u> I have breakfast.		



# Games to revise and build confidence



## 1. Matching games:

Match the high-lighted text with its technical term  
(play these games several times over a year)

Eg: Possessive pronoun      Is that **hers**?

Handout 2



# Games to revise and build confidence

## Grammar dominoes

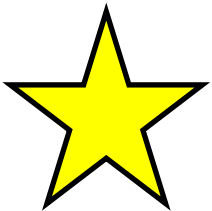
Handout 3

**noun**

**complex  
sentence**

**simple  
sentence**

**adverbial**



# More tricky stuff

**Punctuation: You know more than you think you know**

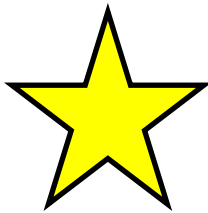
Explain why these have been placed in this order

,

;

:

.



Where would you place a single dash — ?



# The function of punctuation

*Punctuation is the use of symbols to separate off (or link) clauses or phrases to help the reader follow the intended meaning of a text.*

*Provide lots of examples to help children discuss and understand the function of each different type of punctuation.*



# Explain the difference games

**Let's eat grandma!**



**Let's eat, grandma!**

**Punctuation  
Saves Lives.**



## *Eats shoots and leaves.*

A panda walks into a cafe. He orders a sandwich, eats it, then draws a gun and fires two shots in the air.

"Why?" asks the confused waiter, as the panda makes towards the exit.

The panda produces a badly punctuated wildlife annual and tosses it over his shoulder. "I'm a panda," he says, at the door. "Look it up."

The waiter turns to the relevant entry and, sure enough, finds an explanation: *Panda. Large black-and-white bear-like mammal, native to China. Eats, shoots and leaves.*

## **Explain the difference the comma makes.**



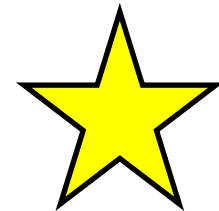
***Eats    shoots    and    leaves.***  
***verb ... noun ... conjunc ... noun***

***Eats, shoots and leaves.***

***?***

***?***

***?***

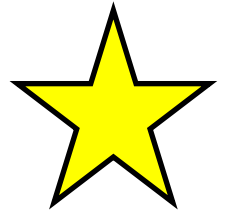


# The 2016 exemplar test

Explain how the comma changes the meaning in the two sentences below.

Are you coming to see, Ali?

Are you coming to see Ali?



---

---

---



# Tense

The tense of a verb indicates the time at which an action takes place – whether in the present or the past. With the help of a few auxiliaries it can tell you whether it is planned to happen in the future or whether it is likely to happen at all. Tense in all its possible forms in English is best understood in context via reading.



# Tense: The *Is it really going to happen* game?

I **would have** ice cream **if I could** but there **isn't** any so I **will have** chocolate instead.

Through shared discussion, based on wider reading, draw out from the children the difference the modal verbs *would, could, might, can* and *will* make to the meaning of sentences and whether the action is definitely going to happen, may possibly happen or just has the potential to happen.



# Tense: The *Is it really going to happen* game?

Give the children groups of sentences using different modal verbs to sort into two categories eg:

- a. The aliens **can land** without warning.
- b. The aliens **could land** at anytime.
- c. The aliens **might land** this evening.
- d. The aliens **will land** tomorrow.
- e. The aliens **would have landed** last night.
- f. The aliens **must have landed** last night.

1. The wording suggests the event is actually going to happen or has already happened.

2. The wording suggests that there is a possibility of the event happening/ having happened.

And then they will not be befuddled by questions like this:

Which of the events in the sentences below is the most likely to happen?

Tick one.

We could go to the swimming pool today.

He can come to my party today.

She will buy some new shoes today.

They might have fish fingers for tea today.

Source: Sample 2016 KS2 grammar test



1.

Fill in the gaps in the sentence below, using the past progressive form of the verbs in the boxes.

to play



While I \_\_\_\_\_ in the park, my mum

to push



\_\_\_\_\_ my sister on the swing.

Exemplar  
questions  
on tense  
for 2016

2.

In the sentence below, Dad booked the cinema tickets before he collected them.

Complete the sentence with the correct verb form.

Although Dad \_\_\_\_\_ booked the tickets, he still had to queue to collect them.

The trouble with question 1 is both versions of the past tense could be used here; it actually sounds best if you mix the past tenses – see 3. The correct answer (2) is clumsy.

1. While I played in the park, my mum pushed my sister on the swing.
2. While I was playing in the park, my mum was pushing my sister on the swing.
3. While I was playing in the park, my mum pushed my sister on the swing.

At least with question 2 you can get it right if you know the pattern of formal English – you don't have to befuddle yourself with knowing the term **pluperfect**. Here the trouble is the sentence sounds like informal speech – in which case, *Although dad booked the tickets, ... would be fine but would get nil point.*



# Simple and progressive present and past tenses

On the positive side it is useful to know that there are two basic forms of the past tense

- The simple past eg: I ran; I danced; I ate
- The past progressive eg: I was running, I was dancing; I was eating

These parallel the two basic forms of the present tense.

- The simple present eg: I run; I dance; I eat
- The present progressive eg: I am running, I am dancing; I am eating etc.

The progressive tenses usually suggest that the activity is in progress, taking place over a limited period.



## **A way forward:** internalise the patterns before naming the parts

- In the foundation years help the children speak these tenses automatically:
  - Teddy walks. Teddy is walking. Teddy walked. Teddy was walking.
- Through reading and oral imitation, help the children internalise the pattern of spoken and written English so that they speak and write it correctly using tenses appropriately.
  - Once upon a time there **was** a boy called Ali who **lived** in a small village. One day, when he **was walking** in the fields, he **met** a genie who **said**, “I **am going to make** you very rich.” The genie **disappeared** as quickly as he **had appeared**.
- Once the pattern is secure, help the children to name the key tenses as required.



**The multi-tense challenge.** Discuss the differences in meaning of the verb phrases highlighted below?

*Inspired by the Olympics, the parrot woke up determined to change his routine. Today he **would not sit** in his cage. Recently, he **had sat** in his cage for most of the time. He realised he **had been sitting** for most of his life - he had become a couch parrot. Even when he was little, he **had used to sit** endlessly. "Why **am I sat** here?" he thought. "From today, instead of **sitting** upright, I **will sit** upside down, hanging by one foot after another." So, as he **sat** on his perch, he resolved **to sit** no more. "**No more sitting!** No more sitting!" he squawked, wildly flapping his wings.*

*A cross voice from the sofa, irritated by such interruptions to the athletics, shouted, "**Sit** down and shut up!"*



# How do the words At that moment function in the sentence below?

At that moment, she didn't care if yelling made her look silly: she just wanted her purse back.

Tick one.

as a noun phrase

as a relative clause

as a fronted adverbial

as a conjunction

Source: Sample 2016 KS2 grammar test



How do the words At that moment function in the sentence below?

At that moment, she didn't care if yelling made her look silly: she just wanted her purse back.

Tick one.

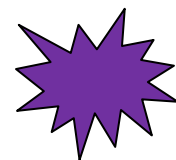
as a noun phrase

as a relative clause

**as a fronted adverbial**

as a conjunction

Source: Sample 2016 KS2 grammar test



# The subjunctive

The subjunctive is very important in some languages, eg French, Polish, Turkish and Latin but it is dying out and somewhat archaic in English. There are three types of subjunctive in English

- The **hypothetical subjunctive** (the were subjunctive):  
*If I were to do that again, I would try harder.*
- The **mandatory subjunctive** (the bossy subjunctive):  
*We require that he return the money immediately*
- The **formulaic subjunctive** (for certain set phrases)  
*God save the Queen!*



## The hypothetical subjunctive is the one most likely to appear in the test

Look at these sentences. What is unusual about all but one of them:

1. If I were Prime Minister, I would order that all Daleks should be melted down.
2. If you were Prime Minister, what would you do?
3. If she were alive today, she would sort the Daleks out.
4. If just one Dalek were to invade, we would have to find The Doctor.

Make up 3 sentences about something that is wished for beginning: If I were ... ; If she were ... ; If he were ...

And now for the mandatory subjunctive.  
Which of the sentences below sounds strange?

- i. I want him to start work tomorrow.*
- ii. I require that he start work tomorrow.*
- iii. He starts work tomorrow.*
- iv. I require that you start work tomorrow.*

.



# The new minister of education:

As the new minister of education, you have decided to issue new rules for teachers. Devise 4 more rules in the mandatory (bossy) subjunctive mode:

1. *The Minister requires that each teacher accept the new curriculum without question.*
2. *The Minister expects that each teacher ...*
3. *The Minister demands that each teacher ...*
4. *The Minister insists that each teacher ...*
5. *The Minister wishes that each teacher ...*



Since this is the KS2 test, God forbid there is a KS4 one!

Which option completes the sentence below so that it uses the subjunctive mood?

I wish I \_\_\_\_\_ free to come to your party, but I am afraid I will be busy.

Tick one.

were

☐

could be

☐

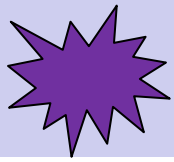
was

☐

may be

☐

# Teaching grammatical skill and knowledge effectively within a Talk-for-Writing unit



- **use assessment** to identify grammar skills needed in a unit (**cold task**)
- **ensure your model text** includes these features
- **introduce** grammar through games and activities linked to text type and progress (warming-up)
- **demonstrate** how to use grammar features in shared writing and investigate in shared reading
- **application** – expect children to use the features in their own writing
- **Help the children to discuss these features** so that they can lead the discussion
- use **feedback** to check on how effectively it was used and what you need to teach
- Build in **progression** across the years



# What makes good writing?

This is a sentence from an example of level-6 writing provided by the DFE. Is the writing effective?

The ground was barren, empty, apart from one bush, which looked as though it had always been there, but to anyone who knew the area, not that anybody did, it was a new feature of the landscape.



# What makes good writing?

- Good writing fulfils its aim.
- It is an experience and it engages the reader – it might move us, intrigue us, make us want to carry on reading, irritate us, make us laugh.
- Grammar has a few ‘rules’ and many ‘tools’ to help us choose words, vary sentences and tie texts together effectively.

