

# SENTENCE-LEVEL FEEDBACK AND SUPPORT

## 6th–8th Grade English Language Arts

### COMMON CHALLENGE #1: SIMPLE SENTENCES

Challenge	Suggestions for Support
<p><b>Writers using fragments instead of complete sentences</b></p> <p><i>Byron and Buphead. Made fun of Kenny.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review the difference between a fragment and a complete sentence.</li><li>• Ask student: Does it say who or what did something? Does it say what happened?</li><li>• Have student orally turn fragments into complete sentences by either adding a subject or a predicate.</li><li>• Provide student with a variety of complete sentences and fragments. Have student identify which sentences are complete and which are fragments and explain why.</li><li>• Create a visual of the difference between a fragment and a complete sentence for student to reference.</li></ul>
<p><b>Writes with no punctuation at all; all sentences are run-on sentences</b></p> <p><i>Byron is a very dynamic character because he can be so rude for example he is always being so mean to Kenny and calling him names but when Buphead wanted to make fun of him for reading in front of the whole fifth grade he wouldn't let him and left him alone.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review the components of a simple sentence.</li><li>• Draw student's attention to the issue and see if they can fix it without further support. Possible prompt: "How many periods do you see in this paragraph?" If they are able to fix it independently, make a plan with them to help them remember to check for run-on sentences.</li><li>• Make sure student understands the importance of punctuation. Ask: "Why do writers use punctuation? How does it help the reader understand what you wrote?" Have them read what they wrote aloud, noticing how the lack of punctuation makes it hard to understand what is happening.</li><li>• If they misplace the periods or are not sure where to start, ask: "What are the parts of a sentence?" They should say "subject" and "predicate." Either one-on-one or in a small group, help them identify the subject and what the subject is doing and model adding a period at the end of the thought.</li></ul>
<p><b>Writes using jumbled, difficult to understand sentences</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This could be a reading comprehension issue. You can assess this by asking a few key questions about the reading. Potentially have student discuss with a</li></ul>

<p><i>They think they're on welfare because Momma send them to the store without money Mr. Mitchell said it wasn't and Byron wants to get some free food now that he thinks it's not welfare.</i></p>	<p>partner or address the reading misconceptions in another way before writing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the student seems to have understood the reading, but their writing is very hard to understand, they might benefit from oral planning. Have them explain their ideas out loud to a teacher or to a peer, and then have them write down their ideas.</li> <li>• If the sentences are still difficult to understand, choose one goal for them to focus on at a time. Even if there are many issues with their conventions, a student will be overwhelmed if they are trying to solve many problems at once in their writing.</li> <li>• Review the different components of a simple sentence. Have the student look back at their jumbled sentence identify the subject and predicate.</li> <li>• If the student is struggling to figure out how to order words in a sentence, have them practice turning jumbled sentences into complete sentences.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Believes a line is the same thing as a sentence</b></p> <p><i>Byron was so miserable so he. Gave the bird a funeral by. digging it a grave.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This can happen when a student has a large run on and they are told to add periods to make complete sentences, but they don't really understand what makes a sentence. Teach student the word "line" and potentially give them an example of a sentence that is shorter than a line, and one that is longer than a line. Explain that a sentence needs a subject, predicate, and a complete thought, and that they are often different lengths.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Incorrectly uses end marks</b></p> <p><i>"Why did you take his glove." Byron asked Larry Dunn.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review the different types of sentences and the end marks associated with each. Ask: "What type of sentence is this? Are you asking something? Are you showing excitement? Are you giving directions? Are you just providing information?" Have them explain the purpose of their sentence and then add the correct end mark.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Writes run-on sentences with "and" or "then", or another word</b></p> <p><i>Momma is so angry because Byron lit a match in the house and she is so worried the house will burn down and she gave Byron another chance then he did it again then she had to take his</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have student mark each time they are using "and" or "then" (or other word) to connect more than one sentence. Think out loud with them: "Are these two thoughts related enough that they should go together?" After completing a few rounds, let them ask themselves. Consider posting the question somewhere where they can reference (on their desk,</li> </ul>

<p><i>hand and teach him a real lesson and we know Momma was real mad because she started talking Southern style.</i></p>	<p>or a poster in the room if it's a class-wide issue). This process would also work as a full-class intervention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A quick solution could also be giving them a hard limit to the number of coordinating conjunctions they can use, with the reasoning that using too many in one sentence can be confusing for the reader. This could be more appropriate for younger students.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Starts sentences with "and" and "then"</b></p> <p><i>Momma is so angry because Byron lit a match in the house. And she is so worried the house will burn down. And she gave Byron another chance. Then he did it again. Then she had to take his hand and teach him a real lesson. And we know Momma was real mad because she started talking Southern style.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One way this can be addressed is talking to the student about repetition. Share that if you always start sentences the same way, readers get bored.</li> <li>• Many people are taught that conjunctions shouldn't begin sentences, but most style guides say that this is fine. We're taught this way to avoid repetition and writing fragments. For upper-elementary students, address those two issues. For younger students, you can say "usually writers don't start sentences with 'and'" and remind them about the purpose of coordinating conjunctions like "and."</li> <li>• Provide student support in choosing another way to begin their sentence. If there are other academic frames posted in the room, you can support them in choosing one. If not, you can provide them with a few or help them rearrange a sentence or two until they can do it on their own.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Restates the question and includes the question word</b></p> <p><i>What she is feeling is angry.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If student does this out loud, have them quickly reframe their sentence. You can start the sentence without the question word, and they can repeat what you said and finish the sentence correctly.</li> <li>• When you have more time, discuss why this is an issue. With younger students, you can explain that usually we don't begin statements with questions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Subject-verb agreement issues</b></p> <p><i>In the beginning, Kenny think that Bryon is rude.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review with student how to check subject-verb agreement.</li> </ul>

## COMMON CHALLENGE #2: COORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

Challenge	Suggestions for Support
<p><b>Does not understand the difference between an</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review with student that an independent clause can stand alone because it has both a noun and a verb. A</li> </ul>

<p><b>independent and dependent clause</b></p>	<p>dependent clause cannot stand alone because it is missing either a noun or a verb. Coordinating conjunctions are used to join two independent clauses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide student with a series of simple sentences. Have student practice combining the sentences. Prompt student to explain why they could combine the sentences.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Uses conjunctions to connect ideas that shouldn't be connected</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Remind student that conjunctions have specific purposes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ For: explains a reason, is similar to "because"</li> <li>○ And: connects similar ideas</li> <li>○ Nor: connects two negative sentences</li> <li>○ But: contrasts two ideas</li> <li>○ Or: provides a choice or choices</li> <li>○ Yet: contrasts two ideas, similar to "but"</li> <li>○ So: connects a cause and effect</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Have student use one conjunction at a time, starting with "but" and "so".</li> <li>• Make sure student understands the content they are writing about. If student does not understand the content, they may not be able to come up with contrasting or cause and effect ideas.</li> <li>• Have student orally rehearse sentences prior to writing. This will allow student to try out different ideas.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Begins a sentence with a conjunction, creating a fragment</b></p> <p><i>Byron is very stubborn. And loyal!</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similar to fragment interventions, first see if the student can spot their own fragment.</li> <li>• If they can't find it independently, point at their fragment and have them evaluate if it is a full sentence. They should notice it is missing a subject.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Overuses the conjunction "and"</b></p> <p><i>Kenny originally thought Byron would run all over Grandma Sands, and he changed his mind by the end of the book.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "And" is used to add information or connect items in a series. If the student wants to express cause/effect, "so" is the better choice. If the student wants to add a contrasting idea, "but" is the better choice. In the example, the conjunction "but" would have been the correct fit.</li> <li>• Ask them what "and" is used for (adding information). Ask them, "Are you adding information?"</li> </ul>
<p><b>Incorrectly uses the conjunction "for"</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the student's first language is Spanish, this may be caused by the fact that the word "for" in Spanish,</li> </ul>

<p><i>The Watsons drive to Birmingham for that Byron can get some discipline.</i></p>	<p>“para”, has many uses, including meaning “in order to” or telling the purpose of something. Because of that, a student may sometimes directly translate what they are trying to say and use “for” when they really should be using “because” or “so.”</p>
<p><b>Incorrectly uses commas</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review with student that most coordinating conjunctions require a comma and review where the comma should be placed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Writes fragments (omitting subject or pronoun)</b></p> <p><i>The Watsons drive to Birmingham so that can get some discipline.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First try prompting generally to see if the student can notice their own mistake. “Is this a complete sentence? Why or why not?”</li> <li>Ask: Does it say who or what did something? Does it say what happened?</li> <li>Review with student what a subject is.</li> <li>Many different languages are pro-drop languages, where the pronoun can be dropped, or null-subject languages, where an independent clause can lack a subject. If the student is a multilingual learner, consider how their native language’s grammar might interact with their English grammar. Explain that in English, a pronoun or subject always needs to be included.</li> </ul>

### COMMON CHALLENGE #3: CORRELATIVE CONJUNCTIONS

Challenge	Suggestions for Support
<p><b>Incorrect parallel structure</b></p> <p><i>Not only is he intelligent, but also has an excellent sense of style.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review that because the first clause uses an adjective, the second clause should also connect an adjective. Similarly, if one clause uses a certain type of verb like an infinitive, the second clause should do the same. The correct sentence would be, “Not only is he intelligent, but also fashionable.”</li> <li>To check for parallel structure, have the student underline the two clauses they are connecting and then see if they match. When they begin using correlative conjunctions, they will need more full-group support with this.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Incorrect subject-verb agreement</b></p> <p><i>Both Ms. Miller and her students loves to dance.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review that the verb should agree with the second subject, not the first. The correct sentence would be “Both Ms. Miller and her students love to dance.”</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If student has issues with subject-verb disagreement in this context, they probably just need a visual reminder about this.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Incorrect pronoun-antecedent agreement</b></p> <p><i>Neither the students nor the teacher likes their new textbook.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review that similar to the subject-verb agreement, the pronoun needs to agree with the second antecedent, "her." The correct sentence would be, "Neither the students nor the teacher likes her new textbook."</li> <li>• Students do not need to know the word antecedent, but they should know that any pronouns should match with the second subject.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Uses double negatives with "neither/nor"</b></p> <p><i>Neither Jess nor Allie won't leave the beach house.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review that "neither/nor" has a negative meaning already, so no other negative words are needed. The correct sentence would be, "Neither Jess nor Allie will leave the lake house."</li> <li>• A student can check if they are using "neither/nor" correctly by substituting them for "either/or" and seeing if the sentence still makes sense (it should). If they add additional negative words, they're creating a double negative.</li> </ul>

## COMMON CHALLENGE #4: SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

Challenge	Suggestions for Support
<p><b>Misunderstands use of a subordinating conjunction</b></p> <p><i>Marty continued to lie whereas he felt guilty.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the long-term, this student probably needs more examples of how “whereas” is used. Consider practicing using it in a small group where students turn and talk and share ideas of how to use it.</li> <li>• In the short-term, one approach is to quickly give the student a few options that would fit better and explain why you would use one of those instead.</li> <li>• Review different subordinating conjunctions and when they can be used.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Misplaces the comma</b></p> <p><i>Even though he was warned Kenny, went swimming in Collier’s Landing.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have student remove their commas and then dissect their sentences into pieces. Ask them, “Where is the complete sentence? Where is the clause?” The comma should be between those two elements.</li> <li>• Make visuals for students with commas located in the correct places.</li> <li>• Note that while you can give feedback on commas, elementary students do not need to master using them with clauses.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Only uses subordinating conjunctions in the middle of the sentence, or in the beginning</b></p> <p><i>Marty continued to lie because he believed it would be best for Shiloh.</i></p> <p><i>Because he believed it would be best for Shiloh, Marty continued to lie.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have students underline both pieces of their sentences (sentence and clause) and flip the pieces around. Students should be flexible with how they arrange their sentences. They should be able to write sentences both ways.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fragments (ending sentences with a subordinating conjunction)</b></p> <p><i>Benjamin Franklin was clever by</i></p> <p><i>Ayanna Pressley is an important leader in Boston because</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When moving from answering writing prompts in a few sentences to composing a topic sentence, sometimes students misapply strategies they’ve learned to add details onto a sentence. Because they want to now explain their details within the rest of the paragraphs, they may truncate the sentence structures they have learned.</li> <li>• Explain the purpose of words like “by”, “because”, etc. They add a detail. Review that if they don’t want</li> </ul>

	<p>a detail in their sentence, they need to remove the conjunction.</p>
<p><b>Writes run-ons with too many clauses or other higher-level grammar forms</b></p> <p><i>Although Min Li's parents love her very much, both Min Li's mother and Min Li don't see that as a fortune because Min Li's mother is very focused on what they don't have and Min Li ended up feeling the same way until she goes on her journey and meets the Buffalo Boy and other characters who teach her to appreciate what they have.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is normal for students to need spiraled review on language that they have “mastered” once their grammar gets more complex. Complete simple sentences are easier to recognize than complete complex or compound sentences.</li> <li>• Try prompting minimally first to see if the student can correct the issue once their attention is drawn to the issue. Especially since they are using clauses or other higher-level structures, they may be able to do this. Ask, “This sentence is getting into run-on territory. Why do you think I’m saying that?” If they can notice their own error, let them attempt to fix it on their own. If they can, have them stamp what they just did. Ask, “What was the problem? How did you fix it? How can you notice that problem in the future?”</li> <li>• If they can’t see their own problem, point it out and explain how you knew it was an issue. See if they can fix it on their own. If they can’t, work with the student to fix it. It might be best to go back to what the subject is, what they are doing, and what the complete thought is. If there are a lot of clauses, ask, “Which are part of the complete thought, and which are part of the next thought/next sentence?”</li> </ul>