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CORWIN

Not Your Granny's Grammar

The greater part of the world's troubles are due to questions of grammar.

This lament sounds familiar, huh? Like something you might hear in the faculty room or mumble to yourself when reading student writing. But, lo and behold, these words were written by Michel de Montaigne, a 16th-century French philosopher. Grammar feels like a “now” problem. Alas, Michel shows us that it is a centuries-long problem that has not yet been resolved.

Throughout history we can mark moments when grammar has been at the forefront of literacy concerns. One notable grammar movement was at Harvard University during the Industrial Revolution. With the burgeoning middle class lifting many into wealth that they never had before, the newly rich wanted a high-class education. They descended on the classrooms at Harvard to the dismay of many professors and upper-crust scholars who found their writing to be atrocious; the professors actually started a movement to purge what they called “linguistic barbarisms” from the new students’ writing.

Fast-forward to today. You probably picked up this book because you feel the same angst about grammar usage today as so many have across history. Maybe you feel that grammar is a forgotten foundational skill, lost in the shuffle of literacy instruction. Perhaps you feel torn about how to teach grammar, even if it is something that you agree needs to be explicitly taught. There are often myriad reasons why we feel this tension about teaching grammar. Very often, teachers are torn because they are grammarians themselves and uphold a set of expectations that they do not see students meet. Other teachers feel wobbly with grammar, unsure of how grammar works, and therefore unsure of how to teach it. Most educators

PART ONE: Grammar Remodel

we have come across did not have the most delightful experience learning grammar when they were young and want something different for their students. They want a grammar refresh, something entirely different from their experience as a student, their parents' experience as a student, and even their grandparents' because, with very few exceptions, grammar instruction has remained the same for generations. This book from 1819 (see Photo 1.1) shows a clear resemblance to some grammar resources today! We like to think of this traditional way of teaching grammar as our Granny's Grammar.

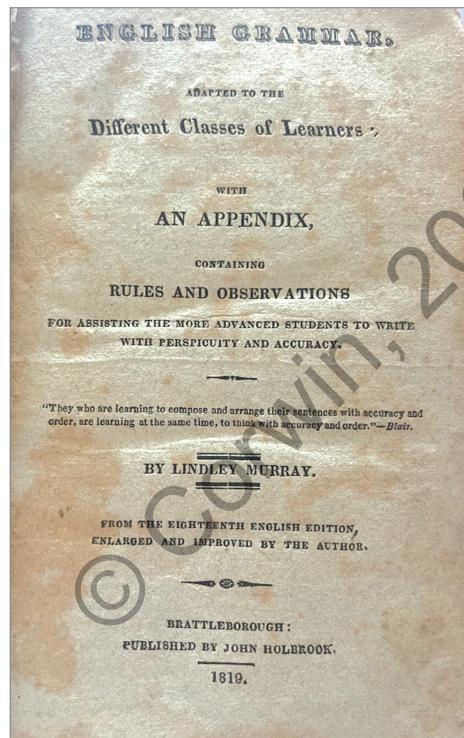


Photo 1.1.
Title page from the
1819 edition of
English Grammar

Feeling this same angst and tension, and knowing grammar will never go out of style in education (pun intended), we have developed Grammar Study, which has become our favorite approach to teaching grammar. We come from differing grammar backgrounds but have found common ground in revolutionizing grammar instruction. Patty's background included years of grammar instruction as a student only to find herself with big grammar gaps in both writing and the teaching of grammar. Although Patty felt strong about teaching in her literacy block, grammar was the clear exception. Tim studied grammar deeply as an English major in college, which helped to fill in gaps that remained following high school. As a teacher, Tim utilized his deep knowledge of grammar while

teaching writing, beginning all writing instruction at the sentence level and helping students to build upon that essential foundation. And so, we have teamed up to provide a resource for you that resets how grammar is taught. Suffice it to say, this book will guide you step by step, lesson by lesson, through nurturing grammar knowledge and usage for both you and your students.

TIME TRAVELING THROUGH GRAMMAR

Read the quotes from each century in Table I.I, starting back in the 16th century. Notice how the grammar has changed over time. It's not just the vocabulary that feels different. It is also the use of capital letters, punctuation, and syntax.

Table I.I

CENTURY	AUTHOR	QUOTE
16th	Michel de Montaigne (the guy we quoted earlier who was none too happy about grammar usage in the 16th century)	Nature has with a Motherly Tenderness observed this, that the Action she has enjoyed us for our Necessity should be also pleasant to us, and invites us to them, not only by Reason, but also by Appetite: and 'tis Injustice to infringe her Laws.
17th	Margaret Cavendish	For disorder obstructs: besides, it doth disgust life, distract the appetites, and yield no true relish to the senses.
18th	Hannah Cowley	The common events of this little dirty world are not worth talking about, unless you embellish them!
19th	Oscar Wilde	My own business always bores me to death. I prefer other people's.
20th	W.E.B. Dubois	Education must not simply teach work—it must teach Life.
21st	Joseph Bruchac	One of the things I've been taught by Native American elders is the importance of patience, of waiting to do things when the time is right.

WHAT GRAMMAR DOES

Let's begin by answering the question, "Why do we teach grammar in the first place?"

We think these t-shirts pictured on Tim and his son, Chris, share at least one reason (see Photos 1.2 and 1.3).



Photo 1.2.

Tim proudly wears a shirt given to him by his parents who are language lovers and grammarians in their own right.



Photo 1.3.

Tim's son, Chris, wears a shirt that he picked out while on vacation in Long Beach Island. Of course he chose a grammar shirt! In Tim's family, grammar humor is an heirloom passed down from generation to generation.

Grammar Nerd Alert!

Still wondering about who vs. whom? In this case, following the preposition *about*, the objective case pronoun *whom* is used. More on all of this later!

There are many more reasons why we teach grammar. Here are the grounds from which we champion grammar learning.

1. Grammar is to writing as a paintbrush is to a painter. It is a tool for self-expression and meaning building. *It is not grammar and style. Grammar is style.*

2. Grammar makes writing more powerful and with this power, people go places. There is rarely a profession in which a person does not use some grammar.
3. Knowing grammar well helps one break the rules intentionally, just as Picasso was a fine artist before he became the artist we know today.
4. The majority of students are not considered proficient in writing, and this has been the case for the last 30 years. (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2016)

Before we introduce our approach to grammar instruction, we want to share some important foundational concepts.

WHAT GRAMMAR IS

1. Grammar is not a static set of rules. It is ever-evolving. This quote from the website *The English Club* says it perfectly.

Grammar is the system of a language. People sometimes describe grammar as the “rules” of a language, but in fact no language has rules. If we use the word “rules,” we suggest that somebody created the rules first and then spoke the language, like a new game. But languages did not start like that. Languages started by people making sounds which evolved into words, phrases, and sentences. No commonly spoken language is fixed. All languages change over time. What we call “grammar” is simply a reflection of a language at a particular time. (Essberger, n.d.)
2. Grammar differs from community to community. There is no *superior* grammar. We have both traveled around the country, and each community we visit has its own unique grammatical style. However, there is a set of grammar standards that we as teachers are obliged to teach. Each state has decided what those standards are.
3. There is a difference between spoken grammar and written grammar. How we speak doesn't entirely line up with the grammar standards. Book grammar is also different from grammar standards. Writers use grammar to craft their writing and very often, very intentionally, do not conform to the standards.
4. There is no consensus on correct grammar usage. Among the many style guides, the most popular are the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*



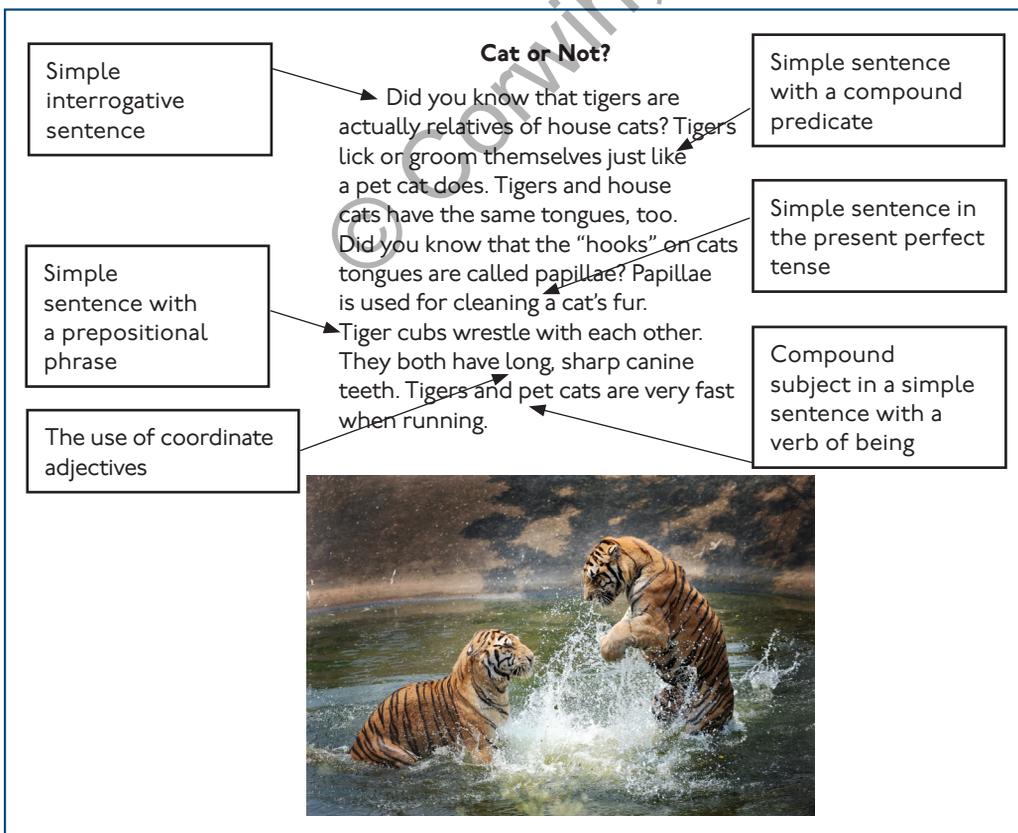
Scan the QR code to see a breakdown of the grammar standards by grade in the Common Core. qrs.ly/hzge09d

To read a QR code, you must have a smartphone or tablet with a camera. We recommend that you download a QR code reader app that is made specifically for your phone or tablet brand.

(APA), the Modern Language Association's *MLA Handbook*, and *The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS)*.

- The purpose of grammar instruction is to benefit writing. Identification of parts of speech, sentence types, and grammar rules isn't a necessity for learning grammar. Identification has, however, been the first step in teaching grammar. We have often heard statements like, "Students can't even identify a noun so how can they use them?" Students are using nouns and other parts of speech long before they even know the names of them. Take, for example, the piece of writing from a fourth grader shown in Figure 1.1. Review the notations and notice all of the grammatical moves they are making; the student would likely be unable to name all of these moves by solely using grammatical lingo. But they used grammar correctly and used it for meaning-making.

Figure 1.1 • Students Can Use Sophisticated Grammar Even Though They Can't Name the Grammar Terms



iStock.com/hxdbzxy

RESEARCH

There have been decades of research devoted to the efficacy of grammar instruction. Instruction differs widely. Yet grammar practices have remained largely the same.

Research has indicated that traditional practices of teaching grammar are ineffective. These traditional practices often include out-of-context exercises, such as worksheets about identifying parts of speech, which separates grammar from the writing process itself. As long ago as 1963, Braddock et al. found that, “the teaching of formal grammar has a negligible or, because it usually displaces some instruction and practice in actual composition, even a harmful effect on the improvement of writing” (p. 49). Hillocks (1986) shared his meta-analysis results on grammar instruction: “If schools insist upon teaching the identification of parts of speech, the parsing or diagramming of sentences, or other concepts of traditional grammar (as many still do), they cannot defend it as a means of improving the quality of writing” (p. 138). Hillocks and Smith (1991) shared, “Research over a period of nearly 90 years has consistently shown that the teaching of grammar has little or no effect on students” (p. 591).

What does work, then, in grammar instruction is teaching in service of writing (DiStefano & Killion, 1984; Ehrenworth & Vinton, 2005; Harris, 1962; Weaver, 1996). Further findings demonstrate that teaching grammar in context will enhance sentence sense, variety, and syntactic fluency; promote the use of appropriate conventions; develop rich content by developing details about abstract ideas via grammatical constructions; improve organization through a focus on transitions and connectors; and enrich voice and style “appropriate to purpose, content, and audience” (Weaver & Bush, 2008).

In a compelling research article entitled “Playful explicitness with grammar: A pedagogy for writing” (Myhill et al., 2013), the authors demonstrated that explicitly teaching grammar enhances student writing, particularly when teachers adopt a playful approach that emphasizes lively discussion and strong links to the writing tasks students are engaged in. Exactly the kinds of instruction we can implement with a few instructional shifts!

The most recent research we have found is Stephen Graham and colleagues’ (2023) meta-analysis on writing treatments. In advocating for instruction at the sentence level, Graham et al.

identify “examples of sentence instruction” that “ranged from sentence combining (O’Hare, 1971) to explicitly teaching students how to construct specific sentence structures through explanation, models, and practice (Kennedy, 2008). Such instruction produced statistically detectable ESs [effect sizes] of 0.73 for all writing outcomes...and 0.75 for writing quality” (p. 46). In other words, teaching sentence combining and construction is the way to go.

In addition, *The Writing Rope* by Joan Sedita (2023) outlines a framework for explicit writing instruction, and one of the threads of this rope is The Syntax Strand, which includes grammar and syntactical awareness, sentence elaboration, and punctuation. Sedita notes the explicit relationship that exists between reading and writing and how knowledge of syntax—the ways in which words, phrases, and clauses are organized to create sentences—is critical for students as they read for meaning and write with purpose. Beginning writing instruction at the sentence level provides students with a common language connected with elements of syntax that can be utilized in the context of authentic writing and reinforced through various reading experiences (e.g., shared reading).

Further recommendations for grammar instruction from a variety of thought leaders emphasize the importance of sentence construction, combining, and expansion (Graham, 2006; Graham & Hebert, 2011; Graham et al., 2015; Hochman et al., 2017; Sedita, 2023).

We took all of this into account, as well as our combined 50+ years as educators, to design our approach to grammar instruction that we call Grammar Study, which we’ll explore and share with you throughout this book.

WHAT IS GRAMMAR STUDY?

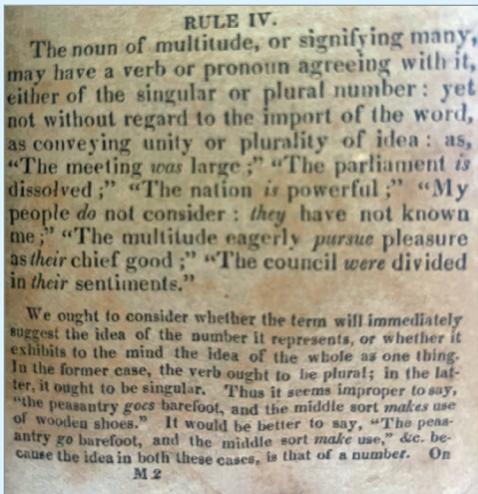
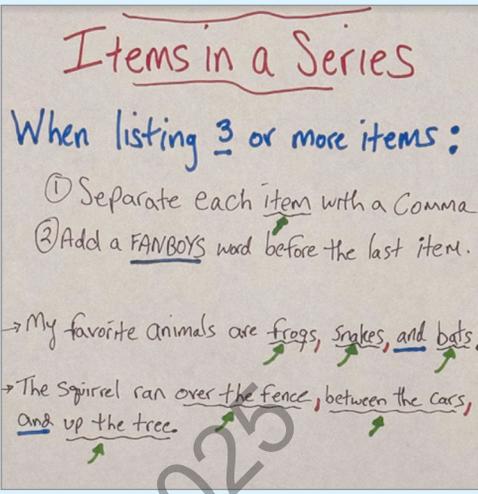
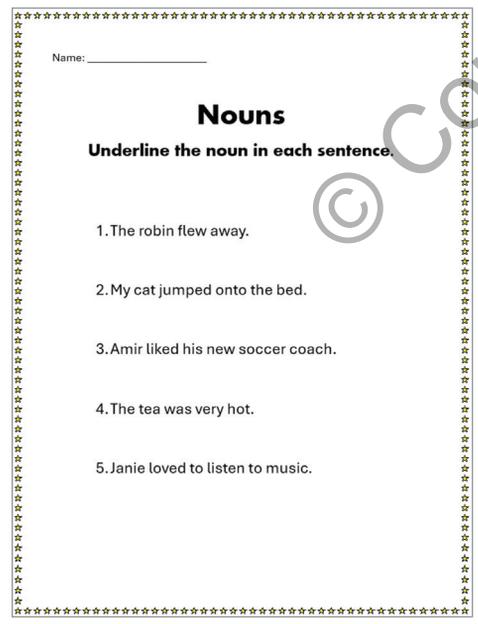
As we developed this approach, we dug into the etymology of the word *study* because it is nuanced and learner-centered. In the 12th century, “study” meant to “strive toward, devote oneself to, cultivate.” In the 14th century, it meant to “reflect, muse, think, ponder.” Though “study” now has multiple definitions and can be used as both a noun and verb, we prefer to define it as something detailed and active, fueled by curiosity.

When we study something, particularly outside of school, we seek out a variety of experiences. Tim studies guitar (and grammar, of course). This study of guitar has been a decades-long experience in which he has

- **sought out experts** by learning to play some of his favorite Dave Matthews Band songs.
- asked for **feedback** from other guitar players and guitar teachers.
- **memorized** notes, chords, scales, and finger placements.
- **questioned** the playing techniques used by others and **hypothesized** how to incorporate those techniques himself.
- **experimented** with these new techniques when practicing individually and when playing with others.
- **reflected** on what he has learned about guitar and how the songs he has played can sound even better.

These are the multilayered experiences that make true study so powerful. Grammar Study takes a similar approach. We create an experience for students where they can *seek out experts*, *ask for feedback*, *memorize*, *question*, *hypothesize*, *experiment (play)*, and *reflect on* grammar—not all in one day, of course, but through intentionally designed units. As you can see in Table 1.2, which compares Granny's Grammar with Grammar Study, our approach provides learners with opportunities to learn grammar in bite-size interactions with written language that matters to them.

Table 1.2 • A Side-by-Side View of Your Granny's Grammar vs. Grammar Study

YOUR GRANNY'S GRAMMAR	GRAMMAR STUDY
 <p>Photo 1.4 Grammatically dense and wordy explanations given for grammar usage.</p>	 <p>Photo 1.5 Simplified, actionable instruction is given in bite-sized pieces.</p>
 <p>Photo 1.6 Isolated worksheet completion is done alone and disconnected from composing writing.</p>	 <p>Photo 1.7 Collaborative, playful learning is fueled by inquiry and curiosity with an eye for usage.</p>

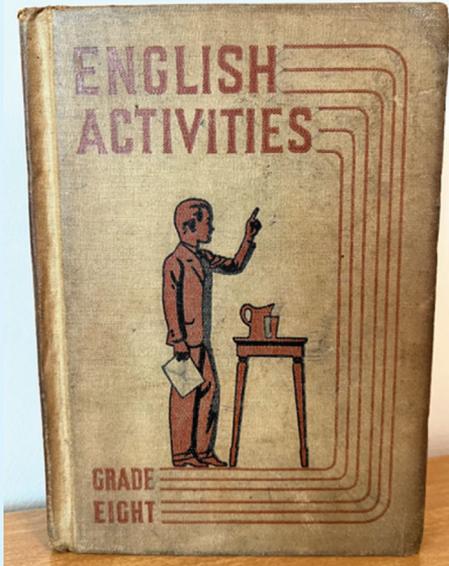


Photo 1.8 Lengthy grammar lessons focus on the teacher.

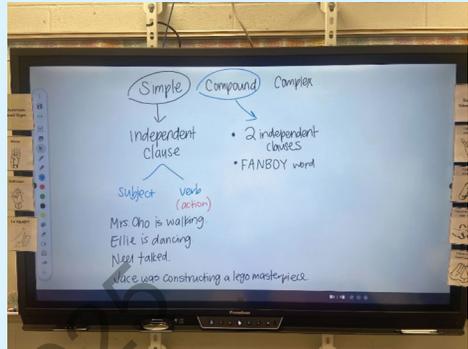


Photo 1.9 Quick explicit lessons teach how to use a grammar concept in writing.

Noun Identification Worksheet

Instructions:

Read each sentence carefully and identify the nouns in each sentence. Write the nouns on the lines provided.

Example:

Sentence: The dog chased the ball.
Nouns: dog, ball

1. The cat is sleeping on the chair.
Nouns: cat chair
2. My mom made delicious cookies for us.
Nouns: mom cookies
3. The sun shines brightly in the sky.
Nouns: sun sky
4. I love playing soccer with my friends.
Nouns: _____
5. The book on the shelf is very interesting.
Nouns: _____
6. We went to the park and played on the swings.
Nouns: _____
7. The teacher gave us a challenging math problem to solve.
Nouns: _____
8. The flowers in the garden are blooming beautifully.
Nouns: _____
9. I saw a colorful butterfly in the garden.
Nouns: _____
10. The car drove quickly down the street.
Nouns: _____

Photo 1.10 The class moves on after completing a worksheet.

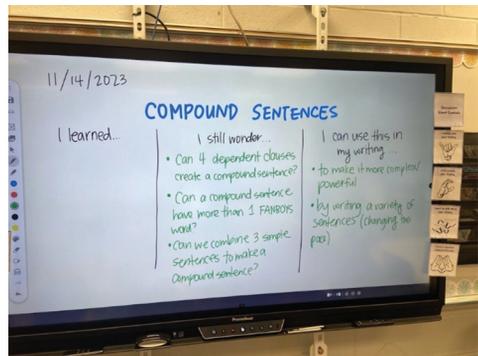


Photo 1.11 Time is taken to reflect on wonderings and curiosities.

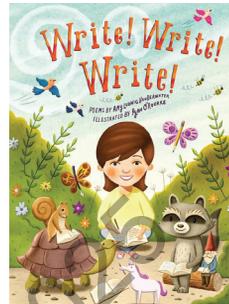


THE GRAMMAR LOVERS' BOOK NOOK

Throughout the book, you'll find these book nooks, highlighting our favorite grammar books for teachers and students. We hope you'll choose one or two to read on your grammar journey!



For Teachers: *Mechanically Inclined*
by Jeff Anderson (2023)



For Students: *Write! Write! Write!*
by Amy Ludwig Vanderwater (2020)

A SUCCINCT OVERVIEW OF A GRAMMAR STUDY UNIT

In Grammar Study, each grammar unit has three phases spread over five to six weeks, creating multiple opportunities for students to seek out experts, ask for feedback, memorize, question, hypothesize, experiment (play), and reflect on grammar. The three phases are

Immersion

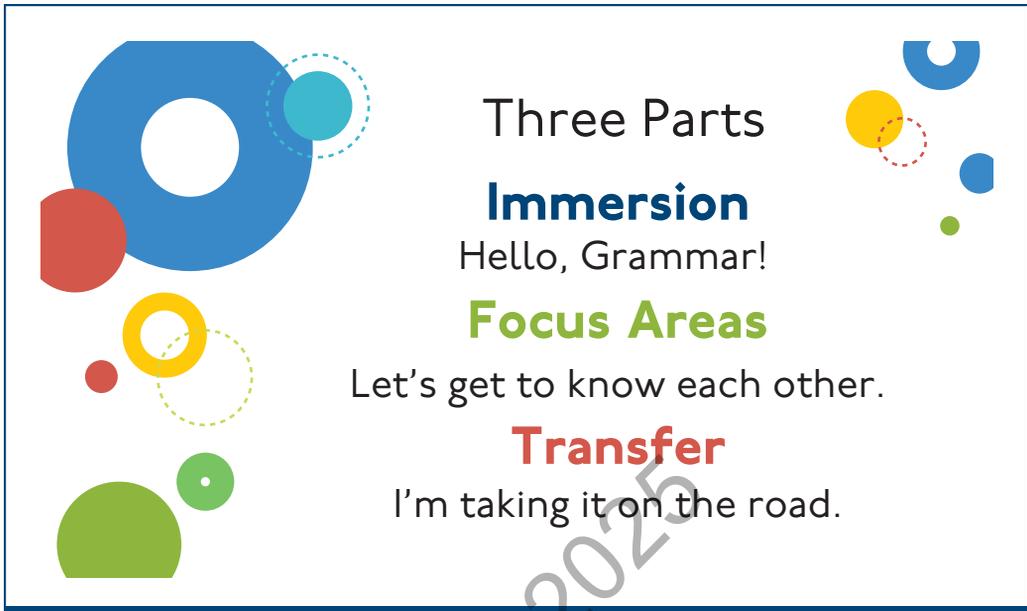
Focus Areas

Transfer

These phases reflect Hattie and Donoghue's (2016) work on the three phases of learning—surface, deep, and transfer—and reflect how people learn over time.

The units and lessons in this book are organized by these phases (see Figure 1.2). Each lesson is meant to be 10–15 minutes and taught 3–5 times per week.

Figure 1.2 • Three Phases of a Grammar Unit



Phase 1: Immersion: Hello Grammar! (2–4 Days)

We begin by introducing students to the focus of the unit in the Immersion phase. This “surface learning” is the first phase of learning and introduces students to the grammatical concepts that will be the focus of the unit. We do this through a study of mentor texts using inquiry questions to guide the exploration.



You'll see this lightbulb icon next to the Immersion lessons in this book.

Phase 2: Focus Areas: Let's Get to Know Each Other (3–4 Weeks)

The Focus Areas phase of the unit enables students to deepen their grammatical knowledge across time and takes up the bulk of the time we will be studying a particular grammar concept. During these three or four weeks, the areas of focus change so that students have myriad opportunities to develop grammar know-how. There are three types of experiences students will take part in, as shown in Table 1.3.



You'll see this magnifying glass icon next to the Focus Area lessons in this book.

Table 1.3 ♦ Three Parts of a Grammar Unit

<p>Explore: Hypothesize and Play. These days are full of inquiry, play, and experimentation. The majority of days in this deep learning time will be Explore days. In this book, Explore lessons are categorized into “Explore and Hypothesize” and “Explore and Play.”</p>
<p>Explicit Teaching. These days, teachers explicitly model the steps for using a particular grammatical concept.</p>
<p>Reflection. This is a time to pause and consider what we have learned thus far about the focus of the unit and share what we still wonder.</p>



You'll see this pencil and notebook icon next to the Transfer lessons in this book.

Phase 3: Transfer: I'm Taking It on the Road

The Transfer phase begins at this point in the grammar unit (and continues throughout the year in all pieces of writing) by creating tools that will support students in applying their new grammar knowledge.

This is a quick overview of the phases, but we promise that the rest of the book will dive deeply into unit design and share lessons galore for each phase.

KNITTING THIS CHAPTER TOGETHER

We ask you to think of this grammar reset and book as a virtual trust fall. We have worked in countless classrooms with brilliant educators, and it is remarkable what happens when students are invited into a true study of grammar. The engaged and curious disposition they take on as they work with partners or in groups to question, hypothesize, and experiment with grammatical concepts and use explicitly taught strategies is enchanting to witness. It is learning alive right in front of us. This work builds a common language around grammar that is cultivated in this type of classroom community. As we embark on this novel approach to grammar, let's keep our eye on the prize. We want students to learn grammar in such depth and detail that they, over time, become fluent users of grammar.

HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED

This book is organized to empower you to implement a Grammar Study approach. A brief description of each chapter follows.

Chapter 2: Setting Up the Classroom for Grammar Study will help you get all that you need ready for Grammar Study to go smoothly.

Chapter 3: Start With a Study of Sentences will give you one full unit that you can use just as is, day by day.

Chapter 4: Immersion Lessons: Mentor Texts and Tips begins our “choose your own adventure” portion of the book. You will mix and match the resources from Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7. Chapter 4 includes mentor texts to use during Phase 1: Immersion.

Chapter 5: Explore Lessons: Hypothesize and Play includes options for students to play with grammar to build grammar know-how. These are usually used in the Explore lessons, which are part of Phase 2: Focus Areas.

Chapter 6: Explicit Lessons: Anchor Charts and How-Tos is a set of lessons and anchor charts for you to use when teaching lessons explicitly and for students to use when applying to their writing. These will be lessons taught in explicit teaching sessions, which are part of Phase 2: Focus Areas.

Chapter 7: Transfer Lessons: Tools and Schedules builds a launch pad for the transfer of grammar learning into everyday writing. These bring you into Phase 3: Transfer.

Chapter 8: Assessment: For Learning and of Learning gives you simple and informative methods to assess *for* learning and assessments *of* learning.

But that's not all! A significant portion of this book gives a glimpse into Tim's grammar brain in *Part 4: Your Grammar Refresher: All You Need to Know About Grammar and Standards*. He has a deep and detailed understanding of grammar and conventions, and he has put this into a digestible format for any grammar refresher you might need. See Part 4 of the book to read this incredible resource; we hope you'll use it as a quick grammar guide as you read this book and as you plan grammar instruction. You may even want to review it first before you begin diving into the other chapters!



Scan this QR code to watch Tim's series of videos that break down key grammar concepts!

qrs.ly/rogkpbq

Many of the resources in the book are available online for download on the companion website; scan the QR codes next to each downloadable resource to retrieve them. The online Appendix, also available on the companion website, shows how Your Grammar Refresher and the chapters of this book align with most state standards.

GRAMMAR SCOPE AND SEQUENCE FOR GRADES 2–8

To give you a bird’s eye view of how a year may unfold for your grade level, we wanted to end this chapter by sharing a suggested scope and sequence with you. Although we fully support teachers creating their own grammar scope and sequence, we know it can take some time. To streamline this, we have put together suggested units from Grades 2–8 (see Table 1.4). You will notice that we really like to start off any grammar experience with sentences. The science of writing indicates that constructing, combining, and expanding sentences is the most useful grammar instruction. From there, feel free to change the order of the other units as you so choose.

Table 1.4 • A Suggested Progression of Units for Grades 2–8

GRADE 2				
UNIT 1	UNIT 2	UNIT 3	UNIT 4	UNIT 5
Designing all Sorts of Sentences (sentence types, expanding sentences, conjunctions)	Punctuation Power (end marks, commas)	The “Who” and “What Did They Do”: A Study of Nouns and Verbs	Painting With Words: How to Use Adjectives, Adverbs, and Pronouns	Capitalization and More Punctuation (capitals, articles)
GRADE 3				
UNIT 1	UNIT 2	UNIT 3	UNIT 4	UNIT 5
Essential Sentences: Designing and Combining the Three Most Common Sentence Types	Can We All Just Agree? (agreement and prepositional phrases)	Describing Words (and the Words They Describe) (nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, and verbs)	The Art of Punctuation (commas, conjunctions, apostrophes, quotations)	Oh, My Stars! A Study of Capitals, Punctuation, and Interjections

GRADE 3				
UNIT 1	UNIT 2	UNIT 3	UNIT 4	UNIT 5
(simple, compound, complex sentences)				(capitals, articles, complete sentences, punctuation for effect, interjections)
GRADE 4				
UNIT 1	UNIT 2	UNIT 3	UNIT 4	UNIT 5
Blueprints of Language: Mastering Sentence Structure (simple, compound, complex sentences, coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, prepositional phrases)	The Past, Present, and Future Walked Into a Room: It Was Tense (verb tenses)	Shall We Agree? Fitting Sentences Together Like Puzzle Pieces (agreement, run-ons, splices, double negatives, adjective order, all sorts of nouns and pronouns)	Building a Punctuation Toolkit (punctuation and quotes)	Capitals, Apostrophes, Commas, and More! (capitals, commas, articles, apostrophes, in possessives)
GRADE 5				
UNIT 1	UNIT 2	UNIT 3	UNIT 4	UNIT 5
The Anatomy of a Sentence: Understanding Structure (simple, compound, complex sentences, coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, prepositional phrases)	Let's Quote! Using Quotations and Punctuation in Lots of Different Types of Writing (quotations for dialogue, citing text, capitalization, hyphens)	Word Choice for the Win! (all sorts of nouns, pronouns, adjectives, adverbs, and verbs, more agreement, plural possessives)	Choosing and Using Sentences With Purpose (agreement and prepositional phrases, modal auxiliaries, correlative conjunctions)	Edit Like an Artist: Redesigning Sentences (run-ons, fragments, shifts in verb tenses, commas in a series, capitalizing/ underlining/ italicizing titles of works, comma to offset tag words, direct address)

(Continued)

(Continued)

GRADE 6				
UNIT 1	UNIT 2	UNIT 3	UNIT 4	UNIT 5
Sentence Architectures: Designing Clear Communication (simple, compound, complex sentences with prepositional phrases and pronouns)	Marks of Meaning: A Journey Through Punctuation (end marks, commas, parentheses, dashes)	Pronoun Possibilities: Exploring Personal, Possessive, and More	Why So Tense? Exploring Agreement of Verb Tenses	Odds and Ends: Crafting Sentences With Parts of Speech and Intentional Design (synthesize what was learned in the other units to consolidate learning)
GRADE 7				
UNIT 1	UNIT 2	UNIT 3	UNIT 4	UNIT 5
From Simple to Compound-Complex: Exploring Sentence Structure (simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex)	Who Are You Calling a Misplaced Modifier? (phrases, clauses, and dangling modifiers)	Advancing Adjectives and Adverbs in Sentence Design (adjectives, adverbs, coordinate adjectives, conjunctive adverbs)	Punctuation in Practice: From Commas to Colons	Common Confusables (Practice with homophones, quotation punctuation, sentence agreement)
GRADE 8				
UNIT 1	UNIT 2	UNIT 3	UNIT 4	UNIT 5
Sentence Architectures: Designing Clear Communication (simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences that include intentional use of phrases and clauses)	What on Earth Is a Verbal? (using gerunds, participles, and infinitives)	Geesh, Those Verbs are Moody! (active and passive voice, indicative, imperative, interrogative, and subjunctive mood)	Punctuation Precision: Fine-Tuning Your Writing (commas, ellipses, dashes)	Voice & Mood: The Dynamic Duo of Effective Writing (using verbs in the active and passive voice and the conditional and subjunctive mood for effect)