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Teaching guide

Real Grammar -
Make every grammar lesson great!

REAL GRAMMAR

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Grammar is a significant part of the National Curriculum. So much so, that it has its own statutory appendix (Appendix 2: Vocabulary, grammar and punctuation) setting out what aspects of grammar should be taught from Year 1 to Year 6. In the introduction to this appendix, it states:

"Explicit knowledge of grammar is… very important, as it gives us more conscious control and choice in our language. Building this knowledge is best achieved through a focus on grammar within the teaching of reading, writing and speaking. Once pupils are familiar with a grammatical concept [for example 'modal verb'], they should be encouraged to apply and explore this concept in the grammar of their own speech and writing and to note where it is used by others."

The idea that grammar should be taught within reading, writing and speaking lessons, and that children should be encouraged to apply what they learn in their own writing, is a view held by most teachers. Yet, almost certainly as a consequence of the KS2 Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar test, many children experience grammar through stand-alone lessons where they learn to recognise grammatical features in short, decontextualised sentences.

Grammar is more than recognising language features; it is language itself. This means that children not only need to know about grammatical features, but how they can be used to create effects. For example, knowing how to use modal verbs to suggest degrees of certainty, or how to use the passive voice to emphasis an action rather than the person undertaking it.

Ensuring that children have the opportunity to see grammar in texts, to use examples to help them understand definitions, and then experience using the grammar they have learned about in their own written texts, is at the heart of Real Grammar.

A robust approach to teaching

Cognitive Load Theory

**Working Memory**

Long Term Memory

Schemas

Cognitive Load Theory builds on a model of learning devised by Atkinson and Shiffrin (1968). The theory suggests that our working memories are easily overloaded. This means that we need to be mindful of the amount of new information that we give to children at any one time. Ultimately, we want children to hold knowledge in their long-term memories. Once stored there, we then need to help them retrieve that knowledge so that they can use it when required. When talking about knowledge, people sometimes use the word schema, or schemas. Another way of talking about schema is to talk about mental models; the way that someone organises information in their mind. Sometimes when we teach, we are giving children new information that will create a new mental model. At other times, we give them information that adds to a mental model they already have. We can use techniques including questioning, testing and discussion to tap into children's schema and this helps us to shape our teaching to meet their needs.

Planning learning so that children meet the same knowledge on multiple occasions is a good way to avoid cognitive overload, and to ensure that children retrieve what they know and build more detailed mental models. Real Grammar uses a teaching sequence that supports these aims.

Five stages of learning

TEACH

PRACTISE

APPLY

REVISIT

REVISE
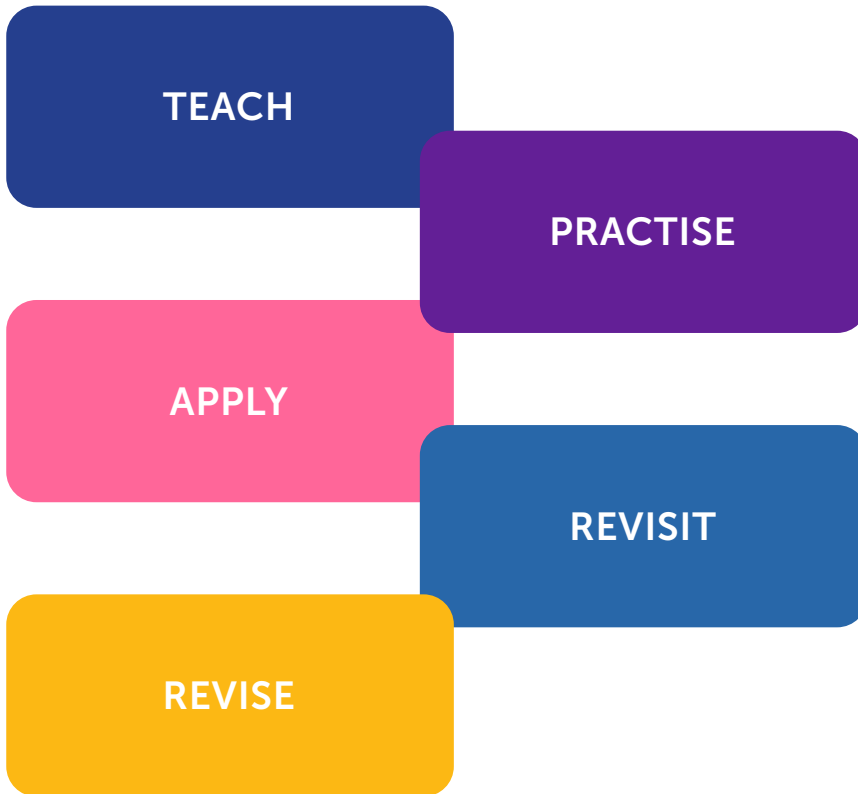
The Real Grammar teaching sequence has five stages of learning. Each focuses on the same national curriculum grammar objective, but teaches the content in different ways. This means children learn from their teachers, learn actively with each other and apply their learning on their own in writing. The teaching sequence is designed so that teachers can space the learning over time, meaning that children revisit, retrieve and strengthen their mental models. Unlike many grammar teaching sequences, Real Grammar includes an Apply section, where children write their own texts using the grammar objective they've learned about.

Ensuring that all children succeed

In any class there are children who are achieving the expected standard, children who are excelling and children who are not yet working at the standard expected for their age. They all have an entitlement to experience the objectives in the national curriculum but some of them will need support and some of them greater challenge. In the Revisit and Revise section of Real Grammar, you will find activities differentiated to three levels so that all children can access the age-appropriate learning objective.

Support is provided through a combination of words and images (sometimes called dual coding) and the use of closed tasks such as cloze procedure. Extension includes evaluative and explanatory tasks so that children are not just revisiting their learning but being encouraged to reflect on meaning too.

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Supportive teaching notes

Real Grammar is written to provide busy teachers with the support they need to deliver high quality grammar lessons. Each part of the teaching sequence is accompanied by a comprehensive script and all the additional resources required. With key questions and prompts included, you can feel reassured that you, or whoever is delivering the lesson for you (such as a supply teacher or HLTA), will deliver accurate, high-quality learning, with complete consistency.

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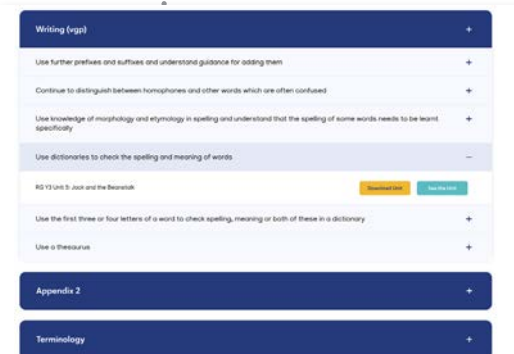
Planning and tracking

There are complete Real Grammar units covering all the grammar and punctuation objectives in the National Curriculum for English; each including a specially written model text, showing the objective in context. Every unit has a unique reference number, which appears at the start of its title (e.g., 1.1 is the reference number for the pack covering the objective 'leaving spaces between words', in Year 1), to help you find and share what you need with ease.

For some objectives (e.g., 'leaving spaces between words' in Year 1), a single teaching pack is provided; other objectives have been broken down into smaller, more focused lessons that together, ensure deep understanding of the overall grammatical concept (e.g., the Year 1 Appendix 2 objective 'suffixes that can be added to verbs where no change is needed to the spelling of the root words (e.g., helping, helped, helper)' is broken down into teaching sequences looking at '-ing', '-ed' and '-er and '-est' separately, with a fourth pack covering all those suffixes together. When this is the case, the reference numbers will start with the same number, but be identified with an additional letter (e.g., 1.2a, 1.2b and so on).

To find the unit you need, simply select the appropriate year group, then use the drop-down curriculum objective menu. This is divided into three sections: Writing (vgp), Appendix 2, and Terminology. Each objective (or part of an objective) has a single Real Grammar unit associated with it, including everything you need to teach, revisit or revise that objective. Many of the units will appear under more than one section (e.g., RG 1.1 is suggested for 'leaving spaces between words' under Writing (vgp), and for 'word' under Terminology), so you can find what you are looking for via multiple routes.

You can track your curriculum coverage, and individual pupils' progress, using the Excel overview and assessment sheet for each year group, which is downloadable from the year group page and can be customised for your specific planning and assessment needs (suggested headings are provided).

Notes...

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