

Introduction

By itself, “grammar” is not an engaging topic for students. You won’t hear them spontaneously discuss the function of an adjective vs. an adverb. Students don’t get excited about linking verbs. Most adults outside the academic arena even shy away from grammar, especially now that our computers can check our grammar for reports or other writings. Even so, effective speakers and writers need to understand and use grammar as a sharp tool to express their thoughts. Grammar rules help us modify a message for a target audience. We even break some rules on purpose to be more casual.

Some say the most practical reason to teach grammar in school is to help students score well on tests. That practice, while pragmatic, ignores the lifelong benefits of solid grammar skills. We make snap judgments when we meet people. These impressions are based on communication style as much as appearance and background knowledge. When all we know about someone is what that person has written, as in many e-mails, grammar and writing style are even more important.

How, then, do we entice students to master basic grammar well enough to apply it in their conversation and their writing?

- First, teach the grammar concept or rule. Highlight a specific grammar point.
- Then, give your students practice, practice, practice.
- Incorporate the grammar concept in both oral and written activities.
- Spotlight the concept as your students encounter it in textbooks, Internet articles, school announcements, and classroom interaction.
- Demonstrate both correct and incorrect use of the grammar concept. Talk about the impact of the concept on a message’s listener or reader. Often a message is clearer when it is grammatically correct. Incorrect grammar can also distract from the meaning or desired effect of a message.

The goals of *Spotlight on Grammar* are below.

- To help students recognize and utilize correct grammar in their speaking and writing
- To boost students’ reading comprehension by understanding the role of grammar

All six books in *Spotlight on Grammar* concentrate on basic grammar concepts typically mastered by students in fifth grade. Use the Pretest/Posttest on page 6 to determine your students' specific strengths and weaknesses. The activities within each book are sequenced by general complexity. Sentence structure, vocabulary, and readability are kept simple to keep students' energies focused on the grammar concept vs. reading comprehension.

Spotlight on Grammar: Adjectives and Adverbs teaches students the functions and correct uses of adjectives and adverbs. These words modify certain other parts of speech and are tools to express our thoughts more clearly and vividly to others. Adjectives and adverbs are also essential for comparing and contrasting things, people, and ideas. Below are additional activities to supplement the activities in this book.

- After defining and illustrating *adjective* for your students, send them on a search for adjectives throughout the school or a given area (posters, bulletin boards, textbooks, written announcements, etc.). Ask your students to list each one they find. As your students share their lists with the whole group, talk about how to be sure a word is an adjective (What does it modify? What does the dictionary tell us?). If your students list words that aren't adjectives, help them understand how to tell a true adjective from another modifier.
- Read your students a story with colorful adjectives, such as *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst. Have your students raise their hands whenever they hear an adjective. You can do the same activity with poems or songs.
- Ask your students to write their ten favorite adjectives and then list the opposite of each word. Share the lists and think of nouns these words could modify.
- Define and illustrate *adverb* for your students. Then work with them to make lists of 20 action verbs and 20 adverbs. Divide the students into two teams and give each team ten index cards. Each team writes one verb and adverb combination from the lists on each card. Most of these combinations will be silly or unique, such as *cry carefully*. As in the Pantomime game, a member of the other team silently acts out the combination on a card. A team earns one point for guessing correctly within one minute. The team with the most points wins the game.
- Create *Madlib* passages for your students or have them develop their own. Simply write a brief passage including adjectives and adverbs. Delete these words and specify *adjective* or *adverb* in each blank. Then have your students complete the passages, comparing and contrasting their word choices afterward.
- Give your students practice in word flexibility by having them change adjectives into adverbs and vice versa, such as *swift/swiftly*, *sleepy/sleepily*, etc.

We hope *Spotlight on Grammar: Adjectives and Adverbs* is a big hit with you and your students!

Carolyn and Kate