

# Sentence Building Dominoes

Sentence Building Dominoes are a fun, hands-on way for beginning readers to learn parts of speech and practice sentence formation skills. Included are 114 double-sided, color-coded dominoes (228 words and punctuation marks). There are: 46 blue nouns and endings, 28 light blue pronouns, 56 orange

verbs and endings, 38 yellow adjectives, 20 green adverbs, 18 purple prepositions, 10 red conjunctions, and 12 white punctuation marks. Use the dominoes with small groups of students, or place them at a center for hours of independent, skill-building learning.



## Parts of Speech Activities

### Introducing the Dominoes

Encourage students to explore the dominoes, helping them to read any words that are difficult for them. Point out the different color dominoes, and explain to students that they show different parts of speech (nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions) and punctuation marks. Remind students that a sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with a punctuation mark and point out those dominoes. Finally, point out the dominoes with the word endings *-s*, *-ed*, and *-ing*. Explain that these dominoes may be added to others to make new words, for example: *boy/boys* and *laugh/laughed*.

### Nouns

Have students separate the blue noun dominoes from the rest. Review the words on the dominoes, encouraging volunteers to read them aloud. Tell students that these words are all nouns. Choose three dominoes, such as *children*, *park*, and *cake*, from the pile. Explain that a noun is a word that names a person, a place, or a thing. Ask students to classify each of the chosen words. Then write each category – person, place, or thing – on an index card or small bag. Invite students to sort the rest of the dominoes into the appropriate categories.

### Verbs

Have students separate the orange verb dominoes from the rest. Review the words on the dominoes, encouraging volunteers to read them aloud. Choose several of the dominoes to display, such as: *run*, *throw*, and *walk*. Act out one of the words for the students, inviting them to guess the word you have chosen. The student who correctly guesses the word is the next "actor." When all the words have been guessed, explain that action words are called verbs. Point out that some words on the dominoes, such as *are*, *can*, *was*, etc., do not show action. These special verbs have a different job in a sentence. They may "link" two words in a sentence, or they may come before the action verb in a sentence to "help" it describe the action. Demonstrate how to combine the dominoes to create the verb "is playing."



## Pronouns

Using the noun dominoes, make several simple sentences using nouns that name a person or people, such as:

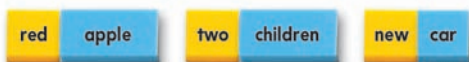
- My teacher likes pizza.
- My mother and I went to school.
- Dad read the girl a book.

Set out the appropriate pronoun dominoes: *She*, *We*, and *her*. Guide students to revise the sentences without changing their meaning by using the appropriate pronoun dominoes. Explain that pronouns are words that can be used to take the place of nouns. Repeat the exercise using nouns that name places and things and the appropriate pronouns.



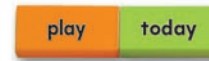
## Adjectives and Articles

Have students separate the yellow adjective dominoes from the rest. Set out several blue noun dominoes. Invite students to use the noun and adjective dominoes to make word pairs, including silly ones. Explain that adjectives are words that describe or tell about nouns, such as which one (*red* apple) or how many (*two* children). Adjectives make sentences more interesting to read.



## Adverbs

Have students separate the green adverb dominoes from the rest. Set out several orange verb dominoes. Invite students to use the verb and adverb dominoes to make word pairs, including silly ones. Explain that adverbs are words that describe verbs by telling when, where, or how an action happens, such as: *play today*, *sleep here*, *ran far*.



## Prepositions

Set out the purple preposition dominoes. Explain that these words are called prepositions. Some prepositions show how two words or ideas are connected to each other. Other prepositions tell about an object's place or position. Provide an object, such as a small stuffed animal. Set out several of the preposition dominoes, such as: *on*, *off*, *under*, *near*. Act out one of the prepositions for the students, for example: Place the animal under a table. Invite students to guess the preposition you have chosen. The student who correctly guesses the word is the next "actor."

## Conjunctions

Set out the red conjunction dominoes. Explain that these words are called conjunctions. Conjunctions connect two words in a sentence, such as: The dog *and* cat play. Let children use the conjunctions to make sentences.

## Playing the Part

Depending on the age and experience of your students, explain to them that the way a word is used in a sentence can change its part of speech. Display a domino, such as *laugh*. Ask children to identify its part of speech. Then make this sentence: The laughing boy ran to me. Explain that the verb (to) laugh is now being used as an adjective describing the boy.



# Sentence Building Activities

## Sentence Sense

Remind students that a sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete thought, such as: The baby smiles. Explain that a sentence usually has at least two important "building blocks," a noun and a verb. Ask students to identify two other facts about sentences. (They begin with a capital letter and end with a punctuation mark.) Have students make simple sentences with nouns and verbs.

## Sentence Structure

Encourage students to add adjectives, adverbs, and other parts of speech to make longer more interesting sentences. As students build their sentences, remind them that they can use the word endings dominoes (-s, -ed, -ing) to make it easier or to change the meaning of the sentence. If you wish, give students index cards with "recipes" for sentences such as: "Make a sentence with three nouns, a verb, two adjectives, and a preposition."



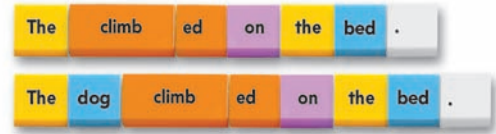
## Silly Sentences

Have students make simple sentences. Then tickle their funny bone by suggesting that they replace one or more of the nouns or verbs in the sentence to make a silly sentence. If you wish, have students write down their silly sentences and then illustrate them. Gather their work together to make a Silly Sentence Book for your class library.



## What's Missing?

Display several dominoes to make a "sentence," but leave out one of the words. Be sure to begin with a capital letter and end with a punctuation mark. Have a student read the sentence aloud, identify what is wrong with it, and find a domino that will complete the sentence correctly. Continue to make sentences with missing words and have students complete them. Then challenge students to make "missing word" sentences for their classmates. If you wish, have students name the missing part of speech.



## Scrambled Sentences

Assign students to work in pairs. Set up a barrier, such as an open book, between the students so they can't see each other's work. Have one student choose several dominoes that form a sentence. Once the sentence has been formed, have the student scramble the word order and then present it to his classmate to unscramble. Have students take turns making and unscrambling the sentences. Suggest that students start with short, simple sentences first.



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