

# Possible sentences for vocabulary



Teaching strategies for reading comprehension

## Best for:

- Year level: 3–4
- Phase of learning: surface

## Overview

<b>Description</b>	Students use general background and language-related knowledge to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words and create sentences that could plausibly be found in a text. They read the actual text and use it to evaluate and refine their sentences and the meanings of the words.
<b>Learning focus</b> (based on National Literacy Learning Progression)	<b>Vocabulary</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• use morphological knowledge to explain words (UnT6)</li><li>• use context and grammar knowledge to understand unfamiliar words (UnT6)</li><li>• interpret unfamiliar words using grammatical knowledge, morphological knowledge and etymological knowledge (UnT7)</li><li>• draw on knowledge of word origin to work out meaning of discipline-specific terms (e.g. universe) (UnT7)</li><li>• use knowledge of prefixes and suffixes to read and interpret unfamiliar words (UnT8)</li><li>• identify how technical and discipline-specific words develop meaning in texts (UnT8)</li><li>• apply knowledge of root words and word origins to understand the meaning of unfamiliar, discipline-specific words (UnT9)</li><li>• use a range of context and grammatical cues to understand unfamiliar words (UnT9)</li><li>• verify interpretations of unfamiliar words using grammatical and contextual cues (UnT10)</li></ul>
<b>Teacher preparation</b>	Select a text to be used as part of a unit. Identify and list key vocabulary from the text on a chart (see 'Causes of rainfall' example). Use only words or short word groups (e.g. water vapour) that can be adequately defined by their context. Include familiar words so that students can use their prior knowledge to make connections between what they know and the unfamiliar words.

## Suggested implementation

1. Introduce the topic and provide a brief, oral preview of the text so that students have a general idea about the meaning of the text.
2. Provide the list of words and word groups to the students and read the list aloud.
3. Discuss the words in the list. For example:
  - For which words and word groups do you know the meaning?
  - Drawing on general knowledge and/or morphological knowledge, what type of words are they — noun, verb, adjective and so forth? For example, atmospheric ends in ‘ic’, an adjective-forming suffix. Evaporation ends in ‘tion’, a noun-forming suffix.
  - What does this tell you about how the word might function in a sentence? For example, nouns can function as part of a participant (or subject or object) or part of a circumstance in a prepositional phrase.
4. Ask students to use at least two words from the list to make sentences that they think might be in the text. Words may be used in different combinations and relevant words in the word family (e.g. evaporation, evaporate) are allowed.
5. Elicit as many sentences as possible and record each one as it is given, underlining the words from the list. Ensure all words in the list are used at least once.
6. Ask students to read the actual text carefully to verify the accuracy of the sentences and use of the words in the list.
7. In small groups, ask students to evaluate each recorded sentence by using the text to verify accuracy. Remove or refine sentences that are inaccurate. Monitor students’ discussions carefully, intervening where necessary to help students correct misunderstandings, e.g. by checking a standard or etymological dictionary.
8. After the student-produced sentences have been evaluated, ask students to write additional sentences. This step extends students’ understanding of the meaning and relationships of the new vocabulary. Check new sentences against the text for accuracy.
9. Students can record all accurate sentences in their notebooks.

### Causes of rainfall

#### Key vocabulary

water cycle	clouds
evaporation	gravity
water vapour	raindrops
condensation	groundwater
atmosphere	precipitation

#### Students’ possible sentences

Water evaporates from oceans, lakes and rivers.

Water vapour condenses into clouds.

Gravity causes water droplets to fall to earth.

Precipitation can occur as snow, hail and rainfall.

Water seeps into the ground to become groundwater.

## Acknowledgment

This strategy, also called *Making sentences*, draws on ideas from: Moore, DW & Moore, SA 1981, quoted in EK Dishner & TW Bean, JE Readence (eds) *Reading in the content areas: Improving classroom instruction*, Kendall/Hunt, Toronto.



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