

TEACHING

SENTENCE FLUENCY

WHAT YOU'RE GOING FOR

- * An ear for language
- * A love of rhythm
- * Sentence sense

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

1. SHARE RHYTHMIC LANGUAGE

that's fun to read aloud. Poetry is an excellent choice, but be sure the rhymes are creative and the language natural. Some poems work so hard at rhyming that much of the natural flow is lost. Rehearse. Read it aloud before you share it with students, so it will feel natural. Remember that some prose pieces have wonderful rhythm, too. Hearing good language read aloud builds fluency even in young writers who are themselves not yet ready to begin writing sentences.



2. SHARE TWO VERSIONS

of writing with the same content but a very different sound. Write one with short, choppy sentences: *We went to the beach. It was sunny. It was warm. We had fun. We flew kites. We ate snacks.* VERSUS: *We spent a warm, sunny day at the beach eating snacks and flying kites.* Ask students which they prefer and why. You may need to share a number of examples before students begin to hear the differences. Don't give up. Keep sharing. Keep asking.

3. PLAY THE SENTENCE BUILDING GAME

You can do this on the board or just orally. Have students choose a topic: money, baseball, school, cats, etc. Then, you come up with sentence beginnings, and ask them to finish each sentence. Give them only one sentence beginning at a time. The only rule is you have to make a complete sentence. For instance, you might come up with the beginning "In the morning" When students add their ending, the sentence might turn into "In the morning OUR CAT IS HUNGRY." The purpose of the game is to help students become aware that sentences can begin in many ways. So use your imagination to come up with lots of variety. Use six or seven beginnings or more each time you play. Variation: Let them give YOU the beginnings, and you come up with the answers by completing the sentences.

