

Openers

Helping your child with sentence openers at home

One of the ways in which children are encouraged to add interest to their writing is by using a variety of sentence openers. This guide will give suggestions for how you can help at home.

An opener is the first word or phrase used in a sentence. There are lots of different ways of opening sentences. When children start on their writing journey, most sentences initially begin with 'I, they, he/she, then'. Some are as follows:

Ing	Simile	Preposition	Adverb	Connective	Ed	Dialogue
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Use an 'Ing clause'

'Ing clause' serve a variety of purposes:

When two things happen at the same time, you can use -ing for one of the verbs.

e.g. **Shouting**, a man ran out of the house. (= he ran out of the house and he was shouting)

We also use -ing when one action happens during another action. We use -ing for the longer action.

e.g. **Playing tennis**, Hannah hurt her arm. (= while she was playing) **Shaving**, David cut himself. (= while he was shaving)

When one action happens before another action, we use having (done) for the first action:

e.g. **Having found a hotel**, we looked for somewhere to have dinner. **Having finished her work**, she went home.

You can use an -ing clause to explain something or to say why somebody does something. The -ing clause usually comes first:

e.g. **Having already seen the film twice**, I didn't want to go to the cinema. (= because I had already seen it twice)

Feeling tired, I went to bed early. (= because I felt tired)

Not having a car, she finds it difficult to get around. (= because she doesn't have a car)

When the -ing clause is first (as in the examples), we write a comma (,) between the clauses.

e.g. **Feeling tired**, I went to bed early.

Feeling tired - ing clause

I went to bed early - main clause

Use a Simile

A simile adds description to writing, by comparing something, to something else. e.g. **Like a surgeon before an operation**, he washed his hands thoroughly. **As excited as a kitten**, Rachel bounded onto the stage. **As pale as a ghost**, John returned from the cellar.

When the simile comes first (as in the examples), we write a comma (,) before the main clause.

Use a Prepositional phrase

A prepositional phrase may help to indicate where something is, in relation to something else.

e.g. **At the end of the lane**, stood an old house.

On the horizon, the first glimmers of the new day began to appear. **Through the wardrobe**, there existed a magical world.

Use an Adverb

This will add detail to the verb in the main clause.

e.g. **Quietly**, she tiptoed to the door.

Angrily, she threw her bag on the floor and stormed upstairs to her room.

Use a Connective

This can be a connective adverb or a subordinating conjunction: **Connecting adverb**

e.g. I should give you a detention for forgetting your homework.

However, this is the first time you have forgotten and you are usually so reliable. **Therefore**, I'll give you another chance.

When we use connecting adverbs, the comma comes immediately after the connective.

Subordinating conjunction

e.g. **Although** I believe you didn't mean to upset your brother, he is currently upstairs crying!

Since it is raining outside, we'll stay in and watch a film.

When we use subordinating conjunctions at the start of our sentences, the comma comes after the subordinating clause.

Use an 'Ed clause'

An 'ed' clause modifies the noun (underlined in the examples) in the main clause. e.g. **Injured in the accident**, the boy was taken to hospital.

Painted in pink, the house was hard to miss!

When the -ed clause is first (as in the examples), we write a comma (,) between the clauses.

Use a Dialogue

Starting a sentence with dialogue (speech), especially if it is at the start of a story, can be a great way to jump straight in with the action.

e.g. “My mum is so going to kill me!” thought George as he surveyed what was left of his house.

How can you help?

- Look out for different types of openers when reading with your child. Why has the author chosen to start the sentence in that way? Can they think of an alternative opening that could work?
- Ask your child to use the openers you have found and to use them to start their own sentences.
- Play ‘table tennis’ openers. Orally ‘serve’ a sentence opener. Children must ‘return’ with the rest of the sentence. They can then ‘serve’ another opening for you to ‘return’.
- Opener challenge – choose a theme e.g ‘the beach’ (see below) and try to think of a sentence for each opener.

Running towards the sparkling sea, Megan couldn’t wait to jump in!

Like a bottle-nose dolphin, she swam up and down, in and out of the waves. Underneath the water, Megan could see a shoal of colourful fish.

Silently, she then tiptoed over to a rock pool to see if she could see a crab. Meanwhile, Megan’s parents fell asleep in the warmth of the sun.

Exhausted from all her activities, Megan lay down on her brightly coloured towel and drifted off to sleep as well!

“Wake up!” cried mum. “The tide is coming in. Grab your things – before we get wet!”