1 On Your Marks!

Objective

Using expanded noun phrases to convey complicated information concisely.

Composite skill(s): Expand a simple noun phrase with appropriate adjective(s), based on context.

Key definition

Noun phrases are groups of words that work together and contain a noun.

e.g. “The girl”

Expanded noun phrases give extra detail.

e.g. “The tall girl”

2 Get Ready

Prior knowledge

Children should have a solid understanding of:

- Nouns
- Adjectives
- Commas in a list

Recap previous grammar knowledge acquired and touch on areas of uncertainty highlighted in the previous knowledge test, particularly nouns, adjectives and commas in a list.

Explain that in this session, we’re going to secure knowledge on expanding noun phrases with carefully chosen adjectives.

Terminology

Nouns are the subject or object of a verb. In the sentence, “The girl sat on the wall”, “sat” is the verb, “girl” is the subject and “wall” is the object.
Phrases are groups of words that work together; in a phrase, there will be one word that all the other words modify. In a noun phrase, the other words will be modifying a noun. In the sentence above, “girl” is a noun; “the girl” is a simple noun phrase. This can then be expanded with an adjective: “the tall girl” is an expanded noun phrase, albeit a very straightforward one.

**Purpose and application**

Expanded noun phrases allow us to communicate precise information in a quick, concise way. The adding of adjectives before nouns is a basic skill in the building of description, and is the simplest way to expand a noun phrase, but it requires practice to do well. Redundant adjectives should be avoided: “The soggy, wet flannel”, where soggy and wet say the same thing; “The huge giant”, where the adjective is adding no value to the already descriptive noun. Adjectives should be chosen to convey precise meaning, and where they are not needed, simplicity may be best: “The big, black, powerful Rottweiler” may not tell the reader more than “The Rottweiler”; “The small, cuddly Rottweiler” conveys useful additional information.

### 3 Get Set

**Resources**

- Shared text (current text, or cross curricular)
- Mini-whiteboards and sentence strips
- Appropriate photographic images

**Activities**

1. Use a sequence of images of individual objects and or people (a dog, a cat, a child, a bicycle, a car, a house, etc) and in each case children suggest a noun phrase expanded by an adjective or two (“a small, aggressive dog”, “her fat, contented cat”).

Work quickly, making speed part of the game, but if you suspect the added information doesn’t accurately reflect the picture, allow peers to judge.

Develop this process by describing multiple details of one picture, trying to create a specific effect (e.g. with a picture of a dog: the alert ears; one glistening nose; his bright, intelligent eyes; a cheerful tail).

2. Find a page or scene from the current class novel in which mood
or atmosphere is strong. Have children identify noun phrases and the adjectives that have been added, and note the tone/impact of the description on the overall piece. Then have the children suggest different adjectives for each noun phrase (e.g. on mini whiteboards) that contribute to a radically different mood/ atmosphere.

Example: “The lonely boy stumbled into the dark room” could become, “The cheerful boy stumbled into the brightly-lit room”.

3. Using mini whiteboards or strips of card, build a sentence that contains both a subject noun and an object noun, e.g. “The woman ran towards her car.”

a. Ask children to identify the simple noun phrases (the woman/her car).

b. Ask for expansion of those noun phrases with adjectives, inserted on further mini whiteboards/strips. In each case, ensure children picture the scene created by the noun phrase expansion and assess the usefulness of the adjectives used.

Example: “The smart, young woman ran towards her sporty red car.” “The ill, exhausted woman ran towards her battered, dusty car.”

This process can be extended to stretch children’s vocabulary: where possible, challenge children to improve the nouns and so make some adjectives unnecessary (“her sporty red car” could become “her Ferrari”); useful adjectives might then be added (“her rusting, dented Ferrari”). Again, the scene should be pictured and considered.

**Practice with the Bug**

Ask children to log onto the Grammar and Spelling Bug games and find the game sequence ‘Noun phrases 2’. This contains the below games:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Game</th>
<th>Skill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aztec Maze: Expanded Noun Phrases 1</td>
<td>Expand a simple noun phrase with appropriate adjective(s), based on context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aztec Maze: Expanded Noun Phrases 2</td>
<td>Identify noun phrases where the expansion or detail comes after the noun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tudor Stocks: Expanded Noun Phrases 3</td>
<td>Expand noun phrases with detail after the noun, based on context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tudor Feast: Expanded Noun Phrases 4</td>
<td>Compose noun phrases with detail after the noun, in context of a passage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Go!

**Noticing noun phrases**

In individual reading, shared reading, and reading across the curriculum, children should notice where simple noun phrases have been expanded with adjectives, and where they haven’t. If noun phrases are used without an expansion, children should consider the effect: does it convey enough information? Would it be genuinely improved by the addition of an adjective?

**Shared writing**

In shared writing, model redundant adjectives that do not add useful information ("the sleek, red, sporty Ferrari") and have children contribute effective adjectives or choose to keep the noun phrase simple.

**Independent writing**

The following writing genres lend themselves to the use of noun phrases:

- Narrative writing
- Personal recount
- Biographical writing
- Historical reports

In both narrative writing and personal recount, the careful expansion of noun phrases can give a scene a distinct mood or atmosphere. Make sure that the details provided by the different expanded noun phrases work together to contribute to a specific feeling, whether positive or negative, happy or sad.

Apply this same technique in biographical writing and historical reports as well as journalistic recounts, but be careful not to overdo the descriptive effect in what should be largely factual accounts.