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## Lesson 26: Sentence Slotting

In this activity, students practice selecting interesting verbs to enhance a piece of writing.

### Objectives:

Students will:

- Brainstorm different verb choices to complete sentences
- Select verbs that enhance meaning to complete sentences
- Revise their own writing by substituting vivid verbs

### Materials required:



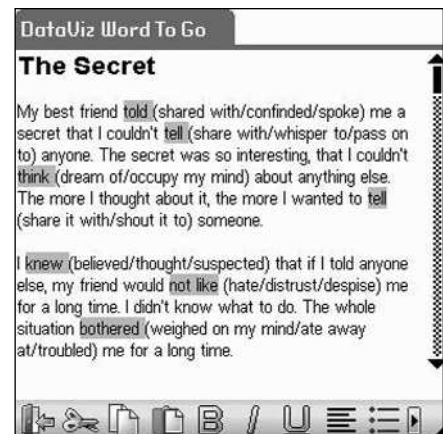
- Handhelds with the following software loaded:
  - Word processing software (see page 143 for options)
  - The family cemetery handout from the Handheld Writing Toolkit
- Sample student writing to be revised
- Keyboards (optional)
- LCD projector and handheld presentation peripheral (optional)

**Time required:** two class periods

### Activity directions:



1. Remind students of the power of vivid verbs. (See pages 93-94.)
2. Beam students the family cemetery handout from the Handheld Writing Toolkit.
3. Project the piece of writing for the whole class to view, and explain that the verbs in these sentences have been removed in order to demonstrate the way in which word choice can make writing more interesting.
4. Model sentence slotting for the class with the first sentence. Read the first paragraph aloud to the class, saying “blank” where each verb will be. This provides students with the necessary context for selecting appropriate verbs. For example, the first blank could be filled with “sat,” “rested,” or “hid.” Write all three of these choices in the blank, with a slash (/) separating each one from the next. Discuss with students how each of these verbs conveys a slightly different meaning.
5. Do a couple more sentences together, brainstorming with the class verbs for each slot. Encourage students to try to think of two or three options for filling in each of the blanks appropriately.
6. When students are comfortable with the process, have them complete the rest of the paragraph individually. Make sure all of the blanks in the paragraph are filled in with at least two choices.
7. After students are done, discuss the options they came up with, and have them select the verb that best fits the meaning of the sentence and is most interesting to readers.
8. Read aloud the final paragraph to ensure that it flows and makes sense.
9. Instruct students to select a piece of their own writing that needs to be revised.
10. Have them highlight each of the verbs in their piece of writing. Depending on what word processing software you are using, this can be done by formatting the word with a color (e.g., in Documents to Go or Pocket Word) or by making the text bold or marking words with asterisks (e.g., in Memos or Notes).
11. Pair up students, and have them beam their writing to a partner.



*Sentence slotting is a good technique for improving writing, but remind students that sometimes their original word choice may be the best.*

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12. Instruct partners to write alternatives for each of the highlighted verbs. Have them leave the original verb in place, and follow it by alternatives with slashes (/) separating them.
  13. Have the partners beam the writing and suggestions for verb replacements back to the original writers.
  14. Tell students to revise their writing by selecting one of the suggested verbs. Writers may decide that their original verb choice is the best choice.

### **Extension ideas:**

Students can select paragraphs from a novel they are reading and complete the sentence slotting exercise as they second-guess the author. The sentence slotting strategy also works well with adjectives, adverbs, or even nouns.

### **Assessment:**

You may choose to assess either student verb ideas or student verb revision choices, or both separately. If you choose to assess verb ideas, make sure students who add the verbs put their names on the paper before turning it in or beaming it to you. Share this rubric with students when the assignment is made.

- 3 – Successfully brainstormed at least two alternative and appropriate verbs for each highlighted basic verb
- 2 – Successfully brainstormed at least two verbs for each highlighted basic verb, but the new verb choices did not add to the writing
- 1 – Did not brainstorm at least two verb alternatives

If you choose to assess student revision of the piece, students may beam or turn in their own papers rewritten with replacement verbs. You can then use the following rubric:

- 3 – Most or all of the verbs in this piece are interesting and lively choices that add to the action and the meaning of the piece.
- 2 – At least half of the verbs in this piece are interesting and lively choices that add to the action and the meaning of the piece.
- 1 – Most of the verbs in this piece are dull verbs with few or no descriptive qualities.