

## Combined list of best practices for teaching conventions

Categories	Details
Where and when to teach?  In context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Grammar taught in isolation from writing does not produce significant improvements in writing.</li><li>• Important aspects of grammar need to be taught, not just assumed.</li><li>• Grammatical construction and skills that are important for writing should be taught in conjunction with writing and reinforced over several grade levels, allowing for more and more students to achieve at least a reasonable level of competence in their use.</li><li>• Grammar instruction should be included during various phases of writing.</li><li>• Teachers need to ensure transfer by providing opportunities for students to use what they learn in real academic contexts.</li><li>• Teach and reinforce editing skills when students are in the editing phase of the writing process.</li></ul>
What to teach?  Be discerning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Address only one aspect of grammar at a time.</li><li>• Applying it to daily writing encourages students to keep inventing and generating text while cueing them into specific concepts and strategies.</li><li>• Not all the constructions that students use in their writing need to be taught. (idea of top 20 and GLEs)</li></ul>

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Teach a few things repeatedly and well rather than a lot of grammatical terms that have little or no practical relevance to writing.</li><li>• Use assessments to determine what your students need to learn in conventions, frequently assess to determine next steps</li><li>• Whenever possible, students who have already mastered a construction or skill should be taught something they have not yet mastered rather than what other classmates need to learn.</li><li>• In many schools and classrooms, grammatical construction and skill can be first taught at earlier grade levels than specified in the average scope and sequence chart.</li><li>• However, remember to make sure all students have had the opportunity to learn the grade level GLEs</li><li>• To paint images (showing sentences) requires an understanding of image grammar- a rhetoric of writing techniques that provides writers with artistic grammatical options.</li><li>• In order for students to be able to play with or manipulate sentence parts, they have to be able to understand what makes up a sentence. They need to have the notion of subject and verb. Students need to understand patterns of punctuation and the patterns of sentences.</li></ul> |
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See page 7 in Mechanically Inclined for 20 Most Common Errors in Order of Frequency.</li> </ul>
<p>How to Teach?</p> <p>1) Mini-lessons</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be short so as not to lose or bore students</li> <li>• Make lessons that fit easily into an already busy curriculum (mini lesson).</li> <li>• Add in quick doses of grammar and mechanics experiences with short mentor texts and editing so that students have ongoing, shared experience with playing with and understanding grammar and mechanics.</li> </ul>
<p>2) Modeling and Using Mentor Text</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show models and have students imitate the models.</li> <li>• Use short mentor texts/models as much as possible so that kids can cling to the craft and meaning without being overwhelmed by words and punctuation.</li> <li>• Teachers need to share their own drafts and revision/editing strategies as well as final pieces.</li> <li>• Teachers should demonstrate how to use the mechanics pattern (including the decision-making process) in a piece of their own writing.</li> <li>• Teachers should use student examples of correct and incorrect conventions</li> <li>• Model correcting errors in focused edits.</li> </ul>
<p>3) Practice makes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Instruction should be designed so that each new lesson or unit builds on the ones that came</li> </ul>

perfect and be sure to scaffold	<p>before (a learning progression, developmental readiness).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scaffold learning with examples and visual inserts</li> <li>• It is not realistic to expect students to master something that is taught just once.</li> <li>• Many repetitions may be necessary in different meaningful context and over several months or years.</li> <li>• Give students ample practice in editing a particular type of error</li> <li>• Provide ongoing practice and accountability of rules learned.</li> <li>• When teaching the use of new kinds of grammatical constructions in writing, many students may at first make new kinds of errors. Their risk taking needs to be honored and celebrated for them to continue to progress.</li> </ul>
4) Visual displays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sophisticated grammar is fostered in literacy-rich and language- rich environments.</li> <li>• Saturate walls with visuals that provide reinforcement of the concepts introduced and used by writers.</li> </ul>
5) Have students track what they learn.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have students keep track of and record (Writer's Notebook) rules, mentor sentences and application/examples of the rules, their application of the rule in a sentence(s). (Writer's Toolbox)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure Writer's Notebooks include examples, visual inserts. Also, collect, categorize and imitate mentor text.</li> </ul>
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Books used to make this list- *Mechanically Inclined* by Jeff Anderson, *Image Grammar* by Harry R. Noden, and *The Grammar Plan Book* by Constance Weaver

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### Questions for teacher self reflection

Pages 10 & 11- *Mechanically Inclined*

#### **When planning:**

How is this grammar and mechanics issue also a craft issue?  
 How can I use it to generate some authentic text?  
 How can I look at it in the context of literature?  
 How can I quickly turn kids back to their writing, so they can be on their way to becoming independent revisers, crafters, and editors?

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#### **When teaching and assessing:**

What have I done to teach this grammar or mechanics pattern?  
 Have I immersed students in correct models? Visually and orally?  
 Did I post an example (through a wall chart or writer's notebook insert?)

Have I demonstrated how to use the mechanics pattern in my own writing?

Have I modeled correcting this type of error in focused edits?

Have I given students ample practice in editing this particular type of error?

Is the item on the class's editor's checklist?

Have I directed the students to edit their own writing for this type of error on multiple occasions?

Is this mechanical error important enough to warrant doing all of the aforementioned work to teach it?

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*Page 72- The Grammar Plan Book*

What aspects of grammar do your students already command in their writing? Even if a grammatical construction or skill is listed in your state or local standards for your grade level, do you really need to teach that construction or skill for writing, or do students' writings already demonstrate its use?

What aspects of grammar for enriching writing- such as modifiers and the use of parallelism- will your students most benefit from?

What editing skills do your students most need to learn as writers- and in what areas do these need dovetail with the standards and/or with skills assessed on a standardized test, if your students are required to take one?

What editing skills are so minor, and what kinds of errors occur so infrequently, that you can justifiably omit them for what you teach during the writing process?

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