

**8 Grammar Rainbow – Explaining ‘C’**

To be a really good teacher of complex sentences, we can show children there are five main ways to make complex sentences. So let's have a closer look at those five main ways.

Way one of making a complex sentence. This strategy relies on front-loading a verb at the beginning of a sentence, and to help children collect those verbs, we can point their thinking towards words that end in –ed. I'm talking here about words like trapped, mortified, terrified, petrified.

So, if we take the word trapped and start a sentence with that word, it could run something like this:

“Trapped in the rain, Jane struggled with her umbrella”.

Here we clearly have two verbs. We have ‘trapped’ at the beginning, that's verb one. That verb is in the subordinating clause; it cannot stand on its own. ‘Trapped in the rain’, it would fall over. The other verb in that sentence is ‘struggled’, that's the other verb, but that chunk, “Jane struggled with her umbrella”, stands as a main clause, because it can live on its own. That is a complex sentence with two verb components, and that strategy is the front-loaded verb strategy ending in ‘ed’.

Way 2 of building a complex sentence is to start with an adverb. Now, we know adverbs are green, they have flexibility, they're on the move. They're wonderful words like quickly, slowly, cautiously. They can even refer to things like how often, and frequency. Let's take the word ‘unfortunately’ and front-load with that.

“Unfortunately, trapped in the rain, Jane struggled with her umbrella”

We can take ‘unfortunately’ and ‘trapped’ and move those two words around: ‘Unfortunately trapped’, ‘Trapped unfortunately’, because we know it's an adverb with high mobility.

Way 3 of making a complex sentence is starting with those action-packed verbs like running, racing, sprinting, and front-loading them at the beginning of sentences. So, for example, we might have: “Skipping in the rain, Jane struggled with her umbrella”, and providing children with a bank of –ing ending verbs can really support them getting into interesting, complex sentences.

Way 4 of building a complex sentence, now this is very different from ways 1-3, which rely on front-loading a verb or an adverb. This strategy relies on building a very good simple sentence, for example, ‘Jane struggled with her umbrella’ and taking a simple sentence and breaking it and embedding some more information within in.

So, for example, if we break the sentence just after the subject here, ‘Jane’, and then we put a comma in place, and then add some extra information for example, ‘Jane, who was caught by surprise, struggled with her umbrella’. This enables us to write a complex sentence that has an embedded clause within it, and enables us to add extra detail.

Way 5 of making a complex sentence. Now, this relies on having a repertoire of conjunctions, words like although, despite, nevertheless, while, so. If we take a conjunction and push it at the front of a sentence, or in the middle of a sentence, we will force a main clause and a subordinating clause.

So let's look at this sentence here, where we start with a conjunction.

“Although she had an umbrella, Jane struggled to open it”

‘Jane struggled to open it’ is the main clause. ‘Although she had an umbrella’, that's the subordinating clause. Conjunctions are a great way to help children be really good writers of complex sentences, so we should give children a full repertoire of these to really push their writing on.