

USING GAMES TO TEACH GRAMMAR

GAME INSTRUCTIONS

Mix and Match

What You Need:

- Whiteboard

What You Do:

Taking the eight words (first line below), brainstorm as many options as you can for each word. Like this:

Article adjective common noun verb adverb preposition pronoun noun

A	little	girl	played	happily	in	her	garden.
The	big	boy	jumped	noisily	around	his	bedroom.
The	silly	dog	barked	incessantly	outside	its	kennel.
A	black	bird	perched	easily	atop	our	tree.
etc							

This will automatically generate multiple use of the grammatical terms involved. It is a simple 'introductory' exercise.

Mix and Match Advanced

Subject	Verb and verb modifier	Object (predicate)
Maisy	danced	in her room.
A little girl called Maisy	sang loudly	in the treehouse.
Maisy, a nice little girl I know	glumly did	her homework.

The goal here is to show children that grammar refers not only to single words (girl) but to blocks of meaning (A little girl called Maisy). Without making it too complex, the idea is to let them see that these elements can be manipulated in a creative and satisfying way. This can be done as a whole class exercise (ideal to begin with) or in groups or individually.

PARTS OF SPEECH

Go Fishing (EASY)

What You Need:

- Card or heavy paper
- Coloured pencils
- 50 index cards
- 2 pencils

What You Do:

Prepare the cards:

1. Children use a pencil and paper. Have them draw a line down the centre, and across the centre so the paper is divided into four rectangular sections.
2. At the top of one section write "Nouns". On another write "Verbs," and another "Adjectives," and finally "Adverbs."
3. Go over each grammatical term with the class. Remind them that a noun is a person, place or thing (dog, bone, sun) and an adjective is a describing word (wet, sunny, silly), a verb is an action word (run, skip, walk), and an adverb is a word that describes a verb or adjective (quickly, slowly).
4. Write down 6 words under each section. When you've finished, there should be a total of 24 words on the paper.
5. Take the index cards and write one word on **two cards**. Write the word in the upper-left corner and lower-right corner of both cards, leaving the middle blank.
6. Use the coloured pencils to draw a picture that represents each word in the middle of the card. (For example, if the word is "run" draw a picture of a person running.)
7. Continue until you've gone through every word of each section. You will end up with 2 duplicate decks of cards (48 cards altogether). This way, you can find a match for each card.



Play the game:

1. Shuffle the cards, and then deal 7 cards to each player. Place the remaining cards in a pile between both players.
2. Any pairs of matching cards should be set aside. Players should sort their remaining cards by the four grammar sections (verb, adverb, adjective, noun).

3. To start the game, the player picks out an unmatched card of her hand. She then states whether the card is an adverb, noun, adjective, or verb so the other player can find the card quickly.
4. Player One should then ask Player Two if she has the matching word card.
5. If she has the match, Player Two hands the card over to Player One who sets the match aside and takes another turn. If Player Two doesn't have the card, she says, "Go fish!" and Player One takes a new card from the deck. Then it's Player Two's turn.
6. Continue the game until all the cards have been matched. Then each player counts the number of pairs she has. Whichever player ends up with the most pairs is the winner!

Speech Bag (EASY)

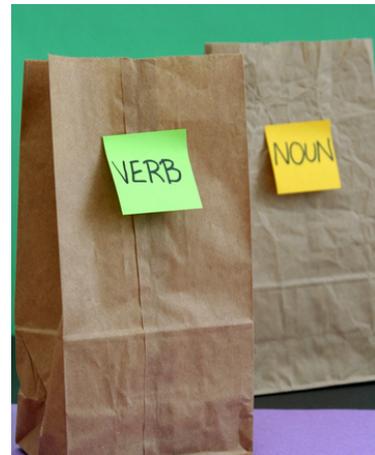
What You Need:

- 8 paper lunch bags
- Index or library cards
- Pen or pencil

What You Do:

This game can be done in groups (3-6 in each), or as a whole class.

1. Go over the eight most common parts of speech:
 - Noun: a naming word.
 - Verb: describes an action (doing something) or a state (being something).
 - Adjective: describes a noun.
 - Adverb: describes a verb.
 - Pronoun: used instead of a noun, to avoid repeating the noun. Examples: I, you, he, she, it, we, they
 - Preposition: usually comes before a noun, pronoun or noun phrase. Examples: on, in, by, with, under, through, at
 - Conjunction: joins two words, phrases or sentences together. Examples: but, so, and, because, or
 - Article: the words that introduce a noun: The, A, An
2. Prepare for the game by labelling each of the eight brown bags, each for a different part of speech. Then, on index (library) cards, have children write down 10–20 words, any words will do, for each category (with the exception of the three article words). Write only one word on each index card.
3. Place the appropriate card in each bag that fits its part of speech.
4. The game: Pick out one word from each bag and use those words to build a sentence. They should be laid out in a row. This is done in rotation.



5. Play until all cards are used up.
6. After you've built a few sentences, reverse the game! Dump all the words onto the table, scramble them up, and correctly place each word back into its corresponding bag.

Grammar Scrabble (EASY)

What You Need:

- Index cards
- Pen or pencil

What You Do:

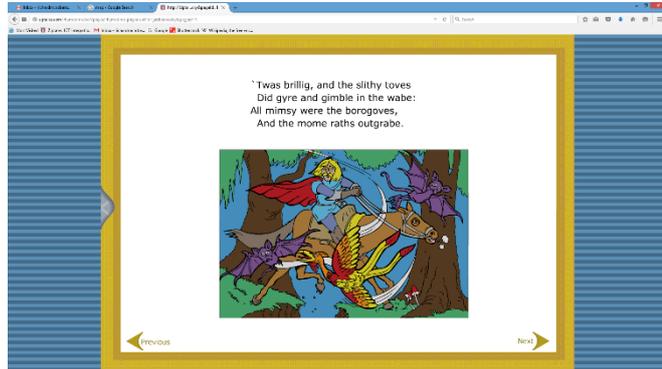
This is a game for six groups (two children in each) in pairs (ie a group has two sets eg Jane and Tricia, Luke and Mark).

1. Students generate six sentences of up to 10 words (eg I came home today with my friend Sally.) Depending on the level of the class, these could be simple or complex sentences. So Jane and Tricia create their sentences. Luke and Mark create theirs.
2. Each word is written onto a separate card (making sure none is missing).
3. Then the pairs swap the cards with the other pair in their group. So Jane and Tricia end up with Luke and Mark's words, and vice versa.
4. With the others watching, the pair (eg Jane and Tricia) make up sentences out of them. This can be timed.
5. The other pair then do the same (timed).
6. The winner is the pair which creates four sensible sentences first.

The Jabberwocky Game (CHALLENGING)

What You Need:

- Handout of neologisms in *Jabberwocky*: they are: beamish; borogoves; Brandersnatch; brillig; burbled; Callay; Callooh; chortled; frabjous; frumious; galumping; gimble; gyre; Jabberwock; Jubjub; manxome; mimsy; mome; outgrabe; raths; slithy; snicker-snack; toves; tulgey; Tumtum; uffish; vorpal; wabe; whiffling
- Copy of *Jabberwocky* (full text)
- Index cards
- Pen or pencil



Ziptales *Rhyme Time*

What You Do:

This is a game based on Lewis Carroll's famous poem *Jabberwocky*. It involves isolating the 28 new words he created for the poem, analysing them one by one (to parse them), and then creating other variants for each.

1. As a whole class, read *Jabberwocky*. It is available (with a professional voiceover) on Ziptales in the *Rhyme Time* section.
2. Analyse the 28 new words, created by the author, and decide what part of speech each is (eg chortled is obviously a verb), and ask why we can make this assumption (ie what 'verb-like' properties does it show?). These words should be written on the board with their correct grammatical name. Why did the author feel confident that people would understand these completely new words?
3. Now, in groups, brainstorm other words that would fit into the poem, which are also "new" words, but in the spirit of the words Lewis Carroll created (eg galumphing could become gasnoodling or grindadiddling).
4. As a class, share the "new" words.

Scrambled Sentences (CHALLENGING)

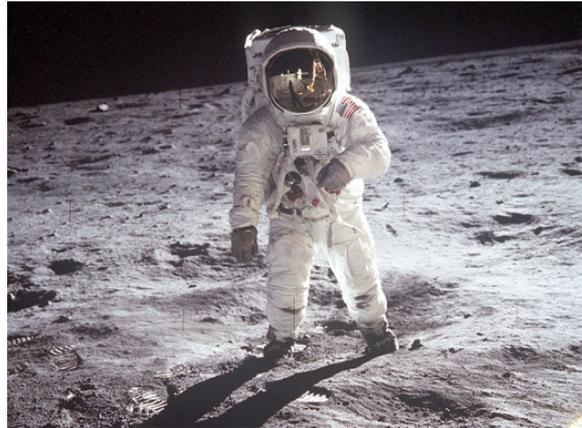
What You Need:

- Index cards
- Pen or pencil

What You Do:

This is a game for groups - say 4-6.

1. Children create sentences of up to 14 words, eg *That is one small step for a man, one giant leap for mankind.*
2. These sentences are then broken down into the individual words.
3. These words are written onto cards.
4. The cards are shuffled and handed to another group.
5. The other group must reconstruct the mystery sentences. They must label each word with its correct grammatical name.
6. This exercise is timed. The winning group the one which finishes first.



Cartoons for Classifying (CHALLENGING)

What You Need:

- 5-6 gag cartoons which can be borrowed from books or found on the internet eg <https://www.google.com.au/search?q=gag+cartoons&biw=1920&bih=984&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&sqi=2&ved=0CEMQsARqFQoTCM3xhbi138gCFYUopgo dnBMOTQ>
- Paper
- Pen or pencil

What You Do:

This game uses cartoons as the source material, and analyses the parts of speech in the cartoon.

1. Teacher hands out suitable (child friendly) cartoons, or shows them on the overhead.



“Understand me not, does my wife.”

2. One by one, they are broken down grammatically. What is the name for each word?
3. In groups or individually, students brainstorm other words of the same kind.
4. These are then shared with the class.
5. An optional extra is for children to create their own gags, with words.
6. These are shared too.

NOUNS

Who am I?/20 Questions (EASY)

What You Need:

- Index cards
- Pen or pencil



Who Am I?

What You Do:

This game can be done as a whole class (or in groups).

1. Create a list of common nouns (eg tiger, harp) - perhaps up to 5 for each student.
2. Write these on cards.
3. Pool the cards.
4. A volunteer comes out the front, picks up a card and says "Who am I?"
5. The class must guess the mystery word (eg tiger). Someone might call out "Are you an animal?" "Yes". "Are you a mammal?" "Yes" etc.
6. The limit of questions is 20. If the word is still a mystery, the volunteer can read it out. This game goes on with different volunteers.



Name the Noun (EASY)

What You Need:

- Whiteboard

What You Do:

This game can be done as a whole class. It could also be done out in the playground, with purely verbal feedback.



1. Revise the difference between common and proper nouns (Teacher).
2. Two columns, "Proper" and "Common" are written on the board.
3. Each student has one minute to find a noun visible in the classroom.
4. The teacher chooses a child and says "Name the noun".
5. The child says "map".
6. "What sort of noun?"
7. "Common noun". This word is written on the board under the correct column.
8. And so on.

Abstract Pictionary (EASY)

What You Need:

- Paper
- Pen or pencil

What You Do:

This game adds a visual element to the grammar unit.



1. The teacher revises the concept of "abstract" nouns, and makes it clear how they differ from common and proper nouns.
2. Each child draws one or more representations of an abstract noun (eg fear, surprise, beauty, pain). On the back of the sheet the child writes the noun word (eg "fear").
3. These are collected by the teacher.
4. The teacher selects sheets at random and holds the pictures up for the class to see.
5. The students must guess the word from the picture.
6. As they guess them correctly, the word is written up on the board.

Invisible Nouns (MEDIUM)

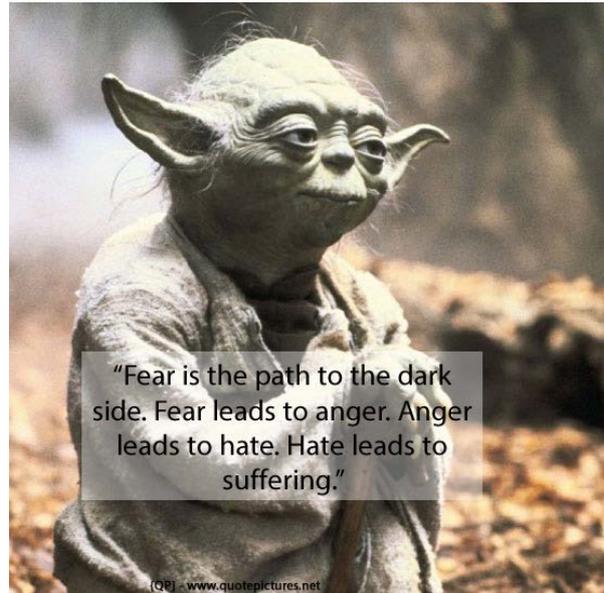
What You Need:

- Whiteboard
- Paper
- Pen or pencil

What You Do:

This game focusses on abstract nouns. It is a whole class exercise.

1. Revise the difference between common and abstract nouns.
2. Find an example of abstract nouns, such as this poster.
3. Talk about how we define “emotions” and other “invisible” qualities.
4. In groups, children must come up with 3-4 abstract nouns (eg stupidity) per group.
5. They define their words as carefully as they can.
6. The teacher selects a group.
7. The spokesperson must read out the definition of the word (eg “the quality of being foolish or silly”).
8. The rest of the class must guess the word from the definition. This can be reversed, so that the word is given and the class must define the word.



Collective Catch Up (CHALLENGING)

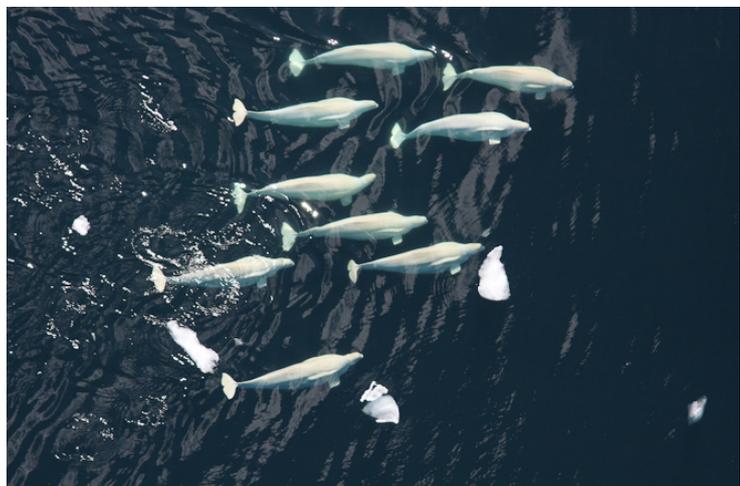
What You Need:

- Paper
- Pen or pencil

What You Do:

This game requires research. Students must find out all the collective nouns eg slaughter of crows, pod of whales, etc.

1. The teacher revises the idea of collective nouns, and distinguishes them from common and proper nouns.



2. As homework, students investigate their favourite things and find at least six collective nouns (eg pride, team, colony, etc). They should try and find some obscure words, as well as the well known ones. They write these down.
3. As a round robin in class, the teacher asks students for their contributions. The student reads out the collective noun. "What is that the name for **a group of?**"
4. The rest of the class must guess at the class of noun involved while the originators sit back and watch (and perhaps give hints).

PRONOUNS

Spot the Pronoun (CHALLENGING)

What You Need:

- Handout text (<100 words)
- Pen or pencil or highlighter

What You Do:

The teacher provides a text, perhaps a short story or even a joke - with a known number of pronouns. The first person to highlight all of them wins. A variation on this is to have one person read the text, and children call out "pronoun" when they hear one.

What Matches? (CHALLENGING)

What You Need:

- Index cards
- Pen or pencil

What You Do:

This game focusses on the different types of pronouns. It can be done in groups (3-6 in each).

1. Go over the most common pronouns. This will require quite a lot of revision. I suggest accessing the special **Pronouns** lesson inside the Ziptales Skill Builders sub-library. There are also lessons in SEL. I suggest the ones on the chart below:

		Subject pronouns						Object pronouns	Possessive pronouns
Singular	First person	I	ate	it	First person	She	sees	me	my
	Second person	you	ate	it	Second person	She	sees	you	your
	Third person	he, she, it	ate	it	Third person	She	sees	him, her, it	his, her, its
Plural	First person	we	ate	it	First person	She	sees	us	our
	Second person	you	ate	it	Second person	She	sees	you	your
	Third person	they	ate	it	Third person	She	sees	them	their

2. First the group writes out all the main pronouns on cards (24 in total - some 'repeats' - same word but different function). Talk about what each pronoun is for.
3. Now they add in some verb cards (eg see, interview, please).
4. They add in a small number of proper nouns (eg Sam, Sydney) and common nouns (eg school, lunch).
5. Now the game itself. The pronoun cards are shuffled, so that they do not resemble the chart - ie they are random.
6. One player has 30 seconds to put a simple sentence together (eg Sam interviews him; I see Sydney).
7. Depending on how this works out, the time can be reduced, or lengthened.
8. The number of cards can be added to at will. After a few rounds, there should be a sharing with the class about what has been learnt. Trouble shooting can be done too.

Fill the Gaps (CHALLENGING)

What You Need:

- Paper
- Pen or pencil

What You Do:

This game is a pairs activity.

1. Students take a piece of writing they have done recently (eg My trip to the zoo) - ideally less than 100 words.
2. They rewrite the piece and **remove** all pronouns.

3. The other person then has to write in the missing pronouns.
4. This is then reversed with the other player. Feedback follows.

VERBS

Manic Mime (EASY)

What You Need:

- No special requirements

What You Do:

This game can be done in groups (3-6 in each), or as a whole class.

1. In groups, children decide on an action (eg bounce, cry, climb).
2. They practise miming the verb.
3. Under the teacher's guidance, they come out one by one and perform the verb for the whole class.
4. The rest of the class (not the originating group) must guess the verb.
5. When it is guessed, it is written on the board.
6. To add interest, this game can be timed (eg "You have 60 seconds to guess the verb!")
7. A variation to extend children would be encouraging the use of more challenging verbs (e.g. procrastinate, ruminate) so the children have to use a dictionary to find what the verb means to help them identify what is being mimed, which just adds an extra couple of skills to the activity.

It's Time (EASY)

What You Need:

- Index cards
- Pen or pencil

What You Do:

This game is focussed on tense. It is a whole class exercise.

1. The teacher revises tense first, with examples on the board - in three columns (past, present, future).
2. Students write down three verbs on the cards, each in a different tense.
3. These are pooled. They are then dealt out to the class.
4. Teacher: "Jodie, what do you have?"
5. "ran"
6. "What tense?"
7. "past tense"
8. As the word is read out and identified, it can be written up on the board in the appropriate column.



Tell a Story (CHALLENGING)

What You Need:

- Whiteboard

What You Do:

This is a theatre sport activity with three teams (A, B, C). The idea is for the three teams to make it as hard for one another as possible. The more laughs the better!

1. First player (A team) makes up a sentence with a missing verb word eg "Johnny was walking through the forest when he _____ ..."
2. Second player (B team) supplies the word. S/He can add more words of course (eg "Johnny was walking through the forest when he fell down a hole.").
3. Third player (C team) must now carry on the story.



4. The game continues until one of the teams cannot go on. In this case, the other two teams continue until they cannot go on. The remaining team is the winner!

ADJECTIVES

Add an Adjective (EASY)

What You Need:

- Whiteboard
- Paper

What You Do:

This game is focussed on adjectives. It involves four teams.

1. Go over the concept of what an adjective does, with examples.
2. Students generate 3-4 sentences with missing adjectives (eg The little girl was very _____.)
3. The teacher has each group (in rotation) read out their sample sentences.
4. The rest of the class must supply the missing word. If the guessing is troublesome, hints can be offered. To add fun, they can even be mimed!
5. This is repeated with the other groups.
6. This can be made a timed competition (60 seconds to guess the word or forfeit).

Synonym Scramble (EASY)

What You Need:

- Index cards
- Pen or pencil

What You Do:

This game can be done in six groups, or as a whole class.

1. Go over the concept of adjectives.
2. The class must come up with 6-12 examples (eg “sad”, “pretty”).
3. The groups must then brainstorm **variations** on these master adjectives (eg for sad: unhappy, miserable, etc).
4. These words must be put on the cards.
5. All the cards are put on the floor.

6. They are lifted up (by two players) one by one.
7. When there is a match, the winner calls out "Synonym!".
8. A variation on this is to have the cards dealt out to the class. The teacher picks up a card and calls out "Who has a synonym?"

Antonym Attack (CHALLENGING)

What You Need:

- Index cards
- Pen or pencil

What You Do:

This game can be done in pairs.

1. One student generates a number of adjectives (eg foolish, angry).
2. The other student must find antonyms (eg clever, contented).
3. This can be allowed to run for 10 minutes.
4. The pairs then share their best examples with the class.

ADVERBS

Charades (EASY)

What You Need:

- Paper
- Pen or pencil

What You Do:

This game can be done as a whole class.

1. Revise the concept of adverbs, with examples.
2. Children then come up with their own examples (eg nervously).
3. One child is chosen, and must play charades with the class as the audience. (*You might need to revise the rules of charades before starting.*)
4. A variation on this would be a short sentence with an adverb (eg A boy ran quickly.) to show the adverb in context.

Adverb Shuffle (MEDIUM)

What You Need:

- Index cards
- Pen or pencil

What You Do:

This game can be done in groups (3-6 in each), or as a whole class.

1. Go over the concept of adverbs, with examples.
2. Groups generate 3-4 adverbs each (eg swiftly).
3. Teacher selects a group and they read out their adverb.
4. The rest of the class must come up with synonyms (eg quickly, speedily, fast).
5. A variation on this is to make it a “sudden death” competition. A player is picked out. A card is read out and the player has 10 seconds to provide a synonym.
6. This can be run until only one player is left.

Picture This (MEDIUM)

What You Need:

- Index cards
- Pen or pencil

What You Do:

This game can be done in four groups, or as a whole class.

1. Start with revision of adverbs. You might like to add in comparatives.
2. The groups create a list of adverbs (eg sulkily). These are written on cards.
3. The cards are pooled.
4. A volunteer picks a card at random and then draws a picture on the board to illustrate that word.
5. The class must guess the word from the picture.
6. A variation on this is to choose a student at random and have them illustrate the group’s adverb. This will generate a lot of laughter, but is useful learning.



...

Trouble shooting common problems

I and me

1 Julie and I went to see the principal. (CORRECT)

2 The principal saw Julie and I. (INCORRECT)

Why?

In sentence 2, the pronoun I is a subject pronoun. It should be an object pronoun (me) because "Julie and me" is the object of the verb.

Misplaced (or "dangling") modifiers

At eight years old, my father gave me a pony for Christmas. (AMBIGUOUS)

Why? It appears that the father was eight years old. It should be "My father gave me a pony for Christmas when I was eight years old."

After rotting in the cellar for months, my brother brought up some oranges. (AMBIGUOUS)

Why? It appears that the brother was rotting. It should be "After rotting in the cellar for months, some oranges were brought up by my brother." or "My brother brought up some oranges that had been rotting in the cellar."

The old classics - where quasi-homophones pose a trap

1 affect (verb) and effect (noun)

I don't think lack of sleep will **affect** me. (*verb - with an 'a'*)

The **effect** of lack of sleep is lowered performance. (*noun - with an 'e'*)

2 its (possessive adjective) and it's (pronoun and verb)

The kitten is following **its** mother. (*possessive - with no apostrophe!*)

It's clear that we need to work harder (*noun and verb - with apostrophe - It is*)

3 lie (intransitive verb) versus lay (transitive verb)

I want to **lie** down. (*the verb has no object*)

I **lay** my book on the table. (*the verb has an object - table*)

4 lose (verb) and loose (adjective)

I **lose** my keys every few days. (*verb - with a single 'o'*)

The wheel of that toy has become **loose**. (*adjective - with two 'oo's'*)

5 practise (verb) and practice (noun)

I like to **practise** the piano every day. (*verb - with an 's' - hint: is is a verb*)

My brother also does lots of **practice**. (*noun - with a 'c' - hint: ice is a noun*)

6 there (adverb), their (possessive adjective) and they're (pronoun and verb)

There are six people in the Harris family. (*adverb - with 'ere'*)

The Harris family love **their** dog Tim. (*possessive - with 'eir'*)

They're a lovely family, the Harris family. (*pronoun and verb - They are*)

7 who (**subject** relative pronoun) and whom (**object** relative pronoun)

Who do you think was the culprit? (*subject pronoun - with a simple 'o'*)

The lady to **whom** I gave it was Mrs Jennings. (*object pronoun - with 'om'*)

8 your (possessive adjective) and you're (pronoun and verb)

Is that **your** lunch? (*possessive - one word: 'your'*)

You're very silly, forgetting your lunch. (*pronoun and verb - two words: You are*)

ZIPTALES RESOURCES FOR GRAMMAR

- **Skill Builders** - a part of the Extending Literacy Library (3-6).

There are special lessons here for each of the following:

- Nouns
- Pronouns
- Verbs
- Adverbs
- Adjectives
- Prepositions and
- Sentences

All come with full worksheets.

- **Specialised English Lessons (SEL)** - a part of the two main libraries.

The following units are devoted to the key parts of speech:

- *What are nouns for? What are verbs for? What are relating verbs? What are adverbs for? What are personal pronouns? What is a Simple Sentence? Expanding Simple Sentences (Years 3-4)*
- *What are noun phrases? How to use verbs; What time is it? Adding descriptors; How to join sentences. (Years 5-6)*