



HOW GRAMMAR IS TAUGHT IN THE LANGUAGE TRACK

OF *READING MASTERY SIGNATURE EDITION (RMSE)*

Grammar is a critical component of the language track of *Reading Mastery Signature Edition (RMSE)*. Grammar is incorporated systematically into a variety of exercises and activities with the goal of ensuring that students can 1) **use** English grammatical conventions correctly in spoken and written communication, and 2) **articulate** the grammatical conventions that they learn. The second goal of the program (articulating grammatical conventions) follows the first, primary goal of the program of students using grammatical conventions correctly and consistently in their written and spoken communication.

Grammatical forms in the Kindergarten level

The first two levels of the language track are designed to enhance and enrich the oral language proficiency of students. In addition to imparting critical background information to students, the first level of the program (Kindergarten) is devoted to the children's correct usage of fundamental aspects of spoken English:

- Pronouns – subject pronouns (I, he, she, we, you they) and corresponding possessive pronouns (my, his, her, our, your, their).
- Verb tense –present tense (am), future tense (will do), present continuous tense (am doing), simple past (was), past continuous tense (was doing) and conditional (if...then).
- Verb number – in the present tense: (I am vs. we are, he/she/it is vs. they are); in the past tense: (I was vs. we were, he/she/it was vs. they were).
- Plurals – regular plurals: hand vs. hands; irregular plurals: foot vs. feet.
- Articles – the, an (apple, elephant) vs. a (tree, window).
- Conjunctions – or, and, but.
- Prepositions – on, over, in front of, in back of, in, next to, under, between.
- Comparatives – examples: bigger, smaller, shorter, longer, and taller.

A primary vehicle for teaching these grammatical constructs is the *action track*, which is presented in a fast-paced, game-like format resembling Simon Says. Initially, the teacher models the actions and corresponding statements that convey the targeted grammatical construct. The students repeat the actions and respond verbally as appropriate to the specific exercise. In subsequent lessons, the students respond to the teacher's prompts without modeling. In this manner, students acquire both receptive and active spoken language skills that increase in sophistication over time.

In the sample lesson (75), students practice the following in the action track (Ex. #1):

What are you doing? *Pointing to a window.*

What were you doing? *Pointing to the wall.*

What are they doing? *Pointing to a wall.*

What were they doing? *Pointing to a window.*



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Early in the program, students learn the difference between whole sentences and sentence parts. Starting in Lesson 7, they learn to “say the whole thing”:

What is this? *A dog.*

Say the whole thing. *This is a dog.*

Sentence complexity increases throughout the first level of the program. In the sample lesson (75), students practice the following in the Action track (Exercise #1):

I was pointing to the wall.

They are pointing to a window.

They were pointing to a window.

I was pointing to the window.

I am pointing to the wall.

This distinction between parts of a sentence and whole sentences lays the groundwork for students to learn to identify the subject & predicate of sentences and specific parts of speech in later levels of the program.

Grammatical forms in the first grade level

The second level of the language track (first grade) expands on the concepts and skills introduced in the Kindergarten level. The sentence and grammatical types encountered increase in complexity and sophistication. For instance, students learn conditional rules that involve actions by several subjects. For example: *if the teacher stands up, the students clap*. Students must then say the relevant sentence parts and whole sentences that describe what the teacher and the students did.

Grammar rules and conventions in the second grade level

The first part of Level 2 (Lessons 1-65) has a strong emphasis on story grammar, which prepares students for later writing. The second part of Level 2 (Lessons 66-110) has a much stronger focus on writing. Student learn how to write paragraphs that tell the main idea of what occurred in an illustration and also tell about details that support the main idea. This part of the program also teaches writing-related skills such as grammar, parts of speech, punctuating sentences and editing passages that have errors.

Highlights of the grammatical skills taught in Level 2 include:

- Sentence Analysis:
Students learn to identify the subject and predicate of regular-order sentences. For example, in the following exercise from Lesson 71, students circle the part of the sentence that names and underline the part that tells more. They begin by analyzing the sentences orally.



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Three tall girls sat on a horse. Say the part of the sentence that names.

Three tall girls.

Say the part of the sentence that tells more.

Sat on a horse.

In later lessons, students analyze passages to identify the sentences. Students identify the part that names and the part that tells more to determine where each sentence starts and ends. Then, they capitalize the first word and put a period at the end of each sentence.

- Subject-Predicate:

In Lesson 87, students are taught that the part of the sentence that names is the *subject*. Two lessons later, they learn to identify the part that tells more as the *predicate*.

- Parts of Speech:

Verbs and pronouns are introduced in Level 2. Students work on both verbs and pronouns early in the program (Lesson 69), but are not taught the labels until later in the program at Lesson 106. Below, is the introduction on verbs from Lesson 106.

Remember, every sentence has a verb. The verb is usually in the first part of the predicate.

I'm going to say some sentences.

Listen: A dog ate lots of food. Say it. *A dog ate lots of food.*

What's the subject? *A dog.*

What's the predicate? *Ate lots of food.*

What's the first word in the predicate? *Ate.*

That's the verb.

- Verb Usage:

Students learn to write sentences in the past tense and to stay consistent with tense when writing. They learn to write sentences that "tell what a person or thing did."

- Pronoun Usage:

Beginning at Lesson 72, students learn that specific pronouns (he, she) can be used to replace names or nouns. In Lesson 80, they learn a rule for using pronouns in a passage: *If two sentences in a row name the same thing, you change the second sentence so that it names he, she, or it.* In Lesson 97, students are introduced to a variation of the rule involving the pronoun they.



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- **Mechanics:**

In Level 2, students learn basic rules for capitalizing and using ending marks. The first work with capitals and periods begins in Lesson 66 where they practice capitalizing the first word and put a period at the end of each sentence. Starting in Lesson 82, the work on capitals and periods focuses more on identifying sentences in a passage. Students use the subject-predicate analysis to identify the sentences and then capitalize the first word and mark the end with a period.

In Lesson 94, students are introduced a rule about persons' names: *Each part of a person's name begins with a capital.* This rule helps students with writing names such as "Mister Henry Jackson."

Grammar rules and conventions in the upper levels of the program

The application of grammar rules and conventions deepens in the upper levels of the RMSE program as students become sophisticated writers and editors. In the highest level of the program (grade 5), students learn to convert statements into questions, combine sentences and ensure correct subject/verb agreement in their writing. They use outline diagrams to critique faulty arguments, and they respond to literature in the program by writing extended answers to literal and interpretative questions.

For more information, contact the National Institute for Direct Instruction (NIFDI) at info@nifdi.org or toll-free at 877.485.1973.