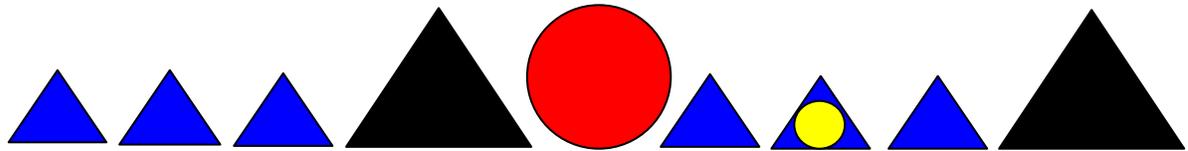
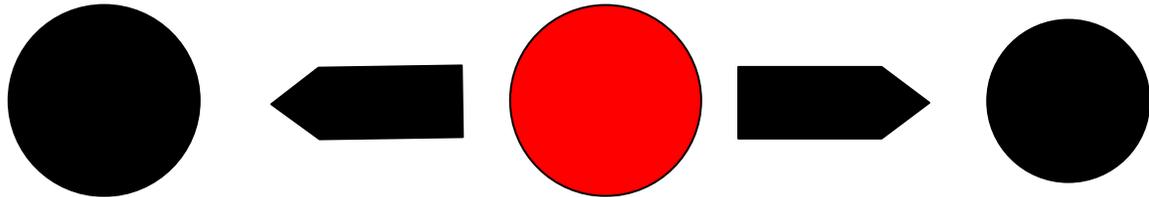


Not Your Grandma's Grammar



Captivating, time-tested language lessons engage older Montessori elementary children.



by
Betsy A. Lockhart

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Third Edition

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Preface

Developing proficient and enthusiastic readers and eloquent writers is a daunting task. Some children seem born for the written word, while others are plagued by auditory processing / discrimination difficulties, phonemic awareness holes, attentional deficits, and complex language comprehension difficulties. Some look at grammar and sentence analysis as a fun puzzle to be attacked and decoded, while others struggle to differentiate between a noun and a verb well into middle school. How is a teacher to advance the language skills of children across the learning spectrum? Individualized instruction and isolation of difficulty through Montessori and other lessons provide the best opportunity for all children to maximize their linguistic potential.

Montessori language materials from the lower elementary classroom are used in upper elementary to extend the children's understanding of the "currency of communication". These old friends are taken to new heights in the upper elementary classroom as children learn advanced linguistic concepts and pragmatic strategies for achieving mastery of language. Yet, many teachers find teaching grammar and sentence analysis to be particularly challenging because there is often more than one reasonable answer, particularly as these studies and the literature being evaluated become more sophisticated. How much simpler is it to teach math, where the answer is either right or wrong. This complexity necessitates that the teacher know not only what the correct answer(s) are, but also why these answers are reasonable. A teacher must be able to explain how *school* can be a noun, and adjective or a verb!

*I took the **school** bus to my **school** so that I can **school** my friends in how to take effective photographs.*

With shorter school days and more demands on teachers' and children's time, it is easy to neglect grammar and sentence analysis. Certainly, if standardized tests require no more than the ability to find the subject of a sentence and discriminate between a noun and verb, it is tempting to push higher-order linguistic skills under the rug. Many traditional schools have done exactly that. Nonetheless, it is exactly these skills that allow children to comprehend and write more sophisticated, complex pieces with confidence and success, and allow them to find delight in the elegance of human language. It is incumbent on the teacher, therefore, to be keenly aware of any linguistic deficits that remain after her own schooling, and to actively work to remediate these deficits. As a result, she will not only be a more effective teacher, but also will more easily delight along with the children in the joy of language!

This album is an integration of traditional Montessori lessons and writing activities from various sources. The most significant source of Montessori-compatible writing activities is Step-up-to-Writing. As a Step-up trainer, I have given 1-day overviews of this powerful program. I have included a small fraction of what this program has to offer into this training. I strongly urge teachers to seek out the 2- or 4-day Step-up training at their earliest convenience.

I would like to acknowledge Judi Bauerline, AMS president, for multiple consultations on some of the more esoteric aspects of Montessori Language, Laura Alexander, upper elementary teacher, for superb editing assistance, and Louis Sisneros, Evergreen High School English teacher, for his timely help with understanding subjunctive mood. Feedback from teachers on lessons that worked well or were less successful, awesome resources, subjects that seem particularly difficult for children to internalize, or fun and effective activities would be greatly appreciated. Please address any questions, concerns, or stories to:

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Preliminary Verb Family Study

Presentation 1: Verb tense

Materials: Three charts of the simple tenses, blank chart, verb and pronoun symbols, prepared sentences strips.

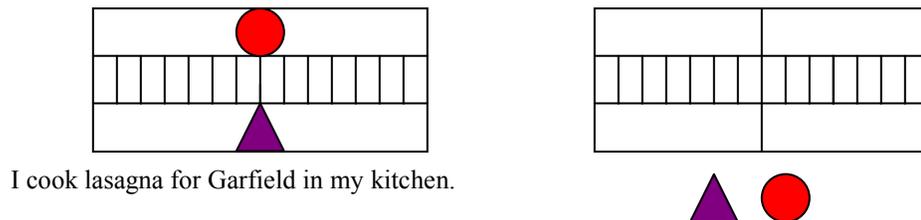
Children of upper elementary age readily understand past, present and future time. A goal of this lesson is to help them reason through the idea that while the action may be in the past or future, the speaker or subject remains in the present. More importantly, this lesson provides much-needed direct instruction in future tense verbs requiring more than a single word to complete the verb. The only other lesson that directly addresses this issue is verb conjugation, which is a much more advanced lesson.

1. Begin with a sentence in the present tense, such as

I cook lasagna for Garfield in my kitchen.

NOTE: Be certain to use a regular verb. Save irregular verbs (to be) for later!

2. Ask the children if the action in that sentence takes place in the present, the past or the future. When they agree that the action is in the present, establish that the speaker is also in the present.
3. Produce the blank chart and grammar symbols. Explain that the black marks on the chart represent time. Think of it as railroad tracks going on without end into the past (to the left) and into the future (to the right). The vertical line at the center represents the present. The children decided that the action, cook, is in the present, so we put the verb symbol above the “tracks” on the vertical line. The children also decided that the speaker, *I*, is in the present, so we put the pronoun symbol below the “tracks” on the vertical line.
4. Produce the “Present Tense” chart. Place it to one side of the blank chart with the sentence below it, and pick up the grammar symbols from the blank chart, as below:

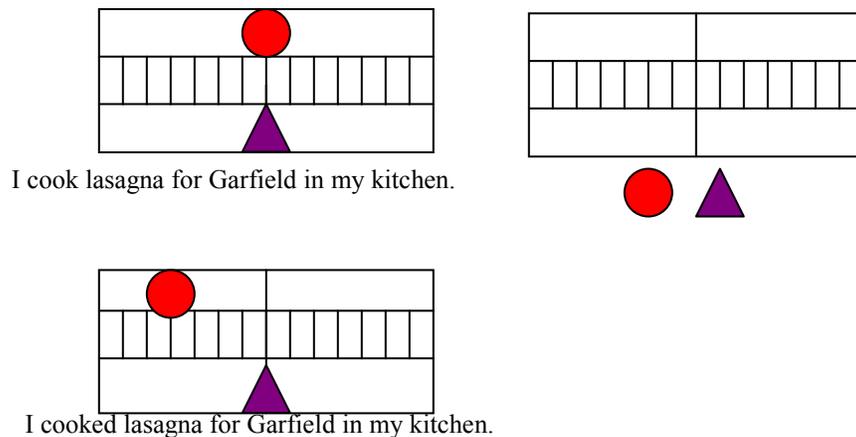


5. Next, read the same sentence in the past tense:

I cooked lasagna for Garfield in my kitchen.

6. Ask the children if the action in that sentence takes place in the present, the past or the future. When they agree that the action is in the past, ask if the pronoun is in the past with the verb. “Is *I* in the past? Did *I* time-travel back to the past to deliver the sentence?” When the children agree that the pronoun stays in the present, lay out the grammar symbols on the blank chart, restating that the children decided that the action, cooked, is in the past, so we put the verb symbol above the “tracks” to the left of the vertical line. The children also decided that the speaker, you, is still in the present, so we put the pronoun symbol below the “tracks” on the vertical line, as before.

7. Produce the “Past Tense” chart. Place it under the “Present Tense” chart with the sentence below it, and pick up the grammar symbols from the blank chart.



8. Reinforce the concept that the verb is in the past or present tense. The pronoun has no tense.

9. Finally, read the same sentence in the future tense:

I shall cook lasagna for Garfield in my kitchen.

10. Establish that the verb, *shall cook*, takes place in the future while the speaker, *I*, remains in the present. Place the verb and the pronoun on the blank chart while restating the conclusions drawn by the children.

11. Produce the “Future Tense” chart. Place it above the “Present Tense” chart with the sentence below it, and set the grammar symbols and the blank chart to one side.

I shall cook lasagna for Garfield in my kitchen.

I cook lasagna for Garfield in my kitchen.

I cooked lasagna for Garfield in my kitchen.

12. Reinforce the concept that the verb is in the past, present or future tense. The pronoun has no tense.

13. Do a three-period lesson, including asking children to construct past, present or future tense using the blank chart and loose symbols.

14. Give the children various sentences and ask them to identify the verb tense.

15. Give the children various sentences and ask them to change the tense of the verb. OPTIONAL: With more confident children, move into some verbs that conjugate irregularly, such as *to run*, *to read*, and (gasp) *to be*.

Children can create a chart of verbs in their past, present and future tense. As irregular verbs are added, this can become a point of reference.

This is the time to draw children’s attention to verb tense in everything they are reading, both in expository and narrative writing. This will raise their consciousness of verb tense, but will also give them closely-spaced practice if the subject comes up several times per day for a week or so.

TEACHER NOTE: Using the pronoun *I* is a bit problematic, as the future tense of the verb becomes *I shall cook*. If one is completely grammatically accurate, the future tense verb *will cook* is only proper for second and third person singular and plural pronouns. However, using third person singular (he, she, it) compromises verb conjugation as the present tense of the verb often ends in *-s*. It would seem that second person (you) would be the best choice for demonstrating tense. However, it is difficult to convince some children that the pronoun remains in the present while the verb took place in the past. I find that few (if any) children question the use of the word *shall*, and using the proper auxiliary verb is sows seeds for the future.

Preliminary Noun Family Study

Presentation 3a: Noun types – Common/Concrete vs. Abstract

Materials: classification cards – **CONCRETE**, & **ABSTRACT**, sorting card set

fun	party
guilt	criminal
happiness	winner
health	vitamins
hope	contest
love	puppy
wealth	investment
peace	Gandhi

1. Mix the sorting cards. Tell the children that all of the words on these cards are nouns. Ask them to create pairs of nouns that have a relationship with one another. NOTE: There is more than one way to pair these. A child might pair *fun* and *happiness*. However, unless the child can also make an argument that pairs *party* and *winner*, he will need to go back and search for better matches.

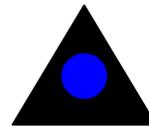
2. Show the classification cards. Ask the children to explain the difference between concrete and abstract. Ultimately, arrive at the conclusion that a concrete noun names something that occupies space, can be seen and/or can be touched, while an abstract noun is an idea, a quality, or an emotion, so it can be felt or sensed. NB: Avoid the definition that concrete nouns can be touched. With that definition, how would one classify a cloud, electricity, or the sun? None can be touched, but all are concrete nouns. Dictionary.com defines abstract as something “existing only in the mind”. We might add “heart and/or soul”.

3. Tell the children that in each pair, one noun is concrete, while the other is abstract. Set out the classification cards and, pair-by-pair, move one from each set to the *concrete* column, and the other to the *abstract* column. If there is a pair where it seems that both are concrete or both are abstract, set the pair aside until the end. There may be a better pairing to be made.

4. Teach the symbol for the abstract noun:

The black triangle represents the noun.

The blue circle represents the idea that since the noun represents a quality, it is somewhat like an adjective, and yet is still a noun.

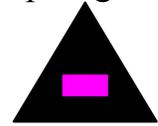


Students may now search for examples of concrete and abstract nouns in literature, sort nouns with materials, create their own lists, or complete tables. A wonderful creative writing experience is writing concrete nouns to visually depict their meaning, such as in concrete poetry.

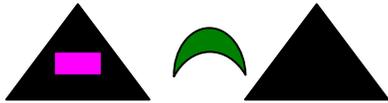
Presentation 3b: Noun types – Collective and Proper

Materials: classification cards from prior lesson – **CONCRETE**, and **ABSTRACT**, as well as two new cards: **COLLECTIVE** and **PROPER**.

1. Lay out cards from the prior lesson and review key concepts.
2. Add the two new classification cards.
3. Explain that *collective* means *acting as a group*. A collective noun, therefore, is one noun that represents a group. One bird may be a goose, but a group of geese is a gaggle. The symbol for a collective noun is a concrete noun symbol with a conjunction superimposed. Think of it as one goose **AND** another goose **AND** a lot more geese make a gaggle (or flock, skein or wedge) of geese. Collective nouns are sometimes used in isolation, and are sometimes used with a prepositional phrase.

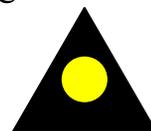
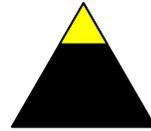


The skies darkened as the flock took off from frozen lake.



The flock of geese took off from the frozen lake.

4. Explain that a proper noun is the name of a **SPECIFIC** person, place or thing, and as such are always capitalized: Paul went to Detroit to buy a Ford Mustang. The symbol for a proper noun is a concrete noun symbol with a gold tip or a concrete noun symbol with a gold circle. Teachers should choose one for use consistently throughout the school.



5. An infrequently encountered noun type is the possessive noun. It is easily confused with possessive proper adjectives. For this reason, many choose not to teach it at this time. This decision is left to the discretion of the teacher.
Possessive noun: This book is **Karl's**.
Possessive adjective: This is **Karl's** book.

6. Provide a number of additional tickets, well-mixed, for the children to sort.

Students may search for examples of various noun types in literature, sort nouns with materials, create their own lists, or complete tables. A fun activity is to research little-known collective nouns and/or compile a book of original submissions! Reference these books and web sites:

An Exaltation of Larks: The Ultimate Edition by James Lipton <http://www.vigay.com/nouns/>: great for kids to research specifics

<http://users.tinyonline.co.uk/gswithenbank/collnoun.htm>: also great for kids' research. Be sure to check out the "Some That Might Be" section at the bottom, which includes such gems as a balance of accountants, a galaxy of cosmologists, and a complex of psychologists!!

Preliminary Preposition Study

Presentation 1: Preposition Types (Simple, Compound and Phrasal)

Materials: Types of preposition heading cards (SIMPLE, COMPOUND, AND PHRASAL), prepositions to sort, grammar symbol box, prepared sentence strips.

1. Initiate a discussion with the children to discover what they remember about prepositions. If they received little instruction on prepositions in lower elementary, key points to bring out include the following.

- Prepositions are joining words, like conjunctions but different.
 - Conjunctions join parts that are of equal value – one noun to the next, one verb to the next, one phrase to the next, one clause to the next.
 - Prepositions relate one part of the sentence to another, telling more about the noun or verb in the sentence – its position/location, direction, time, etc.
- Prepositions show the relationship by hooking onto a noun or noun phrase. This is called a prepositional phrase.
- Prepositions are represented in the Montessori system by a green bridge, showing that prepositions bridge from one part of a sentence to another.
- The word *preposition* comes from the Latin word *praepositio*, meaning “to place in front”. Prepositions are placed in front of the words that complete the relationship. The preposition shows the relationship between its object and the main clause.

The missing book was under Fred’s bed.
The missing book was beside Fred’s bed.
The missing book was on top of Fred’s bed.
The missing book was inside Fred’s bed.

2. Choose one of the above sentences and symbolize it. Transpose the noun families (Fred’s bed was beside the missing book). Show that sometimes noun families can be transposed to create a meaningful sentence and sometimes it is just silly!

3. Ask the children to brainstorm prepositions. Since there are 284 words and phrases used as prepositions in the English language, this should be easy. One way to accelerate the brainstorming process is to ask where a frog can be compared to a log. (He can be on the log, under the log...)

4. Lay out the preposition cards and ask the young grammarians to sort them by type. The children will readily separate phrasal prepositions from the body, but

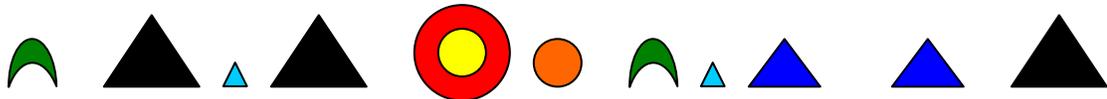
may require help recognizing that some prepositions that remain in the group are simple words, while others are compound words. Laying out the heading cards may be sufficient to the task. Here are a few examples:

SIMPLE	COMPOUND	PHRASAL
up	upon	in spite of
down	into	because of
off	within	according to
on	without	in response to
at	outside	within the bounds of
of	inside	
through	throughout	
to		
about		
under		
over		

5. Give a three-period lesson on the types of prepositions.

Students may now sort prepositions with materials, and/or using a reference like "Writer's Express", make their own brainstormed list of prepositions or preposition tickets to sort.

Children may undertake a traditional Montessori follow-up: symbolizing sentences containing prepositional phrases. If children symbolize sentences, they may indicate the preposition type or each preposition symbolized. This is left to the discretion of the teacher. Remember that the real goals of this lesson are to review prepositions and especially to expand children's view of prepositions to include phrases! Symbolizing sentences can be particularly useful in leading to the next lesson, especially if children are asked not only to symbolize the sentences, but also to underline (twice in orange!) prepositional phrases. For example:



(According to) Sam, the rooster crows raucously at the sleeping barnyard creatures.

Once the children can reliably identify prepositional phrases that have written for their analysis, they can take on a more challenging and, in some ways, more sophisticated follow-up. This follow-up activity, which is designed to help children integrate prepositional phrases into their writing, serves two purposes: practice and application. Give the children sentences devoid of prepositional phrases and ask them to add one or more phrases to each sentence to enliven them. They can then go back to a recent expository or narrative piece and similarly augment their paragraph(s).

Secondary Verb Family Study

Presentation 3: Intransitive Verb Types: Complete and Linking

Materials: Prepared sentence strips, box of grammar symbols, sentence analysis box 4, labels **TRANSITIVE** and **INTRANSITIVE**, **Complete** and **Linking**.

1. Remind the children of the types of verbs: transitive and intransitive. Remind the children of the different complement patterns for transitive verbs using complement charts 1-4. This lesson will focus on intransitive verb sentences.
2. Intransitive verbs are sometimes divided into two distinct types: complete and linking. Lay out the labels.
3. Complete verbs are verbs that make a meaningful sentence without the help of any other words.

**Energetic children play.
The frightened movie-goers shrieked!**

These verbs are symbolized, as was revealed in transitive / intransitive verb lesson in Part I, with a red verb symbol with a concentric small gold circle.

4. Sometimes these complete intransitive verbs can take an adverbial modifier. This does not make them transitive verbs! Remember that it takes an object to make a transitive verb!

**Energetic children play in the garden.
The frightened movie-goers shrieked throughout the movie!**

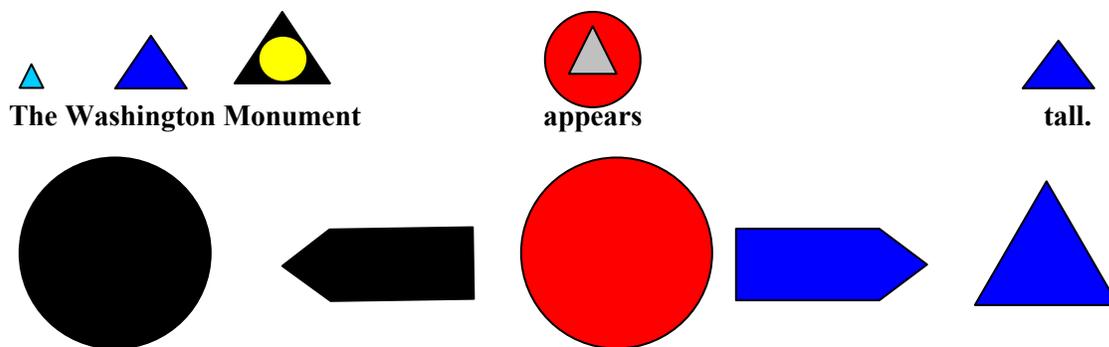
4. Ask the children to diagram and analyze one of each of the two types of sentences. Show the charts for Complete Intransitive Verbs and Complete Intransitive Verbs with Adverbial Modifiers.

5. A second type of intransitive verb is the linking verb. Linking verbs connect the subject with the subject complement. The subject complement can either rename the subject or characterize it.

**Russell is my science teacher.
Abraham Lincoln was the president.
Ryan seems cute.
The Washington Monument appears tall.**

6. Ask the children to symbolize one sentence wherein the subject complement renames the subject and one sentence where the subject complement characterizes it. The symbol for the linking verb is a silver triangle superimposed on a red verb symbol.

7. When the subject complement renames the subject, it is called a predicate noun or predicate nominative. In sentence analysis, it is represented by the same black triangle that was used for the nominative object complement. When it characterizes the subject, it is a predicate adjective. In sentence analysis, it is represented by the same blue triangle that was used for the adjectival object complement. Show the charts for Intransitive Verbs, Complements 5 and 6.



The verb *to be* is a very common linking verb. Others include seem, appear, become, remain, grow, look, smell, taste, sound, feel, etc. A great trick to determine if a verb is a linking verb is to replace the verb with an appropriate form of *to be*. If the verb can be so replaced while preserving the basic meaning, it is a linking verb.

Most linking verbs cannot be turned into transitive verbs. Exceptions include grow and feel.

My son grew taller.
I felt wonderful.

My daughter grew vegetables.
I felt the dishcloth to see if it was wet.

The children may now classify intransitive verb sentences into subcategories. They may symbolize and analyze sentences. They should write sentences to match patterns provided using a mix of transitive and intransitive patterns, encompassing concepts from the past 3 lessons. Be sure to throw in adverbial modifiers as well!