


(Incorrect options in each grid are indicated by italics).


1

	He	<i>he's</i>	<i>go</i>	<i>at house.</i>		
	<i>them</i>	<i>are</i>	going	<i>house.</i>		
	<i>Is</i>	is	<i>goes</i>	home.		
	<i>Us</i>	<i>am</i>	<i>went</i>	<i>to Home</i>		



2

	They	<i>liking</i>	<i>are</i>	but they	<i>liking</i>	<i>kitchen.</i>
	<i>are</i>	<i>likes</i>	<i>is</i>	<i>and us</i>	<i>does likes</i>	chicken.
	<i>Them</i>	like	<i>case</i>	<i>but are</i>	don't like	<i>Chick</i>
	<i>The</i>	<i>likeness</i>	cake	<i>so it</i>	<i>likes</i>	<i>kick in.</i>



Using Sentence Builders in the Classroom

STEP 1: **Allow the students to examine all of the sentences in silence**

This is a very important first step in encouraging the learners to "externalize" and evaluate their current interlanguage. Without marking the sheet, students should first try to read through each sentence grid and string together the words they think will constitute the "hidden" sentence. This can be done in silence, though it is also healthy if the students mouth the words aloud.

STEP 2: **Peer Brain-storming**

After the students have had an initial try at working through the sentences on their own, it is a good idea to put them in pairs and let them discuss what they think is the sentence in each grid. Students should still refrain from marking anything on their sheets.

STEP 3: **Class Brain-storming**

After some discussion in pairs, it is a good idea to go through the sentences as a class – again, without students marking anything on their sheets. This should be mainly elicitation, asking students as a group to offer suggestions word by word, and giving them quick feedback as to whether they are correct or incorrect. As each sentence is "solved" orally in the group, they can be asked to read it aloud in full in unison.


STEP 4: **Sentence Building**

It is now time for the students to "get to work", so to speak. Either individually or in pairs/small groups, students examine each sentence grid and circle the words they believe make up the correct sentence. At

this stage, do not allow the students to write out their answers. When they have completed circling the words to put together their sentences, they should take it to the teacher for feedback. The teacher examines each answer grid, and for each correct word, places a circle or check in the small box above the grid. If the selected word is wrong, the teacher marks a small cross in the box. If all the selected words are correct, the student may write out the full sentence in the space provided below the grid and then draw a quick sketch or diagram to indicate that they know what the sentence actually means. If any of the words have been marked with a cross, the student(s) should go back and attempt to self correct their choice by selecting a different word. There are enough word options and correction boxes to have the students go through this process up to three times – basically, until they get it right. The examples below show this process step by step.


First Attempt

2	×	×	○	×	○	×
	They	liking	are	but they	liking	kitchen.
	are	likes	is	and us	does likes	chicken.
	Them	like	case	but are	don't like	Chick
	The	likeness	cake	so it	likes	kick in.





Second Attempt

2	×	○	×	×	○	×	○
	They	liking	are	but they	liking	kitchen.	
	are	likes	is	and us	does likes	chicken.	
	Them	like	case	but are	don't like	Chick	
	The	likeness	cake	so it	likes	kick in.	



Final Attempt/ Completion

2	×	○	×	×	○	×	○
	They	liking	are	but they	liking	kitchen.	
	are	likes	is	and us	does likes	chicken.	
	Them	like	case	but are	don't like	Chick	
	The	likeness	cake	so it	likes	kick in.	

They like cake but they don't like chicken.

STEP 5: Follow-up Application and Activities

Having completed the sentence builder grids and drawn pictures to show what each sentence means, the teacher has the option of following up with a variety of activities to reinforce what has been learned. These can be simple and quick or quite elaborate – depending on class needs and teacher's discretion.

Follow-up A: Reinforcing selected words through shading/coloring

Have the students look back over their completed grids and get them to shade or color in the incorrect options. This makes the correct elements stand out more at an initial glance, as the example on the next page illustrates:

2



They	liking	are	but they	liking	kitchen.
are	likes	is	and us	does likes	chicken.
Them	like	case	but are	don't like	Chick
The	likeness	cake	so it	likes	kick in.

They like cake but they don't like chicken.

Follow-up B: Calculate "scores" to encourage more careful selection of words

While this activity generally sees guessing and errors as "healthy", it is possible that students will try to "whip through" the activity with little or no regard for being accurate earlier on. One way to alleviate this situation is to mark a "score" on each worksheet. This can be done in a couple of ways: (i) count the first feedback square in each column as 4 points, the second as 3 points, the third as 2 points, and the fourth as 1 point – students who are getting the right answer on the first or second attempt will therefore score higher than students who are taking three or four tries to get it right; (ii) count up the total number of Xs on each sheet, winners being determined obviously by having the least amount of mistakes. It is recommended that "scoring" the activity only be applied for those classes who obviously need to be encouraged to be more careful and not to be content with making careless mistakes time and time again.

Follow-up C: Q and A Quiz

Once students have completed the activity, ask them if they think they can remember what each sentence was. Then have them put their sheets away. Ask them questions for each sentence, demanding word for word answers with completely accurate grammar. This can make for a handy "line up" game towards the end of the class.

Follow-up D: Question Construction

The sentence building grids are generally most appropriate for constructing statements, but as a follow up activity they make for useful material in helping the students to develop their grammar in application to question forms. Once the sentences have been completed, brainstorm with the class as to what questions can be put together to apply to each statement/answer. This generally makes for good practice in constructing Information Questions (Who?/What?/Where?/Why?/When?/How?), and the teacher can assist the students by pointing out key parts of the answer that indicate what needs to be included in question forms. This sort of brainstorming can be individual based, or applied to pair work, small group work or whole class participation.

Follow-up E: Student Generated Sentence Builders

For teachers that manage to get their students to this stage, they are managing to truly make the most of the whole concept underlying sentence building. This basically involves giving the students blank sentence builder grids and having them construct their own sentence puzzles for other students to have a try at. It is recommended that students be encouraged to take their "key language sentences" from earlier parts of their textbooks, which they then "hide" by following much the same process described above for teachers. This will be difficult for the students at first, but as they become more motivated to make their sentences difficult to find for fellow students, they will attempt to use more subtle differentiations and alternatives. In the process, they will be essentially teaching themselves, and gaining confidence based on the knowledge that they are making the same sort of material that their teachers make for them. This kind of follow up tends to be great for competitive group work in the classroom. There is also a strong likelihood that the activity will generate a lot of talk and brainstorming amongst the students, placing the learners themselves at the center of the grammar learning process.