### Possible Sentences (Moore and Moore7)

This is a relatively simple strategy for teaching word meanings and generating considerable class discussion.

1. The teacher chooses six to eight words from the text that may pose difficulty for students. These words are usually key concepts in the text.
2. Next, the teacher chooses four to six words that students are more likely to know something about.
3. The list of ten to twelve words is put on the chalk board or overhead projector. The teacher provides brief definitions as needed.
4. Students are challenged to devise sentences that contain two or more words from the list.
5. All sentences that students come up with, both accurate and inaccurate, are listed and discussed.
6. Students now read the selection.
7. After reading, revisit the Possible Sentences and discuss whether they could be true based on the passage or how they could be modified to true.

Stahl8 reported that Possible Sentences significantly improved both students' overall recall of word meanings and their comprehension of text containing those words. Interestingly, this was true when compared to a control group and when compared to Semantic Mapping.

7 Moore, P. W. and S. A. Moore. "Possible sentences." In E. K. Dishner, T. W. Bean, J. E. Readence, and P. W. Moore (eds.), Reading in the Content Areas: Improving Classroom Instruction, 2nd ed.,1986. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt pp. 174–179.

8 Stahl, op. cit.

# Possible Sentences

Possible sentences is a pre-reading vocabulary strategy that activates students' prior knowledge about content area vocabulary and concepts. Before reading, students are provided a short list of vocabulary words from their reading. Students create, based on their prediction of what the reading will be about, a meaningful sentence for each vocabulary word or concept. After reading, students check to see if their "possible sentences" were accurate or need revising.

## Why use possible sentences?

* It activates students' prior knowledge about content area vocabulary and concepts, and can improve their reading comprehension.
* It sparks students' curiosity about their reading.
* It teaches students to guess how words may be used in the text and create meaningful sentences.

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| **When to use:** | Before reading | During reading | After reading |
| **How to use:** | Individually | With small groups | Whole class setting |

## How to use possible sentences

1. Choose and display the vocabulary words.
2. Ask students to define the words and pair related words together.
3. Ask students to write sentences using their word pairs. Remind students that their sentences should be ones they expect to see in the text as they read.
4. Have students read the text and compare their possible sentences with the actual sentences within the text.
5. If your students' possible sentences are inaccurate, ask them to rewrite their sentences to be accurate.

### Download blank templates

* [Sample activity sheet](http://its.guilford.k12.nc.us/act/strategies/Possible_Sentences.doc)
* [AdLit.org sample](http://www.adlit.org/pdfs/strategy-library/possiblesentences.pdf)

**Session 2: Possible Sentences**

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| --- | --- |
| 1. | Show students the cover of the book *Rechenka's Eggs* by Patricia Polacco. Tell them that they will be reading this book but first you want them to learn some of the vocabulary they will find in the story. |
| 2. | Show students the second chart with the list of vocabulary words (see Preparation, Step 3). Briefly discuss each word, asking if anyone knows the meaning or can use it in a sentence. For example, you might say "*Muffled* means a sound that is not clear, like someone's voice may be *muffled* if they are covering their mouth when they talk." |
| 3. | Next, tell students they will try using at least two words from the list in one sentence that they think may possibly appear in the story (i.e., Possible Sentences strategy). Call on volunteers to give you a sample sentence using two of the vocabulary words. |
| 4. | Allow students time to work on writing their possible sentences. |
| 5. | Before reading the story, remind students to listen for the vocabulary words they used in their sentences. Read aloud *Rachenka's Eggs*. Stop periodically to have students predict what will happen next. |
| 6. | After reading, students can change their sentences to reflect the text. |
| 7. | Call on volunteers to share their new sentences and to try retelling the story using some of the vocabulary words. Students can also build upon one another's retellings. |

See Template Below

**Possible Sentences for**

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Name of Topic

Word Box

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