

# Contracting sentences

## Objective

Revise work on contracting sentences and note making.

## Background knowledge

Contractions of sentences can be used for note taking purposes, to create headlines or to summarise story contents in a blurb. In such cases the context of the contracted form or understanding of the reader should enable access to the sentence's meaning. Such sentences do leave themselves open to ambiguity. When sentences are contracted there is a need for balance between an effective decrease in the number of words and a point where the original is still recoverable. It is no good eliminating so many words that the message is lost. On the other hand if too many are left in a set of notes there was no point summarising.

## Activities

These three activities play around with genuine note taking situations. The focus should be upon looking at the information that is absolutely necessary to tell a story. What type of word carries the important information? What do the children need to listen out for as they make their notes?

- **Photocopiable page 48 'Notes to sentences'** This activity involves children in making journalist-style notes about an item of news. It is best approached using short news items recorded from a radio broadcast, preferably a pop channel with news that will interest the children. (Copyright permitting.)

Once they have made their notes they can compare with a partner to see whether they missed anything out. They can also look at the type of word it was most useful to scribble down to retain the main content of the story; this is perhaps the area where there should be the least disagreement.

- **Photocopiable page 49 'Rebuild the sentence'**

This activity consists of note taking in reverse: as they undertake this activity children are asked to rebuild the original sentences and events from the notes. You could stagger the distribution of the notes, giving children one set at a time and letting them build up the story. Alternatively they could work with all three, reconstructing the sequence of events.

- **Photocopiable page 50 'Editing'**

This is a badly written account of events. The editing activity has two parts to it. Children can find words that could be cut from the sentences in the text. They can also look at ways of rewriting some of the sentences in fewer words. The ultimate challenge is to see if they can reduce the text to 200 words, retaining the important facts and quotes.

## Further ideas

- **Newspaper counts:** Looking at a short news story chosen from a newspaper, children can try to rewrite the same story using fewer words.

- **Trail making:** Following on from photocopiable page 49 'Rebuild the sentence', children can try to create their own story in note form. One group could try to set an example of a story in note form for another group and see if the latter can solve it. This could be a famous narrative or a story they make up.

## What's on the CD-ROM

On the CD-ROM you will find:

- Printable versions of all three photocopiable pages.
- Interactive versions of 'Rebuild the sentence' and 'Editing'.