Sentence Composing Activities
“It All Started with Sputnik”
Foundation Lesson

About this Lesson
This lesson provides practice with the four sentence composing techniques described in Don Killgallon’s *Sentence Composing for Middle School* and *Sentence Composing for High School*:

- sentence unscrambling
- sentence imitating
- sentence combining
- sentence expanding

Teachers may wish to introduce these concepts with the appropriate Killgallon text before having students complete this lesson.

Students will unscramble, imitate, combine, and expand various sentences from the article “It All Started with Sputnik” by Roger D. Launius. After completing the activities, students should read the article, during which time they should find the original sentences and compare those sentences with the ones they have created.

Objective
Students will

- demonstrate understanding that sentences are comprised of various phrases and clauses that must be arranged in ways that are both logical and grammatical.
- demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage.

Level
Grades Six through Ten

Connection to Common Core Standards for English Language Arts
LTF® Foundation Lessons are designed to be used across grade levels and therefore are aligned to the CCSS Anchor Standards. Teachers should consult their own grade-level-specific Standards. The activities in this lesson allow teachers to address the following Common Core Standards:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Level of Thinking</th>
<th>Depth of Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>R.10</td>
<td>Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.1</td>
<td>Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>I</td>
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<tr>
<td>L.2</td>
<td>Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.</td>
<td>Understand</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### L.3
Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

**Level of Thinking**: Understand  
**Depth of Knowledge**: II

### SL.1
Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**Level of Thinking**: Understand  
**Depth of Knowledge**: II

### SL.2
Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

**Level of Thinking**: Evaluate  
**Depth of Knowledge**: III

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**Implicitly addressed in this lesson**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Level of Thinking</th>
<th>Depth of Knowledge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>W.4</td>
<td>Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.</td>
<td>Create</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LTF Skill Focus
The foundation for LTF English lessons is the Skill Progression Chart that identifies key skills for each domain, beginning with grade 6 and adding more complex skills at each subsequent grade level while reinforcing skills introduced at previous grade levels. The Skill Focus for each individual lesson identifies the skills actually addressed in that lesson.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of Thinking</th>
<th>Close Reading</th>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Composition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Remember</td>
<td>written, spoken, and visual texts</td>
<td>purposeful use of language for effect</td>
<td>written, spoken, and visual products</td>
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<tr>
<td>Understand</td>
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<td>Apply</td>
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<td>Analyze</td>
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<td>Evaluate</td>
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<td>Create</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mechanics</strong></td>
<td><strong>Phrases</strong></td>
<td><strong>Composition</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Capitalization</td>
<td>Appositive</td>
<td>Types (modes)</td>
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<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>Infinitive</td>
<td>Descriptive</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Participial</td>
<td>The Process of Composition</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Prepositional</td>
<td>Editing</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sentence structure</td>
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<td><strong>Clauses</strong></td>
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<td>Style/Voice</td>
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<td>Dependent/Subordinate</td>
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<td>Conscious Manipulation of</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
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<td>Sentence Patterns</td>
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<td>Coordination/Subordination</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sentences</strong></td>
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<td>Experimentation with</td>
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<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
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<td>Original Forms and</td>
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<tr>
<td>complex</td>
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<td>Structures</td>
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<tr>
<td>compound</td>
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<td>Experimentation with</td>
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<tr>
<td>compound-complex</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sentence Variety</td>
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<tr>
<td>simple</td>
<td></td>
<td>Imitation of Stylistic Models</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sentence Variety</strong></td>
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<td>Use of Various Sentence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sentence Beginnings</td>
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<td>Openings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sentence Combining</td>
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</tbody>
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Connections to AP*
The ability to manipulate syntactical elements is an integral component of the kinds of writing assignments that appear on the free response portion of AP English exams. In addition, the multiple choice parts of the exams often include questions related to syntax and its effect within a text.

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Materials and Resources
- copies of Student Activity
- *Sentence Composing for Middle School* by Don Killgallon
- *Sentence Composing for High School* by Don Killgallon
- Prepared sentence strips
Assessments
The following kinds of formative assessments are embedded in this lesson:

- sentence unscrambling
- sentence imitating
- sentence combining
- sentence expanding

Teaching Suggestions
Teachers should consider using prepared sentence strips for the unscrambling activity. The physical act of rearranging sentence parts helps students to see (and understand) how the meaning of a sentence can change when phrases or clauses are moved.

Answers
Following are suggested answers for some of the activities in this lesson. For most activities, however, acceptable answers will vary.

Activity One—Sentence Unscrambling:

1. and changed the world
   of a basketball-size satellite
   on October 4, 1957
   the Soviet Union ushered in the “Space Age”
   with the launch

   With the launch of a basketball-size satellite on October 4, 1957, the Soviet Union ushered in the “Space Age” and changed the world.

2. in the United States
   of excitement and worry
   the Space Age dawned
   with a mixture

   In the United States the Space Age dawned with a mixture of excitement and worry.

Activity Two—Sentence Imitating:

3. Scientists and engineers congratulated their Soviet counterparts, but political and cultural leaders called attention to the menacing significance of the achievement.

   Scientists and engineers
   congratulated their Soviet counterparts
   but political and cultural leaders
   called attention
   to the menacing significance
   of the achievement

   (Answers will vary.)
4. The generation of Americans who were in school during that momentous shift in priorities embraced space travel as a symbol of progress.

   The generation
   of Americans
   who were in school
during that momentous shift
in priorities
embraced space travel
as a symbol
of progress

   (Answers will vary.)

Activity Three—Sentence Combining:
5. Certainly the Apollo program was one side of a contest. The contest was political. The contest was a surrogate for war.

   Certainly the Apollo program was one side of a political contest, a surrogate for war.

6. Homer Hickam reflected later that night on Sputnik. Homer decided that he wanted to be a part of a noble dream. He considered space exploration a noble dream.

   Reflecting later that night on Sputnik, Homer Hickam decided that he wanted to be a part of what he considered a noble dream of space exploration.

Activity Four—Sentence Expanding:

   It was a first step beyond this planet,  / (19).

   Answers and word counts will vary

   As a 15-year-old, I sat with friends on the hood of a car on the night of July 20, 1969, / (13).

   Answers and word counts will vary
Sentence Composing Activities  
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Sentences are made up of grammatical units called phrases and clauses. These grammatical units can often be arranged in different ways to create grammatically correct sentences, but rearranging the elements sometimes changes the meanings of the sentences. Look, for example, at the following sentence:

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The first fifty years of space exploration were marked by fantastic dreams and a compelling sense of destiny in space.
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We could divide this sentence into grammatical units as follows:
- the first fifty years
- of space exploration
- were marked
- by fantastic dreams
- and a compelling sense
- of destiny
- in space

We could then combine these elements to make any number of other complete (and grammatical) sentences. Some examples might be:

- The first fifty years in space were marked by fantastic dreams of space exploration and a compelling sense of destiny.
- In space and a compelling sense, the first fifty years of destiny were marked by fantastic dreams of space exploration.
- By fantastic dreams in space and a compelling sense of space exploration were marked the first fifty years of destiny.

While the first of these sentences doesn’t say exactly what the original sentence said, it does make sense. The second one, however leaves the reader wondering just what the sentence is supposed to mean. The third sentence, while grammatically correct, really makes no sense. It is important, therefore, to be sure the grammatical units are arranged in ways that communicate clearly the ideas we want to convey to our readers. As you complete the following activities, keep these ideas in mind.

The following activities are patterned after models found in Sentence Composing for Middle School by Don Killgallon.
Activity One—Sentence Unscrambling: Unscramble the following sets of sentence parts to create one logical and grammatically correct sentence. Write your sentence in the space provided.

Example: among the nations and forward thinking as evidence of progress it also established spaceflight of the world

Unscrambled Sentence: It also established spaceflight as evidence of progress and forward thinking among the nations of the world.

1. and changed the world of a basketball-size satellite on October 4, 1957 the Soviet Union ushered in the “Space Age” with the launch

2. in the United States of excitement and worry the Space Age dawned with a mixture
Activity Two—Sentence Imitating: Write an original sentence that imitates each of the following sentences. Make all of your sentence parts match the grammatical units in the original sentences. Write your sentence in the space provided.

**Hint:** Before writing your sentence, divide the original sentence into grammatical units so you will know what kinds of phrases and clauses you should include in your own sentence.

**Example:** Hickam recalled seeing it in the nighttime sky over his West Virginia home.

`Hickam recalled`
`seeing it`
`in the nighttime sky`
`over his West Virginia home`

**Imitation Sentence:** Steve suggested buying fruit at the farmers’ market after the Labor Day parade.

3. Scientists and engineers congratulated their Soviet counterparts, but political and cultural leaders called attention to the menacing significance of the achievement.

4. The generation of Americans who were in school during that momentous shift in priorities embraced space travel as a symbol of progress.
Activity Three—Sentence Combining: By using what we have learned arranging about grammatical units within sentences, we can often combine several ideas into one more interesting and sophisticated sentence instead of using a series of short, choppy sentences. Combine the ideas in the following groups of sentences to create one logical, grammatically correct sentence. Write your sentence in the space provided.

Example:  
It reversed the image of the Soviet Union as a backwater.  
It placed the country on an international footing.  
This footing was near to that of the United States.

Combined Sentence: It reversed the image of the Soviet Union as a backwater and placed the country on an international footing near to that of the United States.

Hint: The first two sentences have the same subject (“It,” so it is logical to create a compound verb for that subject: It reversed and placed. The last sentence repeats and gives more information about the word “footing,” so it is logical to take the idea from that sentence and create a phrase modifying “footing.” Look for patterns like these when you combine the sentences below.

5. Certainly the Apollo program was one side of a contest.  
The contest was political.  
The contest was a surrogate for war.

6. Homer Hickam reflected later that night on Sputnik.  
Homer decided that he wanted to be a part of a noble dream.  
He considered space exploration a noble dream.
Activity Four—Sentence Expanding: This exercise allows us to create more interesting sentences by adding ideas to a relatively simple sentence. Complete the following sentences by adding your own words. Try to add approximately the number of words in parenthesis, and add these words at the slash mark, not at random places in the sentence. Write your sentence in the space provided, and be sure that you use grammatical units (phrases and clauses) correctly.

Example:
Sputnik signaled a perceived inferiority of American technological know-how, / (18).

Expanded Sentence Sputnik signaled a perceived inferiority of American technological know-how, but this perception only served to awaken American competitiveness, especially in the teaching of math and science in public schools. (20)

It was a first step beyond this planet, / (19).

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________________________________________

(word count: ________)

As a 15-year-old, I sat with friends on the hood of a car on the night of July 20, 1969, / (13).

________________________________________

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________________________________________

(word count: ________)
