



## Why is the Exercise Express activity *Stretch It* worth teachers' instructional time?

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The Exercise Express, found in every Build Skills and Word Experiences section of the Sourcebook, includes a variety of exercises and activities to encourage growth and development of spelling and language-related skills. *Stretch It* is one of the exercises designed to increase students' levels of writing sophistication by providing instruction and practice with sentence expansion. It also provides students with the opportunity to practice writing, spelling, and proofreading.

In *Stretch It*, students are taught how to take a "bare-bones" sentence and embellish it to create a more informative and interesting sentence. To ensure student success, *Stretch It* should initially be modeled by the teacher. Here's an example:

- 🍎 The animals were outside.  
(What animals?)
- 🍎 The circus animals were outside.  
(Where outside?)
- 🍎 The circus animals were outside the Big Tent.  
(Why were they outside?)
- 🍎 The circus animals were housed outside the Big Tent.  
(What were they housed in?)
- 🍎 The circus animals were housed outside the Big Tent in elaborately decorated cages.

Another benefit of *Stretch It* is that it can be completed independently, in cooperative groups, or in a carousel format (each student contributes to the sentence). A teacher-made *Stretch It* chart may also be used to guide students through the activity. Suggested guide words might include who, what, where, when, why, how, size, and color.

With today's focus on assessing writing skills, embodied in both state and standardized tests (such as the SAT), keep in mind that *Stretch It* provides a valuable learning experience that can help students further improve upon these required skills.