Parent Resource: Mad Lib Activity

What is a Mad Lib?
A Mad Lib is a popular children’s writing activity where a person fills in blanks to complete a story. Each of these blanks are labeled as different parts of speech (see above). The person must then write in a word that correlates to the given part of speech. This activity helps to engage students to learn and understand the parts of speech in an exciting and creative way. After the Mad Lib is completed, the person can choose to share their story with others and more than likely laugh out loud. These stories may shy away from common stories where a certain logic is followed, but that is the fun in it. Be creative!

How to Create Your Own Mad Lib
1. Create your own short, paragraph-long story.
   a. Try to make the story simple and straightforward to ensure most of the parts of speech are utilized.
   b. A good technique would be to center each story around a specific topic, i.e. fishing, going to the zoo, etc.
2. Go through the story and take out the parts of speech that are being focused on.
3. Once the parts of speech are taken out, read through the story again and write/type under each blank what part of speech needs to be used.
   a. It is okay to get more specific with what part of speech is used. For instance, if the word “running” is used in the original story, underneath would be written “verb ending in –ing.” Or, if a specific type of noun is required, such as a “vehicle”, an “animal”, or a “kitchen utensil,” then those would be used instead of just writing “noun.”
4. Complete the Mad Lib before using it as an activity to make sure that it works properly.

Need to Know Definitions: Parts of Speech
- **Noun:** Person, place, thing, or idea.
  - Examples: Sister, home, car, happiness
- **Pronoun:** A word that takes the place of a noun, but does not specify the noun.
  - Examples: It, he, she, they, this
- **Proper noun:** Specific person, place, thing, or idea
  - Examples: George Washington, Wal-Mart, The Titanic
- **Verb:** Word that describes the action of a noun
  - Examples: Sleep, run, hide
- **Adverb:** Word that describes a verb; usually ends in -ly
  - Examples: Quickly, sadly, lazily
- **Preposition:** Word that describes the location of a noun or the relation of one noun to another noun
  - Examples: Under, in, on, over
- **Adjective:** Word that describes a noun
  - Examples: Tall, sad, lazy

Example of a Created-By-Hand Mad Lib
Before:
In a town called Dearborn, Sarah went walking through the forest one day. On her way, she encountered a humongous bear. The bear was very hungry. The bear growled at Sarah and she became scared. She jumped into a bush and her chips fell out of her bag. The bear took the chips and left.

After:
In a town called ________, _________ went ________ through the _________ one day. On her way, she encountered a(n) ________ _______. The ________ was very ________. The ________ _______ at ________ and she became ________. She ________ into a ________ and her ________ fell out of her _________. The ________ took the ________ and left.

Ideas on How to Challenge Students
After students have become accustomed to the formula of a Mad Lib, things may eventually become somewhat stale. However, to counteract this, there is a very simple solution. Creating certain requirements for the words being used in a Mad Lib can help to not only refresh a student’s love for Mad Libs, but also to develop their critical thinking skills. For instance, the student can only implement words that start with a certain letter, rhyme with a certain word, or have a certain quality.

Benefits of Doing Mad Libs
Mad Libs are beneficial for more than just educational reasons. They advocate for creativity in writing, something that is sadly missing from many school writing curricula. A sizable handful of students in an average classroom will talk at great lengths about their disdain for writing. This is incredibly unfortunate, as writing is one of the tools that they are granted to share their personal thoughts and get their creative juices flowing. Mad Libs, with its simplistic design and easy-to-follow rules, promotes writing to students as a way for them to share their creativity and uniqueness with the world.

On the educational side of things, Mad Libs still have several important benefits to offer young writers. Firstly, and most obviously, they teach students about the different parts of speech and how to structure sentences using these parts of speech. This could be especially helpful for children whose first language is not English, or, conversely, be formatted to be written in another language besides English and teach the syntax of that language. As previously mentioned, Mad Libs also help students to develop critical thinking skills. Having to be creative given certain parameters can result in some very uncommon and unexpected answers that may just surprise you. Students will likely strive on an intrinsic level to think of wackier and crazier things to put into the Mad Libs they complete, and all the while be developing the expertise to think critically and creatively while writing. And the best part is that students won’t even realize they’re learning!