**Ideas for Grammar and Composition, Grades 7-9:**

* Give each student a composition notebook and give them a writing prompt every day; have them identify certain elements of grammar in their writing; randomly choose one to read to the class; type some of them up occasionally without the author’s name, then let the class peer review the piece
* Do more work together in class and give less homework
* Do diagraming on the board
* Read a story at least once a week and have students stand up or raise their hand when they hear a certain part of speech; read through a book together and then write a book report collectively
* Do mad libs in class
* Make teams and do competitions
* Leave out parts of the grammar book and be sure to mark out the appropriate section of the test
* Play an ongoing “penny, please” game for grammar usage at school
* Hand out a funny or interesting paragraph/story and have students identify subjects and verbs, adjectives, prepositional phrases, etc.; material available online at the Gutenberg.org online library—see children’s literature category (one good resource is *Beautiful Stories from Shakespeare)*

*Some game ideas from Lynell Nolt:*

**The Diagramming Game**—a game I invented and used with 7th-10th.  They enjoyed it, and [best of all, in my opinion] they were actually learning—my slowest students finally began to improve in their diagramming abilities.  Here’s how it works:

I divided them into 4 teams of 4-5 people per team.  Each team used a section of whiteboard and shared one marker.  Every person was carrying their own worksheet of sentences, either a page torn from their grammar book or an extra practice sheet I’d given them.  The sentences were already “marked”—subjects underlined once, verbs underlined twice, complements (DO/IO/PN/PA) labeled, prepositional phrases in parentheses, etc.

The first person on the team drew a diagram I described [without knowing which sentence I was describing].  For instance, “It has a subject, verb, and compound direct object.  There is an adjective under the second direct object, a prepositional phrase under the subject, and the prepositional phrase has two adjectives.”  Once everyone had identical blank diagrams, I said, “It is sentence number…3.  Go!”

It was then a relay race to fill in the diagram, with each person writing one word and then passing the marker to the next person.  If someone made a mistake or didn’t know what to write, a team member was allowed to tell them what to write, but they had to say why that word went there—for instance, “Put ‘ball’ there because it is the object of preposition.”  Once the team was done, they all sat down on the floor.  [This gave a clear signal when they were done, and most importantly, allowed me to see past them to their diagram!]

When everyone was seated, I quickly checked their diagrams, and every team that was correct got one point, with the first team getting a bonus point.  We’d play for 10 minutes or so at the end of class, and get through 3-5 sentences.

You can do this with however many parts of speech they have covered so far.  I taught prepositional phrases first, and you can actually start playing it at that point, with them randomly drawing two or three disconnected prepositional phrases and filling them in.  [I usually taught them that whatever words are not the preposition or the OP are adjectives and go underneath, so they would have 2-5 words per phrase.]

I had them draw the blank diagrams before the relay started so that the diagrams were neat and clear.  In addition, I believe this was one of the reasons the slower students made progress with this game—they began to realize that there really IS some rhyme and reason to how diagrams are set up—it’s not just a sporadic guessing game.  After playing the game several times, some of the teammates who were waiting while the diagrams were being drawn began whispering together and guessing which sentence I was describing.  If they asked me, I gave them no indication whether they were right or not, but I was smiling inside, because it meant they understood the logic of diagramming so well that they could take a blank diagram and figure out which sentence would fit!  

**The Parts of Speech Game**:  I wanted my students to be able to automatically identify certain words when they appear in sentences, particularly prepositions, conjunctions, pronouns, and the being & helping verbs.  Some of my students were confusing them, so I developed this game.

I wrote the lists of commonly used words on index cards.  [See the attached document for my lists.  Each student received a copy of this at the beginning of the year and was supposed to either tape it inside the cover of his/her grammar book, or else were to fold it in half and use it as a bookmark.]  I divided the class into two teams, and they were allowed to have their “Words Worth Knowing” paper with them while they waited in line so they could study, but when they got to the front, they weren’t allowed to look.  Then I used the words as flashcards, and they raced to say the part of speech (prep/conj/pro/etc.).  The first person to say the part of speech could try for a bonus point (not racing) if he/she could correctly identify which kind of pronoun (personal, relative, etc.) or conjunction or verb it was.  If the first person was wrong in identifying the specific kind, then the other person got a chance for the bonus point, and if they were both wrong, I told them and moved on.

Again, this was a game that could be played for 5-10 minutes at the end of class, and I kept the game moving as quickly as possible.

**Words Worth Knowing**

Prepositions (location, direction, time/duration, agency/means, cause, association, opposition/exception…)

aboard

about

above

across

after

against

along

amid

among

around

as

at

before

behind

below

beneath

beside

between

beyond

but

by

despite

down

during

except

for

from

in

inside

into

like

near

of

off

on

onto

out

outside

over

past

since

through

throughout

till

to

toward(s)

under

underneath

until

unto

up

upon

with

within

without

Compound Prepositions (see meanings above)

according to

along with

apart from

as for

because of

by means of

by way of

due to

except for

in front of

in spite of

instead of

in view of

on account of

out of

regardless of

with regard to

Coordinating Conjunctions (the “normal” six)

Correlative Conjunctions (the pairs)

and

but

or

nor

for

yet

both—and

either—or

neither—nor

not only—but also

Subordinating Conjunctions (introduce dependent clauses)

after

although

as

as if

as much as

as long as

as soon as

as though

because

before

even if

even though

however

if

inasmuch as

in order that

lest

now that

once

provided that

since

so

so that

than

that

though

till

unless

until

when

whenever

where

whereas

wherever

whether

while

whither

Verbs (\*\*linking or helping, \*sometimes linking, helping)

\*\*am

\*\*is

\*\*are

\*\*was

\*\*were

\*\*be

\*\*being

\*\*been

\*taste

\*feel

\*smell

\*sound

\*look

\*appear

\*become

\*seem

\*grow

\*remain

\*stay

have

has

had

do

does

did

shall

will

should

would

may

might

must

can

could

Personal Pronouns

Reflexive/Intensive Pronouns

I, me, my, mine

you/thou/thee, your/thy, yours/thine

he, him, his, she, her, hers, it, its

we, us, our, ours

you, he, your, yours

they, them, their, theirs

myself

yourself

thyself

himself

herself

itself

ourselves

yourselves

themselves

Indefinite Pronouns (singular \*plural \*\*either)

Demonstrative

Interrogative

Relative

each

either

neither

one

everyone

everybody

no one

nobody

anyone

anybody

someone

somebody

\*both

\*few

\*several

\*many

\*\*some

\*\*any

\*\*none

\*\*all

\*\*most

this

that

these

those

who

whom

whose

which

what

who

whom

whose

which

that