1. **Focus**

**Explain Sentence Structure**

**Say:** We follow grammar and punctuation rules when we write. These rules hold our sentences together, and they help us communicate more clearly with our readers. If we made up our own rules, we wouldn't be able to understand each other. We must follow some rules all of the time. For example, we always need to put end punctuation at the end of our sentences. If we didn’t do this consistently, readers would be very confused. They would have to figure out where our sentences began and ended. However, some rules are not as rigid as others. For example, you may have learned that you are not supposed to begin a sentence with *and* or *but*. Today I’m going to show you when it is acceptable to begin sentences with *and* or *but*.

**Model Using And or But to Begin Sentences**

Display the modeling text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

**Objectives**

In this mini-lesson, students will:

- Learn about contexts in which it is acceptable to break sentence structure rules and begin sentences with *and* or *but*.
- Practice using *and* and *but* at the beginning of sentences.
- Discuss how they can apply this strategy to their independent writing.

**Preparation**

**Materials Needed**

- Chart paper and markers
- Interactive whiteboard resources

**Advanced Preparation**

If you will not be using the interactive whiteboard resources, copy the modeling and practice texts onto chart paper prior to the mini-lesson.

**Modeling Text**

After example 1. **Say:** In example 1, Jamal tells Luke that he’s not hiding anything. By beginning the third sentence with *but*, the writer hints that Jamal isn’t telling the truth. *But* is a good word choice here. A word such as *however* or *although* would make the sentence sound less like storytelling and more like formal writing.

After example 2. **Say:** Here is a sentence that begins with *and*. It sounds just right to me. It adds to the flow of the “conversation” between Ms. Tilly and the dog, and it helps show that Ms. Tilly is being kind to the dog. If the writer had not started the sentence with *and*, the exchange would have sounded less like a conversation. In both examples, starting sentences with *but* or *and* breaks some grammar rules, but using these words helps make sentences sound more natural.
**Say:** In fiction, writers can be more flexible. Sometimes writers use **and** or **but** to emphasize a point. Sometimes they use it because they want dialogue to sound the way people really talk.

### 2. Rehearse

**Practice Writing Sentences That Begin with *And* or *But***

Display the practice text on chart paper or using the interactive whiteboard resources.

| “I have to feed my dog and take out the garbage. You can come over after that.”
| “Don’t forget to feed my fish. Remember to walk my dog.”

**Practice Text**

Ask students to work with a partner to decide where they might add **and** or **but** to begin sentences in the practice text. Students should think about the meaning of the sentences and where the words **and** or **but** fit the best and sound most natural. Also ask partners to compose their own example of text that includes a sentence beginning with **and** or **but**. Students should write down their new sentences and be prepared to share their ideas with the class.

**Share Practice Sentences**

Bring students together and invite partners to read aloud their sentences and explain how they changed the sentences to begin with **but** and **and**. Record students’ sentences and post these as models for students to use as they write their own realistic fiction stories.

### Strategies to Support ELs

**Beginning**

Beginning ELs are still learning to articulate complete sentences in English. While other students work with partners, or during independent writing time, work with students to orally generate complete sentences, for example: **I have a pencil, Jamal has a dog, and The kids walk home.** Write students’ sentences on chart paper and reread them with students.

**Intermediate and Advanced**

Pair ELs with fluent English speakers during the above partner activity.

### 3. Independent Writing and Conferring

**Say:** We learned that sometimes it is acceptable to break the sentence structure rule that says we shouldn’t begin a sentence with **but** or **and**. Starting a sentence with **but** or **and** can help grab the reader’s attention or emphasize a point. But, remember, don’t overdo it, or your writing will sound choppy.

Encourage students to think about using **and** or **but** to begin sentences as they draft or revise their writing during independent writing time, as appropriate. During student conferences, reinforce students’ use of this and other strategies using the prompts on your conferring flip chart.

### 4. Share

Bring students together. Invite a few students who have used **And** or **But** effectively at the beginning of a sentence to share their sentences with classmates.