

The Sentence Book

Second Edition

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Preface

The purpose of the second edition of *The Sentence Book* remains the same as the first: to help students learn to write clear, well-organized sentences. Students are guided step-by-step through mastery of the basic parts of the sentence and then are taught how to avoid the pitfalls of much student writing. Each element of the sentence, from the simple subject to the simple predicate through subject, predicate, and pronoun agreement, is discussed in a separate unit. Familiar problems, like the sentence fragment and the run-on sentence, are also treated in individual units. This presentation, which is simple, flexible, and employs traditional terminology, allows *The Sentence Book* to be used as a core text in composition courses or as a supplement to review grammar and composition. But above all, *The Sentence Book* is a writing book, not a fill-in-the-blanks book. From the beginning, students write their own sentences and, later on, build strings of exercise sentences into narrative or descriptive paragraphs. One instructor congratulates his students for being co-authors with me, because by the end of the term they have written almost as much in the book as I have. This is only fair, since the book is for writers, and what it teaches is writing.

The second edition reinforces this emphasis on writing with new instruction in proofreading the sentence and the paragraph. In the section on proofreading the sentence, students are taught how to review their work and improve it, while in the section on proofreading the paragraph they learn how to achieve unity and coherence in larger units of writing. A new section on sentence combining and sentence analysis brings together the principles of the book and shows how they can be used to create clear sentences. Also included in this edition are units on sentence patterning and learning from the writing of professionals. In these units, students are asked to write sentences that fulfill specific models in order to demonstrate the effectiveness of sentence variety and the placement of important elements of meaning within a sentence. The opportunity to analyze the sentence patterns of good writers helps students

see the usefulness of learning the basic parts of the sentence. By following these methods, students often surprise themselves with the professional quality of their writing.

As in the first edition, Punctuation Pointers appear throughout the text and treat common punctuation problems. This results in teaching punctuation where it is pertinent, a method that is pedagogically more effective than treating it in an isolated chapter. Pointers on composition also treat specific issues, such as the difference between the restrictive and nonrestrictive clause, as they arise.

Although the progressive nature of *The Sentence Book* allows for self-instruction, the book is best used in the classroom where the instructor can reinforce basic principles and clarify difficult points. Students can then take advantage of the numerous opportunities provided throughout the text to review their own writing in light of these basic principles. In addition, three tests, which may be used in any of several ways, are supplied at the end of the book. The first is a diagnostic test designed to help instructor and student see which areas treated by the book will need the closest and most immediate attention. The second test examines students for their understanding of the principles developed in Section I: Basic Parts and Basic Problems. The third test focuses on the construction of clauses and phrases covered in Section II: Principles of Subordination. The tests can all be used as diagnostic tests, or as achievement tests, or, if the instructor does not wish to use them as tests, they can be used to supplement the exercise material in the book itself.

A great many people have contributed to this revision. Some have written detailed reviews that have proved invaluable. For their help I would like to thank: Richard H. Anderson, Hartnell College, Salinas, California; Thomas Bonner, Jr., Xavier University of Louisiana; Michael Clark, University of Michigan; Patrick W. Conner, West Virginia University; Elizabeth F. Cooper, University of Houston, Downtown College; Rosalie Hewitt, Northern Illinois University; Terese C. Karmel, Eastern Connecticut State College; James Mackillop, State University College, Utica, New York; and David Van Becker, San Jose State University. Others have worked with me in the University of Connecticut Summer Program, which was the inspiration for the first edition of the book. Their advice has been immeasurably helpful. Finally, a special thanks to Judith Davis Miller, who used *The Sentence Book* in the program, and who helped produce this revision. In many ways, her insights and her work were instrumental in making this revision possible.

Lee A. Jacobus

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SECTION I

Basic Parts and Basic Problems

1 The Simple Subject

Every complete sentence has at least two parts: the simple subject and the simple predicate (a verb whose action is complete). The simple subject can be the single word or words that name the main person, place, thing, or idea of the sentence. Usually we find the subject at the beginning of the sentence rather than at the end. Therefore most sentences we write and speak look like this:

subject	+	predicate
---------	---	-----------

This pattern is basic to English speech and English writing and should be mastered quickly.

The simple subject is always a noun or a pronoun. Nouns can be identified in three basic ways.

The proper noun

Since the subject is the name of something, any proper name (the name of a specific person, place, or thing) can be the subject of a sentence.

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Tammy Wynette | 6. Joseph Anthony Rosado |
| 2. John Wayne | 7. Aunt Helen |
| 3. Rita | 8. Henry Ford |
| 4. Henry Kissinger | 9. Anwar Sadat |
| 5. Reggie Jackson | 10. Chris Evert |

There are other kinds of proper names that can serve as the simple subject of a sentence. The following list gives names of movies, buildings, poems, plays, short stories, books, TV shows, businesses, and institutions.

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| 1. <i>Star Wars</i> | 6. <i>Guinness Book of World Records</i> |
| 2. <i>Gone with the Wind</i> | 7. The Bank of America |
| 3. <i>A Raisin in the Sun</i> | 8. Manchester Community College |
| 4. "The Pit and the Pendulum" | 9. "Casey at the Bat" |
| 5. Shea Stadium | 10. <i>The Carol Burnett Show</i> |

► PUNCTUATION POINTER

The examples above show that the first letter of each word of a proper name is capitalized. The shorter words in a title, such as "in" or "the," are not capitalized unless they come first or last. The names

of books, films, and TV shows are in italics, as in this example: *Star Wars*; poems and short stories are enclosed in quotation marks: "Casey at the Bat," "The Lottery."

In the following spaces, give the proper names of any people, movies, books, TV shows, buildings, places, businesses, or schools you have heard about.

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

Now take a minute to see if you have used capitals where they are needed and have underlined the names of books, movies, and TV shows. Be sure you have used quotation marks for short stories and poems.

The common noun

There are many names of things and activities that are not proper nouns. These nouns name a thing or an activity that you can see, hear, taste, touch, or smell, but they do not pertain only to a single person or thing. For instance, Ralph Ellison is the name of a specific man, not a general group of men; but Ellison is a writer, and the word "writer" is a common noun, since it is a name given to many people. The list below offers some common nouns, all of which can be used as simple subjects in a sentence.

- | | |
|------------|-------------------|
| 1. cowboys | 6. television set |
| 2. stairs | 7. joke |
| 3. music | 8. olive oil |
| 4. perfume | 9. passageway |
| 5. stories | 10. remarks |

► PUNCTUATION POINTER

A common noun does not need a capital letter at its beginning because it names a general class of things. Nor does it require italics.

Add your own common nouns in the spaces provided below. Be sure each is the name of a thing or an activity you can see, hear, taste, touch, or smell, and that it is not a name that is given only to a single person or thing.

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

Now check to see that you have not capitalized any of these common nouns.

The abstract noun

The nouns we have been discussing are names given to people, places, or things that can be seen or heard. Even businesses are in a given place and hire workers who work in buildings with the business name on them. But when we describe things that cannot be seen or heard or in any way observed directly by our five senses, we are describing something that is abstract. The word “abstract” only means that we are talking about something that can be thought of or felt emotionally, but that cannot be seen in the way we can see a person or an object or a film. Yet even abstract things, such as human emotions or words that describe a condition of people or things, can be nouns, and in turn can be simple subjects. Following is a list of emotions or conditions of people or things. Like common nouns, abstract nouns are not capitalized unless they begin a sentence.

- | | |
|---------------|-----------------|
| 1. love | 6. freedom |
| 2. irritation | 7. longing |
| 3. surprise | 8. privacy |
| 4. hesitancy | 9. courtesy |
| 5. envy | 10. destruction |