

SENTENCE SKILLS

A Workbook for Writers

6th Edition

FORM A



J o h n L a n g a n

SENTENCE SKILLS

A Workbook for Writers

SIXTH EDITION

FORM A

JOHN LANGAN

Atlantic Community College



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SENTENCE SKILLS: A WORKBOOK FOR WRITERS, FORM A,

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SPELLING LIST

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CHECKLIST OF SENTENCE SKILLS

Use the questions below when checking a paper for sentence-skills mistakes. If you can answer yes to all the questions, your sentences should be clear and error-free.

The numbers in parentheses refer to the pages that explain the skill in question. Also given are correction symbols your instructor may use in marking your papers.

Ab	Words written out rather than abbreviated? (229)
Agr	Possible agreement errors checked? (147, 168)
Ad	Adjectives and adverbs used correctly? (189, 191)
Apos	Apostrophes used correctly? (236)
Cap	Capital letters used correctly? (219)
Cliché	Clichés eliminated? (320)
Comma	Commas used correctly? (257)
Comp	Comparisons used correctly? (189)
DM	Dangling modifiers eliminated? (202)
Frag	Fragments eliminated? (93)
MM	Misplaced modifiers eliminated? (196)
Ms	Paper format correct? (214)
//	Faulty parallelism eliminated? (208)
Pro	Pronoun errors eliminated? (166, 177)
Quote	Quotation marks used correctly? (247)
R-O	Run-on sentences eliminated? (111)
Semi	Semicolons used correctly? (117, 272)
Slang	Slang eliminated? (318)
Sp	Possible spelling errors checked? (286, 299)
Verb	Verbs used correctly? (127, 136, 147, 155, 158)
Wordy	Needless words eliminated? (323)
Var	Sentences varied? (461, 473)
^	All words and letters included? (294)

About The Author

John Langan has taught reading and writing at Atlantic Community College near Atlantic City, New Jersey, for over twenty years. The author of a popular series of college textbooks on both subjects, he enjoys the challenge of developing materials that teach skills in an especially clear and lively way. Before teaching, he earned advanced degrees in writing at Rutgers University and in reading at Glassboro State College. He also spent a year writing fiction that, he says, “is now at the back of a drawer waiting to be discovered and acclaimed posthumously.” While in school, he supported himself by working as a truck driver, machinist, battery assembler, hospital attendant, and apple packer. He presently lives with his wife, Judith Nadell, near Philadelphia. Among his everyday pleasures are running, working on his Macintosh computer, and watching Philadelphia sports teams on TV. He also loves to read: newspapers at breakfast, magazines at lunch, and a chapter or two of a recent book (“preferably an autobiography”) at night.

To the Instructor

Sentence Skills will help students learn to write effectively. It includes a basic rhetoric as well as full attention to grammar, punctuation, mechanics, and usage skills.

The book contains nine distinctive features to aid instructors and their students:

- 1 **Coverage of basic writing skills is exceptionally thorough.** The book pays special attention to fragments, run-ons, verbs, and other areas where students have serious problems. At the same time, a glance at the table of contents shows that the book treats skills (such as dictionary use and spelling improvement) not found in other texts. In addition, parts of the book are devoted to the basics of effective writing, to practice in editing and proofreading, and to achieving variety in sentence writing.
- 2 **The book has a clear and flexible format.** It is organized in four easy-to-use parts. Part One is a guide to the goals of effective writing followed by a series of activities to help students practice and master those goals. Part Two is a comprehensive treatment of the rules of grammar, mechanics, punctuation, and usage needed for clear writing. Part Three provides a series of mastery, proofreading, and editing tests to reinforce the sentence skills presented in Part Two. Part Four describes methods for writing varied and interesting sentences.

Since parts, sections, and chapters are self-contained, instructors can move easily from, for instance, a rhetorical principle or writing assignment in Part One to a grammar rule in Part Two to a mastery test in Part Three to a combining activity in Part Four.
- 3 **Students learn sentence skills within a writing context.** Researchers of writing have shown that students learn grammar and mechanics skills best within the context of actual writing assignments. Part One of the book therefore begins with the basic principles of paragraph and essay writing and provides a series of topics for writing. The remaining parts of the book present sentence skills as customs or conventions of English that students should master to help them better express their ideas.

- 4 **Practice activities are numerous.** Most skills are reinforced by activities, review tests, and mastery tests, as well as tests in the *Instructor's Manual*. For many of the skills in the book, there are over one hundred practice sentences.
- 5 **Practice materials are varied and lively.** In many basic writing texts, exercises are monotonous and dry, causing students to lose interest in the skills presented. In *Sentence Skills*, many exercises involve students in various ways. An inductive opening project allows students to see what they already know about a given skill. Within chapters, students may be asked to underline answers, add words, generate their own sentences, or edit passages. And the lively and engaging practice materials and readings in the book both maintain interest and help students appreciate the value of vigorous details in writing.
- 6 **Terminology is kept to a minimum.** In general, rules are explained using words students already know. A clause is a *word group*; a coordinating conjunction is a *joining word*; a nonrestrictive element is an *interrupter*. At the same time, traditional grammatical terms are mentioned briefly for students who learned them somewhere in the past and are comfortable seeing them again.
- 7 **Self-teaching is encouraged.** Students may check their answers to the introductory projects and the practice activities in Part Two by referring to the answers in Appendix B. In this way, they are given the responsibility for teaching themselves. At the same time, to ensure that the answer key is used as a learning tool only, answers are *not* given for the review tests in Part Two or for any of the reinforcement tests in Part Three. These answers appear in the *Annotated Instructor's Edition* and the *Instructor's Manual*; they can be copied and handed out to students at the discretion of the instructor.
- 8 **Diagnostic and achievement tests are provided.** These tests appear in Appendix A of the book. Each test may be given in two parts, the second of which provides instructors with a particularly detailed picture of a student's skill level.
- 9 **Valuable learning aids accompany the book.** The *Annotated Instructor's Edition* includes answers for all the activities and tests. The comprehensive *Instructor's Manual* contains (1) a complete set of additional mastery tests, (2) a model syllabus along with suggestions for teaching the course, and (3) an answer key. The manual is 8½ by 11 inches, so that the answer pages and the added mastery tests can be conveniently reproduced on copying machines. Another learning aid is a software disk to help students review and practice many of the skills in the text. Finally, instructors have at their disposal McGraw-Hill's *Allwrite!*—a high-interest, interactive grammar tutorial program on CD-ROM.

CHANGES IN THE NEW EDITION

The helpful comments of writing instructors who have used previous versions of *Sentence Skills* have prompted a major change in the new edition. The book now begins with a guide to the basic principles of writing, followed by a series of activities to help students practice and master those goals. Here are features of this new part of the book:

- **Attention to attitude.** In its opening pages, the book helps students recognize and deal with their attitude about writing. Attitude is shown to be an important part of learning to write well.
- **Focus on four basic goals in writing.** After looking at an effective model paper, students learn the four basic steps they should take to write effectively.
- **Emphasis on process.** Students are then shown that writing is a process, and that a paper typically begins with one or more prewriting strategies and proceeds through an outline and a series of drafts and revisions that continue up to a final proofreading.
- **Treatment of both the paragraph and the essay.** A model paragraph is expanded into an essay as part of helping students learn the basics of both paragraph and essay writing.
- **A sequence of learning activities.** The second chapter in Part One contains a carefully designed sequence of interesting activities that help students learn and master the principles of effective writing, one step at a time.
- **Spotlight on specific details.** In particular, the activities will help students understand the nature of specific details and how to generate those details. As writing instructors well know, learning how to write concretely is a key stage for students to master in becoming effective writers.

Along with the new Part One, changes in other parts of the text include an updating and upgrading of practice materials. In particular, a number of multicultural names have been added to better represent the diversity of students using the book. Moreover, a guide to how students can work with and learn from each other in a collaborative way has been added to the introduction to the book.

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John Langan

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Introduction: Learning Sentence Skills

WHY LEARN SENTENCE SKILLS?

Why should someone planning a career as a nurse have to learn sentence skills? Why should an accounting major have to pass a competency test in grammar as part of a college education? Why should a potential physical therapist or graphic artist or computer programmer have to spend hours learning the rules of English? Perhaps you asked questions like these when you found yourself in a class with this book. On the other hand, perhaps you *know* you need to strengthen basic writing skills, even though you may be unclear about the specific ways the skills will be of use to you. Whatever your views, you should understand why sentence skills—all the rules that make up standard English—are so important.

Clear Communication

Standard English, or “language by the book,” is needed to communicate your thoughts to others with a minimal amount of distortion and misinterpretation. Knowing the traditional rules of grammar, punctuation, and usage will help you write clear sentences when communicating with others. You may have heard of the party game in which one person whispers a message to the next person; the message is passed, in turn, along a line of several other people. By the time the last person in line is asked to give the message aloud, it is usually so garbled and inaccurate that it barely resembles the original. Written communication in some form of English other than standard English carries the same potential for disaster.

To see how important standard English is to written communication, examine the pairs of sentences on the following pages and answer the questions in each case.

1. Which sentence indicates that there might be a plot against Ted?
 - a. We should leave Ted. These fumes might be poisonous.
 - b. We should leave, Ted. These fumes might be poisonous.
2. Which sentence encourages self-mutilation?
 - a. Leave your paper and hand in the dissecting kit.
 - b. Leave your paper, and hand in the dissecting kit.
3. Which sentence indicates that the writer has a weak grasp of geography?
 - a. As a child, I lived in Lake Worth, which is close to Palm Beach and Alaska.
 - b. As a child, I lived in Lake Worth, which is close to Palm Beach, and Alaska.
4. In which sentence does the dog warden seem dangerous?
 - a. Foaming at the mouth, the dog warden picked up the stray.
 - b. Foaming at the mouth, the stray was picked up by the dog warden.
5. Which announcer was probably fired from the job?
 - a. Outside the Academy Awards theater, the announcer called the guests names as they arrived.
 - b. Outside the Academy Awards theater, the announcer called the guests' names as they arrived.
6. On the basis of the opening lines below of two students' exam essays, which student seems likely to earn a higher grade?
 - a. Defense mechanisms is the way people hides their inner feelings and deals with stress. There is several types that we use to be protecting our true feelings.
 - b. Defense mechanisms are the methods people use to cope with stress. Using a defense mechanism allows a person to hide his or her real desires and goals.
7. On the basis of the following lines taken from two English papers, which student seems likely to earn a higher grade?
 - a. A big problem on this campus is apathy, students don't participate in college activities. Such as clubs, student government, and plays.
 - b. The most pressing problem on campus is the disgraceful state of the student lounge area. The floor is dirty, the chairs are torn, and the ceiling leaks.

8. On the basis of the following sentences taken from two employees' reports, which worker is more likely to be promoted?
 - a. The spring line failed by 20 percent in the meeting of projected profit expectations. Which were issued in January of this year.
 - b. Profits from our spring line were disappointing. They fell 20 percent short of January's predictions.
9. On the basis of the following paragraphs taken from two job application letters, which job prospect would you favor?
 - a. Let me say in closing that their are an array of personal qualities I have presented in this letter, together, these make me hopeful of being interviewed for this attractive position.
sincerely yours'
Brian Davis
 - b. I feel I have the qualifications needed to do an excellent job as assistant manager of the jewelry department at Horton's. I look forward to discussing the position further at a personal interview.
Sincerely yours,
Richard O'Keeney

In each case, the first choice (a) contains sentence-skills mistakes. These mistakes range from missing or misplaced commas to misspellings to wordy or pretentious language. As a result of these mistakes, clear communication cannot occur—and misunderstandings, lower grades, and missed job opportunities are probable results. The point, then, is that all the rules that make up standard written English should be a priority if you want your writing to be clear and effective.

Success in College

Standard English is essential if you want to succeed in college. Any report, paper, review, essay exam, or assignment you are responsible for should be written in the best standard English you can produce. If not, it won't matter how fine your ideas are or how hard you worked—most likely, you will receive a lower grade than you would otherwise deserve. In addition, because standard English requires you to express your thoughts in precise, clear sentences, training yourself to follow the rules can help you think more logically. And the basic logic you learn to practice at the sentence level will help as you work to produce well-reasoned papers in all your subjects.