

**Essay
and letter writing**

L. G. ALEXANDER

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LONGMAN GROUP LIMITED
London

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First published 1965
Seventeenth impression 1979

ISBN 0 582 52303 6

Printed in Singapore by
Kyodo-Shing Loong Printing Industries Pte Ltd

Foreword

THE AIM OF THIS BOOK is to provide the overseas teacher and student with a wide variety of suitable material for essay work and letter-writing, together with simple instructions on how to go about it. The subject-matter is so arranged that the student will be able to work systematically at the *writing* of English over a long period. The teacher, too, will have at his disposal a great number of exercises and topics so that he can keep a close check on the written work of his pupils.

The first chapter presupposes that the student has covered the main difficulties in elementary grammar and has acquired a limited active vocabulary, without actually having had any experience in expressing himself in continuous prose. Two to three years should be spent on Part 1 which brings the student up to the level of the English Language paper of the Cambridge First Certificate in English examination. A further two years should be devoted to Part 2 which goes well beyond the requirements of the Cambridge Proficiency in English examination and should be found suitable for students doing advanced work in the writing of English as a foreign language.

L. G. A.

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Part 1 Chapter 1

The sentence

Types

No matter how many ideas it may contain, a sentence must always express a complete thought. There are three types of sentence: *simple*, *compound*, and *complex*.

The *Simple Sentence* expresses one idea only. It has one subject and one predicate. Example:

The man (subject) knocked at the door (predicate).

The *Compound Sentence* contains more than one idea. In this type of sentence all the ideas expressed have an equal value. Example:

The man knocked at the door and waited for an answer.

The *Complex Sentence* contains one main idea (called the 'main clause') and one or more secondary ideas (called 'subordinate clauses').

Example:

As soon as he arrived at the house (subordinate clause) the man knocked at the door (main clause).

Joining sentences

The words which are used to combine sentences are called 'conjunctions'. In the exercises that follow you will practise some of the main ways in which different ideas can be joined to make complete sentences.

COMPOUND SENTENCES The main conjunctions used to form compound sentences are: *and*, *but*, *yet*, *so*, *both ... and*, *either ... or*, *neither ... nor*, *not only ... but*.

Complete the following sentences by choosing one of the two words given in brackets.

- (a) (And, Both) my wife and I went out early yesterday.
- (b) (Or, Either) we will have to wait for them, or we will have to leave a message.
- (c) He neither took my advice (nor, or) his father's.

neither ... nor

Note that in the negative *both ... and* and *either ... or* become *neither ... nor*.

Exercise 1

Join the following pairs of sentences using the conjunctions given in brackets. When you have done so write similar sentences of your own.

1. He was in Italy last year. Now he has returned home. (*but*)
2. The talk on the radio was not amusing. It was not interesting. (*neither ... nor*)
3. He told me to leave. He told me never to call again. (*not only ... but*)
4. I have often invited him here. He has never come. (*yet*)
5. Hurry up. You will be late. (*or*)
6. The manager told him he must work hard. He must leave the firm. (*either ... or*)
7. She sent a present to my brother. She sent a present to me. (*both ... and*)
8. My mother lives abroad. My father lives abroad. (*both ... and*)
9. She finished her housework. She went out shopping. (*so/and*)
10. He does not eat too much. He does not drink too much. (*neither ... nor*)
11. He told me I could stay here. He told me I could go away. (*either ... or*)
12. I bought a new car last year. I am not satisfied with it. (*but*)
13. My wife will not go to the concert tonight. I will not to go the concert tonight. (*neither ... nor*)
14. He needs a new suit. He needs a new pair of shoes. (*not only ... but*)
15. I received your telegram. I received your letter. (*both ... and*)
16. We must score two more goals. We will lose the match. (*or*)
17. I forgot my umbrella. I had to return home. (*so/and*)
18. She bought very few things. She spent a lot of money. (*yet*)
19. He did not tell me the truth. I misunderstood him. (*either ... or*)
20. He learned how to read English. He learned how to write it. (*not only ... but*)

COMPLEX SENTENCES In the exercises that follow you will practise some of the main ways in which different ideas can be joined to make complex sentences.

Complete the following sentences by choosing one of the two words given in brackets.

- (a) The gardener (who, which) works here is very good.

- (b) The man (who, whom) you saw yesterday is my neighbour.
- (c) He has received the money (which, who) I sent him.
- (d) The men (who, whom) will be playing on Saturday all belong to our local club.

Exercise 2

Join the following pairs of sentences using the relative pronouns *who*, *whom*, *whose*, or *which* where necessary. When you have done so write similar sentences of your own.

1. Mr Jones bought a new house. He has furnished it beautifully.
2. I have been looking for this book everywhere. I have now found it.
3. There were a lot of people at the party. I had not met them before.
4. That is the man. I spoke to you about him last week.
5. The firemen went into the building. It was full of smoke.
6. I have a few relatives. They live in the country.
7. My sister's friend came to see me. Her parents died last year.
8. He worked at this factory all his life. This is the factory.
9. The vase was very valuable. My younger brother broke it.
10. A friend of mine will be coming tomorrow. I received a letter from him.
11. The man came to visit me. He has just arrived from the Far East.
12. There are several people here. I do not know their names.
13. Is he your friend? Did you go to the cinema with him yesterday?
14. He has sent me a number of letters. I haven't had time to answer them.
15. The elephants escaped from the circus. They have been caught.
16. The country house is very large. He lives in it during the summer.
17. The girl is our new secretary. You saw her a moment ago.
18. The actress lives next door. She is very famous.
19. The man had to pay a fine. His car was parked on the wrong side of the road.
20. He is a lazy student. I can never depend on him.

INDIRECT QUESTIONS Note that in sentences containing an indirect question the subject must always be placed before the verb.

Complete the following sentences by choosing one of the two phrases given in brackets.

- (a) I cannot remember (where did I leave, where I left) my coat.
- (b) He asked me (when would my brother, when my brother would) arrive.
- (c) You did not tell me (how much this cost, how much did this cost.)

Exercise 3

Join the following pairs of sentences using the words *when*, *what*, *where*, *why*, and *how* where they are needed. Make any other changes necessary. When you have completed this exercise write similar sentences of your own.

1. Why did he refuse to see me? You must find out.
2. I must leave now. I have already told you the reason.
3. How did you find out my address? Please tell me.
4. This is the shop. She bought her new hat at this shop.
5. When did you last hear from him? Write and let me know.
6. He wanted me to do something for him. He did not tell me what it was.
7. What did he tell you? I would like to know.
8. How many letters did you write to him? You cannot remember.
9. Did he leave the firm? Ask him why.
10. When did you buy this picture? You must surely remember.
11. He asked me to meet him at a certain place. This is the place.
12. How did he recognize you? I can't understand it.
13. Where did he put the book I lent you? Please ask him.
14. What time does the train arrive? No one seems to know.
15. He was going somewhere. He would not tell me the place.

JOINING SENTENCES WITH CONJUNCTIONS (1) *as*, *since*, *because*, *now that*.

Complete the following sentences by choosing one of the two words or phrases given in brackets.

- (a) We had to leave (why, because) it was so late.
- (b) (Now that, So that) it has stopped raining, I shall not have to take an umbrella.

Exercise 4

Join the following pairs of sentences using the conjunctions given in brackets. When you have done so, write similar sentences of your own.

1. We did not expect you. You did not let us know you were coming. (*because*)
2. The shops have shut. We should go home. (*now that*)
3. You have not understood the question. I will repeat it. (*since*)
4. It is raining heavily. I will not go out. (*as*)
5. I did not tell him. I was afraid I would hurt his feelings. (*because*)
6. You had better not stay too long. I have a lot of work to do. (*as*)
7. We should go home. The sun has set. (*now that*)
8. He is sure to pass his examination. He has worked so hard. (*since*)
9. She has bought a car. It will be easy for her to get to work. (*now that*)
10. I did not go to the theatre. I could not get tickets. (*because*)

JOINING SENTENCES WITH CONJUNCTIONS (2) *so ... that, such ... that.*

Complete the following sentences by choosing one of the words or phrases given in brackets.

- (a) He is (a so, such a) kind person that he is sure to help me.
- (b) He was (such, so) pleased when he heard the news that he rang me up at once.
- (c) It is (such a, a so) nice day, I cannot bear to stay indoors.

Exercise 5

Join the following pairs of sentences using *so ... that*, or *such ... that* where necessary. When you have done so, write similar sentences of your own.

1. He was glad to see me. He asked me to stay the night.
2. He was tired. He could not get up in the morning.
3. I have many friends abroad. I cannot write to all of them.
4. He is a good driver. I am surprised to hear he has had an accident.
5. He is an interesting person. It is a pleasure to hear him talk.
6. It is a good film. It would be a pity to miss it.
7. She was very angry. She refused to see him.
8. It is a beautiful evening. We should go for a walk.
9. He is a shy person. He dislikes talking to strangers.
10. We arrived early. We had to wait for over an hour.

JOINING SENTENCES WITH CONJUNCTIONS (3) *to, in order to, so as to*, (followed by an infinitive) and *so that, in order that*, (followed by may, might, can, could, shall, should, will and would).

Complete the following sentences by choosing one of the two words or phrases given in brackets.

- (a) I went there (for to, to) see him.
- (b) I ran quickly (in order to be not, in order not to be) late.
- (c) The little boy hid behind the door (in order his aunt not to see him, in order that his aunt might not see him.)
- (d) I'll come and fetch you from the station (so that you will not have to, in order you do not have to) walk as far as my house.

Exercise 6

Leaving out the verb 'to want' in each case, join the following pairs of sentences using the conjunctions given in brackets. When you have done so, write similar sentences of your own.

1. He went to the library. He wanted to borrow a book (*to*)
2. The student asked the teacher a question. He wanted to understand the exercise better. (*in order that*)
3. The thief drove quickly out of town. He did not want the police to catch him. (*so that*)

4. I went to the theatre early. I wanted to get a seat. (*in order to*)
5. I rang up. I wanted to find out what time she would come. (*in order that*)
6. He went into the room quietly. He did not want to disturb his brother who was asleep. (*so as to*)
7. The conductor stopped the bus. A passenger wanted to get off. (*so that*)
8. I had to take a taxi this morning. I did not want to miss my train. (*in order that*)
9. She turned on the radio. She wanted her mother to hear the talk. (*so that*)
10. I went into the shop. I wanted to buy a watch. (*to*)
11. She went to the post-office. She wanted to post a letter. (*in order to*)
12. We left in a hurry. We did not want to be seen. (*so as to*)
13. I wrote to the travel agency. I wanted them to send me some information. (*in order that*)
14. The explorer wrote a book. He wanted everybody to learn about his journey. (*so that*)
15. Tell him I have left. I do not want him to trouble me again. (*so that*)

JOINING SENTENCES WITH CONJUNCTIONS (4) *although, even though, even if, however* (much, many, long etc.), *in spite of the fact that*.

Exercise 7

Leaving out the phrase *it does not matter if* where necessary, join the following pairs of sentences using the conjunctions given in brackets. When you have done so, write similar sentences of your own.

1. I wrote to him several times. I received no answer. (*although*)
2. He plays well. He is still not good enough for the football team. (*in spite of the fact that*)
3. We are determined to get there. It does not matter how far away it is. (*however*)
4. The journey takes too long. It does not matter if you go by plane. (*even if*)
5. I'm sure he won't come. It does not matter how long you wait. (*however*)
6. We are going on an excursion. The weather is bad. (*in spite of the fact that*)
7. He speaks French well. He has never been to France. (*even though*)
8. She was very busy. She was able to help me. (*although*)
9. I should not work for him if I were you. It does not matter if he offers you a big salary. (*even if*)
10. I still think the film is poor. It does not matter if so many people enjoyed it. (*even though*)

PARTICIPLES

Complete the following sentences by choosing one of the two words or phrases given in brackets.

- (a) Seeing me coming (the man, the man he) ran towards me.
- (b) (Turning the corner, When he turned the corner) the brick fell on his head.

Exercise 8

Join the following pairs of sentences using the participle construction. When you have done so, write similar sentences of your own.

1. He thought it was my birthday. He came to visit me.
2. I stopped at a corner. I asked a policeman the way.
3. She thought I was a friend of hers. She greeted me.
4. I was ill. I did not go to work yesterday.
5. They found the door shut. They had to climb through the window.
6. He decided not to wait any longer. He left the office.
7. The guard was killed. The prisoner escaped.
8. I saw the car coming. I did not cross the street.
9. He has been abroad for many years. He is now finding it difficult to settle down.
10. He was told to go. He left immediately.
11. He was not able to understand. He asked the teacher to explain.
12. I was afraid. I returned to my room.
13. He has been asked to leave. He went away at once.
14. She did not believe me. She went to see for herself.
15. I felt very tired. I went straight to bed.

Tenses

THE PAST AND PAST CONTINUOUS The past continuous tense is used often when one action is interrupted by another. Interruption is usually indicated by the words *when*, *as*, and *while*. Example:

I was writing a letter *when* the telephone rang.

Choose the correct form of the verbs given in brackets.

When I was young I often (went, was going) to my aunt's house. I (was playing, played) with my cousins from morning till night. Every day we (climbed, were climbing) the hills around the house and (were walking, walked) down to the sea. We occasionally (went, were going) swimming. At midday, we always (were returning, returned) home.

Exercise 9

Write the correct tense (past or past continuous) in place of the verbs in brackets in the following sentences. When you have done so, write similar sentences of your own.

1. Just as we (leave) the house, a friend (come) to see us.
2. When I (hear) the news, I (be) very upset.
3. I (write) a letter when my mother (call) me.
4. When I (be) a boy I often (go) fishing with my uncle.
5. While I (listen) to the news I (repair) my fountain-pen.
6. You (enjoy) Latin when you were at school?
7. I (see) him drive past as I (cross) the road.
8. My sister (work) as a typist before she got married.
9. The train (leave) just as we (arrive) at the station.
10. We (stand) on the corner when we (see) the accident.
11. While I (walk) to the market this morning I (meet) my next-door neighbour.
12. The lights (go) out last night while they (have) a party.
13. When we (be) on holiday we not (swim) because it was so cold.
14. She (play) the piano when the door-bell (ring).
15. The teacher (read) to us when a pupil suddenly (ask) a question.

SEQUENCE OF TENSES (1) When the main verb is in the past, all dependent or co-ordinate verbs must also be in the past.

Complete the following sentences by choosing one of the two words given in brackets.

- (a) I went into the room next door and (tell, told) him not to make a noise.
- (b) He told me he (will, would) finish early.
- (c) He telephoned to say he (can, could) not come.
- (d) My aunt said she (may, might) come tomorrow.

Exercise 10

Re-write the following sentences putting the verbs given in brackets in the correct tense. When you have done so, write similar sentences of your own paying special attention to the rule covering the sequence of tenses.

1. He rang me up several times but I (be) out every time he (call)
2. I thought it (rain) today.
3. He asked me if he (can) leave the room.
4. When he (ask) me I told him I never (be) here before.
5. I never thought I (see) you again.
6. He asked me if he (can) help me in any way.
7. I looked for my pen everywhere but (can) not find it.
8. As he (leave) the house he remembered he (forget) his coat.

9. ... you (remember) to turn off the lights when you left the room?
10. I opened the door and (find) him sitting at my desk.
11. I told him I (be) late because I (be) busy.
12. He asked me who my friend (be).
13. If this (cost) so much why did you buy it?
14. As she (not understand) what he said she (ask) him to repeat it.
15. He (hope) he might go to London but it (be) impossible.

SEQUENCE OF TENSES (2) After the words *when, before, until, as soon as, after*, and *unless* never use the future tense. These words should be followed by the simple present or the present perfect tenses.

Complete the following sentences by choosing one of the two words or phrases given in brackets.

- (a) When I (shall see, see) him, I shall let you know.
- (b) Before you (will come, come) home, please buy some fruit.
- (c) He will get very angry as soon as he (will hear, hears) about this.

Exercise 11

Supply the correct form of the verbs in brackets. When you have done so, write similar sentences of your own.

1. Please let me know as soon as you (hear) from him.
2. I will not stay unless he (ask) me to.
3. She must remain here until she (finish) her work.
4. He will telephone me before he (leave).
5. We will tell him about it after he (arrive).
6. They will go on holiday as soon as the weather (improve).
7. When I (see) you I shall know more about it.
8. We shall wait here until the bus (arrive).
9. He hopes to go to a university when he (leave) school.
10. I promise I will speak to him as soon as he (come).

SEQUENCE OF TENSES (3) clauses with 'if'. The three basic forms are:

1. If he *invites* me I *shall* go.
2. If he *invited* me I *would** go.
3. If he *had invited* me I *would have gone*.

Complete the following sentences by choosing one of the two words or phrases given in brackets.

- (a) If I (would see, see) you next week, I will tell you what happened.
- (b) I would not have come if I (knew, had known).

* Though the past of *shall* is *should*, in this type of sentence it is better to use the past of *will*, *would* as the word *should* often has the sense of *ought to* in English.

- (c) If you wrote to me sometimes, you (would get, would have got) an answer.

Exercise 12

Supply the correct form of the verbs in brackets. When you have done so, write similar sentences of your own.

1. We shall stay at home if it (rain).
2. I would have been able to come if you (let) me know in time.
3. If I (be) in your position I would tell him exactly what happened.
4. If I (have) more money I would buy a car.
5. If the teacher (explain) more carefully they would have understood.
6. We will get there on time if the train (be) not late.
7. Did you ask him if he (want) to see me?
8. I could have finished yesterday if you (ring) me up.
9. This exercise would be less difficult if we (know) the rules.
10. Do you think it will be better if he (come) tomorrow?

Word order

Keep to the basic pattern: Subject/Verb/Object/Qualifying Phrases, as closely as possible. Though there are certain exceptions, a subject may only be separated from its verb by an adverb of frequency. (See below.)

Complete the following sentences by choosing one of the two words or phrases given in brackets.

- (a) (Yesterday he, He yesterday) found (in his garden a coin, a coin in his garden.)
- (b) I received (from my cousin an invitation to a party, an invitation to a party from my cousin.)

Exercise 13

Re-write the following sentences correctly. When you have done so write sentences of your own paying special attention to word order.

1. The captain ordered the men to throw into the sea the goods.
2. You will have to write twice this exercise.
3. I went out to buy a book which had written a friend of mine.
4. It is pleasant to spend sometimes an hour in a library.
5. The head-master gave to the boy some good advice.
6. On my way to the office happened something very funny.
7. They both again reached home.
8. Once used to live two detectives opposite our house.
9. I went into the room where was the thief hiding.
10. I used very often to visit in the country my uncle.

11. Suddenly arrived at the house relations whom he did not want to see.
12. I asked him how much had I to pay.
13. He last month drove into a tree his car.
14. Yesterday brought the post-man a letter which I had been expecting.
15. By the policeman the driver to move on was ordered.
16. The man at last after losing his way returned to the hotel.
17. From the shelf by someone the book was taken.
18. The teacher forgot our compositions to correct.
19. The friend from abroad whom I told you about has arrived.
20. I forgot on the letter I sent to write the address.

ADVERBS OF FREQUENCY Here are the most important of them: *generally, sometimes, often, frequently, rarely, seldom, ever, never, usually, occasionally, already, just* and *still*.

They may be placed:

- (a) Before the main verb. (He often comes to see me.)
- (b) After the first auxiliary in a component verb. (It might never have happened.)
- (c) After the verb 'to be' – though they may be placed before to vary the emphasis. (He is usually late. Or: He usually is.)

Complete the following sentences by choosing one of the two words or phrases given in brackets.

- (a) He (often comes, comes often) to see me.
- (b) If you had been careful this (never might, might never) have happened.
- (c) He (has rarely, rarely has) taken much trouble with his work.
- (d) He (is already, already is) here.

Exercise 14

Put the adverbs given in brackets in their correct place in each of these sentences.

1. He has mentioned the subject. (*never*)
2. It is raining hard. (*still*)
3. We go to this part of the town. (*seldom*)
4. He is ill. (*often*)
5. These adverbs go before the main verb. (*generally*)
6. He has invited me to his house. (*sometimes*)
7. She would have told you a thing like that. (*never*)
8. You can trust him. (*always*)
9. He goes out of the house. (*rarely*)
10. You can be certain that he will succeed. (*never*)