

Steps to Composition

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***A Pre-composition Workbook
for Students of English as a Second Language***

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose. The aim of this workbook is to provide a variety of exercises appropriate for developing the writing skills at the precomposition level. Before they can be expected to write acceptable original paragraphs, students of English as a Second Language need practice in working with the relationships which exist between structures at the sentence level, without having the additional complications of selecting subject matter and vocabulary or of dealing with techniques of organization and style. This material is designed to offer, within a repetitive vocabulary, organized help in mastering the transitional stages from simple imitation to that of controlled or directed composition.

Content and organization. The material has four basic divisions: (1) the expansion of the noun phrase, i. e. structures of modification before and after the noun; (2) predicate structures and compounding; (3) more complex clause and phrase types; (4) practice in producing and combining longer sequences. Simplified grammatical explanations introduce each lesson, indicating the features to be covered in the exercises, and at the conclusion of each lesson are summary exercises, additional material for review or testing. Perforated pages are provided so that lessons may be removed for correcting. Students may wish to retain the grammatical comments for reference and review.

The first lessons introduce basic sentence types reduced to their minimal components, and the student learns to recognize certain significant syntactical elements (word order, the relationship between structural markers and form classes, etc.) and to imitate, substitute, match, transform, expand, or combine according to models. Finally, by following a sequence of controlled procedures involving modification, subordination, combination, etc., he rewrites short selections to produce paragraphs. Although creativity in terms of selection of topics, vocabulary, and structures is not expected of the student, he

deals with several features of the language simultaneously and more than simple manipulation is required as the exercises become progressively more demanding. The later lessons build upon knowledge acquired in the earlier ones, i. e. indirect discourse involves a review and manipulation of the tenses. Certain exercises have been included which allow the student some freedom of choice in the arrangement and association of words or an opportunity to supply appropriate vocabulary and structures of his own for portions of sentences or entire sentences. The conventions of punctuation and capitalization have been discussed wherever pertinent. In order to focus attention on other features of writing, the vocabulary has been limited, especially in the earlier lessons. We have tried to introduce enough new words to keep the assignments challenging while providing for their frequent use in different contexts.

Levels of proficiency. The workbook is designed primarily for students in the intermediate (low-to-high) and the advanced ranges of language proficiency. Students should have completed at least an introductory English language course before beginning the material, that is, they need a reasonable oral mastery of the fundamentals. Advanced students will find the lessons challenging, but can complete the material more rapidly. At the advanced levels the workbook could be a self-help text, but generally it is presumed that the lessons will be supervised by an instructor.

Presentation. Although we have attempted to keep the explanatory language simple, it is assumed that the teacher will introduce, clarify, and develop the structures presented, go over the examples carefully, and supervise the working through of the problems. The lessons do not presume to present an exhaustive treatment of each point. Other useful material will suggest itself to the instructor. Many students will have at least a passive knowledge of many of the constructions, and those features which are new will require a little longer to develop in class and a more detailed introduction on the part of the instructor.

There is a logical progression to the presentation from the simple to the complex, but the material is so arranged that it is possible to omit sections not appropriate to the needs of a particular class and to work constructively in other areas.

Especially at the lower levels the material should be introduced and the exercises gone over orally first. At that time vocabulary and pronunciation can be dealt with. The exercises can then be written in class or assigned as homework. Emphasis should be placed on developing good writing habits by careful attention to the mechanics of capitalization, punctuation, and paragraph form. The amount of time needed to complete the material will depend, of course, on the level of proficiency and the number of class meetings.

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1

FOUR BASIC SENTENCE TYPES

	Subject	Predicate	
		Verb	Complement
Type 1	Noun	Verb	
Type 2	Noun	Verb	Noun (direct object)
Type 3	Noun	Linking verb	Noun (predicate noun)
Type 4	Noun	Linking verb	Adjective (predicate adjective)

1. Sentence type 1 (noun + verb). In these sentences the verbs are not followed by a direct object.

Boys play.

2. Sentence type 2 (noun + verb + noun). Some of the same verbs are used in type 2, but in these sentences the verb is followed by a direct object.

Boys play games.

3. Sentence type 3 (noun + linking verb + noun). The verbs in these sentences are most frequently be and become and are completed by a noun which in some way renames the subject.

Boys become athletes.

4. Sentence type 4 (noun + linking verb). Sentences of this type include be and become in addition to other linking verbs, and they are completed by an adjective which describes the subject noun.

Boys are athletic.

2 / LESSON 1

Capitalization. The first word of a sentence begins with a capital letter.

Punctuation. A period (.) follows the last word of a statement. A question mark (?) follows the last word of a question.

The following combinations are typical noun, verb, and adjective combinations which illustrate four basic sentence types.

Basic sentence type 1 (NV)

- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Babies cry. | 6. Surgeons operate. |
| 2. Children play. | 7. Lawyers debate. |
| 3. Boys study. | 8. Authors write. |
| 4. Students cheer. | 9. Dogs bark. |
| 5. Teen-agers baby-sit. | 10. Fish swim. |

Basic sentence type 2 (NVN)

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Children play games. | 6. Farmers grow crops. |
| 2. Mechanics repair cars. | 7. Doctors cure patients. |
| 3. Secretaries type letters. | 8. Lawyers defend clients. |
| 4. Men smoke pipes. | 9. Authors write books. |
| 5. Dogs eat bones. | 10. Cats catch mice. |

Basic sentence type 3 (NLvN)

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Dogs are animals. | 6. Girls become housewives. |
| 2. Sparrows are birds. | 7. Privates become corporals. |
| 3. Potatoes are vegetables. | 8. Kittens become cats. |
| 4. Computers are machines. | 9. Tadpoles become frogs. |
| 5. Boys become men. | 10. Seeds become plants. |

Basic sentence type 4 (NLvAdj)

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Girls look pretty. | 6. Kittens are playful. |
| 2. Students get homesick. | 7. Apples taste good. |
| 3. Doctors feel tired. | 8. Trees grow tall. |
| 4. Athletes are strong. | 9. Sparrows are small. |
| 5. Flowers smell sweet. | 10. Mechanics are skillful. |

EXERCISE 1A. Write sentences appropriately using be or become to link the subject and the noun complement.

1. dogs/animals Dogs are animals.
2. kittens/cats Kittens become cats.
3. tadpoles/frogs _____
4. privates/corporals _____
5. puppies/dogs _____
6. children/teen-agers _____
7. canaries/birds _____
8. seeds/flowers _____
9. computers/machines _____
10. frogs/amphibians _____

EXERCISE 1B. Choose an appropriate verb from the list to link the subject and the adjective complement.

appear	become	get	look	sound
be	feel	grow	seem	taste

1. soldiers/brave _____
2. professors/wise _____
3. bells/sweet _____
4. apples/good _____
5. students/homesick _____
6. athletes/vigorous _____
7. trees/tall _____
8. surgeons/skillful _____

4 / LESSON 1

9. kittens/playful _____
10. mothers/tired _____

EXERCISE 1C. Identify the sentence types by writing the formula in column 1. Then write the question form in column 2.

	1	2
1. Teen-agers baby-sit.	<u>NV</u>	<u>Do teen-agers baby-sit?</u>
2. Dogs eat bones.	_____	_____
3. Horses gallop.	_____	_____
4. Mice like crumbs.	_____	_____
5. Carpenters are clever.	_____	_____
6. Strangers feel lonely.	_____	_____
7. Dentists fill teeth.	_____	_____
8. Generals command.	_____	_____
9. Peaches taste delicious.	_____	_____
10. Caterpillars become butterflies.	_____	_____

EXERCISE 1D. In column 1 write the question form. In column 2 write a negative answer. Do not use contractions.

1. Fish bark.	<u>Do fish bark?</u>	<u>Fish do not bark.</u>
2. Tadpoles become dogs.	_____	_____
3. Lawyers operate.	_____	_____
4. Birds smile.	_____	_____
5. Farmers grow patients.	_____	_____

- | | | |
|------------------------------|-------|-------|
| 6. Mice catch cats. | _____ | _____ |
| 7. Canaries gallop. | _____ | _____ |
| 8. Potatoes are birds. | _____ | _____ |
| 9. Puppies become
frogs. | _____ | _____ |
| 10. Mechanics fill
teeth. | _____ | _____ |

EXERCISE 1E. Choose appropriate words from the lesson to complete each sentence type. Write the complete sentence in the space at the right.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. (noun) grow (noun). | <u>Farmers grow crops.</u> |
| 2. (noun) grow (adjective). | _____ |
| 3. (noun) bark. | _____ |
| 4. Sparrows are (noun). | _____ |
| 5. Lawyers (verb). | _____ |
| 6. (noun) cure (noun). | _____ |
| 7. Bells (linking verb) sweet. | _____ |
| 8. Mice (verb) (noun). | _____ |
| 9. Cats (verb)(noun). | _____ |
| 10. Horses (verb). | _____ |

EXERCISE 1F. Choose appropriate words from the lesson to write in the spaces.

- 1. Fish _____
- 2. Men _____ .
- 3. Doctors _____ .
- 4. Farmers grow _____ .
- 5. _____ grow tall.
- 6. _____ taste _____ .
- 7. Teen-agers _____ .
- 8. _____ butterflies. ,
- 9. _____ lonely.
- 10. Athletes _____ .

2

COUNT NOUNS AND MARKERS

COUNT NOUNS

Singular	Regular plural
boy	boys
watch	watches
box	boxes
canary	canaries

Singular	Irregular plural
leaf	leaves
child	children
mouse	mice
tooth	teeth
fish	fish

1. All of the nouns in Lesson 1 are count nouns, that is, they can be counted as units (one boy, two boys, three boys, etc.).

2. The count nouns have a plural form that is different from the singular form. Regular plurals are made by adding:

- (a) -s to most words
- (b) -es to words ending in s, z, sh, ch, x
- (c) -es to a final y which is changed to an i, whenever the y is preceded by a consonant, e.g. monkey/monkeys vs. canary/canaries.

3. A very few count nouns, mostly animals, have the same singular and plural forms (fish, deer, salmon, sheep, and trout are some of the common ones).

SINGULAR COUNT NOUNS AND THEIR MARKERS

1. The indefinite article. Singular count nouns are preceded by a marker. This marker indicates that a noun follows and also gives information about that noun. The indefinite article (a/an), for example, indicates an individual member of a general class of persons, places, things.

A boy usually likes sports.

An umbrella is necessary in a rainy climate.

Notice that an is used before a vowel sound: an hour, an egg.

2. The definite article. Singular count nouns can be made definite or specific by using the (or other markers from the list below). In contrasting the use of a and the in consecutive sentences which both mention the same noun, a generalization can be made that the first mention is usually nonspecific (a/an) and the second specific (the).

I ate an apple.

The apple was delicious.

SINGULAR COUNT NOUN MARKERS

a/an	one	each	either	no (some)*	my	her	our
the	another	every	neither	(any)	your	his	their
this							
that							

*The use of some or any as markers for singular count nouns is not dealt with in these exercises, but is presented with plural and non-count nouns.

PLURAL COUNT NOUNS AND MARKERS

1. A marker is not required when a plural count noun has a general meaning, that is, it denotes a general class of persons, places, things.

Boys like sports.

Babies cry.

Cats catch mice.

2. Plural count nouns can be made specific by using the definite article the or a number of other markers. Notice that some of the same markers can precede singular or plural nouns.

PLURAL COUNT NOUN MARKERS

the	several	my, your, etc.	a lot of
these	most		lots of
those	enough		
some	both	no	few
any	more		a few
many			
all	two, three, etc.		other

NOUN NOUN CONSTRUCTIONS

In noun noun constructions only the second noun (if it is a count noun) is pluralized, e.g.

Please give me two grammar books.

There are several new apartment buildings on this street.

THE INDEFINITE ARTICLE

EXERCISE 2A. Make each of the underlined plural nouns singular, using the indefinite article as a marker. Make the necessary verb changes.

Sentence type 1

1. Boys study. A boy studies. _____
2. Athletes exercise. _____
3. Universities teach. _____
4. Housewives cook. _____
5. Knives cut. _____
6. Birds fly. _____

Sentence type 2

1. Authors write books. _____
2. Artists paint pictures. _____