

SIMPLIFIED SENTENCE SKILLS



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藏书章

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SIMPLIFIED SENTENCE SKILLS

PREFACE

If you think this course is going to be easy, you're wrong. Learning a new skill is never easy. Anything worth achieving has a price, and the price of knowledge is self-discipline and hard work. Are you willing to pay the price? If you are, this book can be a great help to you. The book is not intended to teach you "everything you always wanted to know about English but were afraid to ask." Rather, it will teach you everything you need to know about English but haven't learned.

Learning to write is in some ways like learning to walk. We have to begin by taking slow, simple steps before we can walk easily, let alone do creative variations like skipping, jumping, or dancing. Because writing is much too complex to master in one course, this book will give only a few of the beginning steps, steps you possibly were already taught somewhere in your education but never really understood. If you learn these beginning steps thoroughly, you will have a solid foundation for all the additional steps, all the creative variations, you will make later in your life.

After you're introduced to these basic rules of writing, you will be given many opportunities to practice each of them. That's what learning any skill is all about: practice. People do not become skilled swimmers by reading a book or listening to a teacher; they become skilled by getting into the water and swimming. It's true that learners use the information received from swimming instructors, but only by repeated practice will they master the skill of swimming. That's exactly how you will master the skill of writing.

This repetition of basic rules will help you with the simplest steps of writing. *Rules* and *repetition* are not the bad words some educators have made them; they only become "bad" when misunderstood. Some texts and instructors avoid using the word *rule* as carefully as they avoid using all nonacceptable four-letter

words. To them, rules imply a rigid standard forced on the student, a strait-jacket allowing no freedom. Rather than limiting your freedom, however, we believe that rules allow the greater freedom that comes from discipline. Without rules, you flounder in uncertainty; with rules, you flourish in security.

This security comes from knowing what is acceptable for most readers, most of the time; and that's all rules really are. These rules of writing were not handed down by some all-knowing English instructor; they simply reflect how the language works—most of the time. If the majority of educated people in a given geographic area use the language in a certain way, that usage becomes a rule. Because educated people's usage differs, rules are flexible and have exceptions. This flexibility, however, does not mean that rules are bad. It does mean a rule won't work 100 percent of the time; our language is just too varied for that. If a rule works 95 percent of the time, however, it's worth knowing. This book will help you learn what is acceptable to most people, most of the time.

FEATURES OF SIMPLIFIED SENTENCE SKILLS

Simplified Sentence Skills is an effective text for individualized, laboratory, or traditional instruction. The book has unique strengths that simplify both the learning and the teaching of basic skills.

Nuances of language that beginning writers do not need are carefully avoided. For example, the unit on verbs omits voice and mood. Likewise, verbals are included only to show that they are not main verbs, without naming all the types possible. Pronoun case is taught without including the confusing *who/whom* rules. Terminology is presented only when needed.

Only basic rules are included; the book alludes to rules that are omitted but does not teach them. If a rule works 95 percent of the time, we see no reason to confuse you by teaching the 5 percent of exceptions.

The book's clear structure helps show the relationship of the rules to each other. For example, skill with linking verbs is shown to be necessary for distinguishing predicate adjectives from direct objects; skill with direct objects makes the *lie/lay*, *sit/set*, *rise/raise* distinctions easier; skill with independent clauses forms the basis for over half of the punctuation rules. The interdependence of rules is constantly brought to your attention.

There are over two thousand excellent practice items in this book. These items are used in four different types of exercises: Try-It Exercises, Practice Exercises, Review Exercises, and Chapter Quizzes. Each type of exercise serves a separate function:

- The Try-It Exercises, which are placed within each chapter, give you immediate, in-depth feedback, for the answers are in the paragraphs that follow the exercise.

- The Practice Exercises, which are placed within each chapter, come in sets of two: one side of the page has objective exercises, and the other side has generative exercises in which you write sentences using the rule you have just practiced on the other side of the page. The answers to the objective exercises are in the back of the book. These exercises will be perforated, so your instructor can collect and evaluate the generative (or objective) exercises if he or she wishes.
- The Review Exercises, which are at the end of each chapter, move from simple concepts to more difficult ones. You can get an immediate sense of how well you have mastered the skills for each chapter by consulting the answer key in the back of the book.
- The Chapter Quizzes are exercises that review all areas taught.

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We are especially grateful to our students for showing us what needs to be taught and how best to teach it.



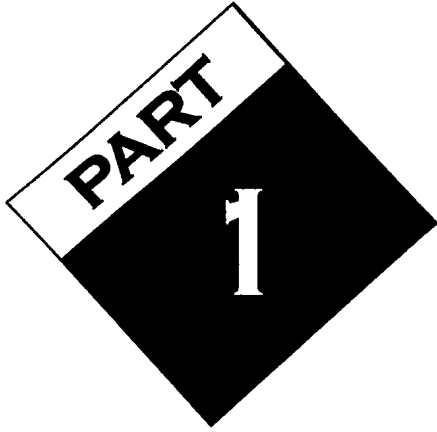
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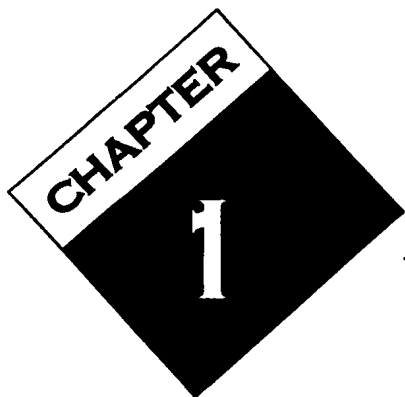
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SENTENCE STRUCTURE



VERBS, SUBJECTS, COMPLEMENTS, AND COMPOUNDS

You know that learning to count to one hundred does not provide you with the ability to add and subtract. Yet without an understanding of individual numbers, you would not be able to learn the basic mathematical functions of addition and subtraction. And without a foundation in basic math, comprehension of geometry, algebra, or trigonometry certainly would be impossible. The same need to understand basics applies to written English as well. If you have been struggling at writing for several years now, it is very likely that your problem is due to insufficient knowledge of the beginning skills. And in turn, that weakness has made your attempts at more advanced writing unsuccessful, or at least less successful than you would like.

To help you gain the knowledge you will need to write well, we are going to start at the simplest level and progress to more difficult sentence skills. We are not going to assume that you have an advanced knowledge of the language. Mastering the simple basics will make you more comfortable with your language and more able to use it effectively to communicate in writing. In short, by learning these simple basics, you will be free to focus on creating strong sentences.

Just as you learned to count consecutively before you learned to add and subtract, you must learn certain terms in order to understand English. Do not be concerned, however, that you will have to learn an overwhelming number of confusing definitions. In this book we will introduce only those terms you need to know in order to strengthen your skills. In time, you will discover that knowing these terms will help you become a more competent writer.

VERBS

In order to write a correct sentence consistently, you first must understand its components. A **sentence** is a group of words that has a main verb and a subject, expresses a completed thought, and can stand alone. Although a sentence *must* have a main verb and a subject, it *may* also have a complement. In addition, there can be any number of phrases or clauses attached to it. All of these elements of a sentence—complements, phrases, and clauses—will be explained later in this book.

The first element of a sentence that we will learn is the verb. Another word for verb that means the same thing is simple predicate. The term **main verb** refers to the word that expresses action or helps to make a statement complete. The main verb can be either an action or a linking verb. Although the main verb consists of only one word, it may have helping verbs in front of it. In this chapter, you will learn to identify main verbs as action or linking, as well as to identify helping verbs and fake verbs.

Look at the italicized words in the following sentences:

Michelle *studied* her lesson.

Michelle *has studied* her lesson.

Michelle *is* a good student.

Michelle *might be* a good student.

Studying her lesson, Michelle *gained* knowledge.

To study her lesson, Michelle *went* to the library.

In the first sentence, *studied* is the main verb. In the second sentence *has* is a helping verb and *studied* is the main verb. In the third sentence, *is* is the main verb. In the fourth sentence, *might* is the helping verb and *be* is the main verb. In the fifth sentence, *gained* is the main verb and *studying* is a fake verb. In the sixth sentence *went* is the main verb and *to study* is a fake verb.

The reason you will learn about verbs first is that *the main verb is the very first thing you must find* in order to determine whether you have a sentence. After you finish this section, you will feel comfortable using the term *verb* and finding the verbs in sentences.

We will begin by explaining the categories of verbs.

Action Verbs

An **action verb** expresses either physical or mental action. Of all the verbs, action verbs are the most common and the easiest to recognize. If you remember that action can be either physical (run, jog, hit, jump, play, etc.) or mental (think, perceive, understand, contemplate, etc.), action verbs will not cause you difficulty. Consider the action verbs in the following sentences:

Meghan *ran* the fastest race.

Meghan *jogged* two miles with her mother.

Meghan *understands* the value of exercise.

Meghan *thinks* positive thoughts before each race.

As Meghan *hugged* her Dad, she *comprehended* the power of self-confidence.

Each verb is an action verb. The verbs *ran* and *jogged* in the first and second sentences show physical action, while the verbs *understands* and *thinks* in the third and fourth sentences show mental action. In the fifth sentence, the verb *hugged* shows physical action and the verb *comprehended* shows mental action.

TRY-IT
EXERCISE

As you read the following sentences, underline any word that shows action.

1. The students walked into the classroom.
2. They sat at their desks.
3. They soon realized a whole new world of words.
4. The students listened and took notes.
5. As they discussed the lesson, the students learned new skills.
6. These students gained control of the written word.

In the first sentence, the action word (verb) is *walked*; in the second, the verb is *sat*; in the third, the verb is *realized*; in the fourth, the verbs are *listened* and *took*; in the fifth, the verbs are *discussed* and *learned*; and in the sixth sentence, the verb is *gained*.

