

SECOND EDITION

# AT A GLANCE



# SENTENCES

LEE BRANDON

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# ***At a Glance***

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## ***Sentences***

***Second Edition***

***Lee Brandon***

*Mt. San Antonio College*

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# *To Sharon*

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# Preface

*At a Glance: Sentences* is the first-level book in the new *At a Glance* series. Along with *At a Glance: Paragraphs*, *At a Glance: Essays*, and *At a Glance: Paired Sources*, it meets the current need for succinct, comprehensive, and up-to-date textbooks that students can afford. All four books provide basic instruction, exercises, and writing assignments at the designated level, as well as support material for instructors. *At a Glance: Sentences* and *At a Glance: Paragraphs* include a transition to the next level of writing while *At a Glance: Paragraphs* and *At a Glance: Essays* end with a handbook, to which students can refer for help with sentence-level issues or for problems with mechanics. *At a Glance: Paired Sources* presents brief writing instruction and twenty-seven sources for reading-related writing. Each book in the *At a Glance* series can be used alone, with one of the other *At a Glance* books, or with another textbook. Two or more *At a Glance* books can be shrink-wrapped and delivered at a discount.

## COMPREHENSIVE COVERAGE

Focusing on sentence writing, *At a Glance: Sentences* covers phrases and clauses, subjects and predicates, sentence types, sentence combining, sentence problems (including fragments, comma splices, and run-ons), and parallel structure. It also treats specific verb, pronoun, and modifier problems, punctuation and capitalization, and spelling. The final chapter provides a bridge to the process of writing paragraphs and essays and includes student examples as well as suggestions of topics for writing. *At a Glance: Sentences* concludes with an appendix on the eight parts of speech.

## INSTRUCTIONAL APPROACH

Principles, rules, and guidelines in *At a Glance: Sentences* are presented concisely and are followed immediately by appropriate examples. Exercises that offer hands-on practice and review of the material end each major section. Throughout, examples and exercises deal with humorous, contemporary, or culturally diverse topics that engage students' interest. Whenever appropriate, chapters end with an exercise that asks students to write original sentences.

Changes for this edition:

- forty-five new exercises in sentence writing
- a new section on strong verbs
- a new section on community dialects
- a new separate chapter on spelling and commonly confused words
- fifty additional pages without a corresponding increase in price

## SUPPORT MATERIAL FOR INSTRUCTORS

- *Instructor's Guide*. Provides answers to exercises, a diagnostic test, a final test, and three quizzes for each major unit. Quizzes may be photocopied and distributed to students as additional classroom exercises.
- *Expressways 4.0* for PC, Macintosh, and Windows. Guides students as they write and revise paragraphs and essays.

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Lee Brandon

# Student Overview

This book is designed to help you write better sentences. In the first five chapters, you'll have a chance to review what you may have already studied about subjects and verbs. Then you'll move on to more advanced considerations of the English sentence: identifying kinds of sentences, putting short sentences together to show relationships, fixing groups of words that look like sentences but really are not, and balancing the parts of a sentence.

In Chapters 6 through 10, you'll study how to make the most effective use of verbs, pronouns, adjectives and adverbs, punctuation and capitalization, and spelling. In Chapter 11, you'll look at the writing process as a series of steps that can carry you from stage to stage until you have produced a polished paragraph or essay.

Finally, the appendix at the end of the book provides a review of the eight parts of speech.

Following are some strategies to help you make the best use of this book and to jump-start the improvement in your writing skills.

1. **Be active and systematic in learning.** Take advantage of your instructor's expertise by being an active participant in class—one who takes notes, asks questions, and contributes to discussion. Become dedicated to systematic learning: determine your needs, decide what to do, and do it. Make learning a part of your everyday thinking and behavior.
2. **Read widely.** Samuel Johnson, a great English scholar, once said he didn't want to read anything by people who had written more than they had read. William Faulkner, a Nobel Prize winner in literature, said, "Read, read, read. Read everything—trash, classics, good and bad, and see how writers do it." Read to learn technique, to acquire ideas, to be stimulated to write. Especially read to satisfy your curiosity and receive pleasure. If reading is a main component of your course, approach it as systematically as you do writing.
3. **Keep a journal.** Keeping a journal may not be required in your particular class, but whether required or not, jotting down your observations in a notebook is a good idea. Here are some topics for daily, or almost daily, journal writing:

- Summarize, evaluate, or react to reading assignments.
- Summarize, evaluate, or react to what you see on television and in movies, and to what you read in newspapers and magazines.
- Describe and narrate situations or events you experience.
- Write about career-related matters you encounter in other courses or on the job.

Your journal entries may read like an intellectual diary, a record of what you are thinking about at certain times. Keeping a journal will help you to understand reading material better, to develop more language skills, and to think more clearly—as well as to become more confident and write more easily so that writing becomes a comfortable everyday activity. The important thing is to get into the habit of writing something each day.

4. **Evaluate your writing skills.** Use the Self-Evaluation Chart inside the front cover of this book to list areas you need to work on. You can add to your lists throughout the entire term. Drawing on your instructor's comments, make notes on matters such as spelling, word choice, paragraph development, grammar, sentences, punctuation, and capitalization. As you master each problem area, you can check it off or cross it out.

Here is a partially filled out Self-Evaluation Chart, followed by some guidelines for filling out your own.

### *Self-Evaluation Chart*

Spelling/ Word Choice	Paragraph Development	Grammar/ Sentences	Punctuation/ Capitalization
receive 61	topic	fragment 40	apostrophe 152
a lot 167	sentence 176	variety of	comma 134
its, it's 167	support 174	patterns 17	semicolon 141
studying 162		comma	question mark
		splice 48	with
		run-on 68	quotation
			marks 147

- *Spelling/Word Choice.* List words marked as incorrectly spelled on your assignments. Master the words on your list and add new words as you accumulate assignments. Also include new, useful words with their brief definitions and comments on word choice, such as avoiding slang, clichés, and vague or general words.



- *Paragraph Development.* List suggestions your instructor made about writing strong topic sentences and attending to matters such as coherence, language, unity, emphasis, and support.
  - *Grammar/Sentences.* As you go through this book, if you find that you did not completely master a section, list here any special problems you have before moving to the next section. Also, list comments from your instructor.
  - *Punctuation/Capitalization.* List any problems you encounter with punctuation and capitalization. Because the items in this column may be covered in Chapter 9, you can often use both rule numbers and page numbers for the references here.
5. **Be positive.** All the elements you record in your Self-Evaluation Chart probably are covered in *At a Glance: Sentences*. The table of contents, the index, and the correction chart on the inside back cover of the book will direct you to the additional instruction you decide you need. Soon, seeing what you have mastered and checked off your list will give you a sense of accomplishment.

Finally, don't compare yourself with others. Compare yourself with yourself and, as you make progress, consider yourself what you are—a student on the path toward effective writing, a student on the path toward success.

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# 1

## ***Subjects and Verbs***

The two crucial parts of any sentence are the subject and the verb.

- The **subject** is who or what causes the action or expresses a state of being.
- The **verb** indicates what the subject is doing or is being.

The subject and verb often carry the meaning of the sentence. Consider this example:

The *woman* *left* for work.  
subject verb

The subject *woman* and the verb *left* indicate the basic content of the sentence while providing structure. So important are the subject and the verb that they alone are sufficient to create a complete sentence.

He runs.  
She thinks.

### **SUBJECTS**

The **simple subject** of a sentence is usually a single noun or pronoun.

The judge's *reputation* for order in the courtroom is well known.  
simple subject

The **complete subject** is the simple subject with all its modifiers—that is, with all the words that describe or qualify it.

*The judge's reputation for order in the courtroom* is well known.  
complete subject

To more easily identify simple subjects of sentences, you may want to review the following information about nouns and pronouns. (You may also consult the Appendix, "Parts of Speech," pp. 185–193.)

### ***Nouns***

**Nouns** are naming words. Nouns may name persons, animals, plants, places, things, substances, qualities, or ideas—for example, *Bart*, *armadillo*, *Mayberry*, *tree*, *rock*, *cloud*, *love*, *ghost*, *music*, and *virtue*.

## Pronouns

A **pronoun** is a word that is used in place of a noun.

- Pronouns that can be used as subjects of sentences may represent specific persons or things and are called personal pronouns:

<i>I</i>	<i>we</i>
<i>you</i>	<i>you</i>
<i>he, she, it</i>	<i>they</i>

Example: *They* recommended my sister for the coaching position.  
subject

- Indefinite pronouns refer to nouns (persons, place, or things) in a general way:

<i>each</i>	<i>everyone</i>	<i>nobody</i>	<i>somebody</i>
<i>either</i>	<i>neither</i>	<i>anyone</i>	<i>someone</i>

Example: *Everyone* wants a copy of that photograph.  
subject

- Other pronouns point out particular things:

Singular: *this, that*      Plural: *these, those*

*This is my treasure.      These are my jewels.*

*That is your junk.                      Those are your trinkets.*

- Still other pronouns introduce questions:

*Which is the best CD player?*

*What are the main ingredients in a Twinkie?*

Who understands this computer command?

**Caution:** To be the subject of a sentence, a pronoun must stand alone.

*This* is a treasure. (Subject is *this*; pronoun stands alone.)

This *treasure* is mine. (Subject is *treasure*. *This* is an adjective—a word that describes a noun; *this* describes *treasure*.)



## Compound Subjects

A subject may be **compound**. That is, it may consist of two or more subjects, usually joined by *and* or *or*, that function together.

The *prosecutor* and the *attorney* for the defense made opening statements.

*He* and his *friends* listened carefully.

## Implied Subjects

A subject may be **implied** or understood. An imperative sentence—a sentence that gives a command—has *you* as the implied subject.

(You) Sit in that chair, please.

(You) Now take the oath.

(You) Please read the notes carefully.

## Trouble Spots

A **prepositional phrase** starts with a preposition (a word like *at*, *in*, *of*, *to*, *with*) and ends with one or more nouns or pronouns with their modifiers: *at the time*, *by the jury*, *in the courtroom*, *to the judge and the media*, *with controlled anger*. Some of the most common prepositions are the following:

about	before	but	into	past
above	behind	by	like	to
across	below	despite	near	toward
after	beneath	down	of	under
against	beside	for	off	until
among	between	from	on	upon
around	beyond	in	over	with

Some prepositions are composed of more than one word and are formed from other parts of speech:

according to	as far as	because of	in spite of
ahead of	as well as	in back of	instead of
along with	aside from	in front of	together with

Be careful not to confuse the subject of a sentence with the noun or pronoun (known as the object of the preposition) in a prepo-