



John Langan

Sentence Skills

A Workbook for Writers Second Edition
Form B

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for

Writers



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John

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Atlantic Community College

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Preface

Sentence Skills will help students master the essential rules of grammar, mechanics, punctuation, and usage needed for clear writing. The book contains a number of features to aid teachers and their students.

- *Coverage of basic writing skills is exceptionally thorough.* The book pays special attention to fragments, run-ons, verbs, and other areas where students have most trouble. 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, entire sections of the book are devoted to editing, proofreading, and sentence variety.
- *The book has a clear and flexible format.* Part One presents and gives practice in all the essential basic writing skills. Part Two then reinforces those skills through mastery and editing tests and proofreading activities. Part Three uses sentence-combining exercises to help students achieve variety in their writing. Part Four presents writing assignments that enable students to transfer the skills they have learned to realistic writing situations. Since parts and sections are self-contained, teachers can move easily from, for instance, a rule in Part One to a mastery test in Part Two to a combining activity in Part Three or a writing assignment in Part Four.
- *Practice materials are numerous.* Most skills are reinforced by activities, review tests, and mastery tests, as well as ditto masters and tests in the Instructor's Manual. For most of the skills in the book, there are over one hundred practice sentences.

- *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*, exercises involve students in various ways. They may be asked to underline answers, add words, generate their own sentences, or edit passages. And the lively and engaging practice materials in the book both maintain interest and help students appreciate the value of vigorous details in writing.
- *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 restrictive element is an *interrupter*. At the same time, traditional grammatical terms are mentioned briefly for those students who learned them at an earlier point in school and are comfortable hearing them again.
- *Self-teaching is encouraged.* Students may check their answers to the practice activities in Part One 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 One or for any of the reinforcement tests in Part Two. These answers appear only in the Instructor's Manual; they can be copied and handed out to students at the discretion of the instructor.
- *Diagnostic and achievement tests are provided.* A diagnostic test for most of the skills in the book appears in Appendix A of the book. A corresponding achievement test, included in the Instructor's Manual, can be easily copied for classroom use.
- *Two valuable learning aids accompany the book.* A set of twenty-five ditto masters, ready to run, enables teachers to check students' progress on most of the skills in the book. And the comprehensive Instructor's Manual includes (1) a complete set of additional mastery tests, (2) a model syllabus along with suggestions for teaching the course, and (3) an easily-used and copied answer key. The Manual is 8½ x 11 inches in size so that both answer pages and the added mastery tests can be conveniently reproduced on a copying machine.

The ditto masters and the Instructor's Manual are available by contacting the local McGraw-Hill representative or by writing to the English Editor, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1221 Avenue of the Americas, New York, New York 10020.

NOTES ON FORM B

Sentence Skills is also available in Second Edition, Form A, so that instructors can use a different form each semester. The chief ways that Form B differs from Form A are noted below.

- All of the activities, tests, and writing assignments are different in Form B.
- Form B has a new chapter, "Effective Word Use," that includes material on slang, clichés, and wordiness (each of these was treated separately in Form A) and pretentious words (not covered in Form A).
- Finally, Form B contains an appendix that includes a diagnostic test and answers to the practice exercises in the book. In Form A, both the test and the answers appear only in the Instructor's Manual. In the last part of the appendix is a handy progress chart which can be used to keep track of a student's performance on the full range of mastery tests available.

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John Langan

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Part 1

Sentence Skills

INTRODUCTION

Part One explains the basic skills needed for you to write clear, error-free sentences. While the skills are presented within four traditional categories (grammar, mechanics, punctuation, and word use), each section is self-contained so that you can go directly to the skills you need to work on. Note, however, that you may find it helpful to cover “Subjects and Verbs” before turning to other skills. Typically the main features of a skill are presented on the first pages of a section; secondary points are developed later. Numerous activities are provided so that you can practice skills enough to make them habits. The activities are varied and range from underlining correct answers to writing complete sentences involving the skill in question. One or more review tests at the end of each section offer additional practice opportunities.

Use the answer key that begins on page 405 after you finish each practice activity. You want to learn right away if you have understood the skill in question and applied it correctly. Talk to your instructor about any answers that do not seem clear. Answers are *not* given for the review tests at the end of each section or for the mastery tests in Part Two. These tests will evaluate your final mastery of the skills.

Section 1: Grammar

Subjects and Verbs

The basic building blocks of English sentences are subjects and verbs. Understanding them is an important first step toward mastering a number of sentence skills.

Every sentence has a subject and a verb. Who or what the sentence speaks about is called the *subject*; what the sentence says about the subject is called the *verb*. In the following sentences, the subject is underlined once and the verb twice:

People gossip.

The truck stalled.

He waved at me.

That woman is a millionaire.

A SIMPLE WAY TO FIND A SUBJECT

To find a subject, ask *who* or *what* the sentence is about. As shown below, your answer is the subject.

Who is the first sentence about? People

What is the second sentence about? The truck

Who is the third sentence about? He

Who is the fourth sentence about? That woman

A SIMPLE WAY TO FIND A VERB

To find a verb, ask what the sentence *says about* the subject. As shown below, your answer is the verb.

What does the first sentence *say about* people? They gossip.

What does the second sentence *say about* the truck? It stalled.

What does the third sentence *say about* him? He waved.

What does the fourth sentence *say about* that woman? She is (a millionaire).

A second way to find the verb is to put *I, you, he, she, it, or they* in front of the word you think is a verb. If the result makes sense, you have a verb. For example, you could put *they* in front of *gossip* in the first sentence above, with the result, *they gossip*, making sense. Therefore you know that *gossip* is a verb. You could use the same test with the other three verbs as well.

Finally, it helps to remember that most verbs show action. In the sentences already considered, the three action verbs are *gossip, stalled, and waved*. Certain other verbs, known as *linking verbs*, do not show action. They do, however, give information about the subject. In "That woman is a millionaire," the linking verb *is* tells us that the woman is a millionaire. Other common linking verbs include *am, are, was, were, feel, appear, look, become, and seem*.

● **Practice 1**

In each of the following sentences, draw one line under the subject and two lines under the verb.

Ask *who* or *what* the sentence is about to find the subject. Then ask what the sentence *says about* the subject to find the verb.

1. Fran froze six pounds of hamburger patties.
2. The company offered a ten-dollar rebate on every toaster oven.
3. The sports announcer talked nonstop during the game.
4. Jill peeled the bandage off her cut finger.
5. The warm sunshine felt good on my bare legs.
6. Our backyard is knee-deep in weeds.
7. Joanne snagged her stocking with her broken fingernail.
8. The steel comb scratched my scalp.

- The pen leaked all over my finger.
10. That outlet store carries only damaged or outdated goods.

• **Practice 2**

Follow the directions given for Practice 1.

1. One lonely neon light glowed in the distance.
2. The kite soared into the sky at the end of a taut, vibrating string.
3. Jimmy caught a foul ball at the game.
4. The skaters shadowed each other's movements perfectly.
5. Fluorescent lights emphasized the tired lines in the man's face.
6. Tracy reads to her bedridden grandmother every night.
7. Marsha's oversized glasses slipped down her nose twenty times a day.
8. Carelessly, Jane allowed the children to light the kerosene heater.
9. The squirrel leaped from one tree branch to another.
10. Carpenters constructed a wooden wheelchair ramp next to the stone steps of the church.

MORE ABOUT SUBJECTS AND VERBS

**Distinguishing Subjects
from Prepositional Phrases**

The subject of a sentence never appears within a prepositional phrase. A *prepositional phrase* is simply a group of words that begin with a preposition. Following is a list of common prepositions:

about	before	by	inside	over
above	behind	during	into	through
across	below	except	of	to
among	beneath	for	off	toward
around	beside	from	on	under
at	between	in	onto	with

Cross out prepositional phrases when looking for the subject of a sentence.

~~In the middle of the night~~, we heard footsteps ~~on the roof~~.
 The magazines ~~on the table~~ belong ~~in the garage~~.
~~Before the opening kickoff~~, a brass band marched ~~onto the field~~.
 The hardware store ~~across the street~~ went out ~~of business~~.
~~In spite of our advice~~, Sally quit her job ~~at Burger King~~.

● Practice

Cross out prepositional phrases. Then draw a single line under subjects and a double line under verbs.

1. Stripes of sunlight glowed on the kitchen floor.
2. The black panther draped its powerful body along the thick tree branch.
3. A line of impatient people snaked from the box office to the street.
4. At noon, every siren in town wails for fifteen minutes.
5. The tops of my Bic pens always disappear after a day or two.
6. Joanne removed the lint from her black socks with Scotch tape.
7. The mirrored walls of the skyscraper reflected the passing clouds.
8. Debris from the accident littered the intersection.
9. Above the heads of the crowd, a woman swayed on a narrow ledge.
10. The squashed grapes in the bottom of the vegetable bin oozed sticky purple juice.

Verbs of More Than One Word

Many verbs consist of more than one word. Here, for example, are some of the many forms of the verb *talk*:

talk	were talking	will be talking
talks	have talked	must talk
does talk	has talked	would talk
is talking	had talked	can talk
are talking	had been talking	should have talked
talked	should talk	could be talking