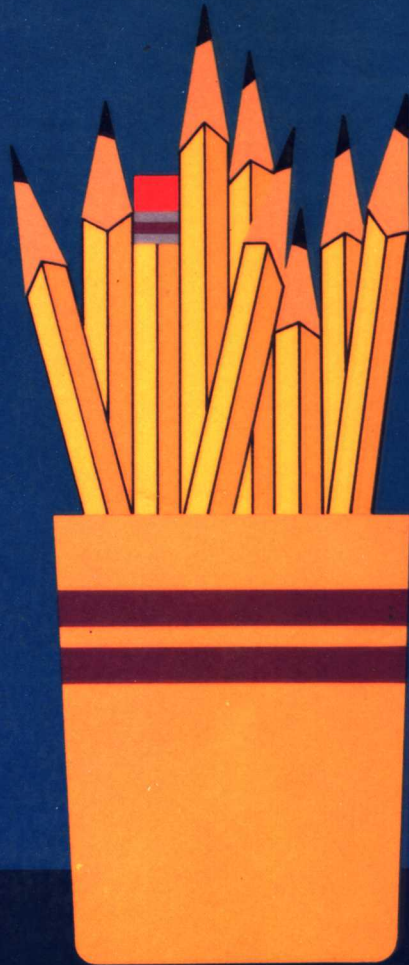


JOHN LANGAN

ENGLISH
SKILLS

FOURTH EDITION



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JOHN LANGAN

Atlantic Community College

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ENGLISH SKILLS

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John Langan has taught reading and writing courses at Atlantic Community College near Atlantic City, New Jersey, since 1971. The author of a popular series of college textbooks on both subjects, he enjoys the challenge of developing materials that teach skills in an especially clear and lively way. Before teaching, he earned advanced degrees in writing at Rutgers University and in reading at Glassboro State College. Prior to graduate school, he spent a year writing fiction that, he says, "is now at the back of a drawer waiting to be discovered and acclaimed posthumously." He supported himself during this time and while in school by working as a truck driver, machinist, car battery assembler, hospital attendant, and apple packer. He presently lives with his wife, Judith Nadell, near Philadelphia. Among his everyday pleasures are listening to Phillies games, running, cooking, reading, and watching the television shows *60 Minutes* and *L.A. Law*.

TO THE INSTRUCTOR

English Skills will help students learn and apply the basic principles of effective composition as well as master important grammar, punctuation, and usage skills. It is a nuts-and-bolts book based on a number of assumptions or beliefs about the writing process:

- First of all, *English Skills* assumes that four principles in particular are keys to effective writing: unity, support, coherence, and sentence skills. These four principles are highlighted on the inside front cover and reinforced throughout the book. Part One focuses on the first three principles; Part Six fully treats sentence skills. The rest of the book shows how the four principles apply in different types of paragraph development (Part Three), in several-paragraph essays (Part Four), and in specialized types of writing (Part Five). The success of the earlier editions of *English Skills* supports the fact that the four principles are easily grasped, remembered, and followed by students.
- The book reflects the belief that the best way to begin writing is with personal experience. After students have learned to support a point by providing material from their own experience, they are ready to develop an idea by drawing upon their own reasoning abilities and upon information in notes, articles, and books. Students are asked to write on both experiential and objective topics in Parts Three and Four. And Part Five offers guidance in many practical writing situations: exam essays, summaries, reports, the job application letter, and the research paper.
- The book also assumes that beginning writers are more likely to learn

composing skills through lively, engaging, and realistic models than through materials remote from the common experiences that are part of everyday life. For example, when a writer argues that proms should be banned, or catalogs ways to harass a teacher, or talks about why some teenagers take drugs, students are more apt to remember and follow the writing principles that may be involved. A related belief is that students are especially interested in and challenged by the writing of their peers. After reading vigorous papers composed by other students and understanding the power that good writing can have, students will be more encouraged to aim for a similar honesty, realism, and detail in their own work.

- Another premise of *English Skills* is that mastery of the paragraph should precede work on the several-paragraph essay. Thus Part One illustrates the basic principles of composition using paragraph models, and the assignments in Part Three aim at developing the ability to support ideas within a variety of paragraph forms. The essential principles of paragraph writing are then applied to the several-paragraph essays in Part Four.
- Other parts of the book reflect additional beliefs about the needs of an English text. Part Two describes several factors important for writing effectively, including the evaluation of one's own attitude about writing, the use of prewriting techniques, and the ability to create logical outlines. Part Five includes skills that will help in a variety of writing situations. Among the skills covered are writing reports and summaries, using the library, and documenting a research paper following the revised MLA guidelines. And last, the grammar, punctuation, and usage skills that make up Part Six are explained in a clear and direct way, without unnecessary technical terms. Here, as elsewhere, abundant exercise material is provided, especially for the mistakes most likely to interfere with clear communication.
- A final assumption is that, since no two people will use an English text in exactly the same way, the material should be organized in a highly accessible manner. Because each of the six parts of the book deals with a distinct writing area, instructors can turn quickly and easily to the skills they want to present. At the same time, ideas for sequencing material are provided by three boxes titled "Some Suggestions on What to Do Next"; the boxes appear at the end of the opening chapters of the book. And a detailed syllabus is provided in the Instructor's Manual.

NOTES ON THE FOURTH EDITION

With pleasure and gratitude, I have watched the audience for *English Skills* expand each year. Teachers continue to say that the four bases really do help students learn to write effectively. And they continue to comment that students

find the activities, assignments, and model passages in the book especially interesting and worthwhile.

Along with such favorable remarks has come the occasional suggestion that the book might better start with the material now in Part Two, "Other Important Factors in Writing." I understand the reasons for this suggestion, but I have decided to keep the existing sequence. I think there is great value in presenting the two basic writing guidelines in the first lines of the first chapter. For students adrift in the choppy waters of learning to write competently, these principles become anchors. However, I have been careful to make Part Two self-contained so that teachers who want to start there can easily do so.

While I have not changed any of the basic features of the book, I have freshened some materials and made additions that I believe teachers will find helpful. Here is a list of what is new:

- 1 Sections added to Part Two include "Reading as an Aid to Writing," "Writing for a Specific Purpose and Audience," and writing as a process of discovery in "Know or Discover Your Subject." Also new is a review test for all the sections in Part Two.
- 2 A fifth writing assignment is now included with each type of paragraph development in Part Three. The new final assignment requires writing with a specific purpose to a specific audience. Students are asked, for example, to write as an apartment tenant complaining to a landlord about neighbors, or as a company employee describing a job position for an employment service. This fifth assignment completes a sequence of assignments that progress from personal to objective topics. (Note that the fourth assignment in each case requires some simple research.) The last assignment helps students prepare all the more for the real-world writing that may be part of their working lives.
- 3 Added to Part Six are eight combined mastery tests (pages 504–511) that reinforce a number of basic sentence skills. There are two tests apiece on fragments and run-ons, verbs, capital letters and punctuation, and effective word use.
- 4 Other changes have also been made in Part Six. The chapter on run-on sentences has been expanded, and the distinction between fused sentences and comma splices has been made explicit. The chapter on consistent verb tense includes more activities. Introductory projects have been added for punctuation marks, effective word use, and commonly confused words. Wordiness is now treated as part of a chapter on effective word use.
- 5 Materials in other parts of the book have been freshened. For example, there is a new model research paper, there is new material on transitions, and a number of changes have been made in the practice sentences in Part Six.

- 6 A second color has been added to the book, further enhancing the clarity of presentation and making the text that much more inviting to read.
- 7 Finally, a newly revised computer disk accompanies a set of twenty-five ditto masters and a comprehensive Instructor's Manual. Richard D. Hathaway, Professor of English at the State University of New York in New Paltz, has done the computer programming; the result is that the previous version of a disk for *English Skills* has been much improved. The disk runs very quickly and is truly "user-friendly"; features include an opening menu of the lessons on the disk, explanations of all answers, automatic scorekeeping, and frequent use of the student's first name. A guide in the Instructor's Manual provides further information and a partial printout of material on the disk.

The computer disk, as well as the Instructor's Manual and the ditto masters, is available from the local McGraw-Hill representative or by writing to the College English Editor, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1221 Avenue of the Americas, New York, 10020.

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I am grateful also for help provided by Janet M. Goldstein. And I am endlessly thankful to my students. The vitality and the specialness of their lives are amply demonstrated on many pages of this text. My last acknowledgment goes to my parents—if for nothing in particular, then for much in general.

John Langan

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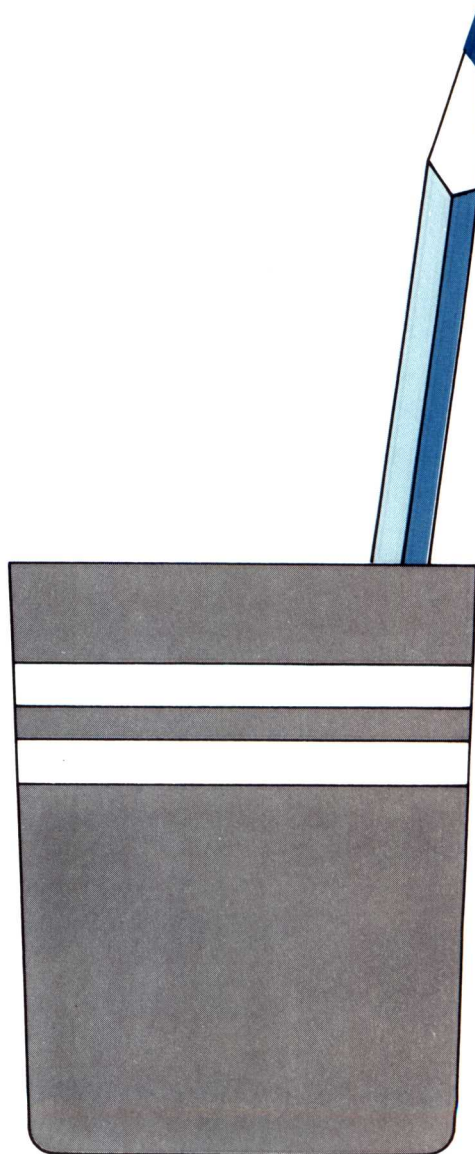
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PART ONE

BASIC
PRINCIPLES
OF
EFFECTIVE
WRITING



PREVIEW

Part One begins by introducing you to the book. As you work through the brief activities in the introduction, you will gain a quick understanding of the book's purpose, the way it is organized, and how it will help you develop your writing skills. Part One then describes the four basic steps that can make you an effective writer. The four steps are:

- 1 Make a point
- 2 Support the point with specific evidence
- 3 Organize and connect the specific evidence
- 4 Write clear, error-free sentences

Explanations, examples, and activities for the first three steps are provided so that you can master the steps. (You will be referred to Part Six of the book for a detailed treatment of the fourth step.) After seeing how the steps can help you write a competent paper, you will learn how they lead to the four standards, or "bases," of effective writing. You will then practice evaluating a number of papers in terms of the four bases of unity, support, coherence, and sentence skills.

INTRODUCTION TO THIS BOOK

This chapter will help you

- Understand how the book is organized
- Learn a sequence for using the book
- Explore your thoughts about writing

English Skills grows out of experiences I had when learning how to write. My early memories of writing in school are not pleasant. In the middle grades I remember getting back paper after paper on which the only comment was “Handwriting very poor.” In high school, the night before a book report was due, I recall working anxiously at a card table in my bedroom. I was nervous and sweaty because I felt so out of my element, like a person who knows only how to open a can of soup being asked to cook a five-course meal. The act of writing was hard enough, and my feeling that I wasn’t any good at it made me hate the process all the more.

Luckily, in college I had a teacher who changed my negative attitude about writing. During my first semester in composition, I realized that my teacher repeatedly asked two questions of any paper I wrote: “What is your point?” and “What is your support for that point?” I learned that sound writing consists basically of making a point and then providing evidence to support or develop that point. As I understood, practiced, and mastered these and other principles, I began to write effective papers. By the end of the semester, much of the uneasiness and bad feeling that I had had about writing had disappeared. I knew that competent writing was a skill that I or anyone could learn with practice. It was a nuts-and-bolts process consisting of a number of principles and skills that

could be studied and mastered. Further, I learned that while there was no alternative to the work required for competent writing, there was satisfaction to be gained through such work. I no longer feared or hated writing, for I knew I could work at it and be good at it.

English Skills explains in a clear and direct way the basic principles and skills you must learn to write effectively. And it provides a number of practice materials so that you can work on the skills enough to make them habits. This introduction will show you how to use *English Skills*. By completing the brief activities here, you will learn exactly how the book is organized and how it can help you become an effective writer.

HOW THE BOOK IS ORGANIZED

The book is divided into six parts. Each part will be discussed in turn.

Part One (Pages 1–84)

A good way to get a quick sense of any part of the book is to look at the table of contents. Turn back to the contents at the beginning of the book (pages *vii–x*) and answer the following questions:

- What is the title of Part One?

- “Introduction to This Book” is the opening chapter of Part One. What is the title of the next chapter in Part One, and what two subheads follow the title?
Title _____
Subhead _____
Subhead _____
- The title of the following chapter in Part One is “The Third and Fourth Steps in Writing.” What two subheads follow the title?
Subhead _____
Subhead _____

At this point, you have already learned the central idea in the book. The idea is that there are four steps in effective writing: (1) make a point; (2) support the point with specific evidence; (3) organize and connect the specific evidence; and (4) write clear, error-free sentences. Part One describes three of the four

writing steps. The fourth step, which includes all the skills involved in writing clear, error-free sentences, would take up too much space if treated in detail in Part One. Therefore, sentence skills have been placed in a later part of the book, where they can be easily referred to as needed. Use the table of contents (pages *vii-x*) to answer the following question:

- In what part of the book are sentence skills treated?

The final chapter in Part One is titled “The Four Bases for Evaluating Writing.” Look at the contents (pages *vii-viii*) again and fill in the first four subheads following the title of that chapter.

- Subhead _____
- Subhead _____
- Subhead _____
- Subhead _____

The four bases are another way of looking at the four steps in writing.

Inside Front Cover

Turn now to the inside front cover. You will see there a (*fill in the missing word*) _____ of the four bases of effective writing. These four standards can be used as a guide for every paper that you write. They are summarized on the inside front cover for easy reference. If you follow them, you are almost sure to write effective papers.

Part Two (Pages 85–112)

The title of Part Two is _____.

Part Two, as the title indicates, explains other important factors in the writing process. Look at the preview on page 86 and record here what the factors are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____