

ENGLISH FOR MODERN BUSINESS

fourth edition

KEITHLEY and THOMPSON

ENGLISH FOR MODERN BUSINESS

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TO THE STUDENT:

English for Modern Business provides an opportunity to develop your skills in the use of the English language. Not only will language ability serve you well in whatever career you choose, but it will also contribute to your success in all your living experiences. When you analyze your daily activities, you will understand that most of your living is a matter of communication.

Your opportunities for a successful career in business will be greatly improved if you can construct grammatical sentences, write coherent paragraphs of understandable prose, and spell correctly the words you use. In any level of work above routine mechanical functions, you cannot escape the requirement to write and speak. A person capable of writing reasonably good English will stand out among employees.

Numerous articles by business executives, educators, and others emphasize the importance of communication skills. In one large company 40 percent of the people interviewed for jobs could not meet the company's reading and writing standards. Careful study will help you meet similar standards. "The best place to learn to write is in school. If you're still there, pick your teachers' brains," is the advice of Malcolm Forbes, president and editor-in-chief of *Forbes Magazine*. The International Paper Company emphasizes the importance of communication in these words: "Today, the printed (written) word is more vital than ever. Now there is more need than ever before for all of us to read better, write better, and communicate better." Edward T. Thompson, editor-in-chief of *Reader's Digest*, points out that there are only three basic requirements for those who want to write clearly: "First, you must *want* to write clearly. Second, you must be willing to *work hard*. Third, you must know and follow some *basic guidelines*."

Your motivation to perfect your use of language will probably be the most important element in your success. You have the opportunity to apply yourself and, with the help of your teachers, to reach a high level of success. Let us explain further our reasons for encouraging you to pursue the study of language structure—the most important basic element of correct English usage.

Most of you are well aware of communication failures in your own lives,

in learning situations in school, and in organizations where you may have worked. In writing this book, we have taken the position that the sentence is the basic grammatical unit of most concern to you. Improving your ability to put together direct, clear sentences is the end result you seek. Knowledge of the structure of language is a *means* to this end.

We are saying to you with great *emphasis*: Improvement of your basic language skills will pay high dividends. There is no magic process to be discovered or revealed, however; so we urge you to keep in mind that good communication involves an intense effort to make *words work*. Clarity depends not only upon the message received but also upon the ability to analyze what is said. As a writer and speaker, you will face the need to put clauses and phrases into correct sentence patterns and to choose words appropriate to the tone and rhythm of your message.

While the instruction and practice in the textbook will require solutions in writing, we urge you to keep in mind the probable transfer of skills to other basic areas of communication. In other classes and in informal activities, attempt to use the communication guidelines you are studying. Seek to improve your skills in situations where you are both passively and actively engaged. Make acceptable usage a matter of habit. View the materials presented as constructive exercises planned to help you achieve excellence in speaking and writing. As you study, be confident of your ability to learn to communicate effectively. Test yourself to measure your improvement. Strive to do the following:

1. Compose clear sentences that convey the meaning you intend.
2. Punctuate these sentences to enhance the meaning and give the emphasis intended.
3. Develop a basic vocabulary.
4. Learn to spell correctly.
5. Edit paragraphs of written material (check content, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and so forth).
6. Improve your communication skills by consulting the dictionary frequently and effectively.

Your determination to improve your communication skills is the basic building block in developing a discipline of putting thoughts into words. Practice to perfect your knowledge of a language structure that will give you the ability to write with clarity, simplicity, coherence, and force. It is the means of getting things done. If you are applying for a job, arguing with a neighbor, or asking for a date, *what you say* and *how you say it* will pretty much determine the success you attain.

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The sentence

Many people call this the “age of communication.” With the inventions of television, computers, instant printing machines, word processing equipment, and other rapid reproduction methods, messages are being flashed before our eyes and beamed to our ears constantly. Computers can analyze, correlate, and evaluate reams of data almost faster than we can assimilate the reports they print out. Worldwide news reaches us the minute the events happen, and almost instantaneously a commentator begins to discuss them. Consequently, we are bombarded by messages continuously. Each one of us is caught up in this constant flow of communications.

**Good communication
is important to
businesses.**

Today, businesses depend on communication to carry on their nationwide and worldwide operations. To keep information flowing, companies find it necessary to establish vast communication systems. These systems depend for their success on the ability of individuals within the system to communicate efficiently and effectively. Communication among employees, between workers and supervisors, between the company and its customers or suppliers, between the company and government agencies—all these opportunities to exchange messages must be accomplished successfully. Thus, it is necessary that each of us in business knows how to use our language efficiently and effectively when communicating.

**Language is the tool
of communication.**

Language is the tool of communication. In a way, we are fortunate to be an English-speaking people. English is less complicated in its structure than many other languages. There are only a few guidelines to remember. The better we understand how to use our language, the easier it is to exchange ideas with other people. You are preparing to enter the business world, and it is important that you look at your language in a new way.

**The sentence is
the framework that
supports the
message.**

The place to start in this study of English is with the sentence. The sentence is the framework on which we hang our messages. Our thinking, our speaking, our writing—all take the form of the sentence. By learning all you can about the use and structure of sentences, you will find that you can express yourself clearly and that your messages are understood. Master the ability to speak and write effective sentences, and you’ll be on your way to a successful business career.

Sentences carry messages

**A sentence contains
a complete thought.**

A sentence is made up of *words grouped together to express a complete thought*. The first word of the sentence is capitalized to indicate the beginning of the thought. A period, question mark, or exclamation point is placed after the last word to indicate the end of the thought.

The catalog was developed by the Bressler Agency.
When will you purchase the supplies?
Please answer the telephone.
Buy now!

Remember, all sentences must express *complete* thoughts. The person who hears or reads the sentence should have no questions about the message. Notice that both the preceding examples and the following sentences carry messages that are clear and complete.

IBM manufactures electronic computers.
Mr. Morgan paid his income tax.
The new copier makes five copies a minute.

**Sentences should
have all the words
necessary for a
clear and complete
message.**

**Fragments should
be rewritten as
complete sentences.**

You may find occasionally that a person gives only part of the thought in sentence form. In a speaking situation, you, as the puzzled listener, can ask questions to obtain the rest of the thought. The speaker then has a chance to clarify the message and say the additional words that complete the thought. In writing, however, the incomplete thought may be written as a sentence with the first word capitalized and a mark of punctuation after the last word. Just doing those two things does not make the message complete, however. You, as the puzzled reader, do not have the opportunity to clarify immediately the intended message, unless you telephone the sender and ask for clarification. Writers need to be sure that their sentences contain all the words necessary for a complete message. Sentence fragments, as incomplete sentences are called, can easily be changed to complete ones. In the following illustrations, the fragments are changed from incomplete to complete sentences.

Incomplete messages	Complete messages
Because you have all the details.	You can go ahead and write the report because you have all the details.
Until the clerk has a chance to explain.	Until the clerk has a chance to explain, we will withhold our decision.
How many miles a gallon?	How many miles a gallon does this car get?

With the addition of a few words, the fragments in the left column have been changed from incomplete to complete thoughts in the right column. Only a few words are needed to change a fragment to a sentence that contains a clear and complete thought. For understanding and communication to take place, it is important that you as the communicator express ideas in their entirety. The ability to use English well—that is, communicate with clarity in both speech and writing—is a priceless asset, highly prized in the business world.

Quick review

A review now to test your ability to identify complete sentences will be helpful. Are all the sentences below complete thoughts? Place a **C** in the column opposite each sentence that does express a complete thought.

1. Making the sales quota. _____
2. Jim was glad that he made the sales quota. _____
3. Look for that letter in the files. _____
4. Margie Foster who is a fast typist. _____
5. Margie Foster, who is a fast typist, was given the job. _____
6. The workers were given a raise in pay. _____
7. The profits based on last year's figures. _____
8. The manager took the reports home to read. _____
9. Although the company sold a million units last year. _____
10. Looking over the list and not finding the name. _____

(Answers in reverse order: - - C - C C - C C -)

Sentences can be constructed in several ways.

Several types of sentences—*statements, questions, commands, requests, and exclamations*—allow us to express ourselves in different ways. With them, we add variety and interest to our writing and speaking.

4 THE SENTENCE

Statements give facts, ideas, descriptions, explanations, and many other kinds of information.

Statements declare facts, develop ideas, describe objects, explain past events, and discuss future plans. Most writing in business is accomplished with statements. They end with periods. The following sentences are examples of statements.

The enclosed brochure will acquaint you with our products.
Almost every kind of employment is covered by Social Security.
Toyota builds six truck models.
Last year the company paid a \$3 dividend on common stock.
Atlas, Inc. employs 10,450 persons in ten job classifications.

Questions ask for information.

A sentence written as a *question* allows you to ask for information from another person. The direct question calls for an answer—the person to whom the question is directed is expected to reply. A question mark (?) is placed after the last word as the end punctuation. The following questions are asking for specific information.

Is Mr. Jones in his office?
What is the name of this product?
Do you make this model in other colors?
Have you a copy of the annual report?
If I learn to type, will I get the job?

An indirect question may be included in a statement.

Once in a while you may run across a sentence that appears to be a question. The message may say something like this: *Mr. Jones asked whether the meeting will be held next week.* What you have here is a statement of a fact. Someone is telling you what Mr. Jones asked. Mr. Jones asked a question previously and someone is reporting that fact. The sentence is a *statement* containing an *indirect question* and takes a period as the end punctuation. *Employees are wondering if Tuesday will be a paid holiday.*

Commands tell someone what to do.

In sentences expressed as *commands*, the person addressed is asked to perform a task. The end punctuation mark for the command is a period. Notice that the following commands use verbs of action, i.e., *take*, *finish*, and *send*.

Take this report to Mr. Jones.
Finish this tabulation by noon.
Please send me three boxes.

Usually the name of the person who is commanded to act is not given. The person addressed, however, is understood to be "you."

You Take this report . . .
You Finish . . .
You Please send . . .

Commands are direct and to the point. They may sound harsh and dictatorial, but they are quick ways to ask for action. The tone of the spoken voice softens most verbal commands. In writing, they do not appear to be dictating action. However, in some messages to certain persons, the writer may wish to rephrase the command as a more polite request.

Requests are courteous ways to ask that something be done.

Sentences written as *requests* are more courteous than commands. The communicator is not commanding someone to do something. However, the action requested is expected to take place. Notice that the following requests are more polite in tone even though the messages are direct and to the point.

May I borrow the report.

(I expect to be lent the report.)

Could we have your check by April 15.

(We expect to receive the check by the 15th.)

Will you please let us know your decision.

(We expect to be told the decision.)

Would you please send us a full explanation of the situation.

(We expect to receive a full explanation.)

If these requests had been written as questions, the writer would have given the reader the opportunity to answer "no." Also, if the requests had been written as commands, the writer might have antagonized the reader by making demands. What the writer expects and needs is affirmative action; therefore, the sentence style of a request is used. Requests are merely statements naming the action that the person receiving the message is to take. The polite request ends with a period just as statements and commands do.

Exclamations show strong feeling.

Sentences that convey feelings of strong emotion are called *exclamations*. The end punctuation mark for them is the exclamation point (!). They may express amazement, fear, hate, delight, relief, excitement, or some other emotion. In business these sentences are used in sales letters, brochures, advertising copy, employee bulletins, or company newspapers and magazines. Notice that the following exclamations are complete thoughts just as other sentences are.

Sales are up 23 percent!

Watch for an important announcement!

Order now!

Punctuation marks are placed after the last word in sentences.

Sentences end with one of three punctuation marks—period, question mark, or exclamation point.

1. Statements, commands, requests—all end with periods (.).
2. Questions end with question marks (?).
3. Exclamations end with exclamation points (!).

Turn to pages 290–292 for further explanation and other uses of these marks.

Quick review

Here are ten sentences to be identified. Indicate in the column whether the sentence is a *statement*, a *command*, a *request*, a *question*, or an *exclamation*. Also, place the correct *end punctuation* after the last word in each sentence.

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1. May we have a reply to our letter of June 19 | _____ |
| 2. Watch out for falling bricks | _____ |
| 3. Place your signature on the bottom line | _____ |
| 4. The economic indicators point to increased production in the 1980s | _____ |

5. Why did you promote Mr. Clark _____
6. Salespersons should contact at least twenty customers next month _____
7. Will you please circulate a copy of this notice in your department _____
8. Will John Taylor be able to attend the board meeting _____
9. Figure out the commission on this sale _____
10. The president asked why the matter has not been settled _____

(Answers in reverse order: SCQRSQSCER)

**Subjects and verbs
are the major parts
of the sentence.**

The next important way to look at the sentence is to discover its parts. By knowing how the parts fit together, you can then construct your own sentences correctly. Every complete sentence has one or more *subjects* and one or more *verbs*. These two parts carry most of the message. When you are able to recognize them, you write and speak more clearly. The *subject* of the sentence may be a *word*, *phrase*, or *clause*. The subject names the person, place, or thing about which something is said. Subjects may be either simple (one) or compound (more than one).

**Look for something
that does or is
something in order to
find the subject.**

To locate the subject, you look for something that does something or is something. The subject names who or what is performing the action or who or what is being acted upon. First, let us look at sentences that contain *simple subjects*. Notice that these simple subjects may be one word, one phrase, or one clause.

One-word subject: *John spoke.*

One-phrase subject: *Typing a rough draft is necessary.*

One-clause subject: *That the metal can be cut was proved.*

In the one-word subject illustration, someone *did* something—*John* (the subject) *spoke*. In the one-phrase illustration, something *is* something—*Typing a rough draft* (the subject) *is* necessary.

A *compound subject* consists of two or more subjects, either as single words or as phrases and clauses. The compound subject is easily located if you look for the entire subject. Continue reading the words in the sentence until you find all that is performing the action or is receiving the action. The following sentences illustrate the use of two or more subjects.

**Words as the
compound subject:** *John, Jim, and Bob spoke.*

**Phrases as the
compound subject:** *Making corrections and typing a rough draft are necessary.*

**Clauses as the
compound subject:** *That the metal can be cut, that the cut is smooth, and that the drill is undamaged were proved.*

Look for all the subjects.

To find all the subjects in a sentence, it is necessary to read the entire part of the message that shows (1) who is speaking, or (2) who is spoken to, or (3) who is the person or thing spoken about. The rest of the sentence contains the verb.

To find the verb, look for the words that show action or state of being.

The second major part of the sentence concerns the *verb*. The *verb* of the sentence is the word or phrase that causes the subject to act or to express a state of being. It may be either simple or compound.

Verbs tell what the subject is doing or what is being done to the subject.

To locate the *verb*, you look for the words that tell you what the subject is doing, what the subject is, or what is being done to the subject. Verbs may indicate action taken by the subject or action received by the subject. In the sentence *The manager read the report.*, the manager performed the action of reading the report. The verb *read*, therefore, indicates the action taken by the *manager* (the subject). But in the sentence *The report was read by the manager.*, the verb *was read* points out that the subject *report* has been acted upon by the manager.

The *simple verb* may be one word or one verb phrase. Notice that all the sentences below contain simple verbs—*holds*, *should be typed*, *was puzzled*.

One-word verb: Mrs. Carter ***holds*** a responsible position in our organization.

Verb phrase: The report ***should be typed*** after lunch.
The clerk ***was puzzled*** about where to file the letter.

A *compound verb* consists of two or more verbs. Locating multiple verbs in a sentence is easy if one looks for the *complete verb*. Check to see how many things the subject is doing.

Simple subject/compound verb: *John ran and jumped.*

Compound subject/compound verb: *John and Jim ran and jumped.*

Simple subject/compound

verb phrases: A secretary ***may handle*** telephone calls, ***may make*** appointments, ***may take*** dictation, and ***may compose*** routine letters.

Helping verbs are used in verb phrases.

Many verbs in the sentence are made up of two or more words. These words form the *verb phrase*. Often helping verbs, such as *could*, *should*, *would*, *shall*, *will*, *might*, *must*, *can*, and *may*, are used with other verbs. Helping verbs assist in expressing the thought more exactly, pointing out the time of an action or shading the meaning slightly.

The next sentences illustrate the use of the verb *count* either as a single word or as part of a verb phrase. Notice that the helping verb points out the time of an action or shades the meaning slightly. Helping verbs contribute more exact meaning to your sentences.

Count as a single word: He ***counts*** the inventory.
(present)
He ***counted*** the inventory.
(past)

Count with helping verbs: He ***will count*** the inventory.
(future)

He **can count** the inventory.
(ability)

He **may count** the inventory.
(permission)

He **might have been counting**
the inventory.
(time and shade of doubt)

He **should have been counting**
the inventory.
(time and duty)

He **did count** the inventory.
(emphasis)

**To be, to have and
to do are both main
verbs and helping
verbs.**

The verbs *to be*, *to have*, and *to do* can be used both as main verbs and as helping verbs. The following outline of their forms and the examples of their use as main or helping verbs illustrate correct usage:

Verb	Its forms	
be	is, am, are, was were, being, been	Main verb: The office was large and noisy. Helping verb: He was given a promotion.
have	have, has, had	Main verb: I have several letters to type. Helping verb: I have typed several letters.
do	do, does, did	Main verb: We do our sorting at these tables. Helping verb: Do come to the meeting.

Quick review

Let's take a few minutes to see if you can quickly identify subjects and verbs. Underline the subject(s) once and the verb(s) twice in each of the following sentences.

1. Every company has an accounting department.
2. The office is the information center.
3. Most office costs are classified as overhead expenses.
4. The worker should have told his supervisor.
5. Correspondence and administrative secretaries handle many difficult tasks.
6. Mr. Jones, Mrs. Falker, and Ms. Peters spoke at the convention.
7. The mail clerk stapled, folded, and put the letters in envelopes before taking them to the post office.
8. The company manufactures and sells electronic components.
9. Mr. Jones did tell the supervisor and also wrote a grievance.
10. The nuts and bolts should be packed in plastic containers.