



Rx: Write

A Compilation of Prescriptive Lessons to Improve Writing
One Step at a Time



Rx:WRITE: A TEACHER'S GUIDE

What is it?

Rx:WRITE is a collection of writing lessons that are linked to a generic rubric. Rx:WRITE also includes other supports that students can use to improve their writing, and teachers can use to improve their instruction with regard to writing in all subject areas.

Why have it? How does it work?

Think about what happens after your students hand in their writing : You collect the papers and carefully evaluate them. Then you return them to the students. But what happens next? How do students move ahead? Do they keep making the same mistakes? Do they even look at your comments and corrections?

Rx:WRITE is available so that you can direct students to lessons that *respond to their demonstrated writing needs*. Students are then expected to do these lessons, either on their own time or as part of your class. The lessons won't take them very long to complete, nor will they take long for you to check (if you choose to do so). But we hope that the lessons will effectively improve your student's writing in the targeted way.

How is it used?

I've tried to make Rx:WRITE as user friendly as possible. First, look over the rubric. I've given you a long form, which breaks down each of the traits, and a short form, for convenience. After you understand the rubric, familiarize yourself with the list of lessons. You may want to asterisk particular lessons that you think will be most useful and understandable to your students.

RxWrite is available online through a link on my website (www.amybenjamin.com). You may choose to have your students access RxWrite online. Or you may choose to print out a few of your favorite RxWrite lessons and have them available in folders in your classroom. Some teachers use RxWrite lessons for whole class instruction. That will work, but I think that RxWrite is best used for differentiated instruction based upon a student's particular demonstrated needs.

When you read a student's paper, certain writing needs probably jump out at you. These writing needs are probably addressed by one of the Rx:WRITE lessons, and you can refer that student to the appropriate lesson. You might want write something like this on top of the student's paper: *Rx: Thesis Statement*, or *Rx: Examples*.

Then, you return the papers to the class, explaining what RxWrite is and where to find the lessons. It would then be that student's responsibility to do this lesson.

What happens next is up to you: You may want the lesson printed out and handed in, you may want to give it a grade, or restore a certain number of points on the original writing piece once the lesson is satisfactorily completed.

Rx:WRITE is here to help you help your students, at your discretion and in accordance with your own teaching style. Please use it just as you see fit.

What do RxWrite Lessons contain? Why are they structured in this way?

Each lesson consists of an explanation of a writing skill, examples, and then a practice segment, introduced by the words "Now, You:." Most of the practice segments take the student back to the original piece of writing that generated the RxWrite, thus the effectiveness of the lesson is immediate.

RxWrite is structured in this way because the student may need to do the same lesson multiple times before applying the concepts in

actual text. Because the lessons are applied specifically to the student's own writing, rather than to made-up sentences such as you'd find in an exercise book, the students are always directed back to their own writing, improving it in very specific ways.

Would teachers have to change their ways of teaching writing in order to use RxWrite lessons?

Maybe, and I think these changes would be for the better. For example, the very first lesson teaches students to use the task verb to analyze the demands of the question. The student's answer is only going to be as good as the teacher's question. When teachers' questions are framed with ambiguous task verbs (such as "discuss"), the students' answers tend to wander all over the place. Teachers need to think carefully about task verbs and what their directions mean to students. Other than that, the RxWrite lessons are generic enough to accommodate all forms of writing instruction.

Is RxWrite geared for a certain level?

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What follows is the list of RxWrite lessons, a Student Guide, and Assignment Tracker that will help you keep a record of who has done what RxWrite lessons.



Rx:WRITE LESSONS

I. **The FOCUS Lessons**: Addressing the Task

Focus I: Learning how to analyze the demands of the question

Focus II: Learning how to write a thesis statement that will guide the essay

Focus III: Learning how to write an effective introductory paragraph that sets the tone and leads up to the thesis statement

Focus IV: Learning how to stay focused by using “anchor words”

Focus V: Learning how to stay focused by using “Q&A” thinking

II. **The DEVELOPMENT Lessons**: Development

Dev I: Elaboration: Think Visually

Dev II: Elaboration: in, on, at, for, with (detail)

Dev III: Textual References

Dev IV: Reasons

Dev V: Names, Places, Events, Facts, Figures

III. **The ORGANIZATION Lessons**: Organization

Org I: Harvard Outline

Org II: Other Organizers

Org III: Transition Words

Org IV: Comparison/Contrast

Org V: General to Specific

IV. The LANGUAGE Lessons: Language

Lang I: Talking the Talk: Using subject area words

Lang II: Conciseness: Omit unnecessary words

Lang III: Pack your sentences with meaning

Lang IV: Repetition: Good and bad

Lang V: Writing for clarity

V. The PRESENTATION Lessons: Grammar, Punctuation, Capitalization, Handwriting, Spelling

Pre I: Comma Rules

Pre II: Possessives

Pre III: Woman/women

Pre IV: Affect/effect

Pre V: Then/than

Pre VI: It's/its

Pre VII: Run-on sentences, semicolon use

Pre VIII: Sentence fragments

Pre IX: *'Would of'*

Pre X: You're/your

Pre XI: Capitalization

Pre XII: There/their/they/re

Pre XIII: Handwriting: Spacing

Pre XIV: Handwriting: Letter Heights

Pre XV: Handwriting: Closure of Letters

Pre XVI: Handwriting: Loops and Tails

Pre XVII: Handwriting: Slant

Spelling Trouble Shooter

RxWRITE: A STUDENT'S GUIDE



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Do I get graded on my Rx:WRITE work?

Whether specific grades will be assigned to Rx:WRITE work will be up to the individual teachers. However, as you do Rx:WRITE lessons, your writing and thinking will improve. These improvements can't help but to bring you better grades and success in school.



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Rx: WRITE



The Focus Lesson Series: Addressing the Task

Focus I: Understanding what the question wants you to do

You may have written a decent essay, but you lost track of what the task was asking for.

You may have written a summary instead of an analysis. You may have just told the facts, when you were supposed to draw conclusions about them. You may have been a reporter, rather than a commentator. You may have just “talked about” the topic, rather than responding to a specific question about it. If you were asked to “compare and contrast,” you may have discussed each topic separately, rather than bringing them together for comparison purposes.

Now, You:

Look again at your question or assignment. Identify the key words that tell you what to do.

Practice: Understanding the task

Use this checklist to help you understand what you were supposed to do:

Explain____

Describe____

Give your opinion_____

Provide reasons_____

Provide examples_____

Summarize_____

Compare_____

Persuade_____

Justify____

Analyze_____

Write the task in your own words:

This question/assignment wants me to....

Rx: WRITE



The Focus Lesson Series: Addressing the Task

Focus II: Writing a Good Thesis Statement

Your thesis statement is your main idea. There are three reasons why writing a good thesis statement is important:

1. A good thesis statement causes your reader to have confidence in you.
2. A good thesis statement helps you organize.
3. A good thesis statement generates further ideas.

When you compose your thesis statement, you are nailing your writing piece into place.

If your thesis statement is too general, your reader will think you don't have much knowledge. If your thesis statement is too specific, you won't have much to work off.

At best, your TS should make a statement that will feed the rest of your essay. It should invite the reader to want to know what you think about the topic, and how much more you know about it.

Your TS is the foundation of your paper, firmly nailed down.

Here are examples of strong thesis statements:

1. *Anyone venturing into the wilderness needs three emergency supplies: communication devices, food and water, and a way to stay dry and warm.*

2. *President Harry S. Truman changed the course of history because of his decisive actions on international and domestic issues.*
3. *I like reality shows because I like to see how real people solve their problems.*

A good thesis statement must do more than just announce the topic. The title already does that. The thesis statement must *make a point*.

Helpful words :

The following words will help you write a thesis statement strong enough to support your essay:

Although	As long as	Because	Unless	When
Which	Since	Whenever	Until	Even though
As long as	Before	After	As	While

Also, a colon (:) is useful in a thesis statement because it introduces a list of ideas for you to develop. (See example #1 above)

Here are some words that you might want to avoid in your thesis statement:

Many	Very	Really	Things	A lot
------	------	--------	--------	-------

One more thing: Sometimes, your ideas change as you write your essay. You may want to go back and adjust your thesis statement after your first draft.

Now, you:

Look at the first paragraph of your paper. Compose a strong thesis statement, based on the above description. Your thesis statement should:

- Show that you understand what the question is asking you to do.
- Make a point (not just announce the topic)

Practice: Thesis Statement

Name: _____

Topic: _____

Date of original: _____

Date of this Practice: _____

Your original thesis statement:

Your revised thesis statement:

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The Focus Lesson Series: Addressing the Task

Focus III: Writing a good introduction

Your introduction is the first impression that your reader is going to get. You must establish that you know what you are doing in your introduction.

The classic introductory paragraph places the thesis statement at the end. This is a strong format because it orients the reader to your subject and writing style, and then delivers the thesis statement just when the reader is in the mood to hear it.

Before you even think about your introduction, think about your audience and purpose. Does your reader want a “just-the-facts” essay? Or, does your reader want a formal, full-dress essay? Has the reader specified that a certain number of sentences must be in every paragraph? The most important rule of writing is: *Write to your reader’s specifications! (AKA: Consider your audience.)*

Let’s say this is a “just-the-facts, get-in-and-get-out” kind of essay. In that case, just start with your thesis statement and go from there.

Let’s say this is a formal, full-dress essay. In that case, romance your reader for a few sentences before getting to your thesis statement.

You may want to begin with an example or an anecdote.

You may decide to charm your reader with a quotation. (Don't use a dictionary definition. That is not charming.) You may want to begin with a rhetorical question.

Example:

Thesis statement: *Cell phone use on commuter trains should be limited to certain cars because commuters have a right to a quiet ride.*

Lead-up statements: *It's hard to imagine life without cell phones. However, people on cell phones disturb the peace in enclosed areas, such as trains.*

Now, you:

Review your opening paragraph. Rewrite it, so that it conforms more closely to the expectations and requirements of your reader.

Rx: WRITE



The Focus Lesson Series: Addressing the Task

Focus IV: Staying focused with “anchor words”

You might think repetition is something to be avoided. Yes, we should avoid repetition in some circumstances, such as when it would serve no purpose. However, the wise writer understands that repetition can be an excellent way to show the reader that you are focused on what the question is asking you to do.

Think in terms of “anchor words.” An anchor is a strong weight that holds you in place, keeps you from drifting. Key words are anchor words. Every topic has key words. These should be repeated to hold you in place, keep you from drifting.

Notice the anchor words in the following paragraph:

Does switching the girls’ soccer season from the spring to the fall violate Title IX? Title IX was put into action to assure equal opportunity for males and females. Right now, boys’ sports are spread out over the three seasons, but girls’ sports are unbalanced. This unbalance denies equal opportunity to males and females, as required under Title IX. For example, boys’ tennis is in the spring for boys, but in the fall for girls. Boys’ swimming is in the winter for boys, but in the fall for girls. This imbalance puts girls at a disadvantage because girls have to make choices that boys don’t have to make. Also, many schools are too small to supply players for multiple sports that seek players for the same season. The imbalance sends a message

that boys' sports deserve more consideration than girls' sports do, and that message violates both the spirit and the letter of Title IX.

Now, you:

You may have lost focus in a way that some strategic repetition could fix. Look at one of your paragraphs. Rewrite it, using anchor words to keep you focused on your main idea.

My main idea:

Anchor words that I will use:

Rewrite of paragraph:

Rx: WRITE



The Focus Lesson Series: Addressing the Task

Focus V: Staying focused by using “Q&A” thinking

An essay topic generates questions: a main question, and then sub-questions. One way to stay focused is to break the question down into its sub-questions, and then, as you write, answer those sub-questions.

Let’s say you’ve been asked to do this:

Take a position, pro or con, on a controversial social issue that affects high school students directly.

This topic suggests the following main question:

What is my opinion about a controversial social issue that affects me and my peers directly?

OK, now: These would be the sub-questions:

- What is the issue?
- Why is it controversial?
- How does it affect high school students directly?
- What are both sides of the issue?
- What is my opinion?
- Why do I have this opinion?
- How can I support my opinion?
- Are there laws applying to this issue?
- What is the opposing opinion?

- **What facts support the opposition, and how do I counter these facts?**

As you write, you should keep these questions firmly in mind to guide you toward creating a coherent, meaningful piece.

Now, you:

Consider the topic that you wrote about. Write the main question and the sub-questions below:

Topic:

Main Question:

Sub-questions:

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The Development Lesson Series: Providing Sufficient Information

Dev I: Elaboration: Think Visually

One way of developing your piece is to use language that lets your reader see what you are talking about. Every paragraph should have something that the reader can visualize.

When writing so that your reader can visualize, you'll want to use lots of concrete nouns. Concrete nouns name things that you can actually see with your eyes, hold with your hands.

Once you have your visuals in place, you can go from the concrete (visual) to the abstract (mental). In addition to your visuals, you need ideas. Words that express ideas are called abstract nouns. These are things that you have to conjure up in your mind. Many abstract nouns have these endings: *-tion, -ness, -ance, -ence, -ity, -itude, -ment*. Abstract adjectives, words that allow us to look upon concrete nouns in abstract ways, often have these endings: *-able, -ible, -ical, -cious*.

Here is a sentence sequence that lacks visuals:

Movie theatres could actually make more money by giving discounts to young adults. This may seem contradictory, but the volume of increased ticket sales would more than make up for the loss on individual tickets. In addition, concession sales would go up.

Here it is, with visuals added:

Movie theatres could actually make more money by giving discounts to high school and college students. This may seem contradictory, but the volume of increased ticket sales would more than make up for the loss on individual tickets. Picture all those teenagers marching the malls on a Saturday night. They may not have enough cash in their pockets to pay full price for a movie ticket, but would flock to the ticket booth if the price were a bit more attractive. In addition, sales would go up at the concession stand, as everyone knows that teenagers consume large amounts of popcorn, candy, and soda.

And the abstract nouns and adjectives that you could add to this paragraph to make it more “idea-based” might be:
entertainment, recreation, affordable, economical

Now, you:

Revise one of your paragraphs by adding visuals, along with at least one abstract noun or adjective:

Rx: WRITE



The Development Lesson Series: Providing Enough Information

Dev II: Elaboration: *in, on, at, for, with*

The little words *in, on, at, for, with* can be very useful to you as you develop your piece. FYI: These words are called prepositions. Prepositions give the reader information about time and place, as well as other details.

Here are some other prepositions that will help you add detail:

Before	After	Next to	Near	Across
Under	Over	Between	During	Into
Toward	Through	Until	From	Among

Now, you:

Revise one of your paragraphs, adding more prepositions. Be sure that each of your prepositional phrases actually adds information, and is not just adding empty words.



Rx: WRITE



The Development Lesson Series: Providing Sufficient Information

Dev III: Elaboration: Textual references

Your reader expects you to prove what you claim. One of the best ways of doing this is to provide textual references. Textual references can be quotations or facts that come out of a book, article, or document.

When you introduce a quotation, do so with finesse. Don't just say: *In the book it says...* Instead, say something like this:

- *The Declaration of Independence asserts that, "...*
- *In the second stanza, Robert Frost writes, "...*

You can set up your quotation by separating it from the rest of the sentence with a colon. After the colon, you present your quotation inside quotation marks, and then follow up with a parenthetical citation. If you are writing in response to a work of literature or a document that your reader already knows you are writing about, all you need is the page or line number. It might look like this:

- In Act II, Scene 2, Julius Caesar declares that he is not afraid of death: "Cowards die many times before their deaths/ The valiant never taste of death but once" (lines 32-34).

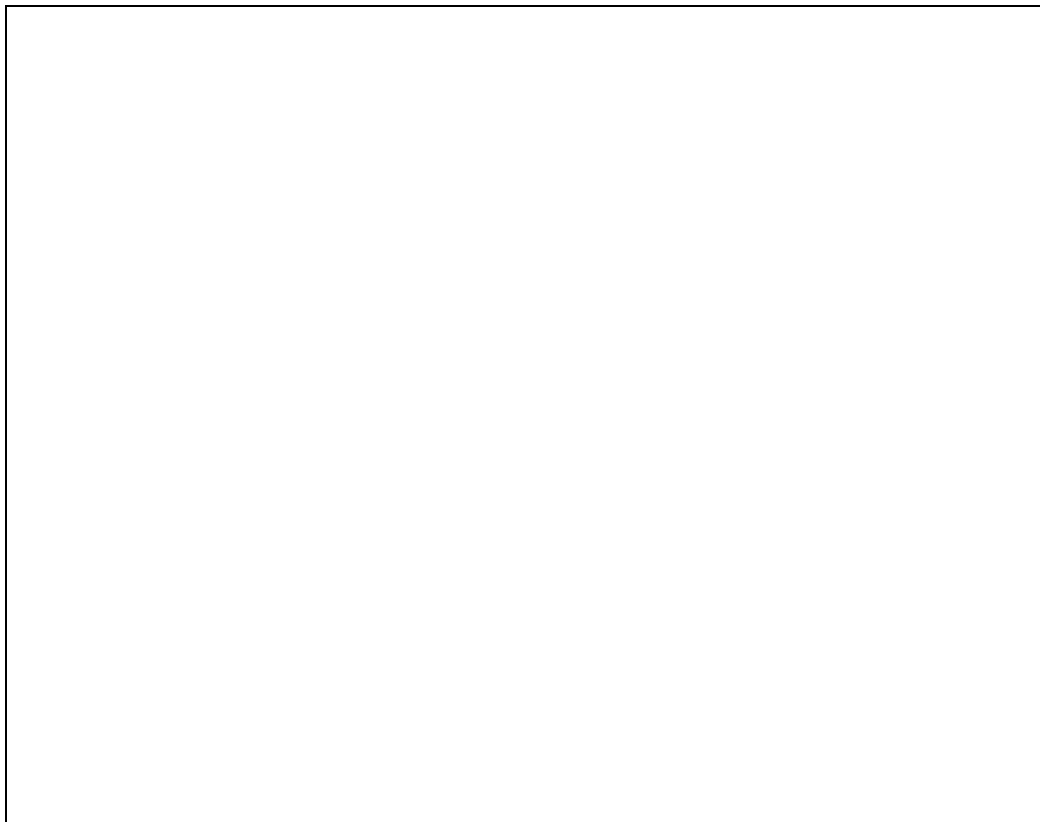
When you quote from text, don't forget that you don't have to quote the entire sentence. You can just pick up the phrase that you want. When you pick up only part of a sentence, use ellipses (...) to indicate that part of the sentence is missing, like this:

- **In Act II, Scene 2, Julius Caesar declares that he is not afraid of death because he is a valiant man who "...never taste of death but once (lines 32-34).**

Textual reference doesn't have to come in the form of a quotation. Any time you refer explicitly and specifically to something from that text, that is good development.

Now, you:

Rewrite one of your paragraph, adding two examples of textual reference:

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the student to rewrite a paragraph and add two examples of textual reference.



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The Development Lesson Series: Providing Sufficient Information

Dev IV: Reasons

You need reasons to support what you claim. Your reasons must be fully explained. For your reasons to be convincing, you need facts. Facts can take the form of statistics, examples, specific information.

Your reasons must show logical thinking. One form of logical thinking is the syllogism. A syllogism is an “if/then” statement.

Your reasons will be more convincing if you use temperate, neutral language rather than emotional, angry language.

Your reasons will be more respected if you avoid broad generalities.

The following words are great for writing statements that provide reasons:

- **Although...**
- **Even though...**
- **If...then...**
- **That is why...**
- **Because.....,**
- **.....because**
- **As**

Now, you:

Expand one of your paragraph by giving reasons:



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The Development Lesson Series: Providing Sufficient Information

Dev V: Names, places, events, facts and figures

To make your writing convincing, you need specifics. Nothing can be more specific than names, places on a map, events and dates, and numbers.

Your essay should have a variety of specific information. Think of it this way: If you were to hold a magnifying glass to your essay, what would you see? Adding specific information is like holding a magnifying glass to your essay.

Now, you:

Expand one of your paragraphs by adding names, places, events, facts and figures:

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The Organization Lesson Series: An Orderly Progression

Org I: How to Write a Harvard Outline

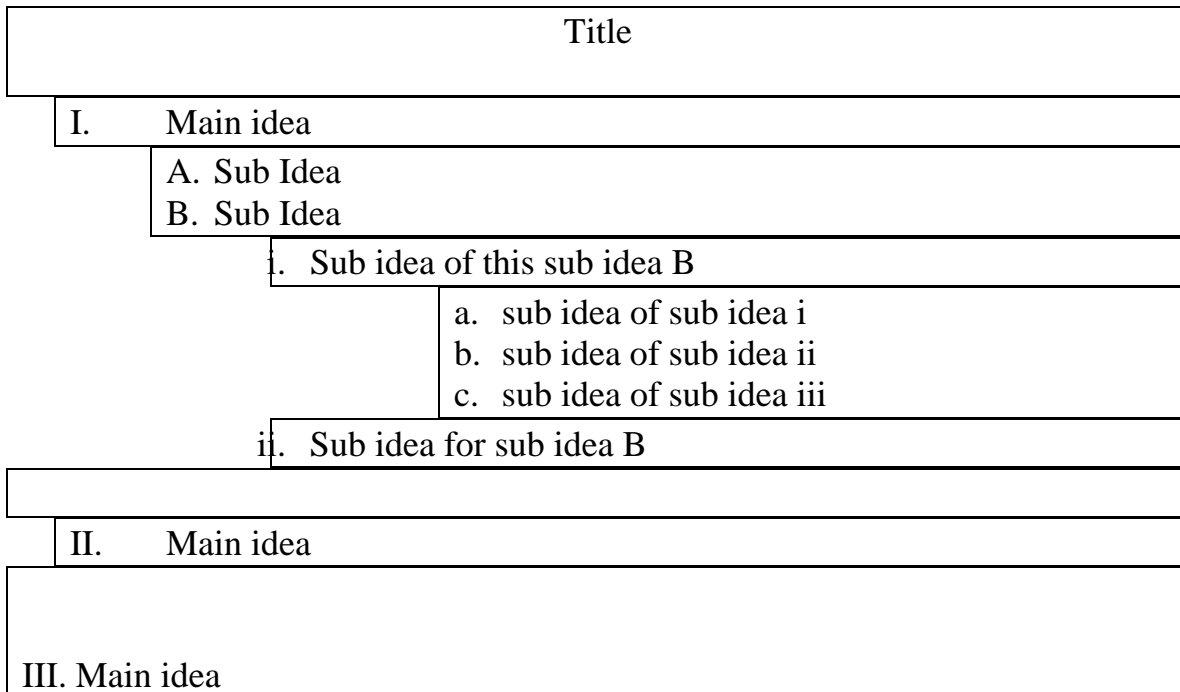
The classic outline form is known as the Harvard outline. Below is an example:

History of the Vietnam War

- I. Vietnam as part of French Indochina**
 - A. 19TH Century imperialism**
 - i. Berlin conference, 1890**
 - a. Africa**
 - b. Chinese concessions**
 - c. Southeast Asia**
 - 2. Restored French national pride after German defeat**
 - 3. Built up the French business classes after Napoleon III**
 - B. Tin and rubber industries**
 - C. Revolutionary insurgencies emerge after 1900**
 - D. Ho Chi Minh and other French-educated Marxists**
- II. Ho Chi Minh and the Vietminh Coalition**
 - A. <sub idea here>**
 - B. <sub idea here>**
- III. World War II and Japanese Occupation**
- IV. Vietnamese Declaration of Independence**

Rules for Constructing a Harvard Outline

- Use phrases, not complete sentences
- Where you have a I, you have to have a II; where you have an A, you have to have a B
- You don't need sub ideas



Now, you:

You are doing this Rx: WRITE lesson because your paper lacked organization. To become a better organizer, write a Harvard outline of your paper.

Next Step:

Use your Harvard outline to formulate your paragraphs. Now is the time to transform your phrases into full sentences. Transform your main headings into topic sentences of your paragraphs. Use your sub-ideas to form your supportive sentences for each paragraph.

Think *Links*:

Give your reader a smooth ride from paragraph to paragraph, and even from sentence to sentence, if necessary. (See RxWrite, Organization Lesson II)

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The Organization Lesson Series: An Orderly Progression

Org II: Transition: Leading the reader gently from one idea to the next.

A good writer helps the reader make sense of the piece. One way to do this is to provide words of transition. Transitional words, also called segues, are usually found at the ends or beginnings of paragraphs. Transitional words inform the reader of the relationship between the idea just expressed and the one coming up.

Here are some transitional words:

I. Transitions that link similar information

Use these transitions as an alternative to AND:

In addition,	Moreover,
Furthermore,	Similarly,

II. Transitions that introduce contrasting information:

Use these transitions as an alternative to BUT:

In contrast,	On the other hand,
However,	In spite of this,
Yet,	Still,

III. Transitions that link causes to their effects:

Use these transitions as an alternative to SO:

Therefore,	Thus,
Hence,	This leads to...

Now, you:

Write two sentences that provide transition at two different points in your paper.

Rx: WRITE



The Organization Lesson Series: An Orderly Progression

Org III: Other Organizers

Although the Harvard outline is an excellent organizer, you may want to use another format.

You may have seen cluster diagrams, Venn diagrams, tree and branch diagrams, stars, flowers, and other graphics.

Whatever organizer you use, keep the following in mind:

- 1. Your organization should be symmetrical: That is, each idea should be given approximately the same amount of ink. If an idea is noticeably shorter than others, maybe you should include it in another paragraph, or flesh it out more with an example or explanation.**
- 2. Lead your reader gently from one idea to the next. Set up expectations for your reader, and follow through on them.**
- 3. Your organizer should help you think.**

Now, you:

Use the organizer of your choice to show a plan for your essay.

Rx: WRITE



The Organization Lesson Series: An Orderly Progression

Org IV: Comparison/Contrast

Comparison/contrast is an important critical thinking skill. Keep the following in mind when writing a comparison/contrast:

1. Don't dwell on the obvious. Look for similarities in subjects that appear different; look for differences in subjects that appear similar.
2. Avoid writing "two reports stuck together" rather than a true comparison/contrast. A true comparison/contrast brings both subjects together under one main umbrella and several sub-umbrellas. The umbrella represents the themes that you are going compare/contrast.

Now, you:

Using three hi-liters, color code your paragraphs. Color A represents the umbrella (themes). Color B represents Subject 1; Color C represents Subject 2. This will show you if you have a true comparison/contrast, rather than a "stuck together" report.

Diagram your paper, using a main umbrella and sub-umbrellas to represent your points of comparison.

Rx: WRITE



The Organization Lesson Series: An Orderly Progression

Org V: General to Specific

An important organizational plan is to go from general to specific, and then back to general. In other words, start off with a general statement. Then, prove it with specific facts. Then, close by re-stating your general statement.

To be really well organized, your general-specific-general structure should work on two levels: The overall paper should be general (introduction), specific (internal paragraphs) and then back to general (conclusion). Within that structure, each internal paragraph should also be general-specific-general.

Now, you:

Using two hi-liters, hi-lite your generalities in Color A, your specifics in Color B.

Rewrite one paragraph, using the general-specific-general structure.

Rx: WRITE



The Language Lesson Series: Word Choice and Sentence Structure

Lang I: Talking the Talk: Using subject area words

One of the reasons why your teacher has asked you to write is so that you will use proper subject area words. Each subject has its own kind of language. Your teacher uses this kind of language. You should use the subject area words that your teacher uses.

Words like “things” and “stuff” are fine in speech, and in some writing, but these informal words won’t convince your teacher that you really understand the subject.

Think about the kinds of words your teacher uses and the kinds of words that appear in your reading in this subject.

The most powerful words are verbs and nouns.

Verbs often have these endings:

...ize

...ate

Nouns often have these endings:

...ment

...ence

...ance

...ness

Now, you:

First, locate any “things” or “stuff” in your piece. Replace these words with proper subject area words.

Then, replace three other words with better nouns or verbs.

Write the original sentences. Cross out the ineffective word and replace it with the new subject area word.

Rx: WRITE



The Language Lesson Series: Word Choice and Sentence Structure

Lang II: Conciseness: Omit unnecessary words

Everyone overdoes it. Everyone is wordy. Your sentences can be more concise. You can eliminate unnecessary words—words that don't add any meaning. You can employ a stronger verb. Strong verbs do the work of the sentence.

Now, you:

Count the number of words in a paragraph. Rewrite that paragraph, using fewer, but stronger words.

Rx: WRITE



The Language Lesson Series: Word Choice and Sentence Structure

Lang III: Pack your sentences with meaning

Strong writers pack their sentences with meaning. A strong sentence does more than just give some facts. A strong sentence establishes relationships. The following words establish relationships within a sentence:

- **Because**
- **Which**
- **When**
- **And**
- **But**
- **Therefore**
- **However**

Except for “which,” these words can appear in the beginning of a sentence, or in the middle. If “because” or “when” appears at the beginning of a sentence, that sentence must have two parts.

Ex: *Because Martin Luther translated the Bible into German, many more people were able to read it.*

Ex: *When the sky turns greenish-gray, a tornado is approaching.*

Some teachers don't like you to begin a sentence with "and" or "but."

Now, you:

Look at your piece to find opportunities to pack your sentences with more meaning. Rewrite one paragraph, using the words above to create relationships within sentences.

Rx: WRITE



The Language Lesson Series: Word Choice and Sentence Structure

Lang IV: Repetition: Good and bad

There's good repetition, and there's bad repetition. Good repetition emphasizes, unifies, and creates rhythm. Good repetition keeps your paper nailed down, focused, organized. Good repetition says: *I have my eyes firmly on my subject, and I want my reader to know it.*

Bad repetition is repetition for no reason. Bad repetition says: *I don't have a lot to say here, so I'm going to spin my wheels.*

A good writer never makes the reader think: "*Didn't I just read this?*" A good writer makes the reader think: "*I get it. This writer is giving me a unified idea and helping me focus on it.*"

You are doing this Rx: WRITE because you need to turn bad repetition into good repetition. The first thing you need to do is to make sure that **EVERY SENTENCE DELIVERS WORTHWHILE INFORMATION**. Some sentences can summarize, or even re-state previous information. But all sentences should have a definite purpose.

Decide what your key words and phrases are. Use repetition to stay focused.

Now, you:

Rewrite one of your paragraphs, using repetition to help the reader focus, but not to make the reader feel that you are spinning your wheels just to fill out the paper.

Rx: WRITE



The Language Lesson Series: Word Choice and Sentence Structure

Lang V: Writing for clarity

The most important quality of a sentence is that it be clear. If your reader has to reread just to make sense of your sentence, then something is wrong.

- You may have unnecessary words.
- You may have pronouns, such as “it” or “which” that the reader can’t connect to the nouns that they represent.
- You may have too many negatives (*not, no*)
- You may have assumed that your reader knows what you are talking about, without fully explaining yourself.
- You may not have made clear connections from one sentence to another

First, clean up. Strip your sentences down to their most basic components. Having done that, you can now add information ...carefully.

Now, you:

Rewrite one of your paragraphs, concentrating on clarity and accuracy. Put yourself in the shoes (or behind the glasses) of your reader.

Rx: WRITE



The Presentation Lesson Series: Commas

Pre I: Comma Rules

There are around 16 comma rules, but all you really have to remember is LIES. Here's what LIES means:

L is for **LISTS**. A question that always comes up: Do I need the comma before the last item in a series? It's more formal to use it, so, yes.

I is for **INTRODUCTIONS**: Use a comma after any word or group of words that precedes (introduces) the subject of the sentence.

E is for **EXTRA INFORMATION**: Any word or group of words that could be removed from the sentence without losing the sense of wholeness should be set off by commas.

S is for **SIDE-BY-SIDE SENTENCES**: Whenever you join two groups of words that could each be a sentence by themselves, you use a comma. The sentence that you just read is an example of this rule.

(The LIES rules don't include the commas that are used with quotation marks. The comma goes outside the first set of quotation marks; the comma goes inside the end set of quotation marks.)

Now, you:

Look through your paper. Find your comma mistakes. Rewrite the sentence that you punctuated incorrectly. Tell which LIES you are applying.

NOTE: The only thing worse than omitting a needed comma is including one that is not needed. Extra commas slow the reader down. Use a comma only when you have a reason.

NEVER SEPARATE THE SUBJECT FROM THE VERB OR THE VERB FROM THE DIRECT OBJECT WITH A SINGLE COMMA.

Rx: WRITE



The PRESENTATION Lesson Series: Possessive Apostrophes

Pre II: Apostrophe Rules: Possessives

Use an apostrophe to indicate possession.

Lots of people have difficulty with the apostrophe s ('s) concept. Actually, it's simple:

<p>The bear The bear has breakfast. That breakfast is the breakfast of the bear. The bear's breakfast (is the breakfast of the bear).</p>

Anytime you can transform a phrase into an "of" phrase, as above, you need to indicate that a noun is being put into the possessive case. You put a noun into the possessive case with 's.

Try these:

The fur of the bear:

The eyes of the bear:

The feet of the bear:

The forest of the bear:

The campgrounds of the bear:

Now, try the reverse.

The bear's mother:

Papa Bear's porridge:

Mama Bear's chair:

Baby Bear's nice soft bed:

Now, go to your paper. Write the possessive phrase that you used and show how it looks in both forms (as 's form and then as an "of" phrase).

Rx: WRITE



The PRESENTATION Lesson Series: Woman/Women

Pre III: Woman/Women

The distinction between “woman” and “women” confuses a lot of people.

But it’s simple:

Associate WOMAN with MAN. Both are singular.

Associate WOMEN with MEN. Both are plural.

Any time you write *woman* or *women*, ask yourself if you would use *man* or *men*.

Now, you:

Find your misuse of *woman/women*. In the margin, write *man* or *men*, accordingly.

Rx: WRITE



The PRESENTATION Lesson Series:
Pre IV: Affect and Effect (Basic)

Affect is the VERB.
Effect is the NOUN.

This means:

Use AFFECT to mean “to change, to influence.” Like this:

Nothing affected the bear’s determination to stick his paws into the beehive.

Use EFFECT to mean “THE change, THE influence,.” Hint: Associate the E from THE with the E in EFFECT. In other words, if you can put THE in front of the word, the word you want is EFFECT, not AFFECT.

Like this: (Imagine that there is, or could be, the word THE in front of EFFECT in these sentences.)

The effects of communication are that people feel closer together.

Now, you:

Write three sentences for AFFECT; three for EFFECT. Be sure to vary these sentences. Use the sentence in your original piece as one of your sentences.

Rx: WRITE



The PRESENTATION Lesson Series:
Pre V: Then/Than

Use THEN when you are telling a story, referring to the sequence in which things happen. First this, THEN that.

Use THAN when you are comparing: This is better THAN that.

Remember:

Associate THEN with WHEN.

Associate THAN with COMPARISON

Now, you:

Identify your misuse of then/then in your paper. In the margin, write WHEN or OMPARISON, according to which word you should have used.

Rx: WRITE



The PRESENTATION Lesson Series:

Pre VI: It's/ its

This is a tricky one. You're thinking that *it's* is the possessive form, right?

Well, it isn't. *It's* means only one thing: IT IS

You're thinking: "But I'm using this word possessively. Don't possessives take an apostrophe?"

Actually, when you think about the matter, you will realize that possessive PRONOUNS do NOT take apostrophes: *his, hers, yours, ours, theirs, and its*. This class of words (possessive pronouns) happens to NOT take the apostrophe form.

Now, you:

You probably used the apostrophe form when you should have used the no-apostrophe form. Go to your paper and write "his" in the margin. You will see that you used a possessive pronoun, one that, like "his" does NOT take an apostrophe.

Another way to look at it is this: If you can't say "it is" in your sentence, then you don't need an apostrophe.

Rx: WRITE



The PRESENTATION Lesson Series: Run-On Sentences

Pre VII: Run-on Sentences

Or...How to fix a comma splice
Or...How to use a semicolon

When two sentences (independent clauses) want to get married, there are two ways in which they may be joined in holy sentence matrimony.

The first way is by using a semicolon. Simply insert a semicolon where you now have comma.

Choose the semicolon marriage when the two sentences are very closely related and grammatically similar, like this:

Sometimes, you feel like a nut; sometimes, you don't.

The other way for two sentences to get married is to use the same comma that you now have, but to strengthen the relationship between the two sentences with one of the following conjunctions: *and, or, so, but*.

Your sentences could, of course, decided not to get married at all. In that case, just separate them with a period.

Or, sentences might just decide to consume each other. Reword Your sentences so that they become one sentence. Eliminate some words. You may need *which, when, or because* to accomplish this reduction in words.

Now, you:

Go through your paper, looking for sentences in which the parts (clauses), are not properly married. Use one of the above methods to join them in holy sentence matrimony, or separate them, or combine them.

Rx: WRITE



The PRESENTATION Lesson Series

Pre VIII: How to Fix a Sentence Fragment

A sentence fragment is an incomplete sentence. Usually, you can fix it by simply attaching it to its previous sentence.

There's a very easy way to know whether a group of words can stand alone as a complete sentence. If you can put the words "It is true that..." in front of a group of words and have it sound complete, then that group of words is a complete sentence.

Now, you:

Identify the sentence fragments in your paper. First, put "It is true that..." in front of those words. You will find that the words can't stand alone as a complete sentence when you put "It is true that..." in front of them. There are two ways to fix a sentence fragment:

1. Add more words until the words pass the "It is true that..." test.
2. Attach the sentence fragment to its previous (or next) sentence.

Write your corrected sentences.

Rx: WRITE



The PRESENTATION Lesson Series

Pre IX: Would of...

This one is easy. There is no such thing as “would *of*.”
There is no such thing as “should *of*” or “could *of*” either.

You mean to say “would *have*,” “should *have*,” or “could *have*.”

Here’s why you are confused:

In informal writing circumstances, and in speech, we use the contractions “would’ve,” “should’ve,” and “could’ve.” These contractions are not usually welcome in formal writing circumstances.

Now, you:

Locate your “of” mistake and write the proper form in the margin.

Rx: WRITE



The PRESENTATION Lesson Series:

Pre X: You're/Your

You're means *you are*.

Your is possessive. Use *your* when you could substitute *his* in the sentence.

Now, you:

Write *you are* or *his* in the sentence in question.

Rx: WRITE



The PRESENTATION Lesson Series

Pre XI: Capitalization

Capitalization can be a bit tricky, but the general rule is that we capitalize words that appear on a map, a calendar, or in the phone book.

Exceptions: We don't capitalize the seasons: summer, winter, spring, and fall.

We DO capitalize historical events: *the Depression, the Vietnam War,*

We DO capitalize a person's title when using that title as part of the person's name: *Doctor Addams, Professor McGinley*

We DO capitalize geographic features when referring to a specific place: *Hudson River, Rocky Mountains*

We DO capitalize words in a title of literature, music, or a work of art. (Note: We DON'T capitalize prepositions: *in, on, at, for, with*)

Note: Don't forget to *italicize* titles.

Now, you: Correct your capitalization errors. For each word that should or should not be capitalized, write the reason.

Rx: WRITE



The PRESENTATION Lesson Series

Pre XII: There/their/they're

Use *there* when you could substitute the word *here* in the sentence.

Use *their* when you could substitute the word *his* in the sentence.

Use *they're* when you could substitute the words *they are* in the sentence.

Practice:

Rewrite the sentence(s) in which you made a mistake using *there*, *their*, or *they're*. For each sentence, write the substitution word, as explained above.



Rx: WRITE



The Presentation Lesson Series: Handwriting

Pre XIII: Spacing

Everyone has a distinctive style of handwriting. Although your handwriting is unique to you, and although it may express your particular style and flair, other people need to be able to read it without difficulty.

You may have fallen into some handwriting habits that make your letters, words, and punctuation hard to read. You are doing this RxWrite to work on your SPACING.

People can decipher your letters and words only if you have enough white space between each letter within a word and enough spacing between each word. In addition, your reader needs one-inch margins on either side of the page. Don't take up the entire horizontal line of the page with writing. If you do, then your reader has no room to write comments.

Look at the Model Handwriting page. Look specifically at how the writer uses spacing between letters within a word and spacing between words to allow the reader to distinguish one letter from another and one word from another.

Now, you:

Go to the RxWrite fonts. Choose the font that best matches your own natural handwriting. Trace the model sentence

once, paying particular attention to spacing. Then, write the model sentence twice.

The Presentation Lesson Series: Handwriting

Pre XIV: Letter Heights

Everyone has a distinctive style of handwriting. Although your handwriting is unique to you, and although it may express your particular style and flair, other people need to be able to read it without difficulty.

You may have fallen into some handwriting habits that make your letters, words, and punctuation hard to read. You are doing this RxWrite to work on your letter sizes. Letters must differentiate themselves in size. You may have developed the tendency to make all of your letters the same height. That means that your reader will not be able to tell one letter from another, causing a miscue. Miscues interfere with the reader's comprehension.

The sentence "*The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog*" uses all of the letters of the alphabet. Notice how the lower case letters *h*, *k*, *b*, *f*, *l*, and *d* have stems that make them taller than the letters *n*, *e*, and *a*, respectively.

Now, you:

Look at something that you have handwritten. Draw a line across the top of your letter. You should have stems sticking up for the lower case letters *h*, *k*, *b*, *f*, *d*.

Go to the RxWrite fonts. Choose the font that best matches your own natural handwriting. Trace the model sentence once, paying particular attention to letter heights. Then, write the model sentence twice.

The Presentation Lesson Series: Handwriting

Pre XV: Closure of Letters

Everyone has a distinctive style of handwriting. Although your handwriting is unique to you, and although it may express your particular style and flair, other people need to be able to read it without difficulty.

You may have fallen into some handwriting habits that make your letters, words, and punctuation hard to read. You are doing this RxWrite to work on your CLOSURE OF LETTERS.

The sentence “The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog” uses all of the letters of the alphabet. Notices how the letters q, b, o, p, a, d, and g need to be closed up at the top. If there’s a space left open, the reader can easily misread your intentions, causing a miscue. Miscues interfere with the reader’s comprehension.

Now, you:

Go to the RxWrite fonts. Choose the font that best matches your own natural handwriting. Trace the model sentence once, paying particular attention to closure of letters. Then, write the model sentence twice.

The Presentation Lesson Series: Handwriting

Pre XVI: Loops and Tails

Everyone has a distinctive style of handwriting. Although your handwriting is unique to you, and although it may express your particular style and flair, other people need to be able to read it without difficulty.

You may have fallen into some handwriting habits that make your letters, words, and punctuation hard to read. You are doing this RxWrite to work on your LOOPS and TAILS.

The sentence “The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog” uses all of the letters of the alphabet. Notice how the letters q, j, p, y, and g have tails that hang down below the line. If your letters that are supposed to have tails don’t them, or if the tails are curling up too close to the line, then your reader may not be able to decipher your intentions, causing a miscue. Miscues interfere with the reader’s comprehension.

Similarly, you need to be careful with your loops. If you have unnecessary loops, your reader will read them as letters, causing a miscue.

Now, you:

Go to the RxWrite fonts. Choose the font that best matches your own natural handwriting. Trace the model sentence once, paying particular attention to loops and tails. Then, write the model sentence twice.

The Presentation Lesson Series: Handwriting

Pre XVII: Slant

Everyone has a distinctive style of handwriting. Although your handwriting is unique to you, and although it may express your particular style and flair, other people need to be able to read it without difficulty.

You may have fallen into some handwriting habits that make your letters, words, and punctuation hard to read. You are doing this RxWrite to work on your SLANT.

Most people have handwriting that slants to the right. Some people, especially left-handed people, have handwriting that slants to the left. Many people have rounded handwriting that does not appear to slant at all. You can have legible handwriting regardless of the direction of your slant. However, the reader appreciates consistency. Your letters should not collide with each other. Work to achieve consistent appearance so that the reader is presented with parallel lines.

Now, you:

Go to the RxWrite fonts. Choose the font that best matches your own natural handwriting. Trace the model sentence once, paying particular attention to slant. Then, write the model sentence twice.

RxWrite Fonts

The D'Nealian style of cursive writing is presented in these fonts. The letters are not linked within the word. This style makes it easier to transition from printing to full cursive, wherein the letters within the word are linked. Try the D'Nealian style in your tracing. If you feel more natural linking the letters in full cursive style, feel free to do so as long as each letter is legible.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog.

More Rx's for Handwriting

In addition to the above prescriptions, you might benefit from a few other ways to improve your handwriting skills:

I. Air-write: Practice writing “The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog” in the air. Use your index finger. Air-write with large letters, as though you are skywriting. Because handwriting is a motor skill, air-writing develops the “muscle memory” that you need to develop good habits.

II. Practice rows of the patterns of handwriting: Using lined paper, practice the following patterns so that you achieve an even, well-controlled look:

Slanted Ovals: Draw a series of connected “Slinkys”™ each about an inch long.

Parallel Lines: Practice making lightly connected parallel lines to simulate the motion of handwriting across the page.

Overstrokes: The letters m and n are formed with the “bounce-over” pattern. Practice this pattern across the page.

Understrokes: The letters u and y are formed with the “dip-under” pattern. Practice this pattern across the page.

III. Become a self-analyzer of your handwriting: Identify, and ask readers to help you identify, your own trouble spots. Most handwriting problems can be easily fixed simply by slowing down, become aware of the reader’s needs, and replacing old habits with new ones.

SP Trouble-Shooter

Word that I misspelled: _____
(spelled correctly)

Circle the part that was misspelled: _____

Kind of error: (Check any that apply)

I before E trouble	
Suffix trouble	
Prefix trouble	
Writing a single letter when there should be a double letter	
Writing a double letter when there should be a single letter	
Not joining words that should be joined	
Joining words that should be separate	
Mistaking one word for another (homonyms)	
IOU trouble	
S for C or C for S trouble	
Ance/ence trouble	



Spelling: Go to the following link to make a crossword puzzle out of your wordlist.

<http://www.edhelper.com/crossword.htm>

Appendix I Rules Worth Knowing

Over the course of my years as an English teacher, I compiled the best rules that I could find for guiding my students toward clear and accurate writing. That collection of rules follows. Included with each rule is a brief comment about how the observance of that rule *affects the reader*. Without consideration of how observance of a rule affects the reader, writers may mistakenly believe that rules are arbitrary. Writers need to think about readers, just as cooks need to think about diners. These rules give writers the perspective of readers.

RULES FOR CLEAR AND ACCURATE WRITING

1. **THE RULE OF DICTION:** Use the right word for the context and audience. *This will allow your reader to take you seriously.*
2. **THE RULE OF JOINING INDEPENDENT CLAUSES:** *Don't send a boy to do a man's job!* A comma alone is not sufficient to join two independent clauses. To join independent clauses, we need a semicolon or a comma along with a conjunction (and, but, so). *This will allow your reader to understand where your ideas begin and end and will eliminate confusion.*
3. **THE RULE OF CLOSENESS:** Place all grammatical structures next to what they modify. *This will allow your reader to understand how your words relate to each other and will eliminate confusion.*
4. **THE RULE OF POSITIVES:** Most messages are clearer when delivered in positive, rather than negative, form. *Your reader will appreciate this because your message will be readily accessible.*
5. **THE RULE OF COMPLETE SENTENCES:** To test whether a group of words comprises a complete sentence, try placing "It is true that..." in front of the words. If you can do so, then you have a complete sentence. If not, then you don't. (**Note:** This rule will not work if the sentence begins with *and, but, so*; however, such sentences can be complete sentences anyway.) *For most academic circumstances, your reader is expecting complete sentences.*
6. **THE RULE OF APOSTROPHES:** Use apostrophes to indicate possessives and contractions. There is no apostrophe in the word *its*, when it is used as a possessive pronoun. (*It's* always means *it is*.) *Your reader will appreciate your attention to detail.*
7. **THE RULE OF HYPHENATION:** Hyphenate compound adjectives. That is, hyphenate adjectives that are formed out of two words, such as *man-eating tiger*. *Observing this rule will eliminate confusion.*

8. **THE RULE OF CONCISENESS:** Express yourself clearly in as few words as possible. Omit unnecessary words. *Your reader will appreciate your consideration.*
9. **THE RULES OF AGREEMENT:**
 - a. **Subject/verb:** The subject must agree with the verb. Objects of prepositions are not subjects, and should be ignored in subject/verb agreement. Hence, “A group of women is <a group is>enjoying the concert,” rather than “A group of women are enjoying the concert.”
 - b. **Pronoun/antecedent:** All pronouns refer to something that comes before them in the sentence, or in a previous sentence. The word that the pronoun refers to is called the antecedent. The pronoun must agree with its antecedent. Because English has no generic singular pronoun, we run into a problem in sentences such as “Everybody is to bring _____ own lunch.” What to do? Modern stylists advise you to RTA (“revise to avoid”) this dilemma. Hence, “All campers are to bring their own lunch,” and the problem is solved!

If you observe the rules of agreement, your reader will not have to trip over mistakes.

10. **THE RULE OF PRONOUN CASE:** Use the correct case of pronoun (subjective or objective). We don't usually run into problems when we have only one pronoun in a structure: *I saw a great movie. Ask me about it.* But, we sometimes run into problems when we add another person: *Judi and I saw a great movie. If you have any questions, ask her or me.* Remember: the object of any preposition should be in the objective case. *Your reader will appreciate your attention to detail.*

11. **THE RULES OF COMMAS:** Remember LIES:

- a. **L: LISTS** (The comma before the final item in a series is optional, but a bit more formal.)
- b. **I: INTRODUCTIONS:** Place a comma before elements that precede the subject.
- c. **E: EXTRA INFORMATION:** Divide extra (non-essential) information of all kinds with a comma on each side of the extra information.
- d. **S: SIDE-BY-SIDE SENTENCES:** Divide independent clauses (sentences) with a comma and a conjunction

(**Note:** Also, observe the comma rules that apply to quotations.)

Your reader will appreciate observance of comma rules, because commas prevent word collision that results in confusion. Unnecessary commas impede comprehension.)

12. THE RULE OF ACTIVE VOICE: In most cases, prefer the active voice to the passive voice. Use passive only when you wish to be evasive or diplomatic. *Your reader will appreciate the liveliness of your writing if you use active voice.*

Example:

Active voice: *She shoots. She scores.*

Passive voice: *Shooting is done by her. Scoring is done by her.*

Appendix II

Spelling Instruction in All Subject Areas: A Guide for Teachers

- I. Understand how people learn to spell:
 - Most people learn to spell through a combination of explicit instruction (phonics, patterns, and rules) and receiving the visual cues of words as they read. Reading fosters spelling.
 - Everyone has personal spelling problems. Some people confuse certain words with others; some have trouble with certain kinds of letter combinations, word patterns, or in applying rules and their exceptions. When we understand why we are misspelling a word, we can often fix the problem.
 - Therefore, it's important for us to help our students understand why they are misspelling certain words (where their confusion lies) as well as how they can fix the problem by applying their preferred learning styles.

- II. Traditional classroom practices that do not tend to promote better spelling:
 - Spelling tests: We find to our chagrin that students spell words correctly on a test, but then misspell the same words in context.
 - Demanding “look-ups”: Yes, you can learn to spell a word once by looking it up in the dictionary. But, as with spelling tests, the student is likely to misspell that same word in short order.

III. Traditional classroom practices that tend to promote better spelling:

- Incorporate spelling instruction as you introduce subject area terminology. As you're writing a word on the board, take a few seconds to emphasize how that word is spelled. Added benefit: Doing so will reinforce the meaning of the word.
- As you do so, point out patterns. Words, especially Latinate words, tend to come in clusters. While teaching the word *median*, for example, you might want to point out its relationship to *mediate*, *mediation*, *remedial*, *immediate*. Think etymologically. Sound-alike words almost always have a common root meaning somewhere in their history. Added benefit: Word associations foster durable learning.
- Model the importance of spelling, especially of subject area terminology. We don't "own" a word unless we can spell it. Added benefit: Students will tend to use words more readily if they are sure of the spelling.
- Display subject area words in your classroom. The visual cues will imprint the proper spelling. (Even better: Have students make word displays.) Added benefit: Your room will look pretty.
- Expect correct spelling. If you are uneasy taking points off for misspelled words, try adding bonus point for 100% correct spelling (but not at the expense of elevated vocabulary). Added benefit: Your gradebook will look pretty.

IV. School-wide practices that promote better spelling:

- A universally accepted expectation that spelling will be an essential instructional component in all subject areas
- Posting of key words and spelling rules in every classroom
- Facilitation of the instructional practices described herein

V. Non-traditional, differentiated instruction practices that tend to promote better spelling:

To differentiate instruction in spelling, you might want to suggest that students choose one or more of the following strategies to conquer their spelling demons:

1. **Visual reinforcement:** The more we see words that are spelled correctly, the better. NEVER deliberately show a misspelled word. Use color coding, or exaggeration to point up the tricky part of the word. Do everything you can to create a visual imprint. Some people need to close their eyes and visualize a word.
2. **Rhythm and auditory reinforcement:** Spell words aloud when introducing them. Try to find rhythmic patterns, such as *nec-ess-ary*. Rhythm is an extremely powerful memory cue. Don't forget pronunciation. Many words get misspelled because they are mispronounced.
3. **Kinesthetic reinforcement:** This can come in the form of writing a word multiple times, especially if the writing is accompanied by visual and auditory cues. Air-writing works well for some people, as does tracing, writing the words across large surfaces, or with tactile enhancements such as finger paint or shaving cream. (!!??)
4. **Interpersonal reinforcement:** When students ask you how a word is spelled, take advantage of the teachable moment to explain everything you can about the word and its etymology. Teach words in clusters.
5. **Metacognitive reinforcement:** Have students keep a word journal and find patterns in the words that they tend to misspell. Encourage students to intellectualize about why they misspelled the word: Were they confusing it with another word? Unaware of a rule? Misapplying a rule? Mispronouncing the word?
6. **Whole Word Contour:** Give students cardstock paper and have them write the words in letters large enough to cover the paper. Then, have them cut out the contour of the whole word with scissors. This is a good

exercise because it provides a visual and a tactile model. Post the words.

7. Patterns, associations, rules: Again, never learn or teach just one word at a time. Link the given word to others. Learning is strengthened through associations.
8. Mnemonics: These are tricks that help us remember. Some of these are rhythm-based, image-based, or slogans (*Never believe a lie; strawberry shortcake dessert, etc.*)
9. Words-within-words: *a rat in separate; iron in environment, etc.*
10. Connections between English spelling to Spanish, French, and Italian: Latinate words have spelling links.
11. Encourage syllabication: Breaking words down into syllables allows students to learn words in accessible pieces, and promotes learning about prefixes, roots, and suffixes.
12. Encourage communication: Your students may have strategies to share that you don't know about. Open the floor.
13. Model your own learning: When you misspell a word, model for the students that you care about spelling the word correctly, although it is no big deal for a teacher to misspell a word. Show them how you intend to go about learning that word. Even better: Ask students to help you think of a way to remember it.
14. Internalization of the rules: Some students will learn the rules by memorizing; others, by translating them into a flow chart or other kind of graphic.
15. Encourage, promote, and model the development of a repertoire of the above strategies.

Useful Spelling Rules

1. The Prefix Rule: Adding a prefix is the easiest kind of change you can make to a word. The base word does not change when a prefix is added. Sometimes, the last letter of the prefix is the same as the first letter of the base word: *misspell, disservice, unnecessary, irregular, dissatisfied*. Usually, however, prefixed words have single letters where the prefix meets the base word: *disappear, disapprove, unattractive, insincere, mismatched*.

2. The I Before E Rule: It's I before E except after C, or when sounded as A, as in *neighbor* or *sleigh*. Hence: *fiery, believe, relieve, friend*. Hence *receive, conceive, perceive, foreign, reign, weight, freight*.

3. The Suffix Rules:

- Does the word have one syllable? Does the word end in one vowel, one consonant? Does the suffix begin with a vowel? Then, double the consonant: *run, running*
- Does the word have two or more syllables? Does the word end with a consonant-vowel-consonant pattern? Does the suffix begin with a vowel? Does the accent fall on the syllable just before the suffix? Then double the consonant: *admit, admitted; commit, committing*
- Does the word end in silent e? Does the suffix begin with a vowel? Then drop the e: *hope, hoping, give, giving*
- Is y the last letter of the word? Does the suffix begin with a consonant? Then change y to I before adding the suffix: *carry, carried; bury, burial*
- Is the suffix –ly, -ness, or –ment? Then do not change the spelling of the base word UNLESS it ends in y: *careful, carefully; fond, fondness; merry, merriment*

The –ible, -able Rule:

If the root is not a complete word, add –ible :*visible, edible, eligible, legible*

If the root is a complete word, add –able :*suitable, dependable, reliable*

Drop the silent e to add able: *likable, valuable, advisable*

The –ion Rule:

If the root ends in *ct*, add ion: *select, selection*

If the root ends in *ss*, add ion: *discuss, discussion*

If the root ends in *te*, drop the *e* and add –ion :*educate, education*

If the root ends in *it*, change the *t* to *s* and add –ion: *permit, permission*

If the root ends in a vowel, followed by *d-e*, drop the *e*, change the *d* to *s* and add –sion: *explode, explosion*

Source

Rebecca Bowers Sipe. They Still Can't Spell? Understanding and Supporting Challenged Spellers in Middle and High School. Heinemann. Portsmouth, New Hampshire. 2003.

