

Skills for Effective Writing

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Discrete writing skills, such as creating topic sentences and recognizing irrelevant information, are critical for good writers. This 4-level series teaches these skills and offers extensive practice opportunities.

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Clarity in Sentences and Paragraphs

COLOR

CONNECTING TO THE THEME

What feelings are associated with colors in these countries? Match the colors and countries with their meanings.

a. danger b. purity c. death d. luck

1. In Japan, Europe, and the U.S., red can signal _____. People in these countries use red in warning signs.

2. In China, red represents _____. This color is used in New Year's decorations to bring good fortune in the new year.

3. According to one article, in the U.S. and Europe, white means _____. White is a popular choice for painting bathrooms and health spas.

4. In China and Japan, white is often associated with _____. This color may be used in times of mourning.

— K. J. P. N. Y.

A. Skill Presentation

There are three ways to improve the clarity of your writing. One way is to use language that is specific, not vague or general. Use **specific adjectives** to add more information. Avoid common words like good, great, nice, and bad – these are too general and do not help make ideas clearer. Look at this sentence. To improve clarity, we could change good to a word like skilled – a more vivid and specific adjective.

She is **good skilled** at choosing colors for websites.

A second way to improve clarity is to use **pronouns carefully**. A pronoun that refers to a noun in a previous sentence may be confusing. If it is not completely clear what a pronoun refers to, change it to a specific noun or noun phrase. Look at this sentence. What Laura enjoys is not completely clear. The pronoun it might refer to the cross-cultural impact of color, to color research, or to an event. To improve clarity, we could change it to a specific noun or noun phrase, like learning about cross-cultural differences.

Laura does research on the cross-cultural impact of color before she plans an event. **She enjoys it learning about cross-cultural differences.**

A third way to add clarity to your writing is to use **action verbs** instead of to be as the main verbs. This makes the sentence more specific, helps the reader understand meaning, and makes your writing more interesting. Be careful – sometimes when you replace a form of to be with an action verb, you may need to rephrase the sentence. Look at this sentence. To improve clarity, we could change with careful to an action verb phrase like made careful decisions.

He did not want to offend his hosts, so he **was / made** careful decisions about choosing colors for business gifts.

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SKILL PRESENTATION

Each unit teaches a single discrete writing skill, helping students focus their attention on developing the skill fully.

OVER TO YOU

Following instruction, students are eased into the skill's application, facilitating their understanding of exactly how each skill works.

B. Over to You

1 Read the sentences. Choose the word in bold that should be changed to improve clarity. Write A, B, or C.

... 1. Many people feel that it is not **nice** to wear **black** to a wedding.

... 2. White **flowers** might be inappropriate in some situations. **They** may be considered **unlucky**.

... 3. Selecting appropriate **colors** for **global websites** **is** time consuming.

2 Look at each pair of sentences. Sentence a is not very clear. Sentence b is clearer. Decide what change the writer made to improve it. Write P/N if the writer replaced an unclear pronoun with a specific noun. Write V if the writer changed the verb to be to an action verb.

1. a. Children tend to prefer purple and orange more than adults do. They often choose these colors for bedroom decorations.
 — b. Children tend to prefer purple and orange more than adults do. Children often choose these colors for bedroom decorations.

2. a. Green has a positive effect on people's emotions. This is why hospitals often have light green rooms.
 — b. Green has a positive effect on people's emotions. This explains why hospitals often have light green rooms.

3. a. Red can be a problem in some situations. Schools often avoid this color in classrooms because it has an overwhelming effect on children.
 — b. Red can create a problem in some situations. Schools often avoid this color in classrooms because it has an overwhelming effect on children.

4. a. Women are more likely than men to have a favorite color. In addition, they usually prefer soft hues.
 — b. Women are more likely than men to have a favorite color. In addition, women usually prefer soft hues.

5. a. A successful delivery company uses a shade of brown for its trucks. It can suggest reliability in North American culture.
 — b. A successful delivery company uses a shade of brown for its trucks. The color brown can suggest reliability in North American culture.

6. a. Women are generally more knowledgeable about color names than men are. Current research supports this conclusion.
 — b. Women generally know more color names than men do. Current research supports this conclusion.

CHECK!

1 Use _____, rather than general adjectives.

2 Use _____ carefully and change those that are unclear to _____ pronouns.

3 Use _____ verbs instead of the verb _____ whenever possible.

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When students master these skills, all of their writing improves. This allows teachers to focus their time and feedback on the content of student work.

C. Practice

1 Circle the correct clearer, more specific words to replace the words in bold for each item.

good significant	1 The color red is often used on signs because it has a big impact on the people who view it.
safe stimulating	2 Some experts believe that the color orange has a good effect on diners' appetites.
negative rude	3 A 2010 study showed that some cultures have a bad reaction to brown and orange.
plays an important role is useful	4 Color choice is important in global marketing.
good safe	5 Culture experts say that yellow is a fine choice for gift giving in Asia.
People in different cultures Colors	6 People in different cultures view colors in different ways. They can be considered lucky or unlucky, depending on where you are.
The color green Food packaging	7 Green is used more than blue in food packaging. It often signifies something "healthy" or "natural."
Royalty This color	8 Purple often signifies "royalty" in the West. It was the choice of kings and queens in the Middle Ages.
produces calm feelings soothes nerves	9 According to Western psychology, blue is calming for many people.
create do	10 Mixing two hues can make a third color.

2 Read each pair of sentences, and check (✓) the one that is clearer. Then circle the words that were changed to improve it.

- a. Some students associate words with colors. This helps them remember them better.
 b. Some students associate words with colors. This helps them remember the words better.
- a. The Olympics logo has five rings. The logo consists of five colors: red, yellow, green, blue, and black.
 b. The Olympics logo has five rings. The logo is five colors: red, yellow, green, blue, and black.
- a. The white dress for American and European brides is a relatively recent tradition. This fashion started in the nineteenth century.
 b. The white dress for American and European brides is a relatively new tradition. This fashion started in the nineteenth century.
- a. Brides wear red or pink in India. These colors are the most popular.
 b. Brides wear red or pink in India. Most brides choose these colors.
- a. Black represents death and mourning in Western cultures. It is often associated with negative emotions.
 b. Black represents death and mourning in Western cultures. Black is associated with negative emotions.

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PRACTICE

The units include extensive practice so that students can truly master each skill.

D. Skill Quiz

Check (✓) the correct answer for each item.

- Clarity is how easy it is to
 - a. understand a piece of writing.
 - b. write a paragraph.
 - c. revise a piece of writing.
- One way to improve clarity is to replace _____ with a more specific one.
 - a. a complicated verb
 - b. a coordinating conjunction
 - c. a common adjective
- Another way to improve clarity is to change _____ to a specific noun.
 - a. an unclear pronoun
 - b. an indirect object
 - c. a proper noun
- Another way to improve clarity is to replace _____ with an action verb.
 - a. the subject
 - b. the verb to be
 - c. every verb
- Choose the sentence with the most clarity.
 - a. Red and gold are nice colors in some cultures.
 - b. Red and gold are good colors in some cultures.
 - c. Red and gold are considered lucky colors in some cultures.
- Choose the sentence with the most clarity.
 - a. Women are typically better than them at naming colors.
 - b. Women are typically better than men at naming colors.
 - c. Women are typically better than him at naming colors.
- Choose the sentence with the most clarity.
 - a. Choosing colors for a global website is very hard.
 - b. Choosing colors for a global website presents a serious challenge.
 - c. Choosing colors for a global website is extremely difficult.
- A: In some cultures, people believe that white is bad luck.
B: In some cultures, people believe that white represents bad luck.
What makes sentence B clearer than sentence A?
 - a. A specific adjective replaces a common adjective.
 - b. A specific noun replaces a pronoun.
 - c. A specific verb replaces to be.
- A: Red represents luck. For this reason, it appears in New Year's decorations.
B: Red represents luck. For this reason, this color appears in New Year's decorations.
What makes sentence B clearer than sentence A?
 - a. A specific adjective replaces a common adjective.
 - b. A specific noun replaces a pronoun.
 - c. A specific verb replaces to be.
- A: Good global advertisers study the cultures where they want to do business.
B: Successful global advertisers study the cultures where they want to do business.
What makes sentence B clearer than sentence A?
 - a. A specific adjective replaces a common adjective.
 - b. A specific noun replaces a pronoun.
 - c. A specific verb replaces the verb to be.

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SKILL QUIZ

Each unit ends with a quiz, giving teachers a quick snapshot of how well the students learned the skill.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

CONNECTING TO THE THEME

What can you do to make a good first impression? Which of the tips below do you think may help?

- 1 You should be neat and well-dressed.
- 2 You should make eye contact with the other person.
- 3 You should talk a lot about yourself.
- 4 You should be comfortable, but you shouldn't look too casual.
- 5 You should ask about the other person when the time is right.

1, 2, 4, and 5 will help you make a good first impression.

A. Skill Presentation

When you write, you should use a combination of simple, compound, and complex sentences.

A **simple sentence** has one or more subjects and one or more verbs. It has only one **independent clause** and expresses only one complete idea. Both of the following simple sentences have one independent clause, but the number of subjects and verbs varies.

Ethan is confident. (1 subject + 1 verb)

Ethan and Vicky feel important and look confident. (2 subjects + 2 verbs)

A **compound sentence** has two or more subjects and two or more verbs. It has at least two related independent clauses that are joined by a **coordinating conjunction**, such as *and*, *but*, *or*, or *so*.

— **INDEPENDENT CLAUSE** — — **INDEPENDENT CLAUSE** —

Ethan is confident, **and** he makes a good first impression.

Ethan and Vicky are confident, **but** their sister isn't confident at all.

A **complex sentence** has two or more subjects and two or more verbs. It has an independent clause that is connected to a **dependent clause**. The dependent clause starts with a **subordinating conjunction**, such as *after*, *before*, *when*, *because*, *although*, or *if*.

— **INDEPENDENT CLAUSE** — — **DEPENDENT CLAUSE** —

Ethan is usually selfish, **although** he sometimes thinks of other people.

Ethan will get the job **if** he makes a good impression.



B. Over to You

1 Read the sentences. Decide if they are simple, compound, or complex. Write S for Simple, C for Compound, or CX for Complex.

- ___ 1 Tom made a good impression, so he got the job.
- ___ 2 Jason seems friendly, although he is very shy.
- ___ 3 Nancy and Lorena have a lot of friends.

2 Read the paragraph and check (✓) the correct answers.

First impressions are important in an interview. *You will make a good impression if you follow some important steps.* **Confident people often make good first impressions.** *Employers may feel uncomfortable when you do not seem confident.* **Your clothing can also make a good first impression.** Clean and neat clothing makes a good impression, and a neat hairstyle also shows professionalism. *Messy clothing does not make a good impression because people associate it with laziness.* You do not have to wear expensive clothing, but you can still dress nicely. **Finally, your body language says a lot about you.** *You should not move around too much, although you do not have to be perfectly still.* **You can follow this advice for your next interview.**

1 The sentences in **bold** are

- a. simple sentences.
- b. compound sentences.
- c. complex sentences.

2 The *italicized* sentences are

- a. simple sentences.
- b. compound sentences.
- c. complex sentences.

3 The underlined sentences are

- a. simple sentences.
- b. compound sentences.
- c. complex sentences.



CHECK!

- 1 A _____ sentence has at least one subject and at least one _____. It has only one independent clause.
- 2 A _____ sentence has at least two subjects and at least two verbs. It has at least two _____ clauses that are related to each other.
- 2 A _____ sentence has at least two subjects and at least two verbs. It has a _____ clause that is connected to an independent clause.

C. Practice

- 1 Read each sentence in the chart. Decide if it is simple, compound, or complex. Check (✓) the box in the correct column.**

	SIMPLE SENTENCE	COMPOUND SENTENCE	COMPLEX SENTENCE
1. Confident people are usually happy.			
2. Cheerful people often get jobs easily because they are usually pleasant coworkers.			
3. My friend Jenny makes a bad first impression.			
4. Jenny seems negative when she meets people for the first time.			
5. She has friends, but she does not always keep them for very long.			
6. Negative people usually do not get jobs easily, but Jenny found a good job.			
7. Negative people can be unreasonable, and they can be difficult to work with.			
8. Negative people have many unpleasant characteristics, although they have good ones, too.			
9. Jenny likes telling jokes and making people laugh.			
10. Jenny is a good worker because she has many positive characteristics.			

- 2 Read the sentences. Write the number of independent and dependent clauses. If there are no clauses of a certain type, write X.**

- The new employee made a positive first impression.
 ___ independent clause(s), ___ dependent clause(s)
- Employers often look at your clothing, so you should dress nicely for an interview.
 ___ independent clause(s), ___ dependent clause(s)
- John had a good interview, although his dirty suit made a bad first impression.
 ___ independent clause(s), ___ dependent clause(s)
- Mario is a great leader because he is passionate about his work.
 ___ independent clause(s), ___ dependent clause(s)
- Kim and Jocelyn are not very good leaders.
 ___ independent clause(s), ___ dependent clause(s)
- Some people make judgments about others, but first impressions are not always correct.
 ___ independent clause(s), ___ dependent clause(s)
- Employers sometimes make incorrect judgments about workers.
 ___ independent clause(s), ___ dependent clause(s)



D. Skill Quiz

Check (✓) the correct answer for each item.

1 Which phrase describes a simple sentence?

- a. two or more subjects, two or more verbs, two independent clauses
- b. two or more subjects, two or more verbs, an independent clause, a dependent clause
- c. one or more subjects, one or more verbs, one independent clause

2 Which phrase describes a compound sentence?

- a. two or more subjects, two or more verbs, two independent clauses
- b. two or more subjects, two or more verbs, an independent clause, a dependent clause
- c. one or more subjects, one or more verbs, one independent clause

3 Which phrase describes a complex sentence?

- a. two or more subjects, two or more verbs, two independent clauses
- b. two or more subjects, two or more verbs, one independent clause, one dependent clause
- c. one or more subjects, one or more verbs, one independent clause

4 When you write a paragraph, you can include

- a. only simple sentences.
- b. simple, compound, and complex sentences.
- c. exactly one compound sentence and one complex sentence.

5 *Good employees arrive on time.*

How many dependent clauses does this sentence have?

- a. zero
- b. one
- c. two

6 *Managers need to listen to people if there is a problem.*

How many independent clauses does this sentence have?

- a. zero
- b. one
- c. two

7 *Employers should not hire people based on personal judgments, and they should not pay attention to stereotypes.*

How many independent clauses does this sentence have?

- a. one
- b. two
- c. three

8 *Joanna and Kyle form opinions about others quickly.*

What type of sentence is this?

- a. simple
- b. compound
- c. complex

9 *Opinions may be incorrect if they are based on personal preferences.*

What type of sentence is this?

- a. simple
- b. compound
- c. complex

10 *Mark did not make a good impression, so Mr. Weston did not hire him.*

What type of sentence is this?

- a. simple
- b. compound
- c. complex

GLOBAL MARKETING

CONNECTING TO THE THEME

The Internet is the most important tool in global marketing today. Which of these are reasons why?

- 1 Word-of-mouth advertising, or hearing about products from people you know, does not impact as many people as the Internet does.
- 2 Social networking sites are popular.
- 3 More than 75 percent of social media users have bought something because of an ad or comment they saw online.
- 4 Some businesses do not have an Internet presence.

1 and 3 are two reasons why the Internet plays an important role in global marketing.

A. Skill Presentation

A **paragraph** usually starts with a **topic sentence**. The topic sentence states the main idea of the paragraph. There are also **supporting sentences**. They give more information, such as details, examples, or facts, to support the main idea. A paragraph also has a **concluding sentence**. This can summarize the ideas in the paragraph or restate the main idea.

A good paragraph has ideas that relate to each other. All sentences should relate to the main idea in the topic sentence. Supporting sentences that relate to the main idea are relevant. If a sentence is not related, it is irrelevant. Avoid irrelevant sentences when you write.

Read the beginning of this paragraph. Think about the features of a good paragraph as you read.

^{TS}People use a variety of interactive websites. ^{SS}**For example**, people use social networking sites to share information. ^{SS}People also use them to keep in touch with friends. ^{SS}~~Most people who work for social networking sites enjoy their jobs.~~ ^{SS}**In addition**, Internet phone and messaging services are also popular. ^{CS}There are many kinds of interactive websites in use today, for many different reasons.

The third supporting sentence is not related to the main idea. It is irrelevant, and it should not be included in this paragraph.

Supporting sentences should also be organized logically and should be connected. Use **transition words** and **phrases** to do this. Transition words such as *first*, *second*, and *then* and transition phrases like *for example*, *another example*, and *in addition* can help readers follow your ideas more easily. Look at the paragraph above again. The transition phrases *for example* and *in addition* help organize the supporting sentences logically.