**TEACHING GUIDE TO THE TASC WRITING SKILLS TEST**

This Guide is intended to help HSE teachers prepare students for the TASC Writing Skills Test.

* It begins with an analysis of the types of questions on the test, the percentage of types, and the question stems that typically accompany them.
* The “meat” of the Guide is a series of mini-lessons with detailed directions for teachers.
* This Guide is the teacher’s accompaniment to a study packet for students entitled “Let’s Talk about Sentences.” This is a word doc which is divided into chapters and can be sent home with students chapter by chapter to provide review and practice with what has been learned the day before. It includes explanations of grammatical concepts, exercises, and sets of test-like questions related to a particular concept (such as using a comma vs. a semi-colon).

**A note on pacing**. There is a lot for students to know, much will be completely new to them, and only through steady and ongoing practice will they be able to master it. Repetition is key. For this reason, it’s a good idea to start at the beginning of the semester and plan for regular hands-on review, using both quizzes and student work on the board, with at least one mini-lesson per week, rather than focusing intensively on Writing Skills for a short time.

**Instructional approach**. This Guide takes a **hands-on approach**, with students coming up to the board regularly to write sentences. **Sentence-combining** is the most frequently used activity. Students receive a set of sentence stems and are asked to combine them, then write them on the board.

**Grammar is taught in use,** rather than as a set of rules. Students are not taught the parts of speech, and sets of punctuation rules are not given out, although they are written on the board as they come up. Instead, students learn to recognize what a sentence is (and isn’t); various common structures for sentences, the punctuation that accompanies these structures, and the ways that sentences can be revised most clearly and concisely. They do this through combining sentences, although supplementary worksheets are given to provide extra practice.

The Guide is both ***concept-based*** and ***test-driven***. This means that *concepts*, such as “What is a sentence?” “How can sentences be expanded?” provide the underlying rationale for the order of the lessons. At the same time, the Guide is tailored very closely to what is known about the TASC Writing Skills test as the goal is: pass!

Below you will find additional recommendations and tips:

* The first lesson should review what a sentence is.
* A sentence has a subject and a verb (“A sentence is a complete thought” is not as clear in terms of giving students criteria for deciding whether a group of words is a sentence or not). Students should be given the opportunity to look at several different types of statements and decide whether they are sentences or not, given that criteria
* It is not necessary to teach a lot of grammatical terminology.

ESOL students may know the terms, but HSE students often do not and it isn’t worth taking the time to teach them

* Teach one structure at a time (a suggested sequence is below, but is certainly not set in stone). Provide a lot of review
* As you teach the structure, teach the punctuation that goes with it, as this is tested (and also good to know). For instance, when you teach students to create compound sentences using and, but, so etc. teach them that the comma goes before the conjunction.
* Be sure you understand the grammar rule regarding each structure very well yourself, and can explain it clearly but simply. I always tell students that *we will be doing this many times*, so if you are confused now, don’t worry, you will get it.
* Once you’ve introduced a structure and students have had time to practice it, you can ask them to look for examples of a certain type of sentence in texts they are reading.
* You can combine vocabulary review, or the introduction of vocabulary words, with sentence combining. For instance, when you introduce appositives, you can teach adjectives that describe people, and then have students write sentences about people or each other or themselves using the new words, for instance, *Kate, who was disgustingly industrious, was typing this sentence guide on Sunday night.*
* If you provide stem sentences that relate to the content students are learning about, or draw from the texts students are reading, you will reinforce content while students work with the sentences. **PLEASE NOTE**: There are sets of ready-to-use question stems related to key texts that have been created for TASC study, including The U.S. History Timeline. These will be available on CollectEdNY.org and the cuny dropbox under the NYSED Teacher Leaders link.

**ANALYSIS OF THE TASC WRITING SKILLS TEST**

Below you will find an analysis of the TASC Writing Skills. It is based on item specifications and analysis of the question types on the Readiness Tests. Please note that it is based on limited information—think of it as the best guess possible under the circumstances.

**Punctuation: 35%**

Roughly 35% of questions will be about sentences and punctuation:

* Commas
* Semicolons
* Colons
* Dashes
* Commands

**Clarity and Conciseness: 40%**

Roughly 40% of questions are clarity and conciseness questions. They will begin with phrases like this:

* *Which revision best combines the ideas of the sentences clearly and concisely?*
* *Which is the best revision of the underlined sentence?*
* *Which revision best explains….?*

**Text-based: 10%.**

These questions are based on one or more paragraphs. They will begin with questions like this:

* *Which is the best sentence to begin the paragraph?*
* *Which is the best sentence to conclude the paragraph?*
* *The best place to insert a paragraph break would be….*

**Choose the Right Word: 15%**

These questions ask you to choose the best word to fill in the blank in a sentence. They begin with phrases like:

* *Which word best maintains a formal, objective tone?*
* *Which word matches the tone of the description?*

The mini-lessons that you find in this Guide were created specifically to help students learn what they need for the test.

**Mini-lesson Sequence**

The mini-lessons in this Guide parallel the chapters inside the student study packet “Let’s Talk about Sentences.”

* Lesson One: What is a sentence?
* Lesson Two: Expanding Sentences with Adjectives and Lists (introducing the colon)
* Lesson Three: Expanding Sentences using “Who” Phrases (introducing the dash)
* Lesson Four: Combining Sentences using a List, Conjunctions (FANBOYS) and Semicolons
* Lesson Five: Combining Sentences using Dependent Clauses (introducing transition words)
* Lesson Six: A Final Comma Tip: Commas with Coordinate Adjectives
* Lesson Seven: Combining Sentences for Clarity and Conciseness: Active/Passive Voice
* Lesson Eight: Combining Sentences for Clarity and Conciseness: Dangling and Misplaced Modifiers
* Lesson Nine: Combining Sentences for Clarity and Conciseness: Parallel Structure
* Lesson Ten: Identify the Right Word Questions
* Lesson Eleven: Text Organization Questions
* Lesson Twelve: Find the Right Word: Signal or Transition Words
* Lesson Thirteen: Find the Right Word: Tone

A few **suggested resources** from the internet. Please note that selected exercises from each of these sites appear in the student study packet “Let’s Talk about Sentences:”

**Purdue OWL**: owl.english.purdue.edu. This is a helpful site for teachers to understand the details of the grammar or punctuation they wish to introduce. The page on Sentence Punctuation Patterns is especially helpful.

**Grammar Bytes** has an excellent powerpoint and online, as well as printable, exercises,on parallel structure

Grammar Quizzes from **Capital Community College**

http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/quizzes/combining\_quiz2.htm\

There are some very good quizzes here where students can practice sentence combining online.As students get closer to the test, it’s a good idea for students to practice with some sample test questions involving sentence combining, as the sentences on the test can be quite difficult and nuanced, and students need to practice with samples to get the “hang” of it.

**MINI-LESSONS**

**Mini Lesson One**: What is a sentence?

Materials: Sentences—see below

Steps:

1. Explain to students that in order to prepare for the Writing Skills Test, there is a lot that they need to know. Most of the Test consists of understanding how sentences are structured. For some questions, they will be asked whether sentences are properly punctuated. For other questions, they will be asked to choose the BEST revision of two sentences that have been combined into one. The best way to practice this is to combine sentences themselves. Other questions ask them about text organization, but by far most of the questions will be about sentences. And so, for the semester, they will be studying sentences in various forms. Today, they will begin by understanding clearly what a sentence is.
2. Write the sentences on the board. Write this question above them: Which one of these are sentences? Walk around as students discuss to hear what they are saying.

1. Time always seemed too short.

2. I voted.

3. Jose and Lisette complained about the lady at the welfare office.

4. Sometimes governments collapse.

5. Democracy has been our form of government for over 200 years.

6. That morning, the senator voted against the proposal and went to lunch.

7. Taxes can really take a chunk out of your paycheck.

1. It’s very important to walk around and get a sense of what students understand and what puzzles them, so the conversation that follows can address some of their confusions. When I teach this lesson, students are usually puzzled by some of the choices. They are not sure that a sentence can be two words, for instance. They have often heard that “a sentence is a complete thought.” They will say to each other “but it’s not complete.” Students may also be confused by sentences that start with abstract nouns like “Time,” or verbs that don’t seem very active like “seems.” Listen for these comments as you walk around, but don’t answer any questions yet.
2. Bring the class together and o through the sentences one by one, stopping and asking what students thought—if they think it is a sentence, why. If they think it is not, why not? Questions come up, and this leads to establishing the following points:

**A sentence is a group of words that has a subject and a verb.** Or, more accurately, a sentence is a group of words with a sentence and a verb, a capital letter at the beginning, and a period at the end. I tell students that they may have learned that “a sentence is a complete thought” but that seems like a confusing definition to me, so I prefer this one.

**Verbs.** I say that if you want to figure out if a group of words is a sentence, first you need to find the verb. I ask students what a “verb” is. Students will often say it is an “action word.” I will say that’s true, but some verbs don’t sound very “action-y” In the first sentence we see “seems.” That doesn’t seem like a very active word, does it? I tell students that they will often come across forms of the verb “to be”—am, was, were, is, have been, were going to, etc. These may not seem very “verby” but they are.

**Verbs change with the time.** So how can you tell a word is the verb? *It changes with the time.* You can put it in past tense, present tense, future tense. Take “always” (which some students will say is the verb if you ask them). Can you “always-ed?”

**A two-word sentence?** When we come to the second sentence, the question of whether a sentence can be two words comes up**.** There are usually some students who think that is not possible. I’ll ask them—is there a verb? Is there a subject that does the action of the verb? Then it’s a sentence.

**Subjects.** Once you know the verb, you can look for the subject. What is the thing that does the action of the verb? *I voted.* Who voted? With sentence 3, we talk about how there can be two subjects that do one action. Jose and Lissette *both* complained.

**Verbs can be more than one word.** We discuss this for sentence 5. The verb includes “has been.” There can be even more words in the verb: *might have been, had been doing*

**Two separate actions with *and.*** That is what we have in sentence #6. You can have one subject who does two (or more) separate things.

**Words between the two verbs.** We discuss this for sentence 7—taxes can really take a chunk…*really* is not a verb, but there are words that can tell us more about the verb, and these can come between the verbs two parts.

As we talk, I write some of these observations on the board and urge students to copy them down. I try to use as few grammatical terms as possible. I tell students that if they are confused not to worry, we’ll be doing this again and again and again.

1. Explain to students that there is ONE exception to the rule of “A sentence has a subject and a verb. This exception is COMMANDS. Review with students what a command is in everyday parlance, as in “I command you to put down your weapon.”
2. Write some commands on the board, such as “Stop!” “Go!” “Get out of my room!” Explain to students that commands are a special kind of sentence. The subject of the sentence is actually “You.” As in “You, stop!” or “You, get out of my room!” But we don’t say the “You” most of the time. Tell students that they need to be able to recognize a command for the TASC. They will have a chance to review for homework and in upcoming class sessions.
3. Give Chapter One of “Let’s Talk about Sentences” for homework.

**Mini-Lesson Two:** **Expanding Sentences using Adjectives and Lists**

Materials: Quiz on sentences

Steps:

1. After students have taken the 3-minute quiz, review. Make sure students understand what commands are and explain that these are the ONLY types of sentences that can be one word. On the test, however, they will not appear as one word. Students will be asked to identify the sentences that is a command.
2. Tell students that now that they understand what a sentence is, it’s time to learn about some ways to expand sentences. You are going to start with something simple:

Kate (substitute your name) is a teacher.

1. …and add words to expand the sentence. One of the easiest ways to expand a sentence is by adding adjectives, or describing words. They are going to try it now.
2. Ask students to brainstorm “words that describe people’s personalities.” You will come up some easy ones like funny, nice, and smart, but see if you can get students to add in some more sophisticated ones, like *determined, optimistic*, or *perceptive*.
3. Create the model sentence on the board.

Kate (substitute your name) is a clever, disorganized teacher.

1. Point out the comma. Explain that you need a comma between two adjectives next to each other (the fact that this is not always true—non-coordinate adjectives do not require a comma—is complicated and can come later).
2. Ask students to write sentences about themselves based on the model, substituting “person” for “teacher” in the model sentence

Kate (substitute your name) is a clever, disorganized person.

… then put them on the board. You can either ask all the students, if you want it to be inclusive, or ask a few, telling the rest that they will have to go up later in the class.

1. When the sentences are up, have students read their statements to the class. Make corrections if any are needed.
2. Explain to students that you can add as many adjectives as you want to expand a sentence. Write an example on the board:

Kate (substitute your name) is a clever, disorganized, happy, hard-working, determined teacher.

Again, note the commas.

1. Tell students that now you want to write a sentence that has “and” in it, so you are going to write it like this:

Kate (substitute your name) is a clever, disorganized, and hard-working teacher.

Point out to students there is a comma before the *and*. THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR THE TASC! WHEN THERE IS A LIST OF ITEMS WITH COMMAS, THE TASC-MAKERS LIKE A COMMA BEFORE THE *AND*. THEY WILL NOT SEE THIS EVERYWHERE, BUT IT’S IMPORTANT FOR THE TASC.

1. Ask all students to write a sentence about themselves (substituting “person” for “teacher”), and have selected students write their sentences on the board when all are finished. Those students should then read their sentences out loud, and corrections made as a group.
2. Write the comma rule on the board and have students write it down: Use commas between two or more adjectives in a row. When there is a list of adjectives with *and*, use a comma before *and*.
3. Tell students there is another way to make a list using commas and a colon. Some students may not know what a colon is. Show what it looks like on the board, and explain how it is used: it shows a list is coming.

Write the model on the board:

Kate (substitute your name) is a great teacher: organized, informed, and hard-working.

1. Put your arm over the part of the sentence that comes after the colon. Ask students: could this be a sentence in itself? Students will most likely say that it is. Explain that the colon is only used AFTER what is called “an independent clause.”

We ***don’t*** write**:** She is: organized, dependable, and classy.

**We do write:** She is organized, dependable, and classy.

**and**

**We do write:** She is a great agent: organized, dependable, and classy.

1. Tell students that this may seem confusing, but after they do it awhile, they will get it. The other thing to notice about colons is that they are NOT just for lists of adjectives, but also for lists of items.

He brought a strange set of items to the picnic: tennis rackets, pickles, and milk duds.

She had everything she needed: purse, car keys, and metro card.

He had three errands to run before returning home: picking up milk, returning a library book, and checking on his sick mother.

1. Give out the worksheet below or simply give out Chapter Two of “Let’s Talk about Sentences,” and ask students to do the exercises, then review them.

###### [**http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons\_ex1.htm**](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm)

###### **WHEN TO USE A COLON**: Examples: Example #1

**Dinner will consist of the following: tuna fish, carrots, and a slice of pita bread.**  
Explanation: The colon serves as a cue to the reader that write is about to name the items being served.

###### Example #2

**Many brave people try to live by Eleanor Roosevelt's famous words: "You must do the thing you think you cannot do."**  
Explanation: The colon tells the reader that the writer is about to introduce a quote.

**Instructions**

1. Each sentence should contain a colon. Select the pair of words between which the colon should be placed.

**Link to the OWL EXERCISE ON COLONS:**

<http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm>

ANSWERS TO EXERCISES, MINI-LESSON ONE

ANSWERS **IN BOLD**

**PAGES 9 &10**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Questions** | |
| 1. Many jobs interest me teaching, writing, editing, and social work. | |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | a.) job, interest |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | b.) interest, me |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | c.) **me: teaching** |
| 2. There were a number of famous people at the restaurant Brittany Spears, Jack Nicholson, and Helen Hunt. | |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | a.) people: at |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | b.) **restaurant: Brittany** |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | c.) Nicholson: and |
| 3. There are a lot of chores I do not like doing dishes, washing windows, and vacuuming rugs. | |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | a.) doing: dishes |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | b**.) like: doing** |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | c.) dishes: washing |
| 4. He was a world class athlete a rowing champion. | |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | a.) was: a |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | b.) class: athlete |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | c.) **athlete: a** |
| 5. She did not pass the most important of her exams math. | |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | a.) pass: the |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | b.) important: of |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | c**.) exams: math** |
| 6. I like all kinds of desserts lemon pie, carrot cake, strawberry ice cream, and chocolate pudding. | |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | a.) kinds: of |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | **b.) desserts: lemon** |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | c.) cake: strawberry |
| 7. Some cities are known for being friendly Buffalo. | |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | a.) are: known |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | b.) known: for |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | **c.) friendly: Buffalo** |
| 8. There are several hobbies I particularly enjoy cake decorating, dancing, and bicycling. | |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | **a.) enjoy: cake** |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | b.) hobbies: I |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | c.) dancing: and |
| 9. One factor made our winter more difficult than usual ice storms. | |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | a.) winter: more |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | **b.) usual: ice** |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | c.) ice: storms |
| 10. She prized only one possession her diamond necklace. | |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | a.) prized: only |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | b.) only: one |
| [Click to select](http://depts.dyc.edu/learningcenter/owl/exercises/colons_ex1.htm) | c**.) possession: her** |

**Mini-Lesson Three:** **Expanding Sentences using Phrases**

Materials:

* Quiz (attached separately)
* Make an Interesting Sentence Scramble-see below
* Word Form Chart and Matching Exercise-see below

1. Give the 3-minute quiz, then review
2. Tell students that today, they will be practicing expanding sentences using phrases. They understand what a sentence is: a subject and a verb. They know that they can expand sentences using adjectives and create lists using a colon and a list with commas. Today they will work with phrases that can be added to a sentence, but also taken away, and it still works as a sentence. They will do this with information that comes at the beginning of a sentence and in the middle, with “who” phrases.
3. Tell students that many times, we add information at the beginning of a sentence that tells about time and place. Write an example on the board:

That morning, the senator voted against the proposal.

Make note of the comma. Write it on the board as a further rule for commas.

1. Then ask the students to help you brainstorm phrases about time: *this week, yesterday, this morning*, etc, and place: *in the park, at the movie theater, in New York, in my apartment, in the subway*, etc.
2. Ask students to help you write some sentences that have introductory phrases based on time and place. Write them on the board with commas or have them generate sentences, then write them on the board. Point out that the sentence can stand alone without the introductory phrase.
3. If you would like to continue work with it, use the handout below. The challenge is to make the most interesting sentence.

Make an Interesting SENTENCE SCRAMBLE

**INTRODUCTORY PHRASES** most often give more information about TIME and PLACE.

Usually, there is a **comma** placed after the introductory phrase.

This morning, I couldn’t find my glasses anywhere.

On the left side are introductory phrases that give more information about time and place.

On the right side are sentences that would like more information added.

Match them up however you like to make a longer sentence. There are no interesting answers—just interesting sentences…but they should make sense! Remember to use a comma when needed. Make your sentences interesting!

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Introductory Phrases** | **Sentences** |
| After lunch | She found her one true love. |
| On 112th Street | They found the mysterious message. |
| Later that afternoon | He blew up Manhattan. |
| Inside the store | They found the answer they’d been looking for. |
| Far, far away at the end of the long road | The aliens appeared. |
| Too late | She understood her mistake. |

1. Tell students that now they will work on phrases that come in the middle of the sentence. Again, these are phrases that can come out of the sentence and the sentence still makes sense and can stand on its own. They might want to think of them as “who” phrases.
2. Tell students they’ll start by reviewing some of the words that describe personality that they brainstormed yesterday, and learn some even fancier words to describe people.
3. Give out the word form chart below and the Matching Exercise. Have students work in pairs to fill it in—this may take 15 minutes or so. Make each group of students responsible for four of the items from the Matching Exercise, who will report back to the class on their “findings.” Walk around to provide assistance.
4. When students are finished, have each group review the 4-5 items they were responsible for.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Word** | **Meaning** | **Sentence** |
| ambitious | Determined to be successful, rich powerful | **Model sentence**: Jesse**, who was ambitious,** never stopped thinking about how she could make more money and rise to a higher position at work. |
| anxious | Worried, nervous |  |
| arrogant | Behaving in a proud, unpleasant way, showing little thought for other people |  |
| aggressive | Angry, or behaving in a way that is threatening to others |  |
| assertive | Expressing opinions or desires strongly and with confidence so that people notice |  |
| compassionate | Feeling or showing sympathy for people who are suffering |  |
| confident | Feeling sure about your own ability to do things and be successful |  |
| decisive | Able to decide quickly and with confidence |  |
| determined | Showing determination, not letting anyone stop you in attaining a goal |  |
| diligent | Showing care or effort in your work or duties |  |
| dramatic | To be dramatic is to be very exaggerated in your reactions to things |  |
| empathetic | Able to understand another person’s feelings and experiences |  |
| insensitive | Not realizing or caring how other people feel |  |
| judgmental | Having a tendency to judge and criticize other people too harshly |  |
| moody | Having moods that change quickly and often; bad tempered or upset for no reason |  |
| optimistic | Expecting good things to happen or to be successful |  |
| outgoing | Liking to meet other people, enjoying their company and being friendly towards them |  |
| passive | Accepting what happens or what people do without trying to change anything |  |
| practical | Sensible and realistic; focused on getting things done |  |
| pessimistic | Expecting bad things to happen and things will not be successful |  |
| passionate | Having or showing strong emotions |  |
| selfish | Caring only about yourself rather than other people |  |
| thoughtful | Thinking of others and their feelings; a person who does small things to make other people feel better |  |
| Studious | A person who studies a lot and cares about school |  |
| thoughtless | A person who doesn’t think of others; insensitive |  |

**MATCH THE PERSONALITY TRAIT WITH THE ACTION.**

THE FIRST ONE IS DONE FOR YOU AS A MODEL

1. Believes she can do well at the job interview **CONFIDENT**
2. Doesn’t notice that his careless remarks cause his mother pain. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. Her feelings change from joy to furious anger in the snap of a finger. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
4. Loves meetings, conferences, and parties.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
5. Is very critical of people who do not share her views\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
6. Believes she will eventually see all her dreams come true\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
7. Never stops reading\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
8. Hates being asked on dates, but doesn’t know how to say “no.”\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
9. Gives her boyfriend a long, drawn-out kiss whenever she sees him.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
10. Always focuses on what needs to be done without complaining or dreaming about impossible things. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
11. Shouted loudly and jumped up and down with excitement when he won the lottery \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
12. Gave 5$ to the pregnant mother who was begging on the street\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
13. Cried when she heard about her friend’s bad experiences as a refugee.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
14. Is always ready to order, right away, after looking at the menu.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
15. Thinks the end of the world will happen soon.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
16. Wouldn’t share his lunch with his girlfriend when she lost hers.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
17. Is always giving her co-workers little gifts.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
18. Threatened to kill the driver who was driving slowly in the fast lane.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
19. Pushed himself to the front of the line rather than waiting, because he said he was more important than other people.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
20. Made sure to do everything possible to make all of her patients as comfortable and safe as possible, always filled in her charts so the doctor would be informed, and performed all of her duties as well as possible.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
21. Was always worried about practically everything\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
22. Never stopped thinking about how she could make more money and rise to a higher position at work\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
23. Kept going to class, studying, and re-taking the TASC test, even after failing it twice\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
24. Constantly referred to his overweight daughter’s large size in his public speeches.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
25. Insisted firmly on her rights as a customer when Verizon tried to cut off her service.\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
26. Write a model sentence on the board:

Harold, who constantly referred to his overweight’s daughter’s large size in his public speeches, was insensitive.

1. Tell students to note the commas. There are commas AT THE BEGINNING AND END OF THE ‘WHO’ PHRASE.
2. Point out that the “who” phrase can be taken out of the sentence. Ask students: if you take out the phrase between the commas, can it still make sense and stand on its own? The answer is “yes!”
3. Ask students to work in pairs or groups to write a sentence following the model with ONE of the items they matched in the Matching Exercise and write them on the board.
4. Review the student-written sentences as a class.
5. Point out to students that “who” phrases are sometimes SHORTENED when we say them. For instance:

Judith, who was very critical of other people’s views, was judgmental.

can become

Judith, very critical of other people’s views, was judgmental.

YOU STILL NEED THE COMMAS!

1. Give out the sheet with similar examples, and ask students to read it for homework.
2. Finally, introduce dashes. Tell students that when EXTRA INFORMATION THAT CAN BE TAKEN OUT comes IN THE MIDDLE OF A SENTENCE, we can sometimes use DASHES. Write some examples on the board:

Kate—who was a nonstop talker—made the staff picnic unbearable with her endless chatter about grammar and sentences.

Tell students that you can even have a whole sentence within a sentence when you set it off with dashes:

The staff picnic—never an event people liked in the first place—was even worse this year because Kate wouldn’t stop talking about grammar.

You can actually even include a whole sentence INSIDE a sentence with dashes:

One reason people didn’t like the staff picnic—it was always crowded and hot, with bad-tasting food—was that Kate talked nonstop about grammar.

1. Give out Chapter Three of “Let’s Talk about Sentences” for students to do as homework.

**Mini-Lesson Four:** **Combining Sentences with FANBOYS and SEMICOLONS**

Materials:

* Quiz (attached separately)
* Sentence stems (see below)

1. Have students take the 3-minute quiz and review as a class
2. Tell students that they have learned about two different ways to expand sentences. Now they will learn about combining two different sentences. One way that two sentences are combined is with FANBOYS.
3. Write FANBOYS vertically on the board and ask students whether they have heard of them and if they know of any of them. Write the word next to each letter in the acronym. As you do, talk about the meaning of each word and give an example sentence. “For” means “because” but we don’t use it very often anymore. “She was late, for there had been a traffic jam.” “Yet” means the same as “but” as a FANBOY. (Sometimes we hear “not yet.” When “Yet” is used as a FANBOY, it means “but.” “I was thirsty, yet I was unwilling to spend $4 on a bottle of water.” Also review “or” and “nor,” but explain to students that the FANBOYS used most are “and,” “but” and “so,” and those are the ones that we will be focusing on.
4. Write two stems on the board:

Lilian was tired.

She went to bed.

Which FANBOY, “and,” “but” or “so” would work best to combine the sentences?

Once you have combined them, emphasize the comma that comes before the FANBOY.

1. Try a few others:

The teacher forgot an important handout.

The class had to do a different lesson.

Lilian was tired.

She didn’t want to get up and come to school.

Jose had worked all night.

He wasn’t looking forward to four long hours of class.

1. This is a good time to talk about “and” and “so,” and the fact that often times both may seem appropriate. Sometimes, though, only “so” makes sense.
2. Point out to students that when using “so,” cause has to come before effect.

Write these stem sentences:

She bought the house.

The house was cheap.

Ask students how it should be combined:

She bought the house, so it was cheap.

The house was cheap, so she bought it.

When we use “so” to combine the two ideas we want *cause* to come before *effect.* Cause and effect have to do with time: causes come before effects. Which came first—the fact that the house was cheap, or the fact that she bought it?

1. Give out the sentence sheet. Have students work in pairs to combine the sentences and have each pair of students put one up on the board, then go over them, making corrections when necessary.

**Combine the sentences below using “and,” “but,” or “so.”**

**SET ONE**

Felicia was moody.

She couldn’t handle sudden changes of plan.

**SET TWO**

Jermaine was decisive.

There was no hesitation in his voice when he made his choice.

**SET THREE**

Veronica was diligent.

She could always be relied upon to do a good job.

**SET FOUR**

Lester, a pessimist, was sure the election would end badly.

He was right.

**SET FIVE**

Sonia was outgoing.

She was delighted to be invited to the party.

**SET SIX**

Ruth, who was childless and judgmental, didn’t approve of the way her sister was raising her children.

She had a tendency to make snide comments about her nieces’ and nephews’ behavior.

**SET SEVEN**

Priscilla was an empathetic mother.

She was understanding when her son explained his feelings of failure.

**SET EIGHT**

Melanie was determined to get an HSE.

She returned to class after failing the math test by one point.

**SET NINE**

Nestor was a compassionate person.

He simply felt no sympathy for people who abandoned their children.

**SET TEN**

Raoul, an optimist, always believed things turned out for the best.

He couldn’t find a silver lining to this particular problem.

1. Tell students that there is another way to combine two independent clauses, that just involves a kind of punctuation: the semi-colon. Write a semi-colon on the board, and explain that it can be used in place of the FANBOY and comma. For instance:

Lester, a pessimist, was sure the election would end badly, and he was right.

Can be written as:

Lester, a pessimist, was sure the election would end badly; he was right.

1. Explain to students that the semi-colon is only used when one idea follows from the other. The two ideas are closely related, or one restates the other.
2. Give students the following example:

Millie was elected captain of the debate team, she has great speaking skills.

Is that correct? If it isn’t correct, how can we fix it?

Work with students to revise the sentence using (1) a period; (2) a FANBOY with comma; and (3) a semi-colon.

1. Give out the worksheet and have students work in pairs to punctuate the sentences. Walk around while students are working to provide assistance. Have each pair of students put up a sentence they feel confident about and review as a class.
2. Give out Chapter Four of “Let’s Talk about Sentences” for homework.

## **LINK TO OWL Exercise : Commas vs. Semicolons - Compound Sentences:**

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/exercises/3/5/23>

## **ANSWERS to Exercise: Commas vs. Semicolons - Compound Sentences**

1. Many companies make sugar-free soft drinks, which are flavored by synthetic chemical**s;** the drinks usually contain only one or two calories per serving.

2. Mr. Leyland played the viola professionally for many years**, and** he now conducts a community orchestra.

3. The crab grass was flourishing**, but** the rest of the lawn was dying.

4. The hill was covered with wildflowers**;** it was a beautiful sight.

5. As I turned around, I heard a loud thump**, for** the cat had upset the goldfish bowl.

6. The artist preferred to paint in oils**;** he did not like watercolors.

7. The house was clean, the table set, and the porch light o**n;** everything was ready for the guests' arrival.

8. He looked carefully in the underbrush**, but** he failed to notice the pair of green eyes staring at him.

9. The foundations of the house had been poured**, but,** to his disappointment, nothing else had been done because of the carpenters' strike.

10. I thought registration day would be tiring**, but** I didn't know I'd have to stand in so many lines.

12. The dog, growling and snarling, snapped at me**;** I was so frightened that I ran.

13. Professors are supposed to be absent-minded**, and** I've seen plenty of evidence to support that claim since I've been in college.

14. In the first place, it was snowing too hard to see the road**;** in the second place, we had no chains.

17. I have read Soul on Ice**, but** I have not read The Invisible Man.

18. The quarterback made a brilliant pass**, and** the end crossed the goal line for the winning touchdown.

19. Large supermarkets fascinate me **;**I can find everything from frozen chow mein to soybean flour in one place.

20. Ron and Mike were both in English class this morning**;** they gave an interesting presentation on their research.

21. The obstacles are not insurmountable**, but** they are real and formidable.

22. Riding a bicycle is excellent exercise**;** I ride mine every day.

23. Katherine has given up smoking about five times**, but** she cannot seem to break the habit.

24. His work may be almost totally forgotten**, but** he would certainly be surprised to see how much current scholarship simply echoes his ideas.

25. Our dog seems to have a built-in alarm clock**;** he wakes us up at exactly the same time every morning.

26. The passengers on the plane were initially alarmed by the loss of altitude**, but** the pilot and the crew kept them calm.

27. Ralph decided to be a chemist**, but** he changed his mind after taking Chem. 121.

28. I finished reading The Nation**, and** then I went to bed.

29. We always go to the mountains in the fall**;** they are at their prettiest at that time of year.

30. Tim went to the candy store quite often**;** the clerk even knew his name.

31. The air was beautifully clea**r;** it was a lovely day.

**Mini-Lesson Five:** **Combine Sentences using DEPENDENT CLAUSES**

Materials:

* Quiz (attached separately)
* Dependent clause sheet--see below
* Stem sentences for Sentence Combining—see below

1. Give the 3-minute quiz and review as a class.
2. Tell students that today they will learn a new way to combine sentences, with dependent clauses. What are dependent clauses? We’ve talked about independent clauses. Independent clauses can stand alone as sentences. Dependent clauses have a subject and a verb, but they cannot stand alone as sentences.
3. WHAT? I told you that a sentence has a subject and a verb. That’s true. UNLESS there is a dependent clause word in front of it.
4. Write this on the board: When I went to the store. Ask students: Is this a sentence? Most students will say no.
5. What about this one? After I left. Again, students will probably say no. Explain that both of these are dependent clauses because they start with dependent clause words.
6. Hand out the sheet of sentence starters with dependent clause words and have students look over them.

**HEARTSICK DEPENDENT CLAUSES**

1. BECAUSE I love you
2. ALTHOUGH you do not even notice me
3. UNLESS I see you
4. SINCE you left me
5. WHENEVER I see you
6. WHETHER you know it or not
7. WHILE I was thinking of you
8. UNTIL I see you again
9. BEFORE I met you
10. AFTER I saw you that day

**9. Ask students,** do these seem like sentences to you? Tell students—that is because they start with dependent clause words. They need an independent clause in order to be complete.

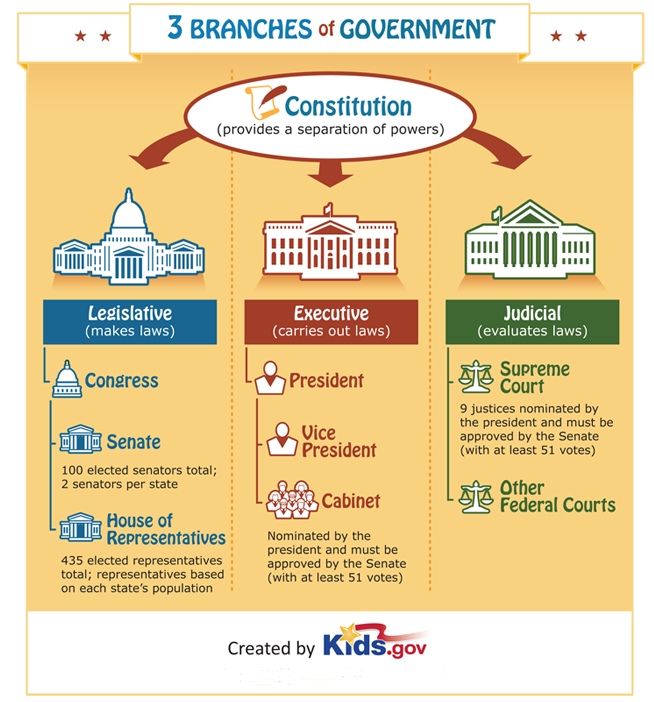
10. Have students help you write an independent clause with you, then point out the comma that is needed.

Because I love you, I will go out and get you pizza.

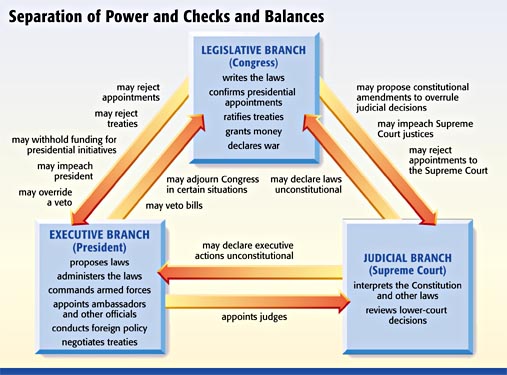
11. Ask students: Can the second part of the sentence, I will go out and get you pizza, stand alone? Yes! Call students’ attention to the comma, and tell students that *a comma is only needed after a dependent clause when the dependent clause comes at the beginning*.

12. Have students work in pairs to complete the rest of the sentence starters on the Heartsick Dependent Clause sheet, including the commas, and put them on the board. Encourage them to be creative. When all sentences are up, have each pair read their sentence and make corrections as necessary.

13. Tell students, *Now you are ready for some sentence combining*. Give out the sentence combining sheet on Checks and Balances.







**SENTENCE COMBINING: CHECKS AND BALANCES**

Above you will find charts that show the three branches of the U.S. Government, their powers, and the way that each branch can check, or limit, the power of the others. Look at them carefully, then combine the sentences below.

Combine each set of sentences using the word below in parentheses.

SET ONE

The Framers of the U.S. Constitution set up the government.

They made three branches: executive, legislative, and judicial.

(When)

SET TWO

The Constitution gives each branch certain powers.

It stipulates that each branch can check, or limit, the powers of the others.

(Although)

SET THREE

A bill Congress voted for doesn’t become law automatically.

It requires the president’s signature.

(Until)

SET FOUR

Congress votes a bill into a law.

The president has the option to veto.

(Whenever)

SET FIVE

The President negotiates treaties.

Treaties can only be ratified by Congress.

(Although)

SET SIX

Congress also limits the president’s powers.

The president can appoint judges.

They won’t officially become judges without the approval of Congress.

(Unless)

SET SEVEN

The Supreme Court checks the powers of both branches.

The Supreme Court has the power of judicial review.

(Because)

SET EIGHT

Judicial review means the Supreme Court reviews laws.

The laws aren’t put into action if the Court declares them unconstitutional.

(If)

SET NINE

President Trump instituted an executive order that banned people from some Muslim countries.

The Supreme Court only allowed some parts of the ban to go into effect.

(Although)

SET TEN

The Supreme Court has a big impact.

That is one reason why there was a big fight in Congress when President selected Neil Gorsuch as a new Supreme Court justice.

(Because)

7. Give students time to look over the diagram, then, when they are ready, do the first set of sentences together. Walk around as students are working in pairs or small groups to provide guidance and support.

8. Ask students to rewrite certain of their sentences with the dependent clause at the end in order to practice adding it without the comma. When students are ready, ask selected groups/students to put their sentence on the board, and review as a class.

9. Give students Chapter Six of “Let’s Talk about Sentences” for homework and review.

**MINI-LESSON SIX**: A Final Word about Commas: **Commas with Adjectives**

Materials: Practice sheet using commas with adjectives

Powtoon video on commas with coordinate adjectives.

* Recommended video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rA0a5H-P9Co>

Steps:

1. Ask students to give you some words to describe houses. Then ask them to give you some words to describe people’s physical appearance. When these are listed, ask them to give you some words to describe people’s personalities, adding in some of the words reviewed in review stations, above. Tell students that all of these words are adjectives. They are words that describe nouns. Review what a noun is—a person, place or thing.
2. Tell students that you are going to teach them some more rules for using commas. One rule has to do with using commas when you have two adjectives in a row. Sometimes, when you have two adjectives in a row you need to use a comma. Sometimes you don’t.
3. Write on the board the following sentences:

* It’s the large red house on the left.
* It’s the second blue house on the right.
* It’s the first scary movie I’ve seen in a month.

Ask students to help you identify the adjectives: Large, red/second, blue/first, scary. Say to students: So there are two adjectives in a row, but they don’t take a comma. Why?

1. Write: It’s the red large house on the left. Does that sound right?
2. Write: It’s the scary first movie I’ve seen all month. Does that sound right? Explain that some types of adjectives have to come in a certain order. Adjectives that describe size generally come before adjectives that describe color, for example.
3. However, in other situations, when we have two adjectives side by side we DO need a comma. Write the following sentences on the board:

* He was a resourceful, perceptive friend.
* She was a friendly, kind woman.
* They were a determined, diligent pair.

1. Ask students: if the adjectives, or describing words, are switched, does it still make sense? If the answer is yes, then you need a comma between the adjectives. Can you put “and” between the two adjectives and it still makes sense? Give out the practice sheet, and do it as a class.
2. Take one of the sentences that has already been written using two adjectives with a comma, and make a few more sentences using the model above.
3. To reinforce the point, you may want to have students watch the short video (link above), then do the exercises that follow.

EXERCISES: Adjectives with Commas

For each sentence, say whether the two adjectives are coordinate adjectives, and need a comma between them, or not.

1. The choir sang a happy merry song.
2. The quiet respectful class listened to the speaker.
3. The mighty winter storm howled through the night.
4. We went down the long dirt road.

**ANSWERS TO EXERCISES: Adjectives with Commas**

For each sentence, say whether the two adjectives are coordinate adjectives, and need a comma between them, or not.

1. **The choir sang a happy, merry song.**
2. **The quiet, respectful class listened to the speaker.**
3. **The mighty winter storm howled through the night.**
4. **We went down the long dirt road.**

**MINI-LESSON SEVEN: REVISING SENTENCES FOR CLARITY AND CONCISENESS**

Materials:

* Quiz (attached separately)
* Analysis of the Writing Skills Test (page 2 of this document)

1. Give the 3-minute quiz, have students take it, and review as a class.
2. Tell students that they have now learned about all of the punctuation they need to know for the test. Congratulations! They will continue to review and practice it as the semester continues.
3. However, there are other kinds of questions. Give out the TASC Analysis and have students look it over, allowing them to ask questions and answering the test-related questions the best you can.
4. Draw students to the “Clarity and Conciseness” category. Explain that these questions are challenging, and they will now spend some weeks preparing. Review with students what “clarity” means…and what “concise” means (Dictionary definition: expressing what needs to be said without unnecessary words; short and clear).
5. Tell students that when they encounter these questions, they will be asked Which of the revisions below combines the sentences MOST clearly and concisely?
6. When they encounter these questions, they should keep the following guidelines in mind. What the TASCmakers mean by “clear and concise” is the following:

* Sentences that provide the same information as the original, but clearly and efficiently.
* Sentences that do not repeat information
* Sentences that do not have passive voice.
* Sentences that do not have misplaced modifiers.
* Sentences with parallel structure.

7. Tell students they are going to look at eliminating repetitive language first. Write this sentence on the board:

Overeating, or binge eating as it has been defined or called, is a national problem and a serious issue to be addressed.

8. Ask students to copy down the sentence, then discuss in pairs where they see repetition—two words used for the same thing, or one word used again and again. Allow students to talk for a few minutes, then ask for report backs. As students report back, highlight the sections they identify and discuss whether they are indeed repetitive. In the end, students will hopefully notice:

***Overeating, or binge eating*** *as it has been defined or called, is a national problem and a serious issue to be addressed.*

They will also probably notice:

*Overeating, or binge eating* ***as it has been defined or called****, is a national problem and a serious issue to be addressed.*

And:

*Overeating, or binge eating as it has been defined or called, is* ***a national problem and a serious issue*** *to be addressed.*

In all three cases, two words that means something very similar are used when one would be enough.

9. Ask students in pairs to cross out the repetitive parts and see if they can rewrite the sentence to be more concise. Walk around to see how students are doing. Invite any student with a good re-write to get up and put it up on the board. As a class, review the rewrites.

10. Give out the “Don’t be Redundant!” Worksheet and have students work in pairs on the sentences. To save time, you may want to assign different groups of students to a particular sentence. They should (1) identify where it is redundant; (2) cross out repetitive words or information; (3) rewrite the sentence to be clearer.

**DON’T BE REDUNDANT!**

FOR EACH SENTENCE:

* Identify the redundant or repetitive words or information
* Cross it out
* Rewrite the sentence to be more concise.

1. Michelle was supposed to have her car’s oil changed every 3,000 miles, and since it had been 3,000 miles since her last oil change, she took her car to the mechanic.

2. As it was repeatedly said at times in the past by several wise men, and has been repeated so very often in the present time period, there are very many more ways than one to solve a problem.

3. Each and every one of us here at Smith Management greatly regrets the fact that you were let go, and wishes you a happy, joyful and blissful future, in spite of the fact that you are, regrettably, no longer employed.

4. Police apprehended a tall, dark-haired white Caucasian male, 6 feet tall, who was walking down Jerome Avenue in the Bronx, and while he was walking, he was accosting passersby and harassing them for money, using threatening postures like blocking their path and calling them “punk” when they did not comply.

**11.** Have students put up their sentences, bring the class together and review. Point out that there is not just one way to revise a sentence, and that is what makes this type of question on the test somewhat challenging.

12. Give out the test-type questions and have students work on them in pairs.

**TASC Practice Questions: Clarity and Conciseness**

1. **The Health Department compared prices at large suburban supermarkets in the greater metropolitan area that sell a great abundance of grocery items, and strictly urban markets that also sell a variety of items.**

**The best way to rewrite the underlined part of the sentence is:**

A. an abundance of many grocery items

B. many grocery items

C. a large number of grocery items

D. a very large array of grocery items

2. **We intended to go shopping, but then there were subway delays, so consequently we decided to give up on our plans for shopping for that day and go to dinner instead.**

**Which is the best revision of the sentence above?**

A. We intended to go shopping, but after subway delays, we consequently decided to give up on our shopping plans and go to dinner instead.

B. We intended to go shopping, but there were subway delays, so we decided to go to dinner instead.

C. There were subway delays when we tried to follow our plan to go shopping, so consequently we gave up on our plans and went to dinner instead.

D. We gave up on our shopping plans when there were subway delays, so consequently we went to dinner instead.

**ANSWERS to TASC Practice Questions: Clarity and Conciseness**

1. **The Health Department compared prices at large suburban supermarkets in the greater metropolitan area that sell a great abundance of grocery items, and strictly urban markets that also sell a variety of items.**

**The best way to rewrite the underlined part of the sentence is:**

A. an abundance of many grocery items

**B. many grocery items**

C. a large number of grocery items

D. a very large array of grocery items

2. **We intended to go shopping, but then there were subway delays, so consequently we decided to give up on our plans for shopping for that day and go to dinner instead.**

**Which is the best revision of the sentence above?**

A. We intended to go shopping, but after subway delays, we consequently decided to give up on our shopping plans and go to dinner instead.

**B. We intended to go shopping, but there were subway delays, so we decided to go to dinner instead.**

C. There were subway delays when we tried to follow our plan to go shopping, so consequently we gave up on our plans and went to dinner instead.

D. We gave up on our shopping plans when there were subway delays, so consequently we went to dinner instead.

**MINI-LESSON EIGHT: REVISING SENTENCES FOR CLARITY AND CONCISENESS: Passive/Active Voice**

Materials:

* Quiz (attached separately)
* Subject/Verb Review—see below
* Active/Passive Voice Worksheet—see below

1. Give the 3-minute quiz and review as a class.

2. Tell students that they will continue to focus on Clarity and Conciseness Questions. Last session, they focused on redundancy. Today they will focus on active and passive voice. First, a review of subjects and verbs.

3. Give out the Subject/Verb review. Remind students that they learned about this in the beginning, and they have now learned the many ways that sentences can be made longer by adding words and phrases, but they should still be able to find the subject and verb at the “heart” of any sentence. Have them work in pairs to identify subjects and verbs, then come together as a class and review.

**SUBJECT/VERB REVIEW**

**For each sentence, identify the subject and verb.**

1. Students laughed.
2. Hard-working, studious HSE students laughed.
3. Hard-working, studious, attentive HSE students laughed.
4. Hard-working, studious, attentive HSE students, who wanted to be dismissed from class, laughed.
5. Hard-working, studious, attentive HSE students, who wanted to be dismissed from class, laughed, so the teacher asked why they were laughing.
6. Because hard-working, studious, attentive HSE students, who wanted to be dismissed from class, laughed, the teacher asked why they were laughing.

4. Tell students that you’ve asked them to review subjects and verbs because passive voice reverses subjects and verbs. You are going to demonstrate.

5. Take out your keys and throw them on the floor. Ask students to help you write a sentence about what you just did. The sentence should start with “The teacher…” Tell students “That is active voice.”

The teacher threw the keys on the floor.

6. Once again, take out your keys and throw them on the floor. Ask students to once again write a sentence about what you just did. This time, though, the sentence needs to start with “The keys…” Eventually someone will arrive at:

The keys were thrown on the floor by the teacher.

7. Explain that, in the active voice, the subject performs the action. In the passive voice, the subject is *acted upon*. The subject *receives* the action.

8. Two good ways to recognize the passive voice: there is almost always a form of the verb to be, often with some other verb, as in ***The keys were thrown***. Have students help you brainstorm forms of the verb to be, then write a complete list on the board:

*am, is, was, are, will be, being, has been, had been*

The other way to recognize the passive voice is that they will often see the word “by.” ***The keys were thrown by the teacher.***

9. Tell students that they are going to practice active/passive voice. Give out the worksheet. Have students work on it in pairs/groups and walk around to check over students’ shoulders. When all are finished, go over the worksheet as a class.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Active Voice and Passive Voice** | |
| **Fill in the blank boxes by changing the sentence so that the verb is in the active or passive voice, as needed.** | |
| **The dog bit the girl.** | **The girl was bitten by the dog.** |
| **The wind blew out the candle.** |  |
| **Jorge brought some popcorn.** |  |
|  | **The car was driven by Riley.** |
|  | **The keys were stolen by the thief.** |
|  | **This song was sung by One Direction.** |
| **England beat Australia!** |  |
| **The builders will finish the wall tomorrow.** |  |
|  | **Shawnette was hugged by her aunt.** |
| **Now make up some of your own.** | |
|  |  |
|  |  |

10. Tell students, “OK, now comes the final test. Let’s apply what you just learned to test practice questions.” Give out the questions and have students work in pairs. Then review them as a class, using the process of elimination.

*The teddy bear was found by our daughter’s best friend in an alley on the outskirts of town.*

1. Which of these is the most accurate and effective revision to the sentence?

* 1. The teddy bear, found by our daughter’s best friend on the outskirts of town, is ours.
  2. Our son’s teddy bear was found on the outskirts of town in an alley by our daughter’s best friend.
  3. In an alley on the outskirts of town, the teddy bear was found by our daughter’s best friend.
  4. Our daughter’s best friend found the teddy bear in an alley on the outskirts of town.

2. *The idea of taking a trip to Washington was presented to the club by our president, Jorge Gutierrez.*

1. Taking a trip to Washington, as a club, was the idea presented by Jorge Gutierrez, the club president.
2. President Gutierrez presented the idea of taking a club trip to Washington.
3. President Gutierrez presented the club with the idea of taking a trip.
4. Club president Gutierrez presented the idea of a trip to Washington.

3. *A man’s wallet in a plastic bag was found at the playground by my brother and me.*

Which revision of the sentence is most correct and concise?

1. In a plastic bag, my brother and me found a man’s wallet.
2. My brother and I found a plastic bag at the playground which had a man’s wallet in it, too.
3. In the playground, a man’s wallet in a plastic bag was found by my brother and I.
4. My brother and I found a man’s wallet bill in a plastic bag in the playground.

**ANSWERS TO TASC PRACTICE QUESTIONS**

*The teddy bear was found by our daughter’s best friend in an alley on the outskirts of town.*

1. Which of these is the most accurate and effective revision to the sentence?

* 1. The teddy bear, found by our daughter’s best friend on the outskirts of town, is ours.
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  3. In an alley on the outskirts of town, the teddy bear was found by our daughter’s best friend.
  4. **Our daughter’s best friend found the teddy bear in an alley on the outskirts of town.**

2. *The idea of taking a trip to Washington was presented to the club by our president, Jorge Gutierrez.*

1. Taking a trip to Washington, as a club, was the idea presented by Jorge Gutierrez, the club president.
2. President Gutierrez presented the idea of taking a club trip to Washington.
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4. **Club president Gutierrez presented the idea of a trip to Washington.**

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Which revision of the sentence is most correct and concise?

1. In a plastic bag, my brother and me found a man’s wallet.
2. My brother and I found a plastic bag at the playground which had a man’s wallet in it, too.
3. In the playground, a man’s wallet in a plastic bag was found by my brother and I.
4. **My brother and I found a man’s wallet bill in a plastic bag in the playground.**

**MINI-LESSON NINE: REVISING SENTENCES FOR CLARITY AND CONCISENESS: Misplaced Modifiers**

Materials

Quiz

1. Review the 3-minute quiz as a class.
2. Tell students that today they will be working on another aspect of clarity and conciseness questions: misplaced modifiers
3. What is meant by “modifiers?” They are words or phrases that give more information about the main action. Give out the handout below and review:

**Types of Modifiers**

**Modifiers give MORE INFORMATION about a subject or action.**

**Adjectives give more information about quantity, type and which one.**

**What kind?**

* + cute baby
  + What kind of baby? A cute baby.
* **Which one?**
  + that baby
  + Which baby? That baby.
* **How many?**
  + three babies
  + How many babies? Three babies.
* **How much?**
  + enough fruit
  + How much fruit? Enough fruit.

**Another type of modifier gives more information about actions:**

* **When?**
  + arrive tomorrow
  + Arrive when? Tomorrow.
* **Where?**
  + dance everywhere
  + Dance where? Everywhere.
* **How often?**
  + dance frequently
  + Dance how often? Frequently.
* **How much?**
  + answer completely
  + Answer how much? Completely.

**Modifiers can be more than one word:**

* The boy riding up and down the street is tired.
  + The phrase “riding up and down the street” modifies the noun, boy
* The cabinets stuffed to the brim needed to be organized.
  + The phrase “stuffed to the brim” modifies the noun, cabinets

**Modifiers that are phrases also may tell about time and place or give other kinds of information:**

* **Where?**
  + by the lake
* **When?**
  + on time
* **Who?**
  + with you
* **What?**
  + besides the dog
* The boy who was at the store bought cookies.
  + This is an example of an adjective clause.
  + The adjective clause is a group of words that modifies “boy”

**Modifiers are critical** to the English language (That sentence alone has two!). Without them, we would not be as efficient or effective in our reading and writing. Furthermore, our sentences would be incredibly boring.

Here are a few sentences trying to express a day’s activities without any modifiers:

* I woke. I ate. I dressed. I drove. I worked. I ate. I worked. I drove. I exercised. I showered. I slept.

That is not engaging or interesting at all!

Here is part of that same schedule with modifiers,

* I woke up at 6:00 a.m. this morning. For breakfast, I ate a bagel and two eggs. I chose to wear a black suit with a blue shirt and matching tie. At about 9 o’clock, I arrived at work. After a busy morning, I consumed a hearty lunch.

Clearly, modifiers enhance language and affect how we communicate daily.

## Misplaced Modifiers

**What is a misplaced modifier?** A misplaced modifier is when the modifier in a sentence is separated from the word it describes or the word it describes is not present at all.

For example,

* Walking through the woods in autumn, leaves began falling from the trees.

In this example, the subject that the modifier is describing is not present in the sentence. Leaves cannot walk through the woods in autumn.

The sentence could be corrected as follows,

* Walking through the woods in autumn, I noticed the leaves falling from the trees.

1. Write this sentence on the board:

Josh ate dinner and went to bed.

1. Ask students: Who or what is the subject of the sentence? What are the verbs? What did he do?
2. Now write this sentence:

After eating dinner, Josh went to bed. Ask students: Who or what is the subject now? Who ate dinner? Who went to bed? Point out that the subject, Josh, has to come right after the modifying clause and its comma.

To provide students with additional practice recognizing when there is no subject present, write the following sentences on the board:

To finish by the 5 pm deadline, the computer keyboard clicked with Carla’s flying fingers.

Putting sugar on top of a frosted donut, the calorie count rose.

Too hungry to wait for mom to return to the table, the fried chicken quickly disappeared.

Sneezing from a terrible cold, a Kleenex would have come in handy.

Ask students to work in pairs. Each pair should choose ONE sentence and rewrite it to be correct (this means rewriting it with a subject), then write their sentence on the board. Once all the sentences are up, review as a class and make any needed corrections.

1. Give out or write on the board the following, and have students discuss in pairs which one is NOT correct.
2. Having finished dinner, the football match was turned on.
3. Having finished dinner, Jorge turned on the football match.
4. After Jorge finished dinner, he turned on the football match.
5. Jorge turned on the football match after finishing dinner.

Which one is unclear? Why?

Review: Answer: The first one is unclear. The subject of the sentence is **the football match**. But did the football match finish dinner? No—**Jorge** finished dinner. **Jorge** also turned on the football match.

8, Repeat the process with the sentences below:

Now, again, choose the sentence that is NOT clear:

1. Playing video games on the computer for three hours, Philomena did not finish her paper.
2. Because Philomena played video games on the computer for three hours, she did not finish her paper.
3. Playing video games on the computer for three hours, Philomena’s paper was not finished.
4. Philomena did not finish her paper because she played video games on the computer for three hours.
5. Introduce the next concept: modifiers **have to be in the right place for the sentence to be clear**. If they are not, we sometimes don’t know WHO is doing WHAT. Here are some examples of modifiers that ARE clear because they all have the same subject:

• *When he was president*, Obama was popular.

• *Before he became president*, Obama was not well-known.

• A popular president, Obama is sorely missed today.

• *To ensure he didn’t waste time on his wardrobe,* Obama simply bought 50 identical suits for his closet, so he didn’t have to think about what he would wear on any given day.

1. Here are some examples of modifiers that are placed correctly in a sentence so the meaning is clear:

* If they want to win, athletes must exercise every day.
* Because he kept barking insistently, we threw the ball for Smokey.
* *When he was president*, Obama accomplished major changes.
* *At the event*, many people enjoyed music and dancing while eating junk food.
* *To stay in shape for competition*, athletes must exercise every day.
* *Barking insistently*, Smokey got us to throw his ball for him.
* *A popular and well respected mayor*, Bailey won re-election.
* *The wind blowing violently*, the townspeople began to seek shelter.
* *After the adjustment for inflation*, real wages have decreased while corporate profits have grown.

1. But what happens when the modifier is not in the right place? Write the following sentences on the board:

Smokey got us barking insistently to throw the ball for him.

Eating junk food, many people at the event enjoyed music and dancing.

How are the meanings of these sentences slightly different from the originals? Why are the originals better?

1. Try another example:

Buffy called her adorable kitten opening the can of food and filled the bowl. Who is opening the can of food? Buffy? The kitten? To make the sentence clearer, we could write:

*Opening the can of food, Buffy called her adorable kitten, then filled the bowl. OR*

*Buffy called her adorable kitten, opened the can, and filled the bowl.*

1. Repeat the process with the following sentences:

Janae was delighted when Mr. Holmes returned her perfect math test with an ear to ear grin.

Hungry for dinner, the surface is where Gert the goldfish waited in anticipation of food flakes.

LaShawn’s foot indicated his nervousness during the interview, which jiggled wildly.

Ask students to help you rewrite the first sentence to improve it:

Janae was delighted when Mr. Holmes, with an ear to ear grin, returned her perfect math test.

Then have half the class work on Sentence 2 and half the class on Sentence 3. They should revise their respective sentences to be clearer, then write them on the board.

To provide additional practice, have students do the exercises in the Grammar Bytes link below:

<http://www.chompchomp.com/handouts/modifiers03.pdf>

Finally, to help students practice the skill with sample test questions, give out the questions below, have students discuss their answers in pairs, then review as a class using process of elimination and explaining why the correct one is correct.

**Question One**

There was a passion with which Kenya read her speech, but it was having to project her voice loudly to the members of the audience—because of the traffic noises outside—that tired her most by the end of the evening.

Which version of the sentence best expresses the ideas precisely and concisely?

1. Kenya and her speech were tired by the end of the evening, having to project her voice to the noisy room.
2. Having to project her voice loudly, Kenya’s speech tired her, but she was able to project her voice loudly to the members of the audience.
3. Though tired by her effort to project her voice loudly to the audience in the noisy room, Kenya read her speech with passion.
4. There was a passion and tiredness in how Kenya read her speech—because of the traffic noises outside—and she was having to project her voice loudly.

**Question Two**

The moment I had been anticipating finally came.

On a seemly routine Tuesday afternoon, I arrived home to my apartment.

A round package was left by the delivery man causally leaning against the front screen door.

Which revision most clearly combines the three sentences?

1. The moment I had been anticipating finally came, when while it was a seemingly routine Tuesday afternoon, I arrived home to my apartment and found a round package leaning against the front screen door that was left by my delivery man.
2. The moment I had been anticipating finally came on a seemingly routine Tuesday afternoon when I arrived home to a round package that was left by the delivery man at my apartment, casually leaning against the front screen door.
3. The moment I had been anticipating finally came on a seemingly routine Tuesday afternoon when I arrived home to my apartment, looked at the front screen door, and found a round package that had been left by the delivery man.
4. The moment I had been anticipating finally came, but on a seemingly routine Tuesday afternoon I arrived and found a round package that had been left by the delivery man casually leaning against the front screen door.

**ANSWERS TO TASC-TYPE MISPLACED MODIFIER QUESTIONS**

**Question One**

There was a passion with which Kenya read her speech, but it was having to project her voice loudly to the members of the audience—because of the traffic noises outside—that tired her most by the end of the evening.

Which version of the sentence best expresses the ideas precisely and concisely?

1. Kenya and her speech were tired by the end of the evening, having to project her voice to the noisy room.
2. Having to project her voice loudly, Kenya’s speech tired her, but she was able to project her voice loudly to the members of the audience.
3. **Though tired by her effort to project her voice loudly to the audience in the noisy room, Kenya read her speech with passion.**
4. There was a passion and tiredness in how Kenya read her speech—because of the traffic noises outside—and she was having to project her voice loudly.

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1. The moment I had been anticipating finally came, when while it was a seemingly routine Tuesday afternoon, I arrived home to my apartment and found a round package leaning against the front screen door that was left by my delivery man.
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3. The moment I had been anticipating finally came on a seemingly routine Tuesday afternoon when I arrived home to my apartment, looked at the front screen door, and found a round package that had been left by the delivery man.
4. The moment I had been anticipating finally came, but on a seemingly routine Tuesday afternoon I arrived and found a round package that had been left by the delivery man casually leaning against the front screen door.

**MINI-LESSON TEN: REVISING SENTENCES FOR CLARITY AND CONCISENESS: Parallel Structure**

**Materials**

**Quiz**

1. Tell students,” Sometimes when you get a clarity and conciseness question, there will be a few sentences that all seem right. Which one to choose? The first question to ask yourself is *which ones are in active voice*? These are the ones the TASC writers will favor. Another question you can ask is *which ones have parallel structure*? One of the things the TASC-writers favor when they give you clarity and conciseness questions is sentences with *parallel structure*. So what is parallel structure? That is what we are going to work on today.
2. Give out the handout below and ask students to take a look at it.

**CHOOSE SENTENCES THAT USE PARALLEL STRUCTURE**

What’s parallel structure? This diagram from Grammar Bytes is a good way for students to understand the concept:

*Parallel* structure, the correct way to write, looks like this:

Students Rubbery.**,** Rubbery.**,** and Rubbery.**.**

Students Delicious!**,** Delicious!**,** and Delicious!**.**

***When you use parallel structure, each of the items in your list follow the same pattern.***

*Nonparallel* structure looks like this:

Students Rubbery.**,** Delicious!**,** and Rubbery.**.**

*Students* ***capped*** *their pens,* ***were closing*** *their notebooks, and* ***zipped*** *their book bags.*

TEST YOURSELF. Which one below, A, B or C, shows parallel structure?

* 1. Barking dogs, kittens that were

meowing, and squawking parakeets greet the pet shop visitors.

* 1. Barking dogs, meowing kittens, and squawking parakeets greet the pet shop visitors.
  2. Dogs that bark, kittens that meow, and parakeets squawking greet the pet shop visitors.

1. If students are having trouble, which they frequently are in the beginning, write the exercise as follows on the board, and ask students if they see a pattern now.
2. Barking dogs

Kittens that were meowing

Squawking parakeets

1. Barking dogs

Meowing kittens

Squawking parakeets

1. Dogs that bark

Kittens that meow

Parakeets squawking

1. Ask students if they see a pattern now. The trick with parallel structure is just that each item in the “list” follows the same pattern.
2. If you feel students need extra practice, write a sentence on the board that does NOT have parallel structure, something like:
3. During class, Samuel spent his time flirting with Brittney, he ate candy, and doodling on the assignment sheet.

And have students help you to revise the sentence so that it DOES have parallel structure.

1. Give out the set of multiple-choice practice questions on parallel structure from Grammar Bytes. Have each pair of students work on the set and put the correct choice on the board. Review as a class.
2. Tell students that now you want to see how parallel structure will appear in a test-like question. Give out the sample test questions, have students work on them in pairs, the review as a class.

PARALLEL STRUCTURE EXERCISES

* 1. Barking dogs, kittens that were

meowing, and squawking parakeets greet the pet shop visitors.

* 1. Barking dogs, meowing kittens, and squawking parakeets greet the pet shop visitors.
  2. Dogs that bark, kittens that meow, and parakeets squawking greet the pet shop visitors.
  3. **Eileen bought new shoes for the party, a**

**gold charm for her mother, and to treat her**

**best friend Maria to lunch.**

* 1. **Eileen decided to buy new shoes for the party, purchasing a gold charm for her mother, and treating her best friend Maria to lunch**.
  2. **Eileen purchased new shoes for the party, a gold charm for her mother, and lunch for Maria, her best friend.**
  3. **Eileen bought new shoes for the party, a**

**gold charm for her mother, and to treat her**

**best friend Maria to lunch.**

* 1. **Eileen decided to buy new shoes for the party, purchasing a gold charm for her mother, and treating her best friend Maria to lunch**.
  2. **Eileen purchased new shoes for the party, a gold charm for her mother, and lunch for Maria, her best friend.**

**LINK TO GRAMMAR BYTES EXERCISES ON PARALLEL STRUCTURE:**

[**http://www.chompchomp.com/presentations/parallelism.pdf**](http://www.chompchomp.com/presentations/parallelism.pdf)

**PRACTICE TEST QUESTIONS USING PARALLEL STRUCTURE**

1. He wanted to go to college.

He found a technical school where he could study for an HSE and get college credit at the same time.

He could get financial aid.

What is the best way to combine the sentences above?

* + 1. He wanted to go to college, and he found a technical school that offered an HSE, college credit, and financial aid.
    2. He wanted to go to college, and he found a program where financial aid was offered and he could also get college credit while he studied for his HSE.
    3. The opportunity to study for an HSE while earning college credit was offered by the technical school, as well as financial aid, so he decided to go.
    4. Wanting to get college credit while studying for an HSE, he found a technical school that also offered financial aid.

1. Unfortunately the technical school was a scam.

He didn’t learn.

The teaching wasn’t good.

He decided to drop out.

Then, he was informed that he owed thousands of dollars in student loan repayments.

Which is the best way to revise the sentences above?

1. Unfortunately, the technical school was a scam; while the teaching wasn’t good, he was also failing to receive college credit and there were thousands of dollars to repay in student loans.
2. He realized the school was a scam when the teaching wasn’t good, no college credit was given, and there were thousands of dollars in student loans to repay.
3. The school was a scam, he realized, when he tried to drop out and was told he owed thousands of dollars in student loans.
4. He realized the school was a scam; there was no college credit available, and neither was the teaching good, although he was charged thousands of dollars in student loans.

Answers to Grammar-Byte and Tasc-type Questions

A. Barking dogs, kittens that were meowing, and squawking parakeets greet the pet shop visitors.

B. **Barking dogs, meowing kittens, and squawking parakeets greet the pet shop visitors.**

C. Dogs that bark, kittens that meow, and parakeets squawking greet the pet shop visitors.

2. A. **During class, Samuel spent his time flirting with Brittney, eating candy, and doodling on the assignment sheet.**

B. During class, Samuel spent his time flirting with Brittney, he ate candy, and doodling on the assignment sheet.

C. During class, Samuel spent his time to flirt with Brittney, to eat candy, and doodling on the assignment sheet.

3. A. Alex looked everywhere for his math book—under the bed, on his desk, and he searched inside the refrigerator.

B. Alex looked everywhere for his math book—viewing under the bed, searching on his desk, and inside the refrigerator.

C. **Alex looked everywhere for his math book—under the bed, on his desk, and inside the refrigerator.**

4. **A. The manager wanted staff who arrived on time, smiled at the customers, and didn’t snack on the chicken nuggets.**

B. The manager wanted staff who arrived on time, would be smiling at the customers, and would not be snacking on the chicken nuggets.

C. The manager wanted staff who arrived on time, smiled at the customers, and no snacking on the chicken nuggets

5. **A. After giving Jeremy her phone number, Felicia had to tolerate his late night calls, stupid conversations, and requests for her math homework.**

B. After giving Jeremy her phone number, Felicia had to tolerate his late night calls, the fact that he carried on stupid conversations, and requests for her math homework.

C. After giving Jeremy her phone number, Felicia had to tolerate being woken up late at night, having stupid conversations, and he constantly requested her math homework.

**Directions: Choose the correct word or phrase within the context suggested by the sentence**.

6. Pasta boiling in water, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and garlic bread baking in the oven welcomed Francisco as he opened the door.

A. simmered tomato sauce in the pan

B. **tomato sauce simmering in the pan**

C. tomato sauce that simmered in the pan

D. saucy tomatoes that were simmering in the pan

7. During our vacation in the Bahamas, we hope \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, to enjoy beautiful sunsets, and to dance ourselves dizzy at reggae clubs.

A. that we eat delicious seafood

B. that eating delicious seafood occurs

C**. to eat delicious seafood**

D. eating delicious seafood

8. Karen wished Ray chewed with his mouth closed, for otherwise he was everything she wanted in a date; he was tall, intelligent, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

A. he looked good

B. being good looking

C. one handsome man to look at

D. **handsome**

9. To win Laurie’s love, Albert visited the florist for roses, the drugstore for a box of chocolates, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

A. bought an expensive gold necklace at the jewelry store

B. **the jeweler for an expensive gold necklace**

C. the jeweler where he bought an expensive gold necklace

D. to buy an expensive gold necklace

10. Kimberly won’t date Terry because he is too short, too noisy, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

A. because he picks his teeth with his fingers

B. **too impolite**

C. is the most impolite man she has ever met

D. Picking his teeth with his fingers

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What is the best way to combine the sentences above?

* + 1. **He wanted to go to college, and he found a technical school that offered an HSE, college credit, and financial aid.**
    2. He wanted to go to college, and he found a program where financial aid was offered and he could also get college credit while he studied for his HSE.
    3. The opportunity to study for an HSE while earning college credit was offered by the technical school, as well as financial aid, so he decided to go.
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He didn’t learn.

The teaching wasn’t good.

He decided to drop out.

Then, he was informed that he owed thousands of dollars in student loan repayments.

Which is the best way to revise the sentences above?

1. Unfortunately, the technical school was a scam; while the teaching wasn’t good, he was also failing to receive college credit and there were thousands of dollars to repay in student loans.
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3. The school was a scam, he realized, when he tried to drop out and was told he owed thousands of dollars in student loans.
4. He realized the school was a scam; there was no college credit available, and neither was the teaching good, although he was charged thousands of dollars in student loans.

**MINI-LESSON ELEVEN: TEXT ORGANIZATION QUESTIONS**

Materials

* Quiz (attached separately)
* Handout on Effective Body Paragraphs—see below
* Essay: A Safer Bicycle Ride in NYC—see below

PLEASE NOTE: This lesson was contributed by Melissa Valerie, NYC Teacher Leader

1. Give the 3-minute quiz and review as a class
2. Tell students, “Congratulations! You’ve mastered MOST of the types of test questions on the TASC! Today, we are going to learn about one more question type: Text Organization Questions. These questions typically ask:

* *What is the best sentence to begin the paragraph?*
* *What is the best sentence to conclude the paragraph?*
* *What is the best place to insert a paragraph break?*

1. Give out the handout on *Effective Body Paragraphs* and ask students to read silently. Bring the class together and ask whether they have questions. Make sure that students understand words like “anecdotes.” Tell them they will use it as a guide in the next activity, the Essay Puzzle.

**Writing Effective Body Paragraphs**

**The Topic Sentence**

A topic sentence tells what a paragraph is going to be about. It also shows the relationship between this topic and the previous one. It often (not always) is the first sentence of a body paragraph.

**Examples or Evidence**

These sentences shows the reader what the topic sentence means. They offer specific examples or other pieces of evidence that help the reader understand the statement that was made in the topic sentence. The examples might be anecdotes, news stories, or information that you have read. The more specific (e.g. actual names, dates, quotes, descriptive detail), the better!

**Explanation**

The writer may need to write sentences that explain the connection between the topic sentence and the example. The explanation helps to make their relationship clear. It may start with words like “This shows that…” or “This is important because…” It helps the reader process the example.

**Concluding Sentence**

Not all paragraphs need concluding sentences. However, they sometimes help give the reader a sense of “closure” to one topic, so then there is a smoother transition to the new topic in the new paragraph.

1. Tell students, “This handout can be a guide for you as you do the next exercise, which is called an Essay Puzzle. I’m going to give you an essay cut up into pieces. Your job, as a group, is to put the pieces back together to create an essay that makes sense.
2. **(Directions for teachers: Use the essay below. Cut each paragraph into a separate piece and put all pieces into an envelope, then distribute one envelope per pair or small group of students as you prefer**)
3. Once student pairs/groups have begun working, walk around to provide guidance and support. This should take 10-15 minutes.
4. When students have finished their essay puzzles (not all may be correct) and BEFORE giving out the essay in its correct order, give out the “Essay Puzzle Questions” Sheet. This is an important component that allows students to reflect on their reasoning for ordering the essay the way they did.

**A Safer Bike Ride in New York**

*By*[*Henry Grabar*](http://www.slate.com/authors.henry_grabar.html)



A man rides in a bike lane on Prospect Park West in Brooklyn in 2011.

Spencer Platt/Getty Images

An issue that affects many New Yorkers today is bike safety. There are many bikers in New York City. According to the city’s [Community Health Survey](http://www.nyc.gov/html/dot/downloads/pdf/cycling-in-the-city.pdf), nearly 1.6 million New York adults ride bikes in the city, and 86,000 New Yorkers commute to work or school using bikes. With so many people biking in New York City, protections for bikers are important.

Unfortunately, there are many accidents involving cars and bikers in New York . For example, I read with sadness about the death of cyclist Matthew von Ohlen, who was recently killed in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Von Ohlen was in a bike lane, and was following all the rules, but it didn’t protect him from a driver who left his body on the street. He is only one example. Every day, approximately a dozen bikers suffer serious injuries on the road.

One of the main reasons bikers end up getting hurt or killed is that bike lanes are not adequately protected. The whole point of bike lanes is to provide bikers with their own space so they do not have to ride in the middle of car traffic, which is dangerous. However, bike lanes in NY are only marked by paint, not physically protected by barriers that separate the bike lane from the rest of traffic. For this reason, it’s easy for obstacles such as dumpsters or double-parked cars to block bike lanes. These obstacles force cyclists to swerve into traffic every few minutes, and as a result, biking in bike lanes is often more dangerous than riding in traffic in the first place!

Another reason biking in New York City is dangerous is the police. The NYPD has checkpoints for silly offenses like not having a bell on your bike or riding with earbuds, but they don’t fully investigate accidents in which motorists are at fault. Statistics show that police investigations of crashes are much less rigorous than they should be, and crash reports written by police tend to let motorists off the hook.

In modern cities, bicycle riding is one way to improve the overall quality of life. Bike riding benefits everyone because it results in less fossil fuel consumption, less traffic congestion in the City, and cleaner air. London, England is a good example: London has cleaner air and fewer traffic jams than New York City because more people commute to work by bike. The rise in biking is a direct result of the city’s push for greater bike safety. In London, three-foot–high hard plastic barriers were erected to separate bike lanes from car traffic on every road. Because biking is safer, more people are biking around the city, and the result is an improved quality of life for all.

New York deserves the same benefits as other modern cities, and improving bike safety will help. There’s room in New York for bikes to have their own space—and every other big American city, too!

**Essay Puzzle Questions**

1. How did you decide what order to put the paragraphs in? Were there any words that clued you in? If so, which ones?
2. Was there any information within the paragraphs that helped you in determining the order of the essay?
3. Using the information in the essay puzzle, what do you think the main idea of the essay is?
4. List two pieces of evidence that the writer uses to support the main idea.
5. Using the information in the essay puzzle, what do you think the purpose of this essay is (entertain, persuade, inform)?

**FOR THE TEACHER: ESSAY PUZZLE QUESTIONS WITH SAMPLE STUDENT ANSWERS**

1. How did you decide what order to put the paragraphs in? Were there any words that clued you in? If so, which ones?

*We used the essay checklist.*

*Clue words—unfortunately—one reason, another reason.*

*What is the argument?—that helped us figure out where things go.*

*Right after talking about safety, he gave an example of an accident.*

*“When I read the title—there is “safety” in the title—then there is “safety” in the intro. Then it talks about the reasons we don’t have safety in NYC, and the benefits of safety.*

1. Was there any information within the paragraphs that helped you in determining the order of the essay?

*According to the sheet, a conclusion doesn’t have an example; a conclusion has a solution or implication.*

1. Using the information in the essay puzzle, what do you think the main idea of the essay is? *We need bike safety.*
2. List two pieces of evidence that the writer uses to support the main idea.

*Cops stop cyclists for silly offenses.*

*NYC doesn’t have physical barriers for bike lanes.*

Using the information in the essay puzzle, what do you think the purpose of this essay is (entertain, persuade, inform)? *Some students said “persuade,” some said “inform,” but most agreed it was “persuade.”*

1. Tell students that they’ve done important work reflecting on the way texts are typically organized. This will help them not only on the TASC, but also in all of the writing that they do. Tell students they are going to practice one more thing: inserting paragraph breaks. Then they will work on a few test questions to see how the work they have been doing today can be applied on the TASC.
2. Give out the Paragraphing Worksheet. Explain that it has all been written as one big paragraph. Tell students that they need to divide the essay into FIVE paragraphs.
3. If you think students need the support, read out loud from the beginning, and ask students to stop you when they think it’s time for a new paragraph. Talk about why the paragraph should end there. Then let students work on their own in groups or pairs. Walk around as students are working to provide guidance and support.
4. When students are mostly finished, bring the class together and review. Ask students who feel confident about one of their paragraphs to read it out loud to the class and see if the class agrees. Whether there is agreement or not, get students to discuss their reasoning, and reinforce the idea that a paragraph is about one main idea.
5. Tell students it’s time to apply what they’ve learned to test practice questions. Give out the practice questions and let students work on them in pairs/groups. When they are ready, review the questions as a class, using process of elimination, and making sure that students understand why the right answer is the BEST one.

**Paragraphing Exercise: Mark places where a new paragraph should start. Note that there are five paragraphs in the essay.**

One goal I have for myself in the next year is to try to save more money. I’ve never had a lot of money and I never cared much about it. When I was younger I always thought I could wait until later to save money. I wanted to enjoy life in the here and now. But now that I’m older and our country has fallen on hard economic times, this attitude seems irresponsible. I plan to save money by making changes in my day-to-day life, opening a savings account and putting my tax refund in the bank. One way that I’ve decided to save money is by cutting back on unnecessary expenses. For instance, every day at work I like to buy myself lunch at one of the delis or restaurants around my office. These lunches don’t cost much—about $10—and it is a little luxury I like to give myself. I’ve realized, though, that $10 a day adds up and I can save a lot by making my lunch at home and bringing it. There are other luxuries I can cut back on too, such as buying new clothes. Another way I plan to save money is by opening a savings account. It won’t be much use to save money if I don’t put some of it away in a place I can’t touch it. All too often in the past, I’ve started saving money, then decided to reward myself for doing it. I’ve saved up a certain amount--$1,000 or so—then bought myself a new sound system or airline tickets to take a trip. Next week, I plan to open a savings account that won’t come with checks, so if I want to take money out of the bank, I’ll have to make a special effort. I’m hoping that by putting money in a savings account, I won’t be tempted to splurge when I’m in the mood. The third way I plan to save money is by saving my tax return instead of spending it. In the past, I’ve always looked at my tax refund as a gift from the government; a treat I received in the mail in the spring of each year. Last year for instance, I used the money to buy myself a new computer. This year, I won’t be buying myself anything. I’ll put my tax return in the savings account I’ve started. This way, if I lose my job, I’ll have something to fall back on. In these hard economic times, lots of people are losing their jobs and it makes sense to save money, just in case. I’m hoping that the money I put in the bank this year will make me feel more secure.

**For Teachers: Paragraph Breaks have been inserted.**

**Essay B: What is a goal you would like to achieve in the next year?**

One goal I have for myself in the next year is to try to save more money. I’ve never had a lot of money and I never cared much about it. When I was younger I always thought I could wait until later to save money. I wanted to enjoy life in the here and now. But now that I’m older and our country has fallen on hard economic times, this attitude seems irresponsible. I plan to save money by making changes in my day-to-day life, opening a savings account and putting my tax refund in the bank.

One way that I’ve decided to save money is by cutting back on unnecessary expenses. For instance, every day at work I like to buy myself lunch at one of the delis or restaurants around my office. These lunches don’t cost much—about $10—and it is a little luxury I like to give myself. I’ve realized, though, that $10 a day adds up and I can save a lot by making my lunch at home and bringing it. There are other luxuries I can cut back on too, such as buying new clothes.

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In these hard economic times, lots of people are losing their jobs and it makes sense to save money, just in case. I’m hoping that the money I put in the bank this year will make me feel more secure.

**SAMPLE TASC TEST ORGANIZATION QUESTIONS**

1. Read this paragraph

The school board met to discuss the problem of underage drinking after high school football games. The problem has increased, they noted, since a 24-hour grocery store carrying beer has opened down the street from the football field. “Perhaps we can open a discussion with the store owners about the penalties for selling alcohol to minors,” John Fulton, the board president, stated.

Which sentence best concludes this paragraph

1. The board ultimately voted in favor of approaching the store in a friendly manner.
2. John Fulton runs a construction business.
3. Underage drinking is a national problem.
4. Underage drinking is far less of an issue at high school soccer games.
5. Read this paragraph

A lot of people don’t realize it, but New York City can be a great place to raise a family. There are lots of parks and playgrounds for children and plenty of good schools. It’s easy for families of any income to get around on foot or using public transportation. Also, New York has an abundance of cultural opportunities, with countless museums, galleries, theaters and musical performances year-round.

Which sentence best concludes this paragraph

1. These opportunities give children a valuable introduction to the arts.
2. There are plenty of interesting things that adults can do in New York as well.
3. Families also face difficulties in New York, like high cost of living and small apartments.
4. However, some people don’t like living without cars, and that can be an inconvenience.

**ANSWERS to SAMPLE TASC TEST ORGANIZATION QUESTIONS**

1. Read this paragraph

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A lot of people don’t realize it, but New York City can be a great place to raise a family. There are lots of parks and playgrounds for children and plenty of good schools. It’s easy for families of any income to get around on foot or using public transportation. Also, New York has an abundance of cultural opportunities, with countless museums, galleries, theaters and musical performances year-round.

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1. **These opportunities give children a valuable introduction to the arts.**
2. There are plenty of interesting things that adults can do in New York as well.
3. Families also face difficulties in New York, like high cost of living and small apartments.
4. However, some people don’t like living without cars, and that can be an inconvenience.

**MINI-LESSON TWELVE: FIND THE RIGHT WORD: Signal Words**

Materials

* Quiz
* Handout on Signal Words
* Exercises
* Practice Test Questions with Signal Words

Steps:

1. Give the 3-minute quiz and review as a class.
2. Tell students that they are on the final question type: Find the right word questions. For these questions, they will be asked:

What is the BEST word to fill in the blank?

1. Generally these questions fall into two types: signal word questions and tone word questions. They will work on signal, or transition words, today. Say that these words are extremely important for college and career, as well as on the TASC. Learning these words and knowing how to use them correctly will give them a tremendous boost in life.
2. Discuss signal/transition words. Explain that they are like traffic signals. Brainstorm with students some traffic signals they have seen—what do they tell you to do? Similarly, transition or signal words give you a preview of what is coming. For instance, if you write “Therefore,” at the beginning of a sentence, what do they think is coming? If you write “However,” what might be coming? If you write “In addition,” what might be coming? And if you write, “For example,” what might be coming?
3. Write columns on the board:

Contrast or Disagreement………Cause and Effect……….Time and Sequence…..Examples. Have students brainstorm other words that might fit under these columns. Give out the “Signal Words” handout and review.

1. Tell students that now they will do some work with words for Time and Sequence. Give out the Banana Pizza text without transition words. Ask students to read the text and look for places where they might add words for Time and Sequence. Do they see any places where they might add one of them? Take suggestions from the class.
2. Tell students that now they will look at a paragraph about school uniforms, and think about where they could transition words. Give out the paragraph, read it out loud. Ask students what the “claim” is. What is the author arguing for? Once this is established, ask students to work in pairs to reread and underline the REASONS the author gives to support his/her claim, and the EXAMPLE or EVIDENCE given for each reason. Model the process by reading the second sentence: **Uniforms save time in the morning**. Point out that this is a *reason* to support the claim. Then read the third sentence: **Choosing an outfit can take time, but putting on a uniform is easy and fast.** Say that this is an example or further explanation of the reason.
3. Ask students, in pairs, to read the rest of the essay and identify which sentences give *reasons* and which sentences give *further explanation or examples*. After 5 minutes or so, bring the class together for a report back.
4. Ask students to take out their Signal Words charts and help you rewrite the first three sentences of the paragraph, adding in transition words. If the sentence gave a reason, they might want to look at words for sequence, so that readers know that is one reason among a number of reasons. If it is an explanation/example, they may want a signal word that shows an example is coming. Once you have rewritten the first three sentences on the board with transition words, have students work in pairs to add transition words to some of the other sentences they have identified as either REASONS or EXAMPLES, then write one sentence on the board. Review these with students.
5. Give out the text with transition words included. Emphasize that this is not the ONLY right way to do it—it’s just a further example.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY: Applying transition words and phrases in summary writing

1. Tell students that now they will work on a harder task. They are going to read two texts that take opposite views of video games and whether they make kids violent. After they read the texts, they will write summaries using transition words.
2. Give out the text entitled “Video Games Cause Real Life Violence.” Read it out loud with students once, then write the following questions on the board: What is the claim? What is ONE reason the writer gives to support the claim? What is ONE piece of evidence the writer gives to support the reason? Ask students to read the first two paragraphs, underline the places where they find the answers, then talk in pairs about how they would answer the questions.
3. Give out and draw the Argument Summary Frame on the board. Have students report back on the claim, the reason given, and the evidence/example.
4. Explain that you want students to PARAPHRASE, rather than copy out the text. Show how you would PARAPHRASE the claim.
5. Have students, in pairs, look at what they underlined in the text, turn their papers over, and tell the information to each other without relying on the text.
6. Ask for some report backs, and write some of the student paraphrases on the board. Which are the best paraphrases? Choose the best paraphrase and write it in the Frame.
7. Repeat the process with the next two paragraphs of the text, and then again with the *Video games have positive effects on players and their behavior*

Activity: Practice test questions

* 1. Give out the practice test questions, starting with the questions for “How to Make a Banana Pizza.” Have students work on them in pairs. Review as a class, using process of elimination to get to the right answer.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Meaning/Function** | **FANBOY example** | **DEPENDENT CLAUSE example** | **At the BEGINNING or MIDDLE of a sentence example** |
| Punctuation: | Comma before the FANBOY | Comma after the dependent clause when it comes at the beginning of the sentence | Comma after the signal/transition word |
| **TIME/SEQUENCE**: a sequence of events, actions, steps or ideas  First (ly), second(ly), third, next, then, after, finally, afterward, later, formerly |  | **BEFORE** I went to lunch**,** I spoke with him.  **AFTER** we discussed the issue**,** I went to lunch. | **First,** we discussed the topic; **afterward,** we went to lunch.  **First**, there is no reason to think we should leave, and **second,** and second, I don’t want to.  **Formerly,** she had been my employee**, but** then she took another position. |
| **ADDITION**: to introduce additional ideas or steps  And, also, in addition, likewise, as well as, another, too, moreover, furthermore | I don’t believe you are correct**, and** I believe my idea is better. | **As well as** forgetting his sweater**,** he left his metrocard at home. | **In addition,** consider the impact this step would have on employee morale.  **Another** reason not to lower salaries is employee morale; **likewise,** lowering salaries could result in more workers quitting. |
| **EXAMPLE**:  For example, such as, for instance, specifically |  |  | **For example,** lowering salaries might cause workers to search for other jobs.  **Lowering salaries,** for instance, might cause workers to look for other jobs. |
| **CONSEQUENCE or RESULT**  So, because, since, consequently, accordingly, as a result, therefore, thus, for this reason | She overslept**, so** she arrived late to class. | **Because** she overslept**,** she was late to class.  **Since** she overslept**,** she was late to class. | She overslept, and **consequently,** she was late to class.  **For this reason,** I believe that students do not need a dress code at school.  **Therefore,** I do not agree that we should institute a dress code. |
| **CONTRAST or DISAGREEMENT**  but, although, even though, in contrast, yet, nevertheless, however, on the other hand, while, whereas, instead, rather | I agree that some elderly drivers may not drive well**, but** I don’t think they need to retake the road test every year. | **Although** I agree that some elderly drivers don’t drive well**,** I don’t think they need to retake the road test every year.  **While** some elderly drivers don’t drive well**,** most are not a danger to the rest of us.  **Whereas** some elderly drivers don’t drive well, others are perfectly capable. | I agree that some elderly drivers don’t drive well; however, I don’t think they should retake the road test every year.  Some elderly drivers don’t drive well. **Nevertheless,** they shouldn’t have to retake the road test every year. |
| **RESTATEMENT** or **EXPLANATION**  That is, in fact, indeed, in other words |  |  | **In fact,** most elderly drivers don’t cause accidents. |
| **EMPHASIS** or **CLARIFICATION**  Even more, above all, more importantly, besides |  |  | **More importantly,** most elderly drivers don’t cause accidents. |
| **POSSIBILITY** (something that might or might not happen)  If, unless, whether, otherwise |  | **Unless** you stop doing that**,** you will fall asleep at the wheel.  **Whether** or not he likes it**,** he will have to do it.  If you want to succeed, work hard. | Learn to work hard; **otherwise,** you will never succeed. |

**HOW TO MAKE BANANA PIZZA**

**(exercise created by Patricia Albers, San Jose University)**

Some people love banana pizza. Yes, it sounds crazy. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, almost everyone who’s tried it is a fan. In fact, banana pizza is wildly popular in Sweden.

Here’s how to make it.

Dissolve a package of yeast and one teaspoon of sugar in 1 cup of warm water. Add 1⁄4 cup of canola oil and a dash of salt. Slowly stir in 31⁄2 cups of flour. A soft dough will form.

Pre-heat the oven to 450° F.

Transfer the dough to a floured surface and knead it until it becomes smooth and elastic. Put it in a bowl, cover, and set the bowl in a warm place. In about 45 minutes, it will double.

Press half the dough onto a greased 12” pizza pan. Now you must decide if you want to make a savory pizza or a sweet pizza.

For a savory pizza, spread the dough with tomato sauce. Add banana slices and top with curry powder. You may want to use other ingredients, smoked cheese and/or ham.

Alternatively, you can make a sweet pizza. Spread the dough with smooth peanut butter. Follow with banana slices and sprinkle with brown sugar. Top with crushed peanuts or, equally good, maple syrup.

Bake for about ten minutes. Finally, eat!

**UNIFORMS IN SCHOOL**

From Betterlesson.com

While some students would like to choose their own clothes, there are many reason why students in public school should wear a school uniform. Uniforms save time in the morning. Choosing an outfit can take time, but putting on a uniform is easy and fast. Uniforms are also less expensive than regular clothing. An outfit for a student can cost more than sixty dollars, and shoes or accessories can add cost. The uniforms sold at area stores cost thirty dollars or less. Uniforms would reduce the competition in dress among students. Some students might not be able to afford popular clothes and wearing uniforms would save those students from being embarrassed. It is clear that students enrolled in public school should be required to wear a school uniform.

**UNIFORMS IN SCHOOL with Signal/Transition Words**

From Betterlesson.com

While some students would like to choose their own clothes, there are many reason why students in public school should wear a school uniform. **First,** uniforms save time in the morning. Choosing an outfit can take time, but putting on a uniform is easy and fast. **In addition,** uniforms are also less expensive than regular clothing. An outfit for a student can cost more than sixty dollars, and shoes or accessories can add cost. **On the other hand**, the uniforms sold at area stores cost thirty dollars or less. **Furthermore,** uniforms would reduce the competition in dress among students. **Finally,** some students might not be able to afford popular clothes and wearing uniforms would save those students from being embarrassed. It is clear that students enrolled in public school should be required to wear a school uniform.

**VIDEO GAMES CAUSE REAL-LIFE VIOLENCE**

Simulating violence such as shooting guns and hand-to-hand combat in video games can cause real-life violent behavior. Video games often require players to simulate, or pretend to act out, violent actions, such as stabbing, shooting, or dismembering someone with an ax, sword, chainsaw, or other weapons. Game controllers are so sophisticated and the games are so realistic that simulating the violent acts actually helps players learn violent behaviors. A 2015 peer-reviewed study found "compelling evidence that the use of realistic video game controllers can maker players more aggressive."

Two teenagers in Tennessee who shot at passing cars and killed one driver told police they got the idea from playing Grand Theft Auto III. Bruce Bartholow, professor of psychology at the University of Missouri, spoke about the effects of simulating violence: "More than any other media, these [violent] video games encourage active participation in violence. From a psychological perspective, video games are excellent teaching tools because they reward players for engaging in certain types of behavior. Unfortunately, in many popular video games, the behavior is violence."

A Sep. 2014 peer-reviewed study found that first-person shooter games trained players to have better accuracy in shooting a gun outside the game, and made them more likely to aim for the head. Video games encourage and reward violent behavior. Violent video games reinforce fighting as a means of dealing with conflict because players get rewards in the game when they are violent. Studies suggest that when violence is rewarded in video games, players show more aggressive behavior compared to players of video games where violence is punished.

The rewards in video games make them different from other violent media such as movies and television shows, which do not reward viewers nor allow them to actively participate in violence. An analysis of 81 video games rated for teens ages 13 and up found that 73 games (90%) rewarded injuring other characters, and 56 games (69%) rewarded killing. People who played a video game that rewarded violence showed higher levels of aggressive behavior compared with people who played a version of the same game that was competitive but either did not include violence or punished violence.

**VIDEO GAMES HAVE POSITIVE EFFECTS ON PLAYERS**

**AND THEIR BEHAVIOR**

Studies have shown that violent video games can have a positive effect on kindness and "prosocial” behaviors. Research shows that playing violent video games can bring on a feeling of guilt that leads to increased prosocial behavior (positive actions that benefit others) in the real world. Another study published in *Computers in Human Behavior* discovered that youths exposed to violence in action games displayed more prosocial behavior and cooperation with others "possibly due to the team-oriented multiplayer options in many of these games."

In a 2013 peer-reviewed study published in PLOS ONE, "Three experiments failed to find a detrimental effect of violent video games on prosocial behavior [positive actions taken to benefit others], despite using contemporary and classic games."

Researchers have shown that playing video games also results in increased moral sensitivity. Violent video games allow players to release their stress and anger in the game, leading to less aggression in the real world. A peer-reviewed study published in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* found that children, especially boys, play video games as a way to manage their emotions: "61.9% of boys played to 'help me relax,' 47.8% because 'it helps me forget my problems,' and 45.4% because 'it helps me get my anger out."

Researchers also say higher game sales have been associated with lower crime rates. A peer-reviewed study in the *Journal of Adolescent Research* concluded that "Boys use games to experience fantasies of power and fame, to explore and master what they perceive as exciting and realistic environments (but distinct from real life), to work through angry feelings or relieve stress, and as social tools. The games serve as a substitute for rough-and-tumble play. **“**

**ProCon.org. (2015, September 23). Violent Video Games ProCon.org. Retrieved from** [**http://videogames.procon.org/**](http://videogames.procon.org/)

**SUMMARY FRAME with Transition Phrases**

**The article, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, states that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

**A significant reason is that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

**For example, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

**An additional reason the writer gives is that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

**For instance,**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

**How to Make Banana Pizza**

Some people love banana pizza. Yes, it sounds crazy. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, almost everyone who’s tried it is a fan. In fact, banana pizza is wildly popular in Sweden.

What’s the best word for the blank above?

1. However
2. Therefore
3. Because
4. Also

Here’s how to make it.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, dissolve a package of yeast and one teaspoon of sugar in 1 cup of warm water. Add 1⁄4 cup of canola oil and a dash of salt. Slowly stir in 31⁄2 cups of flour. A soft dough will form.

What’s the best word for the blank above?

1. Next
2. Then
3. First
4. Another

Meanwhile, pre-heat the oven to 450° F.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_transfer the dough to a floured surface and knead it until it becomes smooth and elastic. Put it in a bowl, cover, and set the bowl in a warm place. In about 45 minutes, it will double.

What’s the best word for the blank above?

1. Finally
2. Although
3. Unless
4. Then

Next, press half the dough onto a greased 12” pizza pan. Now you must decide if you want to make a savory pizza or a sweet pizza.

For a savory pizza, spread the dough with tomato sauce. Add banana slices and top with curry powder. You may want to use other ingredients, smoked cheese and/or ham, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

What’s the best word for the blank above?

1. Therefore
2. Due to
3. To illustrate
4. For example

Alternatively, you can make a sweet pizza. Spread the dough with smooth peanut butter. Follow with banana slices and sprinkle with brown sugar. Top with crushed peanuts or, equally good, maple syrup.

Bake for about ten minutes. Finally, eat!

**PRACTICE TEST QUESTIONS: WHAT IS THE BEST SIGNAL WORD?**

Question One

Read the paragraph, then answer the questions

1. For the most part, it was a very ordinary birthday celebration (2) \_\_\_\_\_ we have my favorite meal, lamb chops, my uncle made me his famous banana split for dessert. (3) Banana splits are best with two scoops of chocolate ice cream, in my opinion. (4) Normally, my uncle would get very excited watching me eat dessert and have me make wishes for the coming year. (5) However, as our spoons clinked around mounds of ice cream and banana, his mood turned sad and soft-spoken. (6) I knew the source of our tension: today was my eighteenth birthday and next month I’d be at boot camp.

A. Should any additional words be added to the end of sentence 1?

1. No, do not add any additional words.
2. Add the phrase “just like always.”
3. Add the phrase “with nothing abnormal.”
4. Add the phrase “and traditional.”

B. Which word would most logically begin Sentence 2?

1. After
2. Such as
3. For example

C. Is the colon in Sentence 6 correct?

1. Yes, do not change it.
2. No punctuation is necessary.
3. Replace it with a semi-colon
4. No, replace it with a comma.

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS FOR MINI-LESSON TWELVE**

**How to Make Banana Pizza**

Some people love banana pizza. Yes, it sounds crazy. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, almost everyone who’s tried it is a fan. In fact, banana pizza is wildly popular in Sweden.

What’s the best word for the blank above?

1. **However**
2. Therefore
3. Because
4. Also

Here’s how to make it.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, dissolve a package of yeast and one teaspoon of sugar in 1 cup of warm water. Add 1⁄4 cup of canola oil and a dash of salt. Slowly stir in 31⁄2 cups of flour. A soft dough will form.

What’s the best word for the blank above?

1. Next
2. Then
3. **First**
4. Another

Meanwhile, pre-heat the oven to 450° F.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_transfer the dough to a floured surface and knead it until it becomes smooth and elastic. Put it in a bowl, cover, and set the bowl in a warm place. In about 45 minutes, it will double.

What’s the best word for the blank above?

1. Finally
2. Although
3. Unless
4. **Then**

Next, press half the dough onto a greased 12” pizza pan. Now you must decide if you want to make a savory pizza or a sweet pizza.

For a savory pizza, spread the dough with tomato sauce. Add banana slices and top with curry powder. You may want to use other ingredients, smoked cheese and/or ham, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

What’s the best word for the blank above?

1. Therefore
2. Due to
3. To illustrate
4. **For example**

Alternatively, you can make a sweet pizza. Spread the dough with smooth peanut butter. Follow with banana slices and sprinkle with brown sugar. Top with crushed peanuts or, equally good, maple syrup.

Bake for about ten minutes. Finally, eat!

**MINI-LESSON THIRTEEN: FIND THE RIGHT WORD: TONE**

Materials

* Quiz (attached separately)
* Short handout on Tone—see below
* Handout: Other Ways to Say…--see below
* Practice Test questions—see below

Steps:

1. Tell students that there are two other types of “Find the Right Word” questions. One usually asks “Which maintains a formal, objective tone?”
2. Ask students, “what do we mean by ‘formal’?” What do we mean by ‘objective’?” What does “maintain” mean?”
3. Once you have working definitions, give out the handout. Ask students to look it over. Work as a class to create short bullet points for “informal” and “formal, objective” writing.
4. Write these two sentences on the board. Tell them the sentences are from a student essay on using human tissue.

Sentence A: Selling people’s tissues is totally wrong because makes the family feel super worried and stressed out.

Sentence B: The sale or resale of human tissue is dehumanizing and exacts a psychological toll on the patient or the patient’s family.

1. Which one seems to be formal and objective? Which one is informal? Use the bullet points on the board to point out the characteristics of each.
2. Repeat the process with these two sentences:

Sentence A: Profits and personal gain should not take precedence over an individual’s right to privacy, especially in relation to the unique genetic makeup of one’s own body.

Sentence B: I don’t think it’s fair at all for profits to be more important than somebody’s private life, because, I mean, come on, this is theirbody!

1. Tell students, “OK, now let’s try some practice test questions.”

**EXAMPLE QUESTION ONE**

(from a description of the Brown v. Topeka Supreme Court case)

In the mid-1950s, the NAACP challenged school segregation in a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of court cases.

In the sentence above, choose a word to fill in the blank that ***best*** maintains the formal, objective tone of the passage?

1. bunch
2. group
3. series
4. lot

**EXAMPLE QUESTION TWO**

(from *The Lesson* by Toni Cade Bambara)

Back in the days when everyone was old and stupid or young and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Sugar and I were the only ones who had any sense.

In the sentence above, choose a word to fill in the blank that ***best*** maintains the tone of the passage.

1. unintelligent
2. foolish
3. imprudent
4. Tell students that there are also questions that will ask them to choose the word that best fits the mood or tone of the sentence. Sometimes the choice is between formal and informal, but sometimes it is more about being able to describe accurately.
5. Talk about the fact that in English, there are different words that mean basically the same thing, but some are much more precise than others. To be a good writer, you have to be able to use precise words. Write some words that people use a lot: good, bad, happy, nice. Write the word “Happy” on the board, and ask students to brainstorm other words for “happy.” If they can’t, start them off with a few: cheerful, glad, delighted. Then add some: content, pleased, joyful, thrilled, ecstatic. These words all mean the same thing, but there are subtle differences. For instance, how is “pleased” different from “thrilled” or “ecstatic?” Explain that these more precise words can really help improve their writing. They are also tested on the TASC. Work with students to create a continuum for the “happy” column, with weaker/more neutral words at the beginning, and stronger words at the end.
6. Give out the handout “Other Ways to Say…” and have students look it over in pairs. Assign each pair one column (for instance, “Good,”Sad,” etc.) and have them look at it together and find any words they are unsure of the meanings of. Then have all groups report back, and write the words students are unsure of on the board. Either have the class work together to refine the word meanings, or if you think it helpful, have students look up the words online and explain to the class.
7. Divide the class into groups: Said, Laughed, Looked, Walked and Ran. Have each group decide which words are more “neutral” and which words are more “emotional.” Give each group time to confer and look up the words they don’t know online, then each group should present their words to the rest of the class. They have three tasks: (1) make sure they clearly understand the meaning of each word. (2) identify the words that are more neutral and those are more emotional. (3) discuss the best way to act out three of the emotional words. (4) For those three words, think of a situation in which they would feel or act that way.
8. Write the following sentences on the board:

She \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ loudly that she would no longer do her brother’s homework.

He \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with laughed when he saw her in her Halloween costume.

He \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ at the joke, then fell silent.

The ants \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ along single file.

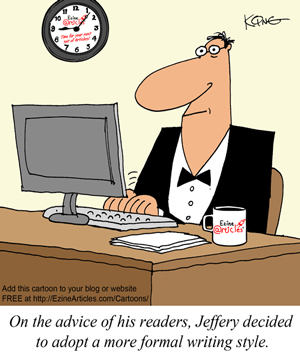
He \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ up to the podium to accept his award.

He \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to the refrigerator to get a cupcake.

As a class, discuss which word would go in each blank and what the BEST word would be.

1. For homework, students should write sentences in which they use five of the words they presented appropriately in a sentence.

## **Formal vs. Informal Writing Styles**

**Who’s Your Audience?**

Before you start writing any article, one of the first things you need to ask yourself is “Who’s my audience?”

Here’s a quick primer to help you answer that question (which can be quite a complicated one):

1. Is there a level of familiarity between you and your audience?
2. Are you writing for colleagues or someone else?
3. Is it for their business/livelihood?

Answering each of these questions will put you on course to figuring out how formal (or informal) your writing ought to be.

An informal writing style shows a level of familiarity and personality that sets it apart. Meanwhile, formal writing most often takes place on serious topics in a direct and succinct way.

Each of these styles has their own merits. Their usage depends on the tone you’re trying to set. To get a better understanding of the differences between formal and informal writing, here are some things to consider:

**Informal**

* **Colloquial** – Informal writing takes on the characteristics of a spoken conversation. Informal writing includes things like slang, figures of speech, broken syntax, etc. It also takes on a personal tone whereby you speak directly to your audience. You can use first OR third person point-of-view, and you’re likely to address the reader using second person pronouns (e.g. you, your).
* **Simple** – Short sentences are acceptable and sometimes essential to making a point in informal writing. Thus, there may be incomplete sentences or ellipsis to make points. Also, try to save your “five dollar words” for a more formal setting. If you use any industry jargon, explain it.
* **Contractions/Abbreviations** – Words can be simplified using contractions (e.g. you’re, couldn’t, it’s) and abbreviations (e.g. TV, photos) whenever possible.
* **Empathy/Emotion** – The author can show empathy toward the reader regarding the complexity of a thought and help them through that complexity.

**Formal**

* **Complex** – Longer sentences are likely to be more prevalent in formal writing. You need to be as thorough as possible with your approach to each topic when you are using a formal style. Each main point needs to be introduced, elaborated on and concluded.
* **Objective** – State main points confidently and offer full support arguments. A formal writing style shows a limited range of emotions. It avoids emotive punctuation like exclamation points, ellipsis, etc., unless they are being cited from another source.
* **Full Words** – No contractions or abbreviations to simplify words.
* **Third Person** – Not a personal writing style, the formal writer is sort of disconnected from the topic to make observations.

So, which of these labels fits your writing style? Again, there’s no “right” or “wrong” answer, it’s an exercise to get you thinking about your own writing style.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Other Ways to Say…..** | | | | |
| **nice** | **good** | **happy** | **sad** | **scared** |
| enjoyable | excellent | cheerful | depressed | afraid |
| pleasurable | amazing | delighted | gloomy | frightened |
| thoughtful | wonderful | pleased | miserable | spooked |
| courteous | pleasant | glad | dejected | horrified |
| lovely | marvelous | thrilled | miserable | startled |
| likeable | exceptional | joyful | cheerless | fearful |
| pleasing | fantastic | ecstatic | forlorn | petrified |
| gracious | super | jovial | sorrowful | anxious |
| congenial | outstanding | amused | upset | aghast |
| cordial | terrific | merry | downcast | alarmed |
| admirable | splendid | elated | tearful | terrified |
| considerate | stupendous | content | somber | shaken |
| **said** | **laughed** | **looked** | **walked** | **ran** |
| commented | giggled | gazed | strolled | bolted |
| replied | chuckled | examined | sauntered | sped |
| remarked | roared | glanced | swaggered | scurried |
| declared | howled | viewed | marched | sprinted |
| stated | snickered | observed | strutted | rushed |
| exclaimed | guffawed | peeked | glided | galloped |
| shouted | grinned | stared | shuffled | hustled |
| whispered | cackled | watched | crept | skipped |
| announced | chortled | inspected | trudged | raced |
| responded | bellowed | studied | paraded | dashed |
| explained | shrieked | noticed | ambled | fled |
|  |  |  |  |  |

**EXAMPLE QUESTION ONE**

(from a description of the Brown v. Topeka Supreme Court case)

In the mid-1950s, the NAACP challenged school segregation in a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of court cases.

In the sentence above, choose a word to fill in the blank that ***best*** maintains the formal, objective tone of the passage?

1. bunch
2. group
3. **series**
4. lot

**EXAMPLE QUESTION TWO**

(from *The Lesson* by Toni Cade Bambara)

Back in the days when everyone was old and stupid or young and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Sugar and I were the only ones who had any sense.

In the sentence above, choose a word to fill in the blank that ***best*** maintains the tone of the passage.

1. unintelligent
2. **foolish**
3. imprudent