

# Writing Skills for Today

Level B

Sample

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# Writing Skills Mastery

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent:** Below is a list of each unit's objectives. As your student completes an assignment, indicate whether each objective has been met. If your student needs more experience with an objective, revisit this assignment or skill before proceeding to the next *Writing Skills for Today* level.

	Skill Mastered	Needs Experience
Unit 1: Writing an Outstanding Sentence Skill Area: Basic Writing		
1. Decide what information to give the reader.		
2. Organize this information for your reader.		
3. Write a sentence containing the information in that order.		
Unit 2: Connections Skill Area: Organization		
1. Ideas in sentences can be connected.		
2. You can make ideas in your writing flow from one point to another.		
Unit 3: The Main Points Skill Area: Organization		
1. Recognize the main points in a story.		
2. List the main points in your summary of a story.		

	Skill Mastered	Needs Experience
Unit 4: I Feel Skill Area: Description		
1. Decide how you felt about something that happened to you.		
2. Understand that it is possible to explain how you felt about an event.		
3. Describe how you felt about an event.		
Unit 5: My Mistake Skill Area: Organization		
1. Admit that you did something that was a mistake.		
2. Analyze what you did.		
3. Recognize the action that caused the mistake.		
Unit 6: What the Narrative Voice Tells the Reader Skill Area: Creativity		
1. Writers create voices which speak to their readers.		
2. All the voices writers use do not work the same way.		
3. When you write, you must choose a voice to talk to your reader.		

	Skill Mastered	Needs Experience
Unit 7: Changing Tenses Skill Area: Basic Writing		
1. Understand how past tense works.		
2. Understand how a change from past to present tense in a story changes the story.		
3. Change past tense to present tense in a story.		
Unit 8: Paragraphs Skill Area: Basic Writing		
1. Organize a group of ideas.		
2. Write a sentence that introduces a group of ideas.		
3. Construct a paragraph based on a group of ideas.		
Unit 9: My Home, Part 1 Skill Area: Description		
1. Understand the layout of a building.		
2. Show relationships of spaces in floor plans.		
3. Use a bird's-eye view.		
4. Create a drawing from what you see.		
Unit 10: My Home, Part 2 Skill Area: Description		
1. Understand the structure of description.		
2. Describe a building starting with general statements.		
3. Support general statements with detail.		
4. Turn graphic representations into verbal descriptions (drawings into words).		

	Skill Mastered	Needs Experience
Unit 11: Describing a Thought Problem Skill Area: Organization		
1. Picture a situation in your mind which would be a problem.		
2. Describe what such an imaginary situation would be like.		
3. Solve a thought problem.		
Unit 12: Person Skill Area: Basic Writing		
1. Use first person.		
2. Avoid careless use of second person.		
3. Use third person.		
4. Control the use of person in your writing.		
Unit 13: Past, Present, and Future Skill Area: Basic Writing		
1. Past tense		
2. Present tense		
3. Future tense		
Unit 14: Things Change Skill Area: Description		
1. Learn that things do change.		
2. Descriptions of changes can be organized.		
3. You can describe changes so they are easy to understand.		

	Skill Mastered	Needs Experience
Unit 15: From Where I Was Skill Area: Creativity		
1. Characters in fiction must be in specific places.		
2. Location (place) determines what characters can experience.		
3. You can control the position of your first-person narrative voice characters.		
Units 16 and 17: Attitude in Description Skill Area: Description		
1. Authors give attitudes to their narrative voices.		
2. You can give your reader feelings by the attitudes you give your first-person characters.		
Unit 18: The Long and Short of It Skill Area: Creativity		
1. Sentence length is important.		
2. You can control the length of your sentences to help your reader appreciate and understand what you have to say.		



## Prewriting

Before you begin this lesson, read “Writing Guidelines” on the previous page.

Review the objectives to the right. These three things are what you should learn with this exercise.

I will work through this process of sentence writing to show you how easy it is, and then you will do the same thing. When you are finished, you will be able to say, “Writing really good sentences is easy.”

There are only three steps:

1. Pick a subject and list the information you want to give to your reader.
2. Organize this information in the best way for your reader to understand it.
3. Write a sentence containing that information in that order.

### Step 1: Pick subject of sentence and list pieces of information

First, I have to decide what I want my reader to know. This could be anything. I will show you how easy this first step is by listing some possibilities.

1. Dog, my dog (Dog really is her name)
2. What I like to eat best
3. Which coat is best for me
4. How graceful Great Blue Herons are
5. My fall

As you can see, it does not make any difference what I want to talk about. The process is the same for all subjects. And this process is SIMPLE.

I will pick 5, My fall. Now that I have the subject of my sentence, I have to decide what I want my reader to know **about** that subject. In this case, I have to decide what parts of my falling I want my reader to understand.

This is what happened:

*After we had finished eating Thanksgiving dinner at my aunt's house, I said I would help clear the table. The women there said that I should not, that they would do it. I said, “I am really very good at this, and I have had lots of practice.” I put all the plates into one pile in front of me. When I picked up this pile, I caught the edge of the tablecloth with my hand and pulled it behind me when*

## Objectives:

- ❶ Decide what information to give the reader.
- ❷ Organize this information for your reader.
- ❸ Write a sentence containing the information in that order.

**Note to the parent:** For the lessons this year, sit with the student, read the lesson together, and discuss anything that is not clear.

*I turned toward the kitchen. Of course, all the glasses came with it. The weight of pulling all the things off the table made me lose my balance, and I started to fall. To save myself, I threw the pile of plates I was carrying forward, but that did not help, and I fell into a great pile of food and broken dishes. I was so embarrassed I could have hidden for a month.*

This information is too much detail for one sentence, so I will list the pieces of information I can give in one sentence, like this:

- Helped clear the table
- Pulled off the tablecloth
- Dropped plates
- Fell into mess
- Was embarrassed

### **Step 2: Organize information to make it easy to understand**

I can move these ideas around in my sentence. The first thing I want my reader to know is that I was really embarrassed. So, I will start my sentence with *was embarrassed*. Since I should tell my readers **when** I was embarrassed, next I will use *helped clear the table*.

The rest of the information can be in the order in which it happened. This will give my reader the information in this order:

1. Was embarrassed
2. Helped clear the table
3. Pulled off the tablecloth
4. Dropped dishes
5. Fell into mess

### **Step 3: Write the sentence**

All I have to do now is construct a sentence with this information in this order.

*I was really embarrassed when I helped clear the table because I caught the edge of the tablecloth, pulled it and the glasses with it, dropped the dishes I was carrying, and fell into the center of a great pile of food and dishes.*





Now it is your turn to write a complete sentence.

1. Pick the subject of your sentence, and list what information you want to give to your reader.
2. Organize this information to make it easy for your reader to understand it.
3. Write the sentence containing this information in that order.

**Step 1:** Write the subject of your sentence and the information you want to give to your reader:

(Subject) \_\_\_\_\_

(Information) \_\_\_\_\_

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**Step 2:** List by number the pieces of information you have written for step 1.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Reorder this list to give your reader the information in the most interesting or understandable way.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

Ask your parent to read your ideas and lists. She will see and discuss with you many positives: your brilliant ideas, your efforts, your organization, your clear wording. Then she will ask you questions and give you ideas about how to tell even more details that will make your work clearer and more enjoyable. Immediately, using your pencil or computer, fill in whatever you think will make your writing better. Continue to follow this procedure all year as you are writing each first draft.

Sample



To show how tenses work, I want to use a familiar story that has a character we all know: the wolf in the “Three Little Pigs.” This wolf is not very bright. He tries to get at the pigs by blowing on their houses.

In most versions of this story, the narrative voice does not show the wolf thinking at all. But, that wolf must have some idea about what is going on. In a moment, I will show you what is going on in the wolf’s mind.

You should be aware that characters think in all tenses. This is what it looks like when a character thinks in **past tense**:

*Late in the afternoon, when the pains of hunger drove the wolf to seek his dinner, he saw three small houses in the valley. He thought, Those three little houses that I saw yesterday were just like these and they were made by pigs. Maybe those pigs built houses that were not strong.*

This is what it looks like when a character thinks in **present tense**:

*The wolf saw smoke coming from the chimney of the first house. He thought, This house appears to be made of straw, and I am standing out here and that pig is sitting in there, and we are both thinking about dinner!*

This is what it looks like when a character thinks in **future tense**:

*The wolf began to drool, which made it hard for him to blow very hard. But he did manage to take in a great lungful of air. As he did this, he thought, I will have to keep my eyes peeled for that little porker. When this house goes, my dinner sure will be running for safety.*

## Writing

For practice, write some of the wolf’s thoughts in **past tense**. (Use the sentence that starts below.)

*As the walls of the straw house began to lean away from the wolf, and the roof began to lift, the wolf thought,*

### Objectives:

- ❶ Past tense
- ❷ Present tense
- ❸ Future tense

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Write the wolf's thoughts in **present tense**:

*The wolf's hay fever got the best of him and he began to sneeze just as the house began to fall. When he took in a large breath, the house leaned toward him, and when he sneezed, it leaned away. He had to hold his nose to keep the straw dust out of it. He thought,*

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Write the wolf's thoughts in **future tense**:

*When the straw house finally fell in and the dust cleared, the wolf stepped into the rubble looking for his ham dinner. The pig was not there! Wiping the tears from his eyes, he thought,*

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Ask your parent to select a short story for you that is written in past tense for your next lesson. You will work with a number of pages in the story from a point selected by your parent.

Story Name \_\_\_\_\_

Pages you will work with: \_\_\_\_\_

