

A Companion Workbook to Lucile Vaughan Payne's

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The Lively Art of  
**Writing**

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# 1 What is an Essay?

## Summary

Pick a subject; examine everything you know about it, arrive at an honest opinion. That probably sounds easy. It isn't. But it represents at least half the work involved in writing an essay. And most of it you can do without touching a pencil. The first axiom of the essayist could hardly be made clearer: Think before you write.

In other words, never sit down to write until you have thought long enough and hard enough about one subject to have an opinion about it—an opinion that you believe in and want to share, one that you can defend logically and honestly. Most writing skills are relatively easy to learn, but it is pointless to learn them—in fact, you will find it almost impossible to learn them—unless you have learned the first rule, the unbreakable rule, of essay writing:

Opinions always come first.

And of course it comes first because, as soon as you have an opinion, you have something to say. That's the important thing: have something to say. Then you can learn how to say it. The skills come easily when you have a purpose for learning them. Have something to say—and if you really want to be heard, nothing can stop you from learning how to say it well.

## 1.1 Questions

1. What is the difference between opinion and fact?

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2. How important are facts in an essay?

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3. Is one opinion as good as another? Explain your answer.

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NAME:

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4. Assuming that the writer has an adequate background in his subject would American foreign policy be a good general subject for an essay? Why or why not?
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5. The titles below are grouped around particular subjects. Which title in each group would make the best essay topic? Why?

- A. Sewing as a Hobby
- B. Clothes You Make Yourself
- C. Sewing is Suddenly "In"
- D. How to Make a Pleated Skirt

- E. Cars for Teen-Agers
- F. Driver-Training Programs Cost Too Much
- G. Cell Phones
- H. Styling on the Latest Sports Models

- I. *Moby Dick*
- J. The Symbolism in *Moby Dick*
- K. The Character of Ahab in *Moby Dick*
- L. *Moby Dick*, America's Greatest Novel

- M. Why Should Students Study Literature?
- N. High Points in American Literature
- O. Literature in Relation to History
- P. Most Students Can't Read

- Q. The 4H Junior Leaders is Outmoded
- R. Youth Organizations
- S. The Fair Board is very important
- T. Your 4H Club

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6. What is the chief difference between a typical term paper and an essay?

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7. What is the weakness in each of the following essay topics?

a. Edison Invented the Electric-Light Bulb

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b. Teachers Should Explain Things Clearly

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c. Science Has Influenced Modern Life

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d. Safe Driving Should Be Encouraged

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e. The Responsibilities of Students

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## 1.2 Assignments

1. Write a one-sentence opinion based on each of the subjects below:  
laughter:

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art

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fear

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apples

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NAME:

DATE:

grades

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fashions

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college football

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pets

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shoes

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2. Choose one of your opinions, and list at least three facts that will support it.

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3. Write a one-sentence opinion that is exactly the opposite to yours, and list three facts that will support it. (You may not agree with the opinion, but you must use convincing facts.)

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4. Write at least two paragraphs using *all* the material you have written for #2 and #3 (the two opinions and both sets of facts.) You must reword the material to suit your purpose, but be sure to use all of it in some way, relating the paragraphs clearly so that the reader will understand why you favor one opinion instead of the other.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There is no handwriting or other markings on the paper.

## 1.3 Vocabulary

1. Look up the following words in a dictionary.  
Find a synonym and an antonym for each word.

<i>Word</i>	<i>Synonym</i>	<i>Antonym</i>
adequate		
altercation		
antagonism		
apathy		
platitude		
valid		

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2. In your opinion, what is the meaning of the term “value judgment”? Use a specific example to illustrate.

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3. In the chapter you have just read the following two phrases appear: “the odor of mendacity” and “Scylla of dullness and the Charybdis of mendacity.” Look up the meanings of *mendacity*, *Scylla* and *Charybdis*.

Find the text sentences containing these phrases and copy the complete sentences. Then, in your own words, explain exactly what the sentences mean.

<i>Word</i>	<i>Meaning</i>
mendacity	
Scylla	
Charybdis	
the odor of mendacity	
the Scylla of dullness and the Charybdis of mendacity	

## 2 From Opinion to Thesis

### Summary

Every essay is an opinion, but not every opinion is a good essay topic. It is a good topic only if it can be boiled down to one arguable statement about one major point. This statement is called a thesis, and you arrive at it by a process of thinking that has five steps: first, by taking inventory of your information; second, by asking yourself general questions, or “wondering” about your material; third, by relating it to your general information and experience; fourth, by asking the yes-or-no question; fifth, by qualifying your answer to this question.

That qualified answer is your thesis. You know now precisely what it is you want to say—and that is the first long step in the path toward better writing.

### 2.1 Questions

1. What is the difference between opinion and thesis?

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2. What is the five-step process for narrowing a general subject to a thesis?

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3. What is the value of the yes-or-no question?

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4. Why is qualification of a thesis important?

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## 2.2 Assignments

At the top of a sheet of paper, write the name of some subject in which you are now enrolled. Then do the following:

1. Write at least five statements of fact about it.

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2. Write at least two yes-or-no questions that occur to you in relation to these facts.

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3. Write a thesis based on one of the questions.

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4. Write an antithesis. (If your antithesis is not valid, write a new thesis. Keep trying until you are sure that both thesis and antithesis can be defended.)

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5. Give at least one reason (or one piece of evidence) supporting your antithesis.

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6. Give at least two reasons (or pieces of evidence) supporting your thesis.

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7. Write a paragraph based on your thesis (#3). Include in this paragraph the point supporting the antithesis (#5) and both the points supporting your thesis (#6). Bear in mind that your purpose is to persuade a reader to agree with your thesis. Organize your paragraph in the way that seems to be best for this purpose.

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## 2.3 Vocabulary

1. Find a synonym to use in place of each of the italicized words in the sentences below.

Rewrite the sentences if necessary.

- a. Everything he had to say on the subject was the *antithesis* of all I believed.

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- b. He is so *arbitrary* in his judgments that it is impossible to reason with him.

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- c. Nobody believes that point is *arguable*.

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- d. He was a small, meek-looking man, but he was a *formidable* opponent in a debate.

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- e. His *impassioned* plea fell on deaf ears.

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- f. He was an *indulgent* grandfather.

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- g. Nobody ever had a more *unpromising* start in business.

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2. The words “principle” and “principal” are often confused because they sound alike although they are spelled differently and have different meanings. Sometimes the only way to master such words is to invent some private trick—a rhyme, a joke, any kind of nonsense that will help you remember their difference. It doesn't matter how silly it seems, if it works. One student, for example, wrote “I can remember that “principle” means rule because it ends like disciple” which reminds me of the Golden Rule.” It worked for him. What works for you? Write two or three sentences explaining how you keep these words and their spelling (and meaning) clear in your own mind. If you don't already have a trick of your own, make one up.

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3. Write a sentence or two defining “status symbol” and giving a specific example of some kind of status symbol that a student might use. (Don't use an automobile as your example. Make it a status symbol that the student could wear or carry with him.)

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## 3 The Full and Final Thesis

### Summary

The full and final thesis is the thesis plus a list of the points that can be made against it and a longer list of the points in its favor. These *con* and *pro* points, listed separately for easy reference under the thesis, provide an organization chart for your entire essay. You should keep your full thesis statement on a separate card that is in full view all the time that you are writing. Use it, not as a rigid outline, but as a guide and a reminder. It will check your tendency to wander off course and will keep you constantly aware of the points you need to make.

The full thesis is a most remarkable and valuable device. Prepare it carefully, refer to it often, use it wisely. It will serve you well as you go more deeply into the structure of essays.

### 3.1 Questions

1. What are the three elements of a full thesis?

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2. Explain the relationship of the full thesis to the psychology of argument.

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3. Why should the full thesis statement be kept in view when you are writing an essay?

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4. How strictly should you follow the full thesis when you write your essay?

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## 3.2 Assignments

1. Below are several thesis statements. Write a full thesis for each, using the form on page 37.
  - a. The search for status generally leads to self-improvement.
  - b. The search for status can limit personal growth.
  - c. Standardized tests are important for college admission.
  - d. Standardized tests are unnecessary.
  - e. Competition is healthy.
  - f. Competition is unhealthy..

### Form of the Full Thesis (from page 37)

*online classes used as an example*

Thesis A: Online classes are useful for home school students.

Con	Pro
Can't see classmates	Class not limited by location
Might misunderstand body language.	Wide range of choices
Internet down interrupts class	Most instructors highly qualified
Maybe less contact with Instructor	Flexible scheduling

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OR

Thesis B: Online classes weaken education

Con	Pro
Traditional friendships can't form	Live classes = conversation
Local teachers overlooked	Live teacher more engaging
Cheating is possible	Students work harder for live teacher.

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Thesis:

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Con	

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Thesis:

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Con	

(Use a separate sheet of paper for the rest)

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2. Using your full thesis statement as a guide, write an essay of at least five paragraphs on one of the topics above. You must work into your essay *all* the material suggested by your full thesis. Develop and arrange your paragraphs in any way that seems effective, bearing in mind that your purpose is to persuade the reader to agree with your thesis.  
(Use a separate sheet of paper)

NOTE: Hold on to this assignment. You will use it again later.

### 3.3 Vocabulary

1. Find synonyms for each of the following words.

<i>Word</i>	<i>Synonym</i>
adolescent	
belligerent	
flourish (n.)	
incoherent	
modify	
propound	

<i>Word</i>	<i>Synonym</i>
analogy	
concede	
groveling	
irrelevancy	
preamble	
relevance	

2. Use each of the synonyms you have found for the listed words in a complete sentence. Each sentence must relate in some way to the problems of essay writing. Be as informal as you please—complain if you feel like it. But use the synonym, and be sure that your sentence bears some relation to essay writing. For example, you might write something like this, using “youthful” (the synonym for one of the words above):

*It is a cruel and inhuman thing to curb my youthful spirit by forcing me to use logic in order to find a thesis.*

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NAME:

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[illegible]

## 4 Structure

### Summary

Think of your essay as a structure, as something that you actually build according to a definite architectural pattern. You will find it far easier to say what you want to say when you have a sense of structure, for it imposes on your thoughts the discipline of logic, which in turn develops your ability to organize and to make relationships.

Every essay has three major parts: an introduction that states the thesis and that can be seen structurally as a triangle resting on one point; a middle section, structurally a large block made up of several smaller blocks or argument; and a conclusion, another triangle resting on a broad-based generalization related to the rest of the essay. Whether an essay is long or short it will have this structure, and you can learn specific techniques for writing each of the three major structural parts and relating them to one another.

Once you have mastered this structure you are ready for the really exciting part of writing: the study of style. That begins in the next chapter. Most of the writing you have done so far has simply familiarized you with your instrument. Soon you will discover what kind of music it can make. But be sure you know your instrument first. Stay with structure until you understand it thoroughly.

### 4.1 Questions, Part 1 (page 47)

1. What is the function of the introductory paragraph?

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2. “The introductory paragraph can be described as a triangle resting on one point.” Explain.

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3. What is the psychological principle behind the practice of opening an introductory paragraph with a broad, noncontroversial statement?

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4. What is the rule of thumb for writing the first sentence of the introduction?

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5. Explain the meaning of the statement that “the sequential logic—from buggy race to hotrod race—is obvious.”

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6. Why do students tend to use “bombshell” opening sentences? Why are such sentences nearly always failures?

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NAME:

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7. The author suggests that mastery of structure makes it possible for you to express yourself more freely. Explain how this theory might be applied to one of the following activities: dancing, gymnastics, painting, automobile design, dress design.

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## 4.2 Assignments, Part 1 (page 47)

1. Write four different opening sentences for the introductory paragraph you wrote for your last essay assignment (pages 39–40), using the structural pattern described in this section.

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2. Write the entire introductory paragraph, beginning with one of the opening sentences in #1.

[illegible]

3. Write an introductory paragraph ending with one of the theses below:
  - a. Reality TV is more than a fad.
  - b. Today's student tends to be a conformist.
  - c. The chief purpose of higher education is to teach students to think for themselves.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

NOTE: You will need this introductory paragraph for your next two assignments. Hang on to it.

## 4.3 Questions, Part 2 (page 53)

1. "The real power of your essay resides in the middle section." Explain.

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2. How does the full thesis help you in preparing the middle section?

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3. Describe the method of handling opposition in both long and short essays.

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4. What point should you make last in your argument? Why?

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## 4.4 Assignments, Part 2 (page 53)

Write a middle section to follow the introduction you wrote for assignment 3 (page 47). Use the illustration for either the short or long essay (figures 4 and 5) as a guide.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

NOTE: Hold on to this assignment. You will need it later.

## 4.5 Questions, Part 3 (page 58)

1. Since the middle section of an essay covers all the points in the full thesis, why does an essay need a concluding paragraph?

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2. How does the introduction help you write a conclusion?

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3. Why is it likely that you will need to rewrite your introduction before writing a conclusion?

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4. Describe the structure of a conclusion.

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5. "Every time you pick up a significant word or phrase from preceding paragraphs and work it into your conclusion, you create echoes in the reader's mind." Explain this statement.

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6. How can you summarize without listing?

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7. Explain what is meant by “broadening” you concluding paragraph to its final sentence.

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## 4.6 Assignments, Part III (page 58)

1. Look again at the introduction and middle section that you wrote for Assignments 3 and 4. Rewrite your introduction. Then write a concluding paragraph.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on its right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

NAME:

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2. Write a complete essay on one of the following subjects:

cats      basketball      careers      dogs      football      college      horses  
track      money problems      (Use a separate sheet of paper)

## 4.7 Vocabulary

1. Using your dictionary, write a definition for each of the following words:

argument	
disconsolate	
intolerably	
irresolutely	
lamentable	
obsessive	
repetitive	
sequential	
tendency	
close-up	
pan shot	

2. Each of the words above is used here in a complete sentence followed by part of another sentence. Finish each of the incomplete sentences so that it *explains* or *illustrates* the first sentence.

a. Most people think of an argument as a quarrel. In an essay, however, an argument

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b. She was disconsolate. She

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c. The man was intolerably rude. He

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- d. The boy stood irresolutely at the door. He could not decide whether to

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- e. Her wardrobe was in lamentable condition. Everything she owned

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- f. The man showed obsessive concern for his health in many ways. He

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- g. He made some good points, but he was repetitive. I got tired of

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- h. The problems were arranged in sequential order, according to their difficulty. The most difficult problem

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- i. She has a tendency to be overcritical. She seems to feel that

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- j. The close-up scenes were particularly effective. One shot concentrated on the old man's hands, and you could see

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- k. Films often open with a wide pan shot. In a western movie, for example, the camera usually sets the scene by

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## 5 First Steps Towards Style

### Summary

The “two commandments” represent way stations on the road to style. You have not yet finished with structure, but from this point forward structure and style begin to merge. So you need to arm yourself now with the two commandments; they can give you immeasurable help in the writing that lies ahead. *Get rid of “there.” Get rid of the first person.* Learn to do without them now in your writing, and when they are returned to you—as they will be—you will be able to handle them with grace and skill.

The exercises that follow will help you establish the habit of writing in third person without the help of “there.” Then you will be ready to practice your new discipline in the paragraph, which comes next.

### 5.1 Questions

1. In what way is style in writing similar to style in any kind of activity?

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2. Why is it important to learn what *not* to do in writing? Give an example of the value of this rule in some other field (golfing, bowling, swimming, acting, singing, etc.)

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3. Name the two rules that you are to observe in your writing until further notice.

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NAME:

DATE:

4. Why does the use of the personal pronoun frequently weaken a writer's statement? To support your answer, give examples other than those used in the text.

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5. What is meant by the terms “substitute first person” and “substitute second person”?

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6. How does the elimination of the word “there” from your written work force you to use better verbs?

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## 5.2 Assignments

1. Complete the sentences below so that they express your personal opinion.

- a. I think that student sports

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- b. In my opinion, art

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- c. To me, the best movies

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- d. I feel that a college education

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- e. It is my belief that the color of a man's skin

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- f. One must pay close attention to most scientific lectures if

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- g. If you analyze television programming, you discover that

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- h. I don't see the point in requiring a person to

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- i. I feel almost certain that space travel

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- j. Nobody can convince me that

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2. Rewrite each one of your sentences in strict third person, avoiding all use of *I, me, my one, you, a person, etc.*

- a. student sports:

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- b. art:

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- c. best movies:

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- d. college education:

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- e. the color of a man's skin:

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NAME:

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- f. close attention to most scientific lectures.

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- g. analyze television programming.

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- h. point in requiring a person to:

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- i. space travel.

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- j. Nobody can convince me:

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3. Delete the word "there" from all the sentences below. Rewrite the sentences if necessary, using active verbs whenever possible.

- a. There is a girl in math class who has a brain like a computer.

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- b. There are some aspects of this problem which can never be understood.

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- c. Every member of the team was there when the coach made the announcement.

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- d. There will be plenty to eat.

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- e. If there is one thing he can't stand, it's long telephone conversations.

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- f. He was right, but there were moments when she hated him for it.

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- g. There will be no meeting of the class tomorrow.

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- h. There were lots of good things to eat in the basket.

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- i. There was a crowd of happy students in the hall.

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- j. His point of view is strange, but there is a lot to be said in its favor.

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## 5.3 Vocabulary

1. Look up the definition of the following adjectives:

authoritative	
insidious	
objective	
redundant	



NAME:

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2. In one sentence for each, explain exactly what the writer means in the sentences below.  
(do not repeat the italicized word nor any form of it.)

- a. He could speak with an *authoritative* voice on the subject of space flight.

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- b. His political enemies tried to destroy him by *insidious* attacks on his loyalty.

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- c. She seemed utterly incapable of an *objective* point of view.

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- d. Don't make *redundant* comments.

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## 6 The Size and Shape of Middle Paragraphs

### Summary

The middle paragraphs of an essay constitute your “body of argument,” and the number of paragraphs you write for any essay depends upon the number of points you want to make. The length of these paragraphs can vary enormously, but for the time being you should concentrate on writing fairly long paragraphs in order to get a firm sense of their structure: a beginning, a middle, and an end.

The easiest way to master this structure is by visualizing what you are writing about. *See* what you mean, then *show* your reader what you see, in a picture-frame paragraph—a paragraph in which the topic sentence and the concluding sentence act as a frame for a picture made vivid in your middle sentences with specific details.

Everything you write about will seem more real, both to you and to your reader, when you master the picture-frame technique. And you will find, as you move from point to point, explaining and illustrating as you go, that paragraphing has become a simple and quite natural process.

### 6.1 Questions

1. How does the structure of a middle paragraph differ from the structure of an introductory paragraph? From that of a concluding paragraph?

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NAME:

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2. What is the main purpose of paragraphing?

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3. Students of composition are advised to write “big” paragraphs while they are learning. Why?

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4. In what way does the structure of a paragraph resemble the structure of a full essay?

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5. What is the function of the first sentence in a paragraph?

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6. What is the function of the middle section of a paragraph?

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7. Why does the three-part paragraph structure automatically insure the “one point, one paragraph” rule?

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8. How does paragraph structure resemble conversation? In what way will it differ?

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9. Explain the “picture-frame paragraph.” Is this different from basic paragraph structure, or is it simply another way of describing the structure?

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10. The picture-frame paragraph that is primarily descriptive will differ somewhat from one that is argumentative. How?

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11. Analyze the following paragraph. What major rule of paragraph structure does it violate?

The old-fashioned American Kitchen was the living center of the American home. That was where the family ate its meals, where children studied and women sewed and men read the newspaper, where every family crisis was settled. It was a big, warm, cluttered place, full of all the smells that meant home—freshly baked bread and starched curtains and stick cinnamon and scrubbed linoleum and apples and oilcloth. The kitchen was really the *living* room—the place where the family lived. The mothers in those days did not usually hold hobs outside the home. Unfortunately, today's modern industrial society has taken women away from their homes.

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## 6.2 Assignments

1. Write a paragraph (using correct paragraph structure) explaining what is wrong with the following paragraph. Be explicit.

Too many students believe that popularity depends not upon what they are but upon what they have. They want their parents to buy them all the things that they feel will guarantee popularity. They feel that these things will solve all their problems and make them happy. This may affect their personalities in a very bad way.

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2. Rewrite the above paragraph, using the picture-frame technique.

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3. Write a paragraph that is primarily descriptive, beginning with this topic sentence: "The day was wet and rainy."

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4. Write a paragraph that is primarily argumentative, beginning with this topic sentence: "Few girls are really interested in athletic events."

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5. Write a paragraph about some television show that you particularly like or dislike. Remember, you cannot use *I, me, my mine, you, and your*. Try to make your opinion clear to the reader by means of descriptive detail.

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## 6.3 Vocabulary

1. Write a definition for each of the following words:

graphic	
ingenuity	
predetermine	
puerile	
rhetorical	
visualize	
willy-nilly	

2. Finish each of the unfinished sentences below, so that it will demonstrate your understanding of the italicized word.
- a. Her description of the thief was *graphic*. She made us see him as a .....  
in ..... with ..... and with .....

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- b. She had shown a great deal of *ingenuity* in making her costume for the party. She had

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- c. You can't *predetermine* the length of any paragraph because, in the course of writing it

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- d. Most of his attempts to prove his sophistication are *puerile*—for example, his habit of

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- e. Don't give me the *rhetorical* answers. Give me an answer that tells me

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- f. The boy had never been to the small town where his father had grown up, but he could *visualize* it. He thought of it as (use several details)

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- g. It seemed to her that she had spent her entire life doing what other people told her to do, *willy-nilly*. She wished that, just once, she could

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**7****Connections Between Paragraphs**

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**Summary**

Remember that the chief purpose of transitions is to help your reader follow your train of thought. They are the links that hold your ideas together and keep them moving toward a single goal. So make certain, always, that some kind of link exists between your paragraphs, and that the link exists not only in your own mind but also, clearly and unmistakably, in the words you put on paper.

One kind of link is not necessarily better than any other kind, but variety is better than sameness. So try for variety. Use the purely mechanical devices for quick and simple transitions. Use word and phrase hooks for stronger and clearer links. Use idea hooks for broad references. Use combinations for emphasis and tone.

Use them all. But, above all, use them.

**7.1 Questions**

1. If a paragraph can stand alone as a structure, why should it need to be linked to any other paragraphs?

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2. Explain the analogy between an essay and a moving train.

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3. What are the three kinds of transitions that link paragraphs?

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NAME:

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4. Describe a standard transitional device. Give examples.

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5. When *however* is used as a transition, what is the best position for it in the sentence?

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6. What is the correct punctuation for a tucked-in *however*?

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7. This sentence appears on page 87: "You probably use the paragraph hook often in your own writing without knowing it and see it constantly in your reading without realizing it (as in this sentence, for example.)" What is the paragraph hook in this sentence? You will have to look back to the paragraph preceding the sentence for your answer.

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8. Describe the difference between a simple paragraph hook and a deeper hook.

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9. What is a multiple hook?

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10. How does an idea hook differ from the other kinds of paragraph hooks?

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11. What is a combination hook?

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12. Is one kind of transition better than any other kind? If so, why? If not, what is the best guide for deciding which kind of transition to use after you have made certain that you are being clear?

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## 7.2 Assignments

1. Assume that each of the paired sentences below is the first sentence of two consecutive paragraphs. Supply a transition for the second sentence of each pair.

- a. He received the highest praise for his efforts to improve living conditions in the slums.  
He was frequently criticized.

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- b. The study of science can be a tremendously exciting intellectual experience.  
The study of science can have a narrowing effect.

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- c. She caused trouble wherever she went. She was the kind of woman who could turn a peaceful exchange of views on the weather into a war of nerves.

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- d. Students are showing greater interest in baseball as a sport.  
Students are showing a greater interest in dramatics.

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- e. The furniture he had acquired for his living room was surely as ugly as anything ever made by man. It was comfortable.

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- f. Far too much emphasis has been placed on psychology and too little on personal responsibility. A knowledge of psychology can be very valuable.

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- g. The movie was the victim of poor photography and a bad script. It was interesting.

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2. Insert the word *however* in the second sentence of each pair below:

- a. He had taken piano for ten years. He was not a good pianist.

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- b. She planned to finish the assignment on Monday. By Monday she had forgotten all about it.

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- c. She had very few interests that could be called hobbies. She liked to take long walks in the city, and these led her eventually to make the city itself her hobby.

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---

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- d. The council has adopted a “wait and see” attitude. This is no solution.

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3. Write a picture-frame paragraph in which you describe some aspect of your trip to an activity each week—perhaps a single city block where you walk, the drive through a particular section of town or country, or the attitude of other people you encounter.

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Then do the following:

- a. Write the first sentence of the next paragraph, using a paragraph hook. (You may also include a standard device if you like.)

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- b. Write another first sentence for your second paragraph, using a deeper hook.

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- c. Write another first sentence, using a multiple hook.

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- d. Write a full paragraph, using one of the sentences above as your opening sentence. This will give you two full paragraphs.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

NAME:

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- e. Write the opening sentence of a third paragraph to follow the two you have just written, using a combination hook for the transition.

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## 7.3 Vocabulary

1. Write a definition for each of the following words.

Analogy	
appropriate*	
arbitrary	
discreetly	
indispensable	
irrational	
Multiple	
Recur	
referential	
sophisticated	

\*This word has two different meanings and two different pronunciations. Consult your dictionary.

2. In the left-hand column below are different forms of the words in the vocabulary list. Write a complete sentence in which you use each of these words and also *all* the words and/or phrases that appear opposite it in the right-hand column. This will require a little inventiveness on your part. Your sentence may be as long as you like, and you can fit the combinations into your sentence in any way you please, but hold yourself to one sentence in each case.

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analogous	links between paragraphs
appropriately	class, subdued
arbitrarily	time, limited
Discreet	information, questions
discretion	allowed, choice
dispense	formality, point
irrationally	convinced, plotting to
multiplying	troubles, blamed, carelessness
recurrent	dream, pursued, who wanted to
reference	understand, background
referring	notes, the impression that
sophistication	dress, contrast, naturalness



## 8 The Passive Voice

### Summary

Training yourself to spot the passive voice in your writing and to put it to rout can be an immensely valuable discipline. It will push you not only toward more direct and forceful statement but will give you a sharper awareness of language as a flexible instrument, a thing of moveable parts that responds to experiment, adjusts to new patterns. Above all, an attack on passive voice will open up vast new resources of power available in active verbs.

Passive voice will always have certain important uses, but remember that you must keep your eye on it all the time or it will drop its *o* and change swiftly from passive voice to passive vice. You must learn to outwit it. *Make your subject perform.* Adopt that as your guiding principle, and you can vanquish one of your most insidious enemies. Only after you have conquered passive voice can you return to it with confidence, knowing when to use it—and why.

So discipline yourself. Put a deliberate check on your tendency to drift into the passive. Experiment with new arrangements of words. Reach for the precise and vivid verb. Make those sentences move. Then you can be sure they are alive.

#### Five steps to avoid passive voice.

1. As soon as you pick the subject of a sentence, supply it with a verb that makes it *do* something. Never mind about the rest of the sentence; first get that verb. If you don't write it in passive voice, you won't have to change it. (This is known as the cut-it-off-at-the-pass technique.)
2. If you use a passive verb, try to change it.
3. If you can't change it, try a new sentence.
4. If that doesn't work, try skipping the sentence altogether.
5. As a last resort, use passive voice.

## 8.1 Questions

1. How does the relationship between the subject and verb differ in active and passive voice? Give examples.

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2. What is meant by the phrase, “a style that has solidified into a convention”?

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3. Why is a “by-” phrase frequently a sign of passive voice?

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4. How can you convert a sentence containing a “by-” phrase from passive to active voice?

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5. What is an “audio-active” verb? Give an example not taken from this chapter.

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6. According to an old Chinese proverb, one picture is worth more than ten thousand words. How could you apply this proverb to writing?

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7. What one rule will help you to avoid passive voice?

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8. Under what circumstances is passive voice more effective than active voice?

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9. What is the “cut-it-off-at-the-pass” technique in reference to passive voice?

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10. What is meant by the statement that vaguely poetic prose in passive voice “is just secretarial prose with its face painted, all dressed up but still going nowhere”?

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## 8.2 Assignments

1. Make a list, in the order of their appearance, of all the passive verbs in the following paragraph.

A man was seen at the intersection, calmly crossing against the light. Cars were brought to a shrieking halt. Horns were honked. Warnings were shouted by the crowd waiting on the corner, and in the distance a series of small crashes could be heard from the growing line of cars as bumpers were engaged unexpectedly. None of this was noticed by the man, a narrow-chested little fellow in a black suit. A black briefcase was carried in one hand and a rolled umbrella in the other. When the opposite side of the intersection was reached, his umbrella was raised in a brief salute to the cars that were now hopelessly stalled for blocks because of him. Then he was seen no more.

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2. Rewrite the paragraph in active voice, rearranging the sentences in any way you like to create a smooth sequence.

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3. Write an original paragraph describing something you saw yesterday. It can be an event you witnessed or simply an object you observed. It need not be important or exciting, but it must be something real, described as completely as possible. *Use passive voice only.*

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4. Rewrite your paragraph in active voice.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

5. Write a complete essay with a thesis based on the general subject of passive voice. Make any point you like, but *use the two paragraphs you wrote for #3 and #4 above as examples to illustrate your point.*
- (Use a separate piece of paper)

## 8.3 Vocabulary

1. Find a definition for each of the following words:

anonymity	
apathetic	
convention	
initiative	
irresistible	

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lethargic	
memorable	
pervasive	
vacuum	
vanquish	

2. Finish each of the incomplete sentences below, so that it will demonstrate your understanding of the meaning of the italicized word.

- a. On a large college campus a student often suffers from a sense of *anonymity*. He feels that ..... that ..... and that .....
- b. Interest in the athletics last year was *apathetic* at best. Students either ..... or .....
- c. His nominating speech certainly did not follow the standard *convention*. Instead of ..... he .....
- d. In the campaign to improve living conditions in the refugee camp, John Fletcher took the *initiative*. He was not the kind of man who could .....
- e. To him the appeal of the sea was *irresistible*. He felt ....., and he .....
- f. He felt completely *lethargic*. He could not ..... What he wanted above all else was .....
- g. It was a *memorable* moment. For the first time in his life he ....., and he knew .....

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- h. The peculiar scent in the house, reminiscent of both roses and mildew, was faint but *pervasive*. It clung to ....., emanated from ..... and seemed to be part of .....
- i. The girl's mind seemed to be a complete *vacuum*. She seemed incapable of ....., and she .....
- j. Nothing could *vanquish* his high spirits. Even when ....., he .....

## 9 The Sound of Sentences

### Summary

Written sentences should have the sound of speech—intelligent, highly ordered speech that sounds completely natural to the listening inner ear of the reader. The means to this naturalness is through variety in sentence patterns: basic statements, strung-along sentences, periodic sentences, combinations. By learning to add detail in various ways to a basic statement, you can create any of these patterns; and by alternating them, by striving consciously for variety, by listening to your sentences as well as looking at them, you can create the natural cadence of the human voice.

The big obstacle that most student writers must overcome is the conviction that any sentence, once written, is an immovable and unchangeable object, like a chunk of concrete or an engraving on steel.

*You must remember that a sentence is a thing of moveable parts, an endlessly adapting structure that is completely subject to the writer's will, shrinking or expanding to fit the sound and sense he chooses to give it.*

So relax. Loosen up. Play boldly with sentences. Combine, convert, shift, change, add, subtract, divide, multiply. Take chances. The more you experiment, the more you will learn.

### 9.1 Questions

1. Why is a child likely to believe that written sentences have nothing to do with spoken language?

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2. In what sense is reading “almost as much an act of hearing as of seeing”?

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3. Written sentences should sound like natural speech but cannot actually be natural speech. Explain.

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4. What is the first principle of rhythm in writing?

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5. What is a basic statement?

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6. Describe the difference between a strung-along sentence and a periodic sentence.

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7. What are the three main places in a sentence where details can be added?

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8. Name three ways of constructing graphic details, illustrating each method with an example not taken from the text.

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9. How do you add details to a verb?

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10. What is an appositive? Give an example. How can a preposition help you think of details to add to an appositive?

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## 9.2 Assignments

1. Reduce all the following sentences to basic statements.
  - a. Looking from the mountain road above like a small tumble of children's toys left carelessly behind on the desert floor, the village slept in the sun, its streets empty, its houses shuttered and silent.

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- b. The old man ate noisily, making a great clatter with his silverware, blowing on his coffee, smacking his lips with pleasure.

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- c. Whatever else he may have been, however rude or quarrelsome or untidy, he was honest in all his dealings in every way.

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- d. As he left the town behind he gained speed, pushing the little car faster and faster through the flat countryside that stretched endlessly to right and left of a highway as smooth and flat as the blade of a knife.

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- e. The telephone rang, its shrill summons bringing everybody in the room to frightened attention.

---

---

2. Write a strung-along sentence *at least twenty words long* using each of the basic statements below as a starting point. Do not change the basic statement; just add to it (see examples, pages 111-112).

- a. The moon rose.

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- b. The man was dead.

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- c. He longed to be free.

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- d. She liked the song.

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- e. They had a good time.

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3. Using each of the basic statements below, write five periodic sentences *at least fifteen words long* (see examples, page 112).

- a. Mary left the room.

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- b. The world's greatest invention is the safety pin.

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- c. Hate is based on fear.

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- d. The man was dead.

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- e. The circus was his life.

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4. Select five of the ten sentences you have just written and add details that will make each one a combination of strung-along and periodic.

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5. Expand the subject of the sentence below in the seven different ways illustrated on page 116 (#1-7). Follow the patterns exactly.

The old man shuffled out of sight.

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6. Expand the verb of each of the following sentences.

a. The girl walked across the playground

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b. The boy talked about fishing.

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7. Add a simple appositive to the noun at the end of each sentence below:

a. He liked the car.

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b. John read the book.

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c. They listened to the lecture.

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d. It was a special chair.

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---

e. He called the dog.

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8. Using both prepositional phrases and participles, add detail to each of the appositives in the five sentences you have written. Make each sentence *at least fifteen words long*.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There is no text or other markings on the paper.

9. Add an appositive and a *who* clause to the sentence below, following the pattern shown in #5, page 19.

They asked for Mrs. Smith.

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10. Write a sentence containing an appositive and a *so...that* comparison as shown in #6, page 119.

## 9.3 Vocabulary

1. Define each of the following words.

adhering	
arbitrarily	
Erratic	
exorcised	
implication	
inexhaustible	
irreducible	
paradox	
repetitive	
subconscious	

2. Below are the first few words of six incomplete sentences. Finish each of the sentences, using all of the following: 1) the word shown in parenthesis with each; 2) an appositive; and 3) at least one prepositional phrase. The three items need not be used in the order given here, but all three must appear in each sentence.

- a. Although John had worked out a (adhering)



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b. He managed to (arbitrary)

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c. The rhythm of (erratic)

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d. The ghosts (exorcised)

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e. We can only guess at (implication)

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---

f. The resources of (inexhaustible)

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3. Follow each of the statements below with a second statement that explains the first in different words.

a. A basic statement is irreducible;

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b. Writing that sounds natural is a paradox;

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c. The speaker was needlessly repetitive;

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d. His fear was subconscious;

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## 10 Parallel Structure

### Summary

Some parallels are a matter of simple logic. Controlling them is mainly a housekeeping chore, a necessary straightening and tidying-up that every writer learns to do as a matter of course, as part of his job. The subtler and more complex parallels are the real challenge and the true delight of writing. Requiring the most artful balance of many elements, they are exciting things to handle; but even more exciting is the immediate and startling improvement they can make in your writing style.

Parallelism on any level is simply, in the final analysis, control. Keep all elements of equal value parallel, whether they are big elements or small, and your sentences can't straggle off raggedly this way and that. They will have the sense of wholeness and balance, of architectural soundness, that pleases the ear and satisfies the mind.

### 10.1 Assignments

1. Complete the unfinished sentence below with a series of *who* clauses.

He always made trouble. He was the kind of boy who

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2. Complete with a series of infinitive phrases, using a different infinitive for each phrase: To be famous, she thought, she needed only to

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---

3. Using *to* as your preposition, complete this sentence with a series of prepositional phrases: In desperate search for a cure, he went to

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---

4. Using *of* as your preposition, complete this sentence with a series of prepositional phrases: She was afraid of everything, of

---



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5. Complete this with a series of *that* clauses:

He complained that the children made too much noise, that

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---

6. Write a sentence beginning with three *if* clauses.

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7. Write a sentence ending with three *if* clauses.

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8. Complete the sentence below by *interrupting* it with two parallel *if* clauses:

The problem of race relations, if

and if

must be solved.

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9. Write a balanced sentence modeled on #6 on page 124 but using different infinitives.

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10. Write a sentence that contains a double parallel.

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## 10.2 Questions

1. What is the best way to learn parallel structure?

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2. Parallelism “is a repetition of *structure*.” Explain.

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3. Give an example of a balanced sentence.

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## 10.3 Assignments

1. Each of the sentences below contains some kind of faulty parallelism. Rewrite each sentence correctly.
  - a. She planned a trip to the country, a visit with her grandmother, and taking long hikes with her cousin.

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- b. The old man was gentle, kind, and gave away a lot of money to the poor.

---

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- c. He put the model airplane together neatly, accurately, and with a great deal of skill.

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- d. The boy wiped the windshield, cleaned off the dirty headlights, polished the chrome trim, and even the hubcaps were checked.

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- e. She was a good cook and also kept house well.

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- f. She was beautiful but a spoiled child.

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- g. He hoped either to be elected president of his class or make the highest grades.

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- h. He was intelligent as well as having a lot of friends.

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- i. He had to have the suit both altered and to have it cleaned.

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- j. The thing he most looked forward to was a hot meal and having a hot bath.

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- k. He enjoyed going to the movies as well as trips to the theater.

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- l. Either the boys disliked or ignored him.

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- m. That girl will neither take advice from her parents nor her friends.

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- n. Their purpose was not only to take special courses in science but in art.

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- o. The committee is not only working hard to preserve historical landmarks but is also interested in developing a local museum.

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- p. They believe that a museum will promote greater interest in local history, that it will enrich the lives of school children in the community, and will become a major tourist attraction.

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- q. Many people believe that to be admired is happiness.

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- r. Study develops the mind; exercise develops the body; and understanding is developed by experience.

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- s. He made it clear, first, that he had no faith in the project; second, that he would not support it; and that, third, he would advise his friends against it.

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- t. They arrived in town by bus, by train, by plane, and even walking.

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2. President John F. Kennedy's Inaugural Address contained a number of striking parallelisms. Find at least five in the selections from the Address, below. Copy them exactly.

We observe today not a victory of party but a celebration of freedom, symbolizing an end as well as a beginning, signifying renewal as well as change.....

.....Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans, born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard work and bitter peace, proud of our ancient heritage, and unwilling to witness or permit the slow undoing of those human rights to which the nation has always been committed, and to which we are committed today at home and around the world.

So let us begin anew, remembering on both side that civility is not a sign of weakness, and sincerity is always subject to proof. Let us never negotiate out of fear, but let us never fear to negotiate.



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Now the trumpet summons us again—not as a call to bear arms, though arms we need; not as a call to battle, though embattled we are; but a call to bear the burden of a long twilight struggle, a year in year out, “rejoicing in hope, patient tribulation,” a struggle against the common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself.

And so, my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.

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3. Below is a description of an animal lab. Choose a subject of your own—perhaps a library, a dormitory, a restaurant, any place you have observed closely—and write a description that imitates the passage below. Match its sentence structure, parallels, figures of speech, etc, with suitable constructions of your own.

The animal lab is full of strange, muted sounds. Somewhere down the hall, behind closed doors, monkeys gossip incessantly, their voices thin, faintly exasperated, like the voices of emptied-headed office girls on an endless coffee break. Now and then a lemur’s cry—high, sweet, full of grief and hope—breaks through the monkeys’ mindless chatter. And something else whispers in the air, a small rustling and scuttling sound, anciently familiar and vaguely disquieting; rats are nearby.

They are, in fact, nearby in great numbers, in the big colony room. These are elegant rats, refined rats, plump and docile and immaculate, white of fur and innocently pink of claw and tail. Science has bred out of them nearly every resemblance to their ugly ancestors. These placid aristocrats have never seen a ship’s hold, or a garbage dump, or a littered ally; they have never run from snapping dogs

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nor crept at night through secret tunnels in the walls of decayed tenements. But they still make, in their clean wire cages, the ageless sound that rats in movement have always made.

[illegible]

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- In addition to actual physical description, indicate also the kind of person you think your subject might be, guessing at his inner thoughts, his ambitions, his attitudes. This will take some imagination. Except for literal description, you will be treating your subject almost as a fictional character. Use third person only. And finally, *use at least one example of each kind of parallel structure shown in examples #1-6 on page 124 (and label them in parenthesis within your paragraph)*. If you are homeschooled, choose a family member, an animal, or pet!

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

## 10.4 Vocabulary

1. Define the following words.

disquieting	
docile	
immaculate	
impervious	
inherent	
intricacy	
pedestrian	
vantage	

2. Choose the word from above that most nearly fits the meaning of each sentence below:

a.	The pattern in the lace was extremely delicate and complex, a web of leaves and flowers interwoven with gold thread.	
b.	An iron-willed man, he could not be reached by any appeal to his emotions.	
c.	From the attic window they had a splendid view of everything that went on in the street.	
d.	Every word, every gesture suggested a strong instinct for drama.	
e.	She was quiet, submissive, and willing to learn.	
f.	His writing style is quite ordinary.	
g.	His white shirt was spotlessly clean.	
h.	She refused to believe the rumor, but it made her uneasy.	

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3. Using all the words in the vocabulary list above, write four sentences, each one containing one of the parallelisms illustrated in examples #1-6 n page 124.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

# 11 A Way with Words

## Summary

Increase your vocabulary consciously by reading, by using your thesaurus and your dictionary, by practicing new words in speech and writing until they become a natural and familiar part of your thinking process. To enrich your vocabulary is to enrich not only your writing but your life, for the more words you know the better you can understand and interpret your own experience.

Make abstractions real by using your senses. Translate big, vague terms into the tangible objects of real life. Make yourself *see* what you write about: give your ideas substance with specific details, with real things that have color and shape, things that can be touched or tasted or smelled or heard. Strive always toward realness.

For this realness use metaphor and simile. *Show* what you mean, in images. And use allusion to maintain the sense of friendly communication, or shared experience, with your reader. Connect, relate, compare– and thus delight.

## 11.1 Questions

1. What is *le mot juste*?

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2. What should you do every time you come across a word that is new to you?

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3. What is a synonym?

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4. What is an antonym?

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5. Describe Roget's *Thesaurus*. What was the original meaning of the word "thesaurus"?

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6. Will your writing have more dignity if you make a point of using big words in place of smaller, more familiar words? Explain your answer.

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7. Explain the meaning of this statement about vocabulary: "You can be a prince or a pauper, depending upon how much of your inheritance you choose to claim."

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8. What does the author mean by the phrase, "the slums of language"?

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9. What are the "Solemn Vapors"?

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10. What is the difference between an abstract word and a concrete word? Give at least two examples (not the same ones used in the text).

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11. What is the difference between a metaphor and a simile? Give examples.

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12. What is an allusion?

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## 11.2 Assignments

1. Write a brief essay defending the idea that a student's personal copies of a pocket dictionary and a *Thesaurus*, worn out from use, may be better evidence of a good education than a diploma. (Use a separate sheet of paper)
2. Look up the word "nice" in the dictionary. You may be surprised to learn its precise meaning, as opposed to the meaning it has for most people in ordinary conversation. Write a brief essay in which you do the following:
  - a. Give the precise definition.
  - b. Poke fun at the overuse of "nice," giving examples of its overuse.
  - c. End your essay with a sentence that uses the word "nice" correctly.(Use a separate sheet of paper)



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3. Rewrite each of the following sentences so that it expresses the same idea in concrete rather than abstract terms (For example, "Vigorous physical exercise before breakfast is an excellent way to start the day" can be concrete by saying "A few push-ups before breakfast can start the day right.")

a. He was tired of domestic chores.

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b. The available reading material was very scanty.

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c. Certain physical characteristics gave evidence of his anger.

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d. Real elegance, to her, was jewelry.

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e. The daily consumption of some kind of fresh fruit is helpful in reducing the need for medical attention.

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f. He longed for contact with nature.

---

---

g. His clothing was obviously old and worn.

---

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- h. He was tired of the pressures of city life.

---

- i. He would have given a great deal for some kind of solid nourishment.

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- j. What he needs is some kind of strong disciplinary treatment.

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4. Choose one of the sentences below as the first sentence of a descriptive paragraph. Use an extended metaphor to complete the description. (See example on page 140). Be sure to keep details consistent.

- She was as cool and graceful as a very elegant cat.
- He looked like a crafty intelligent old goat.
- She moved about the house like a fat, dignified hen.
- She was small and mouse-like.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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5. Write five sentences in which you make some kind of familiar allusion. (See examples on pages 141-142.) Be as original as possible.

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6. Write five sentences in which you make a literary allusion. Your literature textbook may be helpful. Find a well-known quotation and work it into some meaning of your own. (See examples on page 142).

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## 11.3 Vocabulary

- Below is a list of words that are constantly overused. For *each* of the words, supply a list of at least ten other words that might be used in its place.

good

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bad

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big

---

little

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terrible

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wonderful

---

happy

---

sad

---

pretty

---

ugly

---

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dull

---

exciting

---

2. Use *each* of the words below in a periodic sentence that contains at least fifteen words:

behooves

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---

corpulent

---

---

demented

---

---

eccentric

---

---

gargantuan

---

---

invidious

---

---

loquacious

---

---

malicious

---

---

maniacal

---

---

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obstreperous

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---

obtuse

---

---

odious

---

---

orthodox

---

---

surly

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## 12 Odds and Ends and Means

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### Summary

The thirty transgressions listed in this chapter are not the only sins against style, but they are the most common– and the most likely to cause offense to the discriminating reader. The easiest way to handle them at first is to forget about them until you are ready to write the final draft of your paper. Then check. And check closely. Go through your entire paper, checking every sentence against every item on the list until you are certain you have rid yourself completely of the thirty offenders.

It may be a slow, laborious process at first, and you will probably be appalled at how many items from the list show up in your writing. But gradually you will find that control has become automatic; you will find fewer and fewer of the thirty barbarisms in your work because your heightened awareness of them will help you avoid them from the start. Habit will take over. The deliberate, painstaking, conscious hunting–down of stylistic faults leads eventually to a natural, almost unconscious avoidance of those faults.

The Terrible Three probably won't give you much trouble. They are so laughably obvious, once you have become sensitized to them, that they will probably disappear from your writing immediately. (They will also provide you with a fine source of private amusement as you discover how often –*wise* and *type of* and *manner* or *nature* turn up in the speech and writing of people who should know better.)

The remaining twenty–seven stylistic faults are slyer and more persistent, but these too will eventually disappear as your awareness increases– as it will, if you are vigilant.

In any case, checking over your paper for the barbarisms listed in this chapter is a very slight effort indeed compared to the effort you have already put into your essay. You have gone to the hard labor of creating something entirely new and entirely on your own. Before you send it out to face the world, give it this final grooming. You owe that to yourself.

## 12.1 Questions

1. Notice the title of this chapter. What play on words do you find in it, and how does it relate to the content of this chapter?

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2. What are the “Terrible Three”? Give an example of each.

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3. Why is the phrase “center around” a logical impossibility?

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4. Why is “fabulous” a poor word to use in most writing?

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5. Logically, what is meant by “I feel badly”?

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6. What is wrong with the word “irregardless”?

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7. What test can you give the word “like” to make certain that you are using it correctly?

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8. Why is it impossible to be “more perfect” or “more unique”?

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9. What is a trite expression? Give examples other than those in the text.

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10. Explain the real purpose of punctuation and illustrate its relation to sound.

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11. What kind of pause does a comma indicate?

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12. Explain the proper use of a semicolon.

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## 12.2 Assignments

1. Write three sentences using the suffix *-wise* as it should *not* be used. Then rewrite the sentence without the suffix. Example: Everything was against him, percentage-wise.

All the percentages were against him.

[illegible]

2. Write three sentences using the expression “type” or “type of”. Then rewrite correctly.

[illegible]

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3. Write three sentences using the expressions “in nature”, “of a....nature,” and “in a ....manner.” Then rewrite correctly.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

4. Write a sentence that demonstrates, in the same order listed in the chapter, each of the stylistic flaws in the “Troublesome Twenty–Seven.” Then after each sentence that contains a flaw, rewrite to get rid of the flaw.

Example: As far as exercise, few people get enough.

As far as exercise is concerned, few people get enough.

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This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

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5. Find the stylistic flaw in each of the sentences below and rewrite the sentence correctly. Some sentences contain more than one flaw.

a. Everybody who came to the meeting thought the discussion ought to center around their particular problem.

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b. While he was not a doctor, he was very well informed as far as treatments for sore throats.

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c. The course was different than he expected.

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d. He acted like he was green with envy.

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e. Just to be sure on impartiality, get an uninterested judge for the contest.

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f. Regarding his future prospects, they look good.

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g. If he would get off of that subject, he could make a lot of forward progress inside of a year.

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- h. It was the most perfect kind of response to a silly question.

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- i. Your letter seems to infer that you are ready to retreat back from your former position.

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- j. He felt badly about it, but it was all past history now, and outside of expressing his regrets he could do nothing but try and keep things under better control in the future ahead.

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- k. Each of the girls are asked to seriously consider the risks of the program.

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- l. She was too disinterested in the subject to attend the lecture, plus she was certain it would be similar to all the other lectures she had heard.

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- m. The movie was fabulous, but due to closing hours she had to leave before it ended.

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- n. He knew he might have false illusions about his ability, but he decided to enter the contest irregardless.

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- o. He found the hike so exhausting, and the reason was because he had slept for only a short period of time the night before.

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6. On page 152, under “Punctuation,” is an entire paragraph that contains no punctuation after the first sentence. Beginning with the second sentence, copy the entire paragraph and punctuate it correctly.

[illegible]

# 13 More Freedom and a Few Flourishes

## 13.1 Assignments

### 1. First Person at Last

Using the first person, write an essay based on a personal experience. This time, instead of developing your thesis with *pro* and *con* argument, you will develop it by telling a story. You will tell it in much the same way you would tell it to a friend and for the same reason: because it is something that really happened to you, and because it proves your point. (Refer to the text for further instruction.)

### 2. How to Write Badly by Trying Very, Very Hard

You have spent a great part of the year learning how to improve your writing by using active verbs and concrete detail, by avoiding vague abstractions, clichés, and redundancies. Now you are going to kick over the traces by writing an essay that deliberately violates all of these principles. You are to be luxuriously long-winded, devastatingly dull, overpoweringly pompous. You may write in first person or third, but you must stick carefully to standard structure, for your essay must appear to be highly, even loftily, reasoned. Pick a thesis so trivial and/or obvious that nobody in his right mind would consider arguing it—something like “The adhesive quality of adhesive tape is frequently so sticky in nature that it produces negative reactions, skin-wise” or “The standardization of electric-type signals has been important in the solution of problems of traffic.” The whole point is to do deliberately some of the very things you have learned *not* to do. Now is your chance to get them all out of your system. Don’t try to be funny (that will take care of itself). And don’t violate *all* the principles of good style— if you do that, your paper will be unreadable. Just follow the rules below:

- a. Use only passive voice (no active or “audio-visual” verbs at all)
- b. Use the *-wise* suffix at least twice in every paragraph.
- c. Use *type*, *type of*, and *manner* or *nature* phrases as often as possible.
- d. Use abstractions, preferably in every sentence: important sounding words ending in *-tion*, *-ment*, *-ance*, *-ence*, *-ism*, *-ness*, *-ity*, and *-acy*.
- e. Inflate simple statements. Don’t say “He looked bad.” Say “He had the appearance of being in an unhealthy condition.” Don’t say, “He did good work.” Say, “The type work accomplished by him was excellent in nature.”
- f. Use every trite expression you can think of (see list on page 151 if you run short). See the text for further instructions.



**3. Irony**

Choose a thesis as you would choose it for any essay. Then reverse it and *overstate* it. That overstatement is important; it's the signal to your reader that your words are not to be taken face value.

.....In short, say what you mean by saying what you don't mean. Don't try to be funny—that will take care of itself. And don't attack personalities— that's cheap sarcasm, not irony. For serious essays, stick to ideas, policies, programs; for the merely humorous, use the nuisances and discomforts and absurdities of life for your subject matter. Always present your mock thesis as though it makes complete and admirable good sense. Develop it in the same way, with arguments that are perfectly logical in relation to your own mock thesis, however outrageous they may seem if judged by ordinary standards. In your own phrase, play it cool. Then you will have irony.

**4. Irony continued**

It would be interesting, for this assignment, to rewrite one of your earliest essays (if it is still available) to see how much it can be improved by an infusion of irony. Otherwise, choose any serious thesis that interests you. Write your introduction without any attempt at irony. Keep your development straightforward, but try to give every paragraph at least a touch of irony—one surprising conjunction of words, one ironic reference, or one gently ironic comment. The result should be the best essay you have written.

## 13.2 Questions

1. How do you arrive at a thesis for an essay about personal experience?

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2. How does the development of this thesis differ from the development of the thesis in an essay of argument?

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3. Suppose you write a colorful description of a city street scene, using first person throughout. Is this an essay? Explain your answer.

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4. Why is the use of the word "I" usually paradoxical? Under what circumstances would it *not* be paradoxical?

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5. What is a "moral tag"? Give an example of the kind of moral tag that might appear at the end of the suggested essay on racial prejudice. Why would it be a mistake?

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6. What is the chief value of "writing badly by trying very, very hard?"

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7. What is irony? What is the chief principle underlying it?

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8. How does the fully ironic essay differ from the essay that has only the ironic touch?

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9. How can you make certain that a reader understands that you are being ironic? Give an example other than any of those in this chapter.

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