

Composition

ONE

INVENTION AND PERSUASION

TEACHER'S EDITION

C O M P O S I T I O N I



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C O M P O S I T I O N I

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I N V E N T I O N A N D P E R S U A S I O N

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Veritas Press, Inc. and World News Group

ISBN 978-1-936648-65-8

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Printed in the United States of America.

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INTRODUCTION

What if skilled journalists, writers, professors, and teachers collaborated on a writing program? What if the resources of *God's World News*, *WORLD Magazine*, and Veritas Press joined forces? They would produce the text before you.

Learning to write well is integral to a student's education. It's also one of the most challenging lessons students face. Training young writers takes time, practice, conversation, patience, and encouragement.

Learning to write well is only one of our goals, though. We also want students to *enjoy* writing. Reaching this goal will depend as much on quality teaching as on students' progress. Parents and teachers play a pivotal role in fostering this love of writing.

Too many young writers learn the opposite lesson—to dislike writing. They hear that writing is more about mechanics than message. They learn a great deal about rules but little about how to make writing come to life. They work page after page of exercises but don't learn how to apply their skills outside class.

Composition takes a different approach. It shows students many examples of effective writing, most from published authors. It gives students opportunities to practice their skills with purpose. Its assignments are developmental and thought-provoking. *Composition* provides students both helpful feedback and meaningful evaluations. It helps shore up their weakness so their strengths can soar.

Composition encourages students to love writing, and it trains them to write well. It prepares them to share their ideas—in fiction and nonfiction, stories and essays. It equips them to write with skill and passion in the service of both God and neighbor. *Composition* is the writing program none of us had in middle school but wish we had.

DISTINCTIVES

Students benefit from a writing community

Students need regular conversation with a community of teachers and writers. *Composition* provides this conversation. Every unit offers relevant advice and commentary. Most of it comes from published journalists, photojournalists, novelists, and essayists. Writing teachers design units' lessons and offer teaching insights from their experience.

Students see the curriculum as a living conversation

Dull writing prompts produce dull prose and disheartened writers. *Composition* gives students assignments that inspire quality writing. Assignments emphasize purpose, plans, message, and audience. They arise from nineteenth-century literature, modern advertising, and today's headlines.

Students select from assignment options in many lessons

Some lessons in *Composition* focus on developing basic skills. Other lessons build up to major writing assignments. Most of those lessons offer students assignment options.

Even in the best writing programs, some assignment prompts cause writer's block. When this happens, students and teachers need flexibility and options. Assignment flexibility

helps writers push through a slump. It inclines students to take ownership of options they've chosen, too.

Students become stronger writers when they learn to read with a critical eye

Composition teaches students to read with attention and care. Early lessons use images to teach the importance of details and description. Later lessons have students apply what they've learned to words and sentences. Students see that details have more than descriptive power. They help writers convey their message.

Students examine model writing to improve their own skills and style

Students need more than grammar rules and style rubrics to write well. Checking off lists of elements to include in their writing will take them only so far. They need to see models of writing, both strong and weak and from various genres. Strong examples give them patterns to imitate; weak examples, patterns to avoid.

Students learn to read and write through the lens of a worldview

Does God exist? What's really *real*? What's truth? How do we *know* what we *believe* we know? What's the difference between good and evil, and should we care? All writers—all people—make basic assumptions about these worldview questions.

Our worldview influences all our writing, from choice of topic to the conclusions we draw. Writers who view life as a gift from God will write one way. Those who believe life to be an accident with no ultimate purpose will write another.

Composition trains students to be discerning readers, to look for writers' "worldview clues." *Composition* helps students express their own voice and worldview, too. We want students to take part in the ongoing dialogue about life's most important matters. We want them to speak with words "full of grace, seasoned with salt." We want to prepare students to "know how to answer everyone" (Colossians 4:6).

UNIT I

OVERVIEW

When buying a car, most people don't walk into a showroom and make a selection in a quick minute. Buying a car requires more thought than that. Buyers compare makes and models. They look at advertisements to determine where they will buy. They ask questions about the engine, trunk, safety, comfort, sound system, and price. They take several cars for test drives to see which feels best. To "buy a car" is to engage in a process of asking questions, trying options, and making decisions. Teaching students to write well is a similar process.

Most students won't start this *Composition* course with excellent writing skills. Some will have a natural talent, but others will struggle to put their ideas onto a page. All students need to learn the link between thoughtful reading and thoughtful writing.

Many writing programs teach only the basics of writing. These programs cover parts of speech, sentence structure, and the rudiments of paragraphs. These are important lessons, but they don't make us great writers. Too many writing programs teach tools, but not how to use them. When the teacher says, "Let's write your first essay," many students return a blank stare.

They look dumb-struck because they don't know what to do with their writing tools. They understand what makes a sentence. They don't understand what makes one sentence weak and another strong. They know the rules for paragraphing, but not why some paragraphs work better than others. They recognize excellence in an essay. They can't figure out, though, what exactly brings an excellent essay about.

Unit I challenges students to engage in a thought process that will be new to many. Students need to understand that writing well is more than putting words down on paper. It's a long process of asking questions, trying options, and making decisions. It begins with the thoughtful arrangement of ideas and the words that convey them.

Students need to become critical readers, too. They need to learn what makes one sentence, paragraph, or essay better than others. Discerning readers tend to become strong writers. They learn to recognize which writing models to avoid and which to embrace.

Once students learn the characteristics of strong writing, it'll be time to put that knowledge to use. Here we'll avoid the popular "worksheet" method of writing practice. For those unfamiliar, this approach first teaches a principle. For example, use a comma and coordinating conjunction to combine sentences. Then, the student must apply the principle by connecting dozens of ready-made sentences. This "worksheet" approach falls short in at least two ways. One, it denies students the freedom to write their own material. Two, it suggests that writing takes place apart from context. This *Composition* course offers many examples of what it teaches. It doesn't ask students to apply their skills to cut-and-paste exercises, though.

Effective writers know the "rules" and principles of good writing. They know how to link words to create meaningful sentences that convey their message, too. They know how to order those sentences to construct unified paragraphs. They know how to organize paragraphs to explain an idea, tell a story, or make an argument.

One of *Composition's* goals is to convince students that all the writing they do has purpose and meaning. We want students to begin to think as good writers do. We want them to view

writing as the making of meaning through words. We also want them to see that *they* get to make choices about how to convey that meaning to their audience.

OUTLINE

Lessons 1–5: Reading Images and Advertisements

Students need to start somewhere. Unit I asks them to begin where they are comfortable, with images. Images speak to many in this generation more than words do. Students can explain why they like a particular image. They can intuit how it works. They can even recognize how it persuades them to buy something, a product or an idea. These lessons challenge students to read images with greater care and discernment.

Lessons 6–10: Reading Sentences

These lessons call students to read texts as they read images, with careful attention. They learn the importance of well-defined subjects and clear, active verbs. They learn about adjectives and adverbs, too, but as means of supporting their nouns and verbs.

Lessons 11–15: Comparative and Critical Reading

These lessons help students become better readers of paragraphs. What makes for an informative paragraph? An engaging one? Students learn how some paragraphs are better than others at conveying their message. We examine patterns, especially logical order and transitions, that predict their success.

Lessons 16–20: Essays

A photo is a snapshot of the world outside the camera. An essay is a picture of the world inside the mind of the writer. The best essays and images are full of details: ideas, arrangement, interpretation. Good essays and images intrigue us because they tell compelling stories. Lessons 16–20 show how solid sentences work together to build strong paragraphs. Strong paragraphs make for effective essays that convey a writer's message and voice.

Lessons 21–25: The Paragraph

These lessons focus on the qualities of successful paragraphs. Students practice writing topic sentences that engage the reader. They work on selecting details that support the main idea. They consider how to order their sentences in a logical way. We begin with paragraphs, rather than sentences. This reinforces the idea that writing is contextual. When students write sentences, they should think about their purpose. What role do they play in the paragraph or essay they're writing?

Lessons 26–30: Composing and Linking Sentences

These lessons return to the sentence as the basic building block of writing. We look at simple sentences, as well as more advanced constructions. Some may shy away from writing complicated sentences for good reason. Others may shy away because they don't understand how they work or how they can be useful. We aim to clarify both.

Lessons 31–35: Focus and Arrangement

These lessons introduce the concepts of focus and arrangement. Successful paragraphs have a clear center and a logical organization. Students practice writing topic sentences that

prompt readers to ask questions. They also practice arranging a paragraph's sentences. We consider arranging them by chronology, location, and order of importance.

Lessons 36–40: Linking Paragraphs

These lessons apply paragraphs' organizational patterns to longer pieces of writing. We focus on crafting a solid paragraph and then situating it among other paragraphs. Students practice transitioning from paragraph to paragraph. The subject matter, writing about someone else's life, connects this unit to Unit III.

WAYS TO HELP STUDENTS

Conference Regularly

Unit I's assignments don't require grades beyond complete/incomplete. Consider the assignments to be prewriting exercises. Your role is to help students find specific answers to questions the exercises raise. Talk with them about their responses. Ask them to explain their answers and the writing choices they made.

Conferencing is key to helping students become better writers. Hold regular meetings to discuss their work. In time, students will discuss and defend their writing choices *in writing*. For now, oral explanations will suffice.

Encourage Specificity

Great writers use details to make their writing come to life. They don't tell; they show. They do more than describe; they paint pictures with words. Details give sentences and paragraphs life. This is true of fiction, nonfiction, and persuasive writing. Writing with detail is difficult for most students, whether they're 12 or 21.

When soliciting students' opinions, don't settle for incomplete answers. "This paragraph is better than that one" will not do. Nor will "I liked the third paragraph best." Such answers may be true, but they lack support. *Why* does the student prefer this paragraph or that? *What* makes one better than another? Require students to explain themselves, to give reasons for their assessments. Challenge them to deal with the specifics of the text.

Evaluate Sensibly¹

Not all evaluations call for intense scrutiny and a red pen. Some kinds of grading can set expectations for improvement without terrifying the writer. Grading with a hungry red pen, though, can have unintended and unwelcome consequences. Some students develop a distaste for writing. They associate it with harsh, unforgiving grading. They remember too many papers that bled crimson.

Low-stakes evaluation is less critical, less harsh than its high-stakes counterpart. The low-stakes approach offers helpful comments but minimal grading. One grading scheme uses "excellent," "satisfactory," and "weak"; a simpler one, only + and-. A low-stakes evaluation points out problems. Its emphasis, though, is celebrating the use of new skills.

For this unit, we encourage the use of low-stakes evaluation. Unit I is developmental. Offer students specific ways to improve their work. Explain how they can turn a weak response into

1 For more on grading, see Unit IV's "Helping Your Student Through Effective Feedback: Effective Grading."

a satisfactory one. Students are learning to become a discerning reader and a focused writer. They need all the encouragement we can give them, even while we challenge them to improve.

Encourage Specifically

Encourage *specificity* in students' writing, and encourage students' writing *specifically*. Jotting a "good" or "nice job" in a margin can make a student feel good. It doesn't tell him what exactly he did well, though. Try a different and more helpful approach. "Your sense of humor comes through in this sentence. I like it." Comments like these can both encourage a student and point out a writing strength. They can also "buy goodwill." They soften the sting of constructive criticism offered in other areas.

When offering constructive criticism, avoid jotting "dull" or "boring" in the margin. Even a mature writer might find that approach discouraging. Try a different tack. "I see what you're trying to do. What if you include some humor here?" The student knows you view his humor as a strength, so he'll read these comments as encouraging. He'll be more enthusiastic about revising his work.

Emphasize Risk

Teachers who stress correctness everywhere and always create students who never take chances. They're too worried about getting something wrong. Correctness has its place in writing, but it's not primary.

In this unit, especially, we emphasize the importance of taking risks. Taking risks helps young writers become good writers. As students try out new skills, give them room for failure without penalty. Applaud the student who uses a new vocabulary word in a place where it *almost* fits. Suggest a more suitable word, but applaud the attempt. Encourage the student who makes her first compound complex sentence. Point out that it uses commas, not colons, but praise the risk she took. Students "free to fail" are more likely to try out new skills and different approaches.

Provide an Audience for Student Writing

People write for an audience. Columnists, novelists, bloggers, and scientists write for someone else. In this *Composition* course, you will be the students' primary audience. Unfortunately, teachers don't always make for the best audience. They have advantages most other audiences don't. They know what the writer has been learning. They understand what the writer "meant" to say. These advantages can be a liability, though. Many audiences won't be as understanding or forgiving.

Whenever possible, have students read or send their writing to a different audience. This could be a neighbor, a sibling, or the readers of a blog. Hearing feedback from different audiences is vital to becoming an effective writer.

Some have never shown their writing to anyone but a teacher. They may be nervous about their audience's reaction. If so, have them share their work with a kind audience—a grandparent or a good friend. As they become more confident, urge them to share with someone who might challenge them. There's nothing like a skeptical reader to help writers fine-tune their message!

STUDENT PAGES WITH MARGIN NOTES FOR LESSONS 1–40

U N I T I

SENTENCE STRUCTURE, PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE,
AND THE ESSAY

LESSON 1

READING IMAGES AND ADVERTISEMENTS: THE
STORY BEHIND THE IMAGE

Are you a bookworm? Or are you the opposite—rather than reading, you prefer shopping, shooting basketball, playing video games? No matter whether you're an avid reader, a reluctant reader, or something in-between, you read more than you think. A *lot* more.

And you started early. Whenever you look at an image and try to figure out what it means, you're reading. If you have younger brothers or sisters, you've probably seen them pick up a book and "read" it by looking at the pictures. Maybe you can even remember doing that yourself.

Take a look at this picture. A quick glance tells you it's a picture of a girl on a skateboard playing a guitar. But you see much more if you look carefully. How old would you guess the girl is? Why is she riding a skateboard while playing a guitar? What kind of day is it outside? Where do you think she might be? Is she enjoying herself? How does the picture make you feel?

When we "read" this image, we see a teenaged girl. Her facial expression seems to indicate that she's relaxed but concentrating. Her skateboard appears to be a longboard, which would make sense, because some people use this type of skateboard as transportation. She seems to be going somewhere: She's crossing a street. We know she's in a city because we can see tall buildings and city buses behind her. We can infer that the weather is warm because there are trees with green leaves



1a



1a

This lesson—this book—begins with the discussion of an image. Some won't see this as a good start to a writing course. Shouldn't it begin with pen, paper, and a grammar rule or two?

Good writing doesn't start with good grammar; it starts with good thinking. Before writers commit the first sentence to paper, they need a good idea. Further, the idea needs specificity and details if it's to come to life. Ideas for writing need *development*, and that's the focus of this lesson.

2 COMPOSITION I

in the background, and she's wearing shorts and flip-flops. Perhaps she's taking her guitar to a friend's house. Or maybe she's planning to perform on the street or in a park. We like this picture because the girl seems to be enjoying herself. It makes us wonder who she is and where she's going with that guitar.

ASSIGNMENT

Now it's your turn. Take a close look at this picture. What questions does this picture raise in your mind?

1. Write down five questions that the picture raises in your mind. (For example: Is the surfer in control, or about to wipe out?)
2. Write a paragraph describing the image of the surfer. Make sure to include an answer to how the picture makes you feel.



Note: Be sure to save all your work throughout this course, as you will be required to edit and modify prior work as you go along.

LESSON 2

READING IMAGES AND ADVERTISEMENTS:
WHAT A PHOTOJOURNALIST SEES

Lesson 1 demonstrated how pictures tell stories and how we read those stories. This lesson concentrates on the “author” responsible for those stories/pictures: the photojournalist. In a split second, the photojournalist makes a decision to take a photograph that can tell a story for a lifetime.

Let's look at what a photojournalist sees when he or she takes a picture and what elements make a photograph special.

2a



2a

Some students won't know what a photojournalist is. Put a definition together using the compound word's parts. *Photo* they understand. A *journalist* writes about current topics for a newspaper, magazine, or news site. A *photojournalist*, then, is a “writer” who uses images to convey ideas about current topics. Instead of using a pen and ink to inform or persuade, he uses a camera.

INVENTION AND PERSUASION 3

James Allen Walker is a photojournalist with *WORLD Magazine*. He's taken thousands of pictures over the course of his career, but this is one of his favorites.

"Choosing one photo that I've made as my favorite is not an easy task. One reason is most of the images I make for *WORLD Magazine* are often very similar. More often than not I make a portrait of someone I've just met for the first time. Getting to know that person becomes part of the task of illustrating them for the magazine story. However, in the case of this shot I made the person that I'm illustrating and I'm introducing him to the rest of



the world! He's my son, Ethan at six months old. It becomes plain why it happens to be my favorite photo, but let me expound.

"I didn't make this portrait for the purpose of a magazine cover. That came later. I've been photographing Ethan since minutes after my wife Beth gave birth to him. So, for me the picture is one example of a whole body of work, and it has become about me being a dad. It's also about sharing my life with this little person whom I adore. It's also about my sharing this treasured title with many other men who have children. All of whom execute the responsibilities in their own imperfect way. It's been a life changing experience through which God has taught me many lessons and He's made me aware of myself and how much I need Him to be a good dad. He shows me every day how I need to change my habits, and choose carefully every word in order to be a standard for Ethan. What a precious gift."

ASSIGNMENT

2b



1. List three things you liked about James Allen Walker's picture and three things you disliked.
2. Find a photograph that has special meaning to you. Write a paragraph describing why the image is so important to you. Remember, you are helping the reader to understand the meaning behind the image.
3. Write a paragraph describing what someone else might have seen as they looked at the image without the knowledge you had of the image.

2b

Many students are comfortable telling you what they think or feel. Fewer are capable of telling you why. For those unable to explain why the photo's important, try a goading prompt. When the student says, "This photo makes me smile," ask her why. "This photo makes you smile because . . . ?" This sort of prompt can help when any student shares a thought or feeling but gives no rationale for it.

4 COMPOSITION I



LESSON 3

READING IMAGES AND ADVERTISEMENTS: THE STORY BEHIND THE IMAGE

They're funny. And they sell a lot of chicken. If you live in one of the states that boasts one or more Chick-fil-A restaurants, you probably recognized these cows even before you read the signs they are wearing. If you did recognize the Chick-fil-A cows, you have seen Chick-fil-A's advertisements.

Advertisements are ubiquitous—whether you are driving down the street, reading a magazine, watching TV, or checking your e-mail, you can't get away from companies trying to sell you something.

Advertisers' influence begins early with advertisements, commercials, and images. Did you know that by the age of two, many toddlers recognize logos for companies and products such as McDonald's, Chuck E. Cheese's, and Cheerios?

Besides feeling annoyed when a commercial interrupts your favorite television program, you may have become so used to ads that you barely notice them. But advertisers will try all

kinds of tricks to get your attention. Advertisers are particularly interested in you. Why? Kids in your age group as a whole spend about \$50 billion a year.

That brings us back to the cows. Why use cows to advertise for a restaurant that doesn't even sell beef? The idea of cows making signs that promote chicken sales to save their own hides is funny. Advertisers sometime use humor to get your attention. Creating recognizable characters helps, too. The Chick-fil-A cows are not regular cows; these cows are known for spelling words incorrectly. The cows give Chick-fil-A's brand a personality. It's hard to feel connected to a chicken sandwich. But people emotionally connect with the cow characters.

Chick-fil-A spent millions running their cow campaign, and their food sales increased greatly. Companies would not spend such big money on ads if they didn't work. Do advertisements work on you? Can you think of anything you've bought (or wanted to buy) because you liked the ad?

3a



3b



ASSIGNMENT

1. Make a list of at least 15 items you find in your home that have visible brand names or logos.
2. Chick-fil-A uses cows instead of chickens in their advertisements. Assume that you are the advertising agency trying to convince the founder of Chick-fil-A to go with the image of a cow over a chicken. Write a paragraph to convince him.

LESSON 4

READING IMAGES AND ADVERTISEMENTS: THE MESSAGE BEHIND THE ADVERTISEMENT

Whether they're drinking soda, driving cars, or mopping floors, most people in advertisements have one thing in common: They're smiling. Often, the advertisement lists all the reasons we should buy a product ("This car gets the best gas mileage in its class. Its safety rating is unbeatable."). At the same time, the beautiful, contented-looking models in the ad silently create another message: "Look at us. We're happy. If you buy this car, you'll be happy too."

You should be using the same careful eye to examine ads as you did the surfer earlier. Why? Advertisers are constantly trying to sell you something. Each company wants us to believe its product is the best. When people have lots of choices, many of them fairly similar, a company must make people believe they need (or at least really want) that company's product. If a company can't get enough customers, it'll go out of business. The company must make its product stand out.

3a

Advertisements attempt to persuade us of something. *Commercial* ads try to get us to buy some product or sign up for some service. The Chick-fil-A cows ad is a good example.

Talk with students about how ads work. How do they convince us we "need" a chicken sandwich, a smart phone, or a new pair of shoes? Is it in the words they use? The images? Analyzing ads will train them to be critical thinkers. They'll learn to filter out an ad's noise to hear what it's trying to convince them of.

3b

See any pattern in students' answers to question 1? Are most of the items clothing, electronics, food, something else? What thoughts or feelings do those brand names or logos stir up? Why might that be? Does advertising play a role? Does experience with the brand? What's the main reason students or their families buy the brand(s)?

6 COMPOSITION I

That's why it's important to look at the tactics advertisers use to influence you to buy products. An ad is an image with a message. Some messages are printed right on the page. Imagine a toothpaste ad. Emblazoned across the top of the page is this motto: "Blinding White toothpaste will brighten your smile!" Below are two pictures.


In one, a yellow-toothed girl stands alone, looking sad. In the next picture, teeth now white, she's smiling and laughing with a group of friends. Which child would you rather be like? What message would you get from the pictures? If you said something like, "People will like you better if you whiten your teeth with Blinding White toothpaste," you understand the advertisement's implicit message.



Targeting emotions can be particularly effective with tweens and teens. When trying to sell to kids your age, advertisers often focus on worries you already have. They want to make you think you need their product to fix a particular problem—yellow teeth, acne, bad breath, and so on. Ads can make you feel even more insecure about your “flaws” if you buy into their messages.

Ads often focus on outward appearance and the things we own. It is easy to get caught up in the desire to look great and have the latest phone or other gadget. In general, the message of advertising is, “We can fix you. We can give you a great life. Buying stuff is fun, and it will make you happy.”

If you are not carefully “reading” the ads that come your way, you’re more likely to let their hidden messages influence your worldview. Everyone has a worldview. The beliefs that determine how you look at and live your life make your worldview. As Christians, we need to remember that we don’t belong to this world (John 15:19). We belong to Christ. Our joy and fulfillment come through him, not through products we purchase. Believing in Christ gives meaning to our lives; products and advertisements want you to believe in their product’s power to improve your life.



TESTING THE WATER

Pictures, words, advertisements all have the power to make you feel. They can make you feel happy or sad, thirsty or hungry. Most importantly, they can make you feel like you need what they are selling. You need the grape-flavored drink in the ad to be stronger or you need to try that sandwich with five different types of cheese and purple ketchup to be happy.

Everywhere you go and look, advertisers are speaking to you through their messages. When you made a list of brand names and logos in your house, how many did you find? Which ones did you find? In your home—when you wake up, open your refrigerator, or go into the kitchen—advertisers are speaking to you and your family through these messages.

Knowing this is important. The people making these advertisements don't want you to think. They only want you to listen to and learn from them. Why think when you can watch television and listen to advertisements that tell you how to live? Why think when you can read a magazine in a comfortable chair and see what you need to live a happy life?

If you listen to advertisements, you will learn how a pair of jeans can make you happy, what food will make you stronger, what toothpaste will make your teeth whiter, and what computer will make you look smarter. Advertisements tell you what an ideal world could look like.

I once had a student who bought a bottle of water because advertisers claimed the water came from a tropical island in the South Pacific. This "island" water came in a bottle that had a beautiful picture of paradise with palm trees, a shining sun, and a bright blue waterfall. My student told me the water tasted better than other bottled waters because it came from this beautiful place. In fact, my student wouldn't drink any other water—nothing tasted as good as her "island" water.

Let's think about that. My student believed this water was ideal because the bottle implied or said it came from a beautiful waterfall on an island in the South Pacific. I had to test this student's belief.

First, I found five colored cups. In a yellow cup, I poured "island" water. In blue, red, and green cups, I poured other bottled waters. In the orange cup, I poured tap water from the kitchen sink. My student did not know which water was in each cup. This is called a blind taste test. She took a drink from all the cups and then ranked them in terms of taste. Which water do you think she thought was best or worst?

She chose the water in the green cup—another bottled water—as the best tasting. Her second best tasting water was tap water from the kitchen sink! The "island" water in the yellow cup came in fourth. My student even said the water in the yellow cup tasted "dirty."

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What do we learn from this? Advertisers' messages and images can be very powerful. The images they use can make us believe in and want what they are selling. You and I need to read advertisements very carefully and realize they are making promises or presenting ideas that may not be true.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Find an advertisement online or in a magazine that interests you.
2. Write a two- to three-sentence description of the ad. (Example: This advertisement is for Jump-high Shoes. The picture shows a tall, sweating athlete jumping and dunking a basketball. The athlete looks happy and is wearing the shoes.)
3. Then answer these questions:
 - a. What is the ad selling?
 - b. What is the stated message?
 - c. Look carefully at the picture. What is its unspoken or implicit message?
4. What tactics does the ad use to persuade you to buy the product? Here's a list of possibilities:
 - a famous person using the product
 - value/price
 - humor
 - before/after pictures—this person looks much better after using the product
 - image—you'll be cool if you use this product
 - fear—if you don't use this product people will not like you
 - facts and statistics—9 out of 10 bicyclists ride this bike
 - top of the line or "snob" appeal
 - scarcity or limited supply appeal—this product is made of the rarest materials
 - adventure or fun appeal

4a



4a

Students may find questions 3 and 6 challenging. Both ask them to interpret an ad. "What is its unspoken or implicit message?" That question may be especially difficult. To point students in the right direction, you may need to ask a few leading questions.

Imagine the sweaty-athlete ad mentioned in question 2. You could pose questions like these. "Why's the athlete sweaty? Why's he smiling? Did his shoes help him dunk the ball?" This last question invites students to make a claim and defend it. Feel free to challenge them by taking the opposing view.

- “fix-it” appeal—this product will make you prettier, younger-looking, healthier
5. Do you like this advertisement? Why or why not?
 6. In this advertisement, do you think the stated or the unstated message is more likely to persuade people to buy the product? In other words, which message is stronger? Why?

LESSON 5

READING IMAGES AND ADVERTISEMENTS: STYLE, DICTION, AND REVISION

When you hear the word “grammar” what springs to mind? Pages of worksheets with sentences to correct? Notes in red all over your paper? Learning grammar is necessary to writing well. The rules are there for a reason. For instance, if you use vague pronouns all the time, your readers get confused. Knowing rules—such as how to properly construct a sentence—will improve your style. The more you know about how grammar works, the more comfortable you will be experimenting with sentences and language. And people who are comfortable with language make better writers.

In this lesson we’re covering an easy one—*its* and *it’s*.

People confuse the two all the time. Here’s why: *its* is possessive. Often, a possessive requires an apostrophe. If I’m talking about the car that belongs to John, I would say “John’s car.” But some possessives—like her, his, and its—don’t require an apostrophe. For example, if we were talking about a car’s tire, we would write “its tire,” not “it’s tire.”

It’s is a contraction, or a way to put together the two words *it is*. So if you write “it’s tire,” you’re really writing, “it is tire,” which doesn’t make sense.



5a



5a

Grammar is important, but some ways of learning it are better than others. Worksheets have their place, as do handbooks on the mechanics of writing. (A good handbook is a great addition to a class library. It’s a handy reference for word forms, sentence structure, punctuation, and the like.) Students learn grammar best, though, when they study it in the context of their own writing. *Composition* takes this approach.

ASSIGNMENT

Number a piece of paper from 1 to 7. Read the paragraph below which contains seven uses of *its* or *it's*. For *it's*, substitute the words *it is*. When you say it out loud, does the sentence still make sense? If not, this should be the possessive *its* instead. If *its* is being used correctly, then substituting *it is* should sound wrong. On your paper for each instance, write "Correct" or "Incorrect" and write the correct one for any that are wrong.

A puppy is different from a full-grown dog in many respects. When **it's** first born, **its** not aware of people at all. This may be due to not yet having **it's** eyes open. Once a few weeks have passed, the puppy opens **its** eyes and can begin to react to **it's** environment. As **its** trained, a puppy can grow into a loving companion that interacts in a satisfying way with **its** owner.

LESSON 6

READING SENTENCES: KNOWING THE SUBJECT

Which sentence describes the photo better?

The girl is on the cow.

The teenaged girl riding the brown and white cow is teaching it to jump over a hurdle.

That's pretty easy, right? The first sentence doesn't give us any real idea of what's happening in the picture. But even if you couldn't see the picture, the second sentence gives enough information that you could recreate it in your mind. Your cow and girl and the hurdle it is jumping over might look different, but you'd have the basic idea.

If you understand that simple illustration of the importance of pertinent details in writing, congratulations! You've grasped one of the key elements of good writing. Over the next few lessons we're going to examine ways of making sentences more descriptive.



INVENTION AND PERSUASION 11

Don't worry—we're not going to have you rush to your thesaurus and add in a bunch of smart-sounding words. We just want you to take some time to think about the words you use. Can you use more specific words that will help your readers better visualize what you're



describing to them?

How would you describe this picture? Let's start with the subject of the picture. By subject we mean the central figure. The subject of the picture will also be the subject of your sentence. We could say the subject is "a child," but that does not give readers a very specific picture. What are some other nouns we could use that help the reader see in their minds what's on the page? The child looks very young, so we could probably use one of these nouns:

Toddler
Preschooler

The child's hairstyle and clothing look female, so we could say:

Girl

6a



6a

Effective sentences have strong subjects. By *subject*, we mean both what the sentence is about and who or what is "doing" the action of the verb. A *strong* subject is a descriptive one. Students may find it easier to write with strong subjects if they think of them as characters. Have students describe their favorite characters from books, plays, or movies. Those descriptions will be detailed, colorful, and memorable, like students' subjects should be.

12 COMPOSITION I



The subject of this picture is a man. If we look at the details of the picture, we can be more specific. Two other nouns that are more descriptive of this subject are

Artist
Painter

Can you think of any others?

ASSIGNMENT

1. Flip through copies of *WORLD Magazine* or another magazine or online source until you find an interesting photograph. Make sure you choose a photograph that has some good visual details. We'll be coming back to it over the next few lessons as we build an effective sentence that helps your readers imagine the photograph. Write your answers to the following:
 - a. What or who is the subject (or subjects) of the photograph?
 - b. What's another, more descriptive noun you can use to identify this subject?
2. You are the subject. Come up with at least ten nouns that describe you. I'll get you started: Student, middle-school scholar...

LESSON 7

READING SENTENCES: KNOWING THE SUBJECT BETTER

In the last lesson, we looked at the subjects of two pictures. By subject, we mean the person, animal, object, place or thing that the picture is about—the central figure. When we say a sentence has a subject, it is just like the subject in the picture: The central character or topic of the sentence. The subject is always a noun (a person, place, or thing).

To make writing detailed and descriptive—so that someone can actually get a mental picture of what we're talking about—we need to be as specific as possible when we choose each word in a sentence. *Cougar* is more descriptive than *animal*. *Cookie* is more descriptive than *snack*. *Writer* is more specific than *person*.

When someone says "cookie," we want to know what kind. Is it a *chocolate chip* cookie, *peanut butter* cookie, or *Snickerdoodle* cookie? The italicized words in the last sentence describe or modify the noun *cookie*; they are called adjectives. Well-chosen adjectives are of utmost importance when it comes to good description. I should warn you, though, it is easy to get carried away. Let's look back at our pictures from yesterday.

Which is a better description?

A fascinated blonde toddler

A cherubic, blonde-haired, blue-eyed, purple-clad female toddler

The second one gives more information, but it seems forced. No one talks that way. You've overwhelmed your reader with too much information even before you even get to the subject. You can include some of those details later in the sentence. An avalanche of adjectives will create lots of detail. But some of that detail is unnecessary and distracting.

What about the second picture? There's lots of detail to choose from here—the artist is male, he's middle-aged, he's wearing a hat and a jacket. He's holding a palette and brush, and he's got a goatee. Remember that all the description doesn't have to come in adjectival form.

We would probably start off with details that describe the artist himself:

A goateed, middle-aged artist

How would you describe him?

7a



7a

This lesson introduces the concept of balance. Students will need time to develop their own sense of it. If they believe the second example is better, they aren't wrong per se. That sentence does give a lot of detail, and details are a good thing. That one sentence, though, says everything there is to say about the child.

Creating alternative descriptions of images is good practice. It'll help students find the balance their details need.

DANGEROUS ADJECTIVES

Adjectives can make your writing more specific and help people see a picture. Adjectives are one feature that can turn good writing into great writing.

However, did you know that adjectives can be dangerous? A sentence can have too many adjectives. Look at the example in this lesson:

A cherubic, blonde-haired, blue-eyed, purple-clad female toddler

This writer uses eight—yes, eight—adjectives to describe a child. When people talk, they use adjectives, but rarely do they use eight. This writer is forcing adjectives into this part of her sentence and, as a result, creates a phrase that is forced. Too many adjectives will cause your audience to stop listening before they ever finish reading the sentence.

I once had a student who wrote a paper describing a summer trip through Italy. The student loved her trip, but she was really excited about: *gelato*. Gelato is an Italian ice cream; it is richer, creamier, and tastier than ice cream in the United States. Even I love gelato, but this student was crazy about it.

When the time came for this student to write about gelato, she wrote a lot. Sadly, she wrote a lot of adjectives—too many adjectives. Here is one sentence from her paper:

When we got to Florence, the first thing we did was buy gelato. We found a gelato shop, and I looked at the counter. They had chocolate gelato, lemon gelato, lime gelato, hazelnut gelato, pistachio gelato, vanilla gelato, cream gelato, cappuccino gelato, raspberry gelato, chocolate chip gelato, banana gelato, peach gelato, pineapple gelato, coffee gelato, blackberry gelato, fig gelato, strawberry gelato, dark chocolate gelato, peanut butter gelato, champagne gelato, and many other types of gelato.

Do you see the problem? I understand that the shop sold many flavors of gelato, but this sentence actually fails to make this point. I stopped paying attention at



“hazelnut.” This writer feels it is necessary to tell me every flavor the shop sold, and she uses adjectives to do this. In other words, this sentence has too many adjectives.

This student could use fewer, smarter adjectives to create a better picture of all the gelato this shop sold. For example, she might write:

When we got to Florence, the first thing we did was buy gelato. We found a gelato shop, and I looked at the counter. This shop sold over 28 exciting flavors of gelato.

I like this revision: It tells me that the shop had a lot of gelato and lets me know that the author is excited about all the gelato. More importantly, I know this and am ready to move to the next sentence.

You want to use adjectives in your sentences, but you should use them carefully. Use adjectives to encourage your readers to read more, to see what you are describing. Do not overload sentences with adjectives or force them on your readers. Using a few well-chosen adjectives can improve a sentence more than a large number of adjectives.

ASSIGNMENT

1. Take another look at the picture you chose in Lesson 6.
 - a. Make a list of all the adjectives you can think of to describe the subject of the picture.
 - b. Write a short description (e.g., “a goateed, middle-aged artist”). Choose the adjectives that best describe the subject without overdoing it. Try to list at least fifteen specific descriptions. Avoid easy, generic descriptions such as *man* or *old*. You may list more than fifteen if you would like.
2. List at least fifteen adjectives that describe *you*. These descriptions should be things that distinguish you from somebody else. Again, avoid easy, bland adjectives. They should be things that show how unique you are.

LESSON 8

READING SENTENCES: STRONG SUBJECTS NEED STRONG ACTIONS

In the first two sections, we have worked on defining the subjects of two pictures. We've labored to find specific nouns to name them. We've studied the pictures, culling details so we can include accurate adjectives. Accurate adjectives help readers envision what we're seeing on the page.

To create a strong sentence, the next step is turning our subject into an actor. Creating actors requires verbs.

Specific, lively verbs propel good writing. How do you like that verb? *Propel* works well because it helps generate a picture of an object moving forward. And that's just what strong verbs do. They create action in your sentences. Strong verbs help your sentences get somewhere instead of stalling into vagueness.

Sometimes, though, nothing really happens in a sentence. The sentence might merely explain a state of being, or existence. *She is pretty. She was late. He was the winner.* These verbs—*is, am, are, was, were, be, being, been*—are all being verbs.

Sometimes we need this type of verb. But whenever we can employ a more descriptive verb, we should. Writing full of "being" verbs doesn't create vivid word images, so we should eliminate as many as we can.

"The blonde toddler is looking at cupcakes" uses a being verb. Can you choose more descriptive verbs? How about:

The little blonde-haired girl *sees* a plate of cupcakes.
The little blonde-haired girl *stares* at a plate of cupcakes
The little blonde-haired girl *gazes* at a plate of cupcakes

Can you think of any other possibilities?

"The artist is standing by a picture he painted" could use a stronger verb. The picture seems staged. Perhaps the photographer told the artist to stand next to the picture with his palate. If that's true, here's a good description:

The artist *poses* next to a picture he painted.

Or we could say:

The artist *pretends* to paint a picture.

You get the idea. You need to make every word—especially the verbs—in your sentences count. Otherwise, your sentences will lack action and be boring.


8a



8a

Most students write many sentences that use verbs of being. This is natural. (Catch that? That last sentence used *is*, a verb of being.)

Some zealous teachers forbid their use. The zeal may be admirable, but the prohibition isn't. Nor is it realistic. Let students write drafts with as many *be* verbs as they wish. Then, have them revise using stronger verbs/verb forms. Encourage students to expand their repertoire of vivid verbs.



MAKING EVERY VERB COUNT

Kim Stegall, an editor with *God's World News* magazines, always faces the challenge of telling big stories in small articles, without losing any of the interest. Her experience can help you learn to make every word count:

"Sometimes with a piece of writing I evaluate words individually. I ask whether each one pulls its own weight. Do some fail to convey precise meaning? Does a single word exist that could replace a string of them? Could any be cut entirely? Shorter isn't always better. But it often is. And since verbs are usually the workhorses of a sentence, they demand strict consideration. Verbs should tighten and clarify content, infuse color, progress plot, and imply tone. A lawyer I once worked for told me that he never used exclamation points. He said that if he found himself unable to achieve enough emphasis without them, he hadn't chosen the right verb."

ASSIGNMENT

1. Pull out your picture again. What's happening in the picture? Write your answers to the following:
 - a. Using your imagination, what are three action verbs you think this character did before the picture was taken?
 - b. What are three action verbs that the character might have done after the picture was taken?
2. What activities do you enjoy taking part in? Write six verbs that describe you—do you *compete in track*? Do you *devour* great books? Do you *love* watching funny insects? Like in the last lesson choose actions that show how special and unique you are.

LESSON 9

READING SENTENCES: USING ADVERBS TO ANSWER IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

With our subject and verb in place, we've got everything we need for a complete sentence:

The toddler stares.
The artist poses.

We've even added some adjectives to help set our subjects apart from the crowd—some details that help us recognize them:

Blonde
Goateed

But adjectives only describe nouns. And we haven't finished describing the picture. We still need more words to help readers create a mental image that matches the images we're looking at.

We need some adverbs. Adverbs describe or modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. They answer important questions in a sentence. They tell where, when, and how actions take place. Adverbs also show degree (the *better* runner, the *worst* sandwich.)

Look back at the pictures. Can we add some adverbs that help describe *how*? (Hint: these adverbs often end in *-ly*.) For instance, we could say:

The blonde toddler gazes *longingly* at the cupcakes.
The goateed artist poses *stiffly* in front of his painting.

Wow! We've come a long way. We can—and will—add some more words, but we'll bet you could already start forming pictures in your mind that match the ones on the page.

9a



ASSIGNMENT

1. Look at the verbs that you came up with in the previous lesson. Pick one of those to describe with an adverb. Because adverbs can be easily overdone, we don't want to write an adverb for every verb we write. Whenever possible, we want to allow our action verbs to be strong enough to stand alone.
2. Look back at your verbs from last time. What adverbs could you use to better define how you do the things you do?
 - I devour books *daily*.
 - I compete *tenaciously*.
 - I love watching insects *more than anything else*. (This is an adverb showing degree, or how *much* you love this activity.)

9a

Lists of adverbs may not pop into students' minds. If not, remind them of a common way to make them. Add *-ly* to an adjective. *Voracious*, for example, becomes *voraciously*. Have students review the adjectives they brainstormed in Lesson 7. Have them practice turning those adjectives into adverbs.

LESSON 10

READING SENTENCES: SENTENCES CAN CREATE IMAGES

If you can learn to create images with words, you've mastered a skill that you'll need in all kinds of writing. Good writing helps readers see what you're talking about. Readers should be able to picture what you're describing in their minds.

Let's look back at our two pictures. Compare these two sentences about the first picture:

A child sees some cupcakes.

A small blonde-haired girl watches intently as an adult sprinkles toppings onto a plate of cupcakes.

Both accurately describe the picture. But one is clearly superior and more specific. By using adjectives (blonde), adverbs (intently), and strong verbs (sprinkles), a bland sentence can be transformed into a detailed, interesting one.

Compare these sentences about the second picture:

A man stands by a painting.

A middle-aged, goateed artist wearing a hat and holding a paintbrush poses next to a painting of a boat in the water.

Both meet the requirements for a sentence—they have a subject and a verb. But the first contains almost no information. Writing a sentence with no substance is like sending an envelope with no letter inside—it is a waste of postage.

If you learn to carefully choose your words and craft them into meaningful sentences, you've taken the first step toward becoming an excellent writer.



SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

We've tried to show you how to add details to make your sentences informative and interesting. But did you know that one of the most common mistakes writers make when they write sentences is not writing sentences at all?

Let us explain. A sentence must have a subject and a verb.

Babies cry. (*subject/verb*)

Dogs bark. (*subject/verb*)

Birds fly. (*subject/verb*)

I'm sure none of you would think this is a sentence:

On the stove. *(It has a noun, stove, but no verb.)*

But what about this one?

Because I like to play tennis. *(It has a noun, I, and a verb, play. But is it a sentence? No.)*

Why not? It begins with *because*, which belongs to a group of words called subordinating conjunctions. Parts of sentences (clauses) that contain subordinating conjunctions have a subject and a verb. But they cannot stand alone.

If you sat down across from a friend at lunch and said, "Because I like to play tennis," he would wait to hear the rest of your sentence. It doesn't make sense by itself.

Later we'll learn more about parts and types of sentences and how to combine them. But for now, a good way to check your writing for this error, called a sentence fragment, is to read each sentence aloud. If you can't say it by itself and have it make sense in conversation, it's not a sentence. It's a sentence fragment. That's why

I went roller-skating. *(This is a sentence.)*

After I went roller-skating. *(This is not.)*

Look back over the sentence you wrote about the image you chose. Does it have a subject and a verb? Now read it out loud. Does it make sense?

ASSIGNMENT

1. Look back over the nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs you came up with to describe your picture. Now put the best ones together into a short paragraph that creates a word-image of the picture you chose to describe. Add additional words and phrases to fully detail what's going on in the picture.
2. Now have a parent read the description; do not let her see the picture. After she has read the sentence, give your parent the magazine and have her look for the picture you described. Was she able to find it based on your description?
3. Write three short paragraphs about yourself as if you were writing a newspaper article. Here's what someone's might look like:
 "The forty-two-year-old writer and mother of three enjoys relaxing with a good book when she's not busy running kids to and from school and extracurricular activities."

10a



10a

This is the first "real" writing we've asked from students. Further, we ask them to "publish" their writing by sharing it with you. Some students may be apprehensive about sharing their work. Remind them that becoming a good writer is like becoming a good athlete. Sometimes, the best way to improve—or the only way—is to take the advice of a coach.

It's been a delight for our journalistic team at World News Group to work with the folks at Veritas Press in creating this writing manual. This combination of sponsors offers an intensely practical perspective on the writing task while simultaneously meeting curricular requirements. Students and their families will find here the helpful preparation they will need as Christian wordsmiths, both in their undergraduate and more advanced studies, and later on in the workplace. In those regards, this manual has no equal.

—JOEL BELZ

FOUNDER | WORLD MAGAZINE



ISBN 978-1-936648-65-8



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