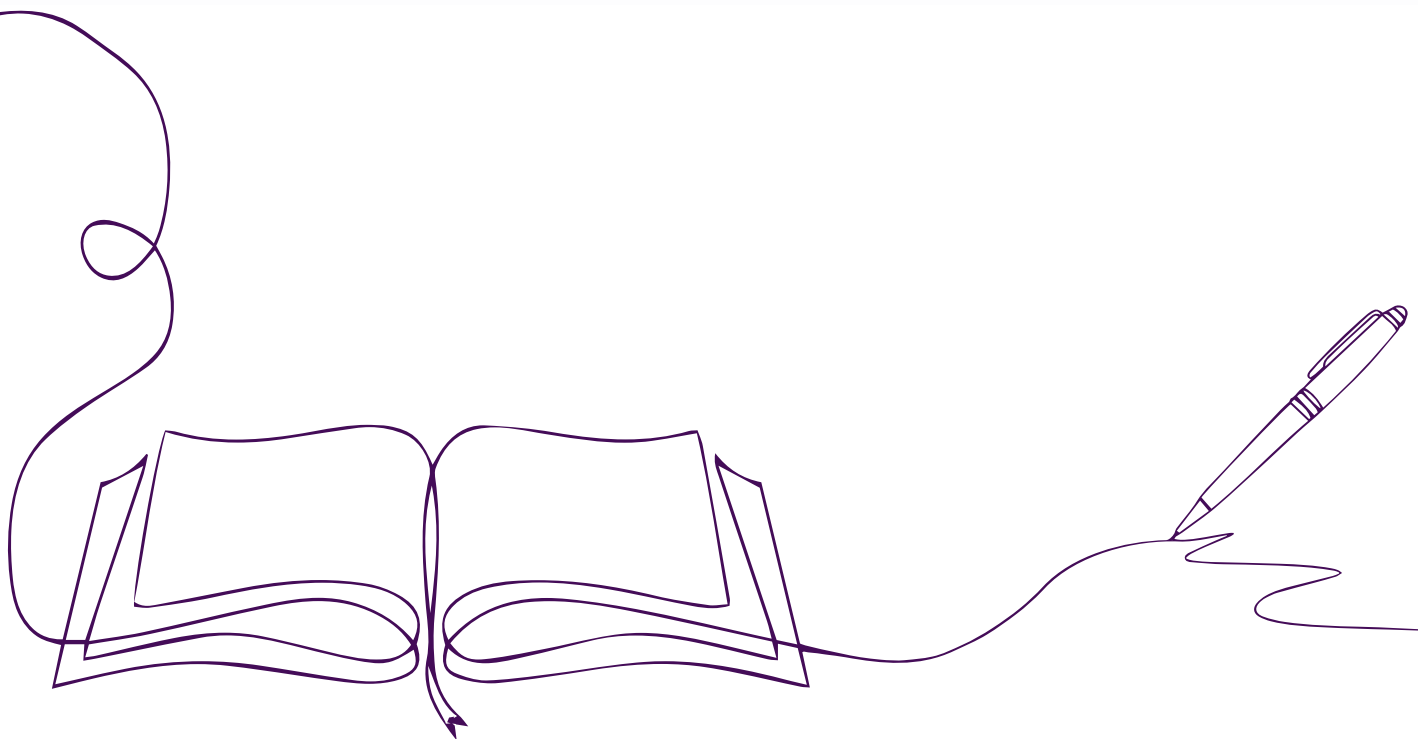


Level 3
Volume 1

FUNDAMENTALS of WRITING





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Introduction

Welcome to Fundamentals of Writing Level 3! In this workbook, we will explore a wide variety of writing genres, as well as many key writing skills that will help your writing shine. You may have already mastered basic essay writing skills, but review never hurts, so some of the basics will also be reviewed as we learn new skills.

Once you graduate high school and go out to the world, you will find that there is not a single area of life in which writing does not play a prominent role. Whether you are a concerned citizen writing an email to a local politician, a manager writing a memo to staff members, or an entrepreneur writing a proposal to potential investors, strong writing skills are a very important part of effective communication.

Before every writing assignment, you will be introduced to a writing skill. This skill will be the writing focus of the assignment, and you will practice implementing that skill as you complete your assignment.



Unit 1

Personal Writing

1. Personal Essay

Writing focus: sentence complexity

2. Memoir

Writing focus: sentence expansion

3. Professional Bio

Writing focus: tone



Lesson 1

Personal Essay

Our first essay will be a personal essay, which is when the writer explores personal experiences, reactions, or feelings. The writing focus will be the ability to balance sentence complexity.

A. Writing Focus: Sentence Complexity

1. An important part of writing is keeping your sentences the right length. Sentences should not be too lengthy and complex, but they also should not be too short and choppy. You should have a variety of sentence styles and lengths, with the occasional longer or complex sentence interspersed between medium-sized sentences. Very short sentences should be kept to a minimum.
2. Splitting up lengthy sentences is usually easy to do, but fixing short sentences can sometimes be a bit more tricky. Here are a few methods for lengthening shorter sentences.

a. **Conjunctions.**

Combine two short sentences by using a conjunction. There are two types of conjunctions: coordinating and subordinating .

Coordinating conjunctions: and, or, but, so, yet, for, nor.

Examples:



1. *They planned to meet for breakfast, but the bagel store was closed.*
2. *Please try to get ready faster, or we will all be late.*
3. *My uncle from Memphis visited us, and we spent a nice day in the park.*

b. **Subordinating conjunctions:** because, although, until, before, after, unless, when, if, while, to.

1 A coordinating conjunction precedes a coordinate clause, as opposed to a subordinating conjunction which precedes a subordinate clause. See glossary for the difference between a coordinate and subordinate clause.





Examples:

1. *I stopped by his house because he wasn't answering his phone.*
2. *Unless it snows, we can spend the day together.*
3. *The room was quiet while the baby slept.*

Note that the coordinating conjunctions are preceded by a comma but not the subordinating conjunctions. (For the rules of commas before conjunctions, refer to the "Grammar Rules" in Appendix A, section 1.)

c. **Compound predicates**

Combine several sentences with the same subject to create a compound predicate. A compound predicate is made up of several actions.



Examples of compound predicates:

1. *We went to the wedding and danced with our friends.*
2. *I warmed up the pot, set the table, and brought out drinks.*
3. *Dr. Stein entered the room, studied the patient's chart, and sat down.*

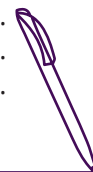
Note that when there are three or more actions, commas are placed after each one except the last. (For the rules of commas in a series, refer to the "Grammar Rules" in Appendix A, section 2.)

d. **Sentence expansion**

This will be explained in a future lesson.

1 The subject of a sentence is the main person, place, or thing that the sentence is about. It is usually the noun at the start of the sentence. See the glossary for example sentences.

2 The predicate of a sentence is what the subject does or is. It is the action of the sentence. See the glossary for example sentences.





TRY IT YOURSELF

Fix each group of sentences on the lines provided using one or more of the methods covered in the lesson.

1. Ari was late to his job interview. Ari raced out the door. He forgot his keys.

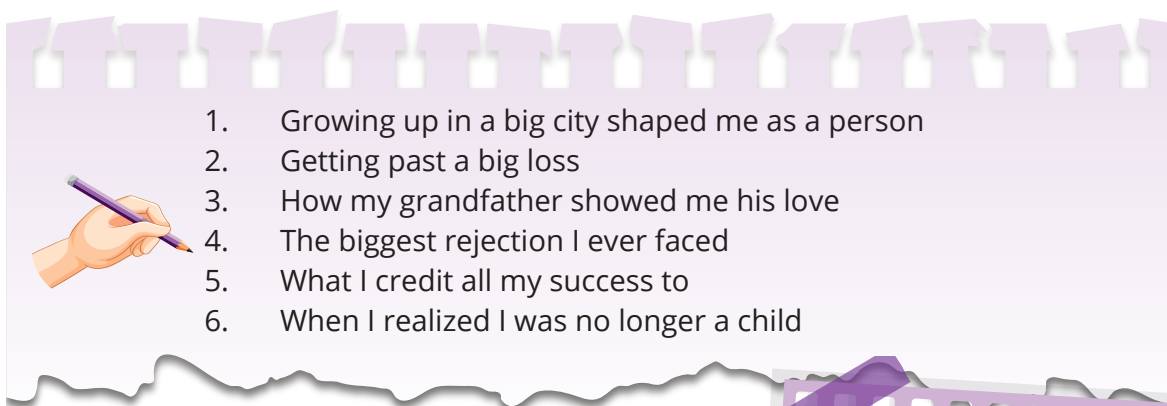
2. Tova drove ten miles to the nearest pharmacy. It was closed for the night.

3. The men entered the forest. They searched for a water source. Eventually, the men found a river.

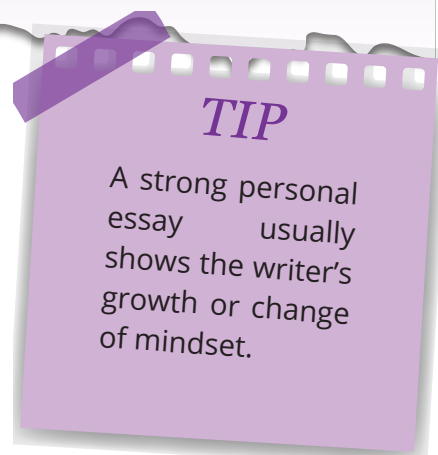
4. Wait by the door. Do this until the guests arrive.

B. Sample Personal Essay

A personal essay explores the writer's own experiences. It is nonfiction (discussing only true events) but focuses on the writer's feelings about a topic rather than simply relating events as they transpired. The following are examples of personal essay topics:



Read the sample writing below. It is a short personal essay. The parts of the essay are named in the margin. Red markup shows how sentences were revised to balance sentence complexity.



Introductory paragraph

These two sentences have been combined using a compound predicate.

I will never forget the teacher who believed in me and taught me how to believe in myself. Until seventh grade, I just floated along on the sidelines. I had no friends^{and} I barely got above passing grades. Then I met Mrs. Moskowitz, who was our afternoon teacher. Right away, she took me on as her "project," and under her wing, I blossomed.

This long sentence has been split in two.

Throughout fifth and sixth grade, I hardly paid attention in class. I spent more time doodling and daydreaming than studying. Teachers would just shake their heads at me after a half-hearted attempt to get me to take class more seriously.^{and} everyone made it clear that they didn't think I would ever get anywhere in life. I was just the quiet girl who didn't show interest in anything.



These two sentences have been combined using a coordinating conjunction.

When Mrs. Moskowitz entered our classroom for the first time, I could see she was different. She knew how to be stern and fair at the same time. On the very first day, she realized that I was silently calling out for help. That same day, she kept me after class ^{and} ~~We~~ spoke for over two hours! Her warmth and understanding made me open up to her. Between my laughing and crying, we forged a bond that continues to this day.

Over the course of the year, I made a complete turnaround. Mrs. Moskowitz gave me the confidence I never had, and I was soon making lots of friends. My grades shot up as well. I am now in eleventh grade, and I am still considered one of the top girls in my class.

Conclusion

Mrs. Moskowitz taught me how to believe in myself even when no one else did. To this day, I owe all my success to her. She was the first teacher who rooted for me and showed me that someone cared.

Let us study the sections of the above essay.

Introduction: In this paragraph, the author introduces the main topic of the essay—how a teacher helped her when she was struggling in school.

Body paragraphs: In these three paragraphs, the author details what she was going through and how her teacher showed her compassion and helped her.

Conclusion: In the final paragraph, the author sums up her experiences and why they were important.

TIP

Other important tips to note

- Do not go off topic in a personal essay. Every detail mentioned should help support the main theme.
- A personal essay should be about the writer's personal feelings, growth, or impact, not a simple narration of events.





Lesson 2

Memoir

A memoir is a short autobiography¹ or biography of another person written based on personal experience. A memoir is usually much more personal than a personal essay. It delves deeply into very private feelings or musings and has very strong themes that are meant to touch the reader's emotions. The writing focus will be sentence expansion.

A. Writing Focus: Sentence Expansion

1. In a previous lesson, we learned about combining short sentences using conjunctions and compound predicates. Another way to fix short sentences is called sentence expansion. This is when more details or explanation are added to a sentence, usually by using one of two methods: appositives or prepositional phrases. Even when sentence length does not need to be fixed, adding appositives and prepositional phrases can help improve the clarity of your writing by providing vital details.
2. An appositive is a phrase that defines or renames a noun. It is usually set off with commas to separate it from the rest of the sentence, with some exceptions.

In the following examples, the appositives appear bolded, and the nouns that are renamed are underlined.

(For the rules of commas with appositives, refer to the "Grammar Rules" in Appendix A, section 3.

Examples:

1. Yellowstone National Park, **the U.S.'s first national park**, is home to the famous Old Faithful geyser and Grand Canyon.
2. Franklin D. Roosevelt, **the 32nd U.S. president**, won four consecutive elections.
3. The Chevrolet Bolt, **a popular EV (electric vehicle)**, had several recalls over safety concerns with its battery.



¹ An autobiography is a biography (the history of a person) that the author writes about themselves.

3. A **prepositional phrase** is a phrase that begins with a preposition (such as at, before, with, for, under, near, and by) and modifies (explains) a noun or verb. A prepositional phrase usually answers one of the following questions: where, when, why, how, which one, or what kind.

In the following examples, each prepositional phrase appears bolded, and the noun or verb being modified is underlined. The parenthesis after each sentence notes which question about the underlined word(s) is answered.



Examples:

1. We enjoyed a delicious picnic **at the lake.** (where)
2. She lost control of the wheel **right before the accident.** (when)
3. He walked into the store by **the gas station.** (which one)





TRY IT YOURSELF

Expand each sentence on the lines provided by adding appositives and/or prepositional phrases.

1. My uncle helped me find work.

2. Two dark SUVs were parked in front of her house.

3. The Department of Health contacted Shlomo after his injury.

4. Chaim Eisenberg convinced the judge to drop Shimon's ticket.

B. Sample Memoir

A memoir is nonfiction writing in which the author explores events that they witnessed themselves. It is defined by heavy themes that are meant to touch the reader's emotions, usually by revealing deeply personal feelings or emotions. The following are examples of memoir topics:



1. My ambitions to become a paramedic
2. How I felt about having my mother as a teacher
3. What it's like to be the son of a mayor
4. Coping with diabetes
5. My grandfather, the pioneer

TIP

Make sure your topic is a deeply personal one that can evoke strong emotions in the reader.

Read the sample writing below. It is a memoir. The parts of the essay are named in the margin. Red markup shows how short sentences were expanded and clarifying details added during revising.

Introductory paragraph

An appositive added to provide important information.

I am the oldest child in my family. I have two brothers and three sisters, and we live in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. We are a typical Jewish family, except for one thing that stands out: my brother Aharon's ^{a medical condition that affects breathing}asthma. [^]Asthma attacks are very serious and can be scary for everyone.

Body paragraphs

Prepositional phrases added to expand the sentence and add explanation.

By the time Aharon turned two, he had been hospitalized twice. I still remember the first time he was hospitalized when he was only ten months old. That's when the doctors told my parents about his condition. Since then, our family revolves around Aharon. My parents have to always make ^{When we go on family trips,}sure he has all his medicine before they go anywhere. ^{if Aharon feels out of breath}~~We~~ often have to stop to rest or take it easy. [^]

Prepositional phrases added to expand the sentence and add explanation.

My parents trust me to watch Aharon, but this can sometimes feel like a tremendous responsibility. One time, my parents ^{visiting my grandparents in Wisconsin}were away. [^]I had to watch Aharon overnight, and I was so nervous that I couldn't sleep the entire night. I kept getting ^{to check on Aharon}up. [^]After that, my parents always hired an aid when they



had to go away overnight.

Sometimes, Aharon's condition makes me worried, but my parents are always very relaxed about it. Even the times when he had trouble breathing and we had to call an ambulance, they never lost their cool. Their strength is contagious and makes me feel confident[^] that everything will be all right

Prepositional phrase added to explain better.

Conclusion

Having a brother with asthma can sometimes feel like the defining character of our family. I can get overwhelmed at times because of everything, but my parents give me the strength to believe that we will always be safe.

Let us study the sections of the above essay.

Introduction: In this paragraph, the author introduces the main topic of the essay—how he copes with having a brother who has asthma.

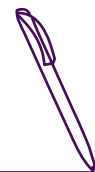
Body paragraphs: In these three paragraphs, the author details what it's like to have a brother with a serious medical condition and how he feels about it.

Conclusion: In the final paragraph, the author sums up his feelings and how his parents give him the strength he needs to deal with everything.

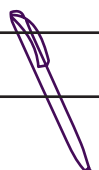
TIP

Other important tips to note

- A memoir should be deeply personal and touch the reader's emotions. It should share your deeply felt desires, ambitions, or feelings.
- Keep the reader connected and make them feel like they understand something about you or the person you are writing about.



Lined writing area with horizontal lines.



Lesson 3

Professional Bio

Our next writing genre is a professional bio, also called a bio for short. A bio introduces you as a person in a formal and professional way. It often accompanies a resume when you apply for a job, but it can also introduce you in a book, website, company brochure, or online business profile. A bio highlights your background, education, credentials, skills, and interests. The writing focus for this section will be avoiding wordiness.

A. Writing Focus: Avoiding Wordiness

1. Writing that is bloated with extra words can be boring to read and sounds less intelligent. A writer should always be on the lookout for obvious, redundant, or wordy phrases to trim out. The following are four common examples of wordiness in writing:

- a. **Obvious details:** Many times, a detail is obvious and should be removed.

Examples:



1. The **camera** photo showed a family dressed for a wedding.
(Photos are usually taken with cameras, so this adjective is obvious.)
2. The **glass** windows shook when the movers dropped the bookcase.
(Windows are commonly glass.)
3. He gulped down the water **to quench his thirst**.
(Gulping water shows you are thirsty.)

- b. **Redundancies:** Many times, details are already inferred from other words in the sentence, making them redundant.



Examples:



1. **Loud** music blasted from the speakers.
("Loud" is redundant since it says that the music was blasting.)
2. He raced **quickly** down the path.
("Raced" means quickly.)
3. She tiptoed **quietly** past the sleeping child.
("Tiptoed" means quietly.)

- c. **Wordiness:** Many common phrases are very wordy and should be reworded whenever possible. The following are some wordy phrases and how they can be replaced with more concise writing:

Wordy

Regardless of the fact that
In my humble opinion
Due to the fact that
She is a person who enjoys
He opened his mouth to speak

Concise

Even though
I think
Because
She enjoys
He spoke

- d. **Empty phrases:** Sometimes, empty phrases can be removed entirely. Think carefully before adding extra phrases to your writing. The following are examples of phrases that can often be removed entirely:

Examples:



1. *As a matter of fact*
2. *Suffice it to say*
3. *I would be remiss not to mention*
4. *Let me remind you*





TRY IT YOURSELF

Rewrite each sentence to correct wordiness. Remove obvious or redundant words and revise wordy phrases.

1. At 3 p.m. in the afternoon, Dovid met up with the other players on his team.¹

2. Truth be told, the wet pool was too cold for us to take a dip.²

3. It was at that point that Shira and Elisheva went into the shade to get out of the sun and continued their conversation.³

1 Three p.m. is clearly the afternoon. "Other players on his team" can be condensed to "his team."

2 "Truth be told" serves no purpose in this sentence. "Wet pool" is redundant.

3 "Then" is more concise. The shade is, by definition, out of the sun.

B. Sample Bio

A bio is a formal description of yourself that sheds a positive light on your skills and background. It includes important information such as:

- job title or position
- unique skills
- work history
- interests and goals
- accomplishments
- education
- location

Read the sample bio below. Red markup shows how sentences were revised to reduce wordiness.

Since it says she is a speech therapist, this detail is obvious.

An extra phrase and a redundant adjective were removed.

A redundant word was removed.

Rivka Goldwasser, SLP is a speech therapist with over ten years of experience ~~in helping people with speech issues~~ and hundreds of happy clients. ~~As a matter of fact,~~ her unique blend of compassion and ~~skillful~~ professionalism helps her develop a tailor-made program to support each client's needs. Rivka earned her Master's in Speech-Language Pathology at Emerson College and is ~~officially~~ licensed by the state of Florida in SLP. She currently works for the Sunshine State Therapy Group, located in Tallahassee, Florida

Let us study the sentences of the above bio.

In the first sentence, the author introduces herself and lists her job title and accomplishments. In the next sentence, she highlights her skill and unique approach to her work. In the third sentence, she mentions her education and credentials. In the final sentence, she gives her current location and workplace.

TIP

Other important tips to note

- A bio should be very formal and concise.
- A bio should include important information about you, as well as something personal, such as your goals, passion, interests, or unique approach.

