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Writing Concepts Directory

Topic	Exercises	Topic	Exercises
Punctuation, capitalization	1–4, 7	Sarcasm and slang	32, 36
Spelling, possessives	1–4, 7	Exaggeration	33, 36
Subject-verb agreement	5, 7	Pompous (self-important) constructions	34, 36
Pronoun references	6, 7	Sexism and bias	35, 36
Double negatives	8, 14	Awkwardness	37, 38, 42
Parallelism	9, 14	Needless prefaces and qualifiers	39, 42
Run-on sentences	10, 11, 14	Fact vs. opinion	40, 41, 42
Sentence fragments	11, 14	The five W's and an H	43, 44, 49
Misplaced modifiers	12, 14	Using details	45, 46, 49
Dangling modifiers	13, 14	Organizing	47, 48, 49
Tense shifts	15, 20	Summarizing	48, 49
Active and passive voices	16, 17, 20	Formal style	50, 51, 54
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Sentence length	19, 20	Complaint letter (point of view)	52, 53, 54
Job applications	21, 22	Internal paragraph unity	55, 56, 59
Similar-word confusion	23, 24, 29	Paragraph coherence (logic, transitions)	57, 58, 59
Jargon	25, 29	External paragraph unity	60, 66
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Redundancy	28, 29	Interview request letter	63–66
Strong vs. weak verbs	30, 36	Résumés	67, 68
Nominalizations	31, 36	Follow-up letters	69, 70

How to Use This Book

Anyone entering the job market today directly from high school, a GED program, or a junior or technical college needs competitive writing skills. This publication will help you develop them through exercises based on real job situations.

These exercises require you to do more than fill in forms. On-the-job writing is much more than that. In this book you will closely examine sentence mechanics, word choice, tone, point of view, detail, organization, and job writing formats. While doing so, you will work toward a clear, concise style that you can use to communicate with confidence.

While *Better Writing for Better Jobs* generally progresses from “simple” to more complex concepts, each exercise makes use of a variety of writing and business communications principles. For example, the main purpose of a given exercise may be to make you aware of common verb errors. But you and fellow learners could also use it as the springboard for a discussion of memo style, business etiquette, or the particular field of work mentioned in the exercise.

You will find short “Checkups” throughout the text. They always cover material found in the previous four to six exercises. These will help you see whether you have mastered the material before you move on. You can also check your answers for the exercises and Checkups. Notes and answers are provided for each section.

In any writing class, it is good to discuss the principles and procedures before beginning an exercise. Be sure you understand the “concept” that usually appears at the top of the exercise before continuing. If the exercise requires creative thinking, a class brainstorming session may be in order. Working in pairs or small groups will also be helpful in some cases. Workplaces today often rely on group and team effort. This will give you valuable practice.

As you move into paragraph writing, allow plenty of time to revise. Revision is absolutely necessary for good writing. If it is hard for you to see how you could improve your own writing, you might want to trade papers with other students and give each other fair, honest criticism.

If some exercises seem too complex, you can break them into smaller, shorter tasks. For example, instead of plunging into writing a whole paragraph at once, first come up with the main idea, then the topic sentence, then the supporting material, then the concluding sentence. Lastly, redraft the whole paragraph.

What if you think you can’t do a certain exercise because you know little about the particular business mentioned? Remember that it’s clear writing you’re shooting for, not expert knowledge of that field.

Also take into account your own learning style. Some people learn best by reading about what they’re supposed to do, some by hearing about it, some by seeing examples, some by talking about it, and others by all of the above. Some people work best on their own, quietly, while others thrive on sharing ideas. Some people need background noise in order to concentrate. When possible, try to accommodate each other’s needs.

Completing this book will help give you a solid foundation in business writing skills. You will be convinced of how important these skills are by collecting and studying samples of reports, memos, letters, and forms from the working world, and through listening to guest speakers from local businesses and industries. Work with your teacher to gather these resources and people and to learn from them. *Better Writing for Better Jobs*, combined with outside resources, will give you a substantial edge over job seekers who haven’t done the work. And remember, learning is a lifelong project. We hope you will find it an enjoyable one.

SECTION 1

Writing Sentences That Make the Grade

1. Employee Suggestions: Sentence Basics

Directions

A co-worker is about to give her supervisor the following list of suggestions for improving working conditions and morale. She has asked you to look at it first and correct her mistakes in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar. Rewrite each numbered suggestion on the lines below it. Circle the errors in the old sentence first, if you need to. Try to improve the style and rhythm of the sentence as you rewrite it.

Inkspot Printing, Inc.
Interoffice Memo
To: Ms. Alvarez
From: Sarah Jones
Date: 8/26/99



At the August 25 meeting of the Employee Input Committee, we came up with the following ideas and comments.

1. Employees should get a bigger discount: on Company Products and services.

2. Inkspot should revue it's salary structure, since many employees question whether they are being payed enough?

3. The copy machene operators, would like gas masks to save them from the gross odours.

4. Employees want to have a say in how projects assigns to the different work groups.

5. A speciale sertificate for employees with especially good ideas for improving the company would be real nice.

6. Wonderful Web Designers the company who we sometimes use their work has been getting even more sloppier.

7. Everyone on the nite crew at the Washington st. plant would like to have the electronic alarm code a key and access to the supply room.

8. We should elect two people each month, to watch for employees who are affective; and rewards them with a free lunch!

9. We think Carrie m. is steeling (from the company.

10. The companies motto should be just when you need us their we are with good advise.



Which of the suggestions above would management welcome? Which lack backup information? Which are just silly?