

Writing Skills for Today

Grade 4

SAMPLE

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Writing Skills Mastery

Student Name: _____

Date: _____

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

	Skill Mastered	Needs Experience
Unit 1: Following Directions Skill Area: Basic Writing		
1. Believing that it is possible to follow directions		
2. Understanding that it is good to follow directions		
3. Understanding what makes a sentence		
Unit 2: Sentence and Paragraph Control Skill Area: Basic Writing		
1. Including more than one item in a sentence		
2. Understanding the relationship between main and subordinate ideas		
3. Writing an organized paragraph		
Unit 3: Write and Rewrite a Sentence Skill Area: Basic Writing		
1. Writing a simple sentence		
2. Making a simple sentence more complicated		

	Skill Mastered	Needs Experience
3. Connecting a number of complicated sentences to make a story		
Unit 4: My Friend Skill Area: Description		
1. Organizing what will be described		
2. Describing in sentences the appearance of a friend		
3. Seeking help from a parent		
4. Rewriting parts of a paper to improve it		
Unit 5: Point of View Skill Area: Creativity		
1. Understanding that characters think when they talk		
2. Writing about characters who think		
Unit 6: What Did You Do Today? Skill Area: Organization		
1. Organizing a description		
2. Using experiences to help organize		
3. Planning organized answers to questions		
Unit 7: Furniture Skill Area: Organization		
1. Examining a number of objects		
2. Organizing objects so their placement can be understood		

	Skill Mastered	Needs Experience
Unit 8: Out the Window Skill Area: Description		
1. Understanding that all people do not see the same things		
2. Organizing what is seen		
3. Establishing a character's position by telling what that character can see		
Unit 9: A Very Short Story Skill Area: Creativity		
1. Planning a very short story		
2. Writing the parts of a very short story		
3. Putting story parts together		
Unit 10: My Room Skill Area: Description		
1. Understanding that the world is an organized place		
2. Realizing the need to understand organization		
3. Describing something in an organized way		
Unit 11: How People Move When They Talk Skill Area: Description		
1. Punctuating dialogue		
2. Describing characters' dialogue		
3. Writing so that characters move as they talk		

	Skill Mastered	Needs Experience
Unit 12: Story Events Skill Area: Organization		
1. Understanding that a story is a series of events		
2. Understanding that the order of events is logical		
3. Writing a series of events for a story		
4. Creating a story from a series of events you have listed		
Units 13 and 15: Tell a Story Skill Area: Creativity		
1. Planning the telling of an event		
2. Supplying the details to the event		
3. Telling the parts of the event in order		
4. Maintaining a point of view		
Unit 14: Liking the Character Skill Area: Creativity		
1. Understanding that all characters in stories are not liked by all readers		
2. Creating characters who will be liked by your readers		



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

This exercise is about following directions. Remember when we talked about rules or guidelines? Rules help us communicate better. Directions are a little like rules. Following directions can also help us communicate better. Let’s have some fun following directions.

Read the paragraph below.

A sentence is a statement one person tells another. A question is what one person asks another. They both have to make sense.

Until you are older, there is no such thing as a one-word sentence.

One word is not a sentence. Read that sentence again. *One word is not a sentence.* Sometimes you have to follow directions even when you do not think you are doing so.

Sometimes two words can make a sentence. Bill ran. That is a sentence. Bill. That is not a sentence. Ran. That is not a sentence. A sentence must have two things: a noun and a verb. You already know this; this is not a grammar lesson. You are following *directions*, remember?

In our sentence, “Bill ran,” the word *Bill* is the subject. *A subject is a noun — a person, a place, or a thing.* Do you know a Bill who is a thing? Most Bills are people. I get and pay the gas bill, but that is something else.

Ran is a verb, a word that shows action. It is what Bill did.

Read this sentence twice. *Read this sentence twice.* Sometimes there is no way to avoid following directions, is there?

Writing

Write a two-word sentence.

Did you write a two-word sentence? If your two-word sentence starts with *Bill* and ends with *ran*, write one using different words. If you did not start with *Bill* and end with *ran*, do not write another sentence.

If your two-word sentence starts with a person or a place or a thing and ends with an action word, you might have written a good sentence. Tell your parent that you are at the end of today’s lesson.

Objectives:

- 1 Believe that it is possible to follow directions.
- 2 Understand that it is good to follow directions.
- 3 Understand what makes a sentence.

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

HINT! Every sentence ends with a period, an exclamation point, or a question mark.



This is an exercise in following directions, remember? Add one word to the two-word sentence that you wrote for lesson one. Your sentence will have three words in it. The third word will explain something to the reader that the reader might want to know: *Bill ran home*, *Dogs chase cats*, or *Mom burned dinner*. There still is a subject and there still is a verb, but there is more information. **The third word could be added anywhere in the new sentence that it makes sense.**

Write five sentences. Each one should add information to the one that comes before it. If you do not understand how many sentences you are to write, read this paragraph again. *The new words can be added anywhere to each previous sentence.*

The first sentence should have two words in it. Do not start with *Bill*.

1. _____ .

HINT! Do exactly as the directions tell you.

The second sentence should have three words in it.

2. _____ .

The third sentence should have four words in it. (Put the new word anywhere.)

3. _____
_____ .

The fourth sentence should have five words in it.

4. _____
_____ .

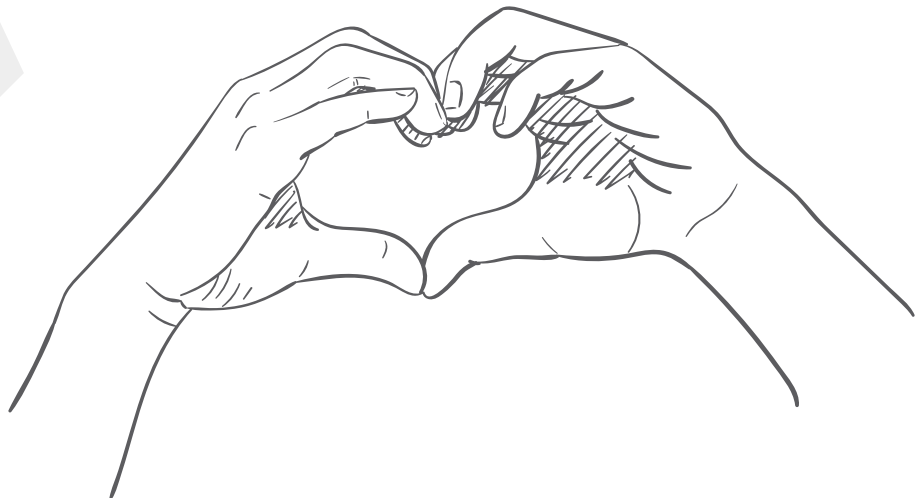
The fifth sentence should have six words in it.

5. _____
_____ .

Now go back and count the number of words in each of your sentences. If you do not have the right number of words in each of your sentences, erase some or add some.

Example:

1. Dogs bark.
2. Dogs bark frantically.
3. Upset dogs bark frantically.
4. Upset, territorial dogs bark frantically.
5. Concerned, upset, territorial dogs bark frantically.





Prewriting

It will make your writing more fun to read if your characters move their bodies when they talk to each other.

For this exercise you will have to watch how the members of your family move when they talk. See if the adults move differently than the kids do. You will find most people move their eyes, hands, feet, and shoulders when they talk.

Just as real people move when they talk together, your characters who are talking should have body movement descriptions along with what they say. It can read like the example below.

To show you how this works, I will put body movement descriptions in bold type. If you ask nicely, your parent may read this to you.

*John was getting mad. His voice rose **and he waved his hands in the air** as he shouted, “I get the catcher’s mitt!”*

*Bill, **looking John in the eyes**, said, “I get it today. I asked the coach yesterday.”*

“You did not. I was there, and you didn’t say nothin’ about today.”

*John **pointed his finger at Bill’s chest** and said, “I got the mitt, and I am gonna keep it.” **He put it behind his back.***

*Bill, **reaching behind John and trying to grab the mitt**, said, “Give it to me.”*

*As he **lifted his lip**, John answered, “Try and take it.”*

To show you how important it can be to let your reader see your characters move, I wrote this short conversation again and **took out** the movements. You will recognize that it is harder to “see” the characters when they do not have body language to go with their voices.

John was getting mad. His voice rose as he shouted, “I get the catcher’s mitt!”

Bill said right back at him, “I get it today. I asked the coach yesterday.”

“You did not. I was there, and you didn’t say nothin’ about today. I got the mitt, and I am gonna keep it.”

Bill said, “Give it to me.”

John answered, “Try and take it.”

Objectives:

- 1 Punctuate dialogue.
- 2 Describe characters’ actions.
- 3 Have your characters move as they talk together.

HINT! Separate what a person says from the rest of the sentence with commas.

Now it's your turn. You will decide on **two characters** for your dialogue and decide what they will **talk about**.

Step 1: Give your two characters **names**:

a. _____
_____ Age: _____ Sex: _____

_____ List three words that describe this person:

1. _____ 2. _____

_____ 3. _____

b. _____
_____ Age: _____ Sex: _____

_____ List three words that describe this person:

1. _____ 2. _____

_____ 3. _____

Step 2: Describe what they will **talk about**:

