

INTRODUCTION

TO THE STUDENT

Writing is one of the most important skills you will ever learn. Whether you like it or not, at some time in your life you will be called upon to put your thoughts in written words. Just suppose

- You have to explain why you want a certain job.
- You want to send your mother a special birthday or holiday greeting
- Your local hang-gliders club volunteers you to write the club history.
- Your boss wants a report on sewing-needle factories in South America.
- You have to make a welcome speech for new teachers at your school.
- You must convince someone to marry you.

All of these will be much easier if you know how to write.

Have you ever tried to play a violin? It might look easy, but the first time you pick up the instrument and draw the bow across its strings, the sound that comes out is not pretty. If you want to play you'll have to learn how. A teacher can show you where to put your fingers and how to handle the bow, but you're the one who has to practice. You would probably start with simple tunes like "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," then go on to more complicated pieces as your skills improve.

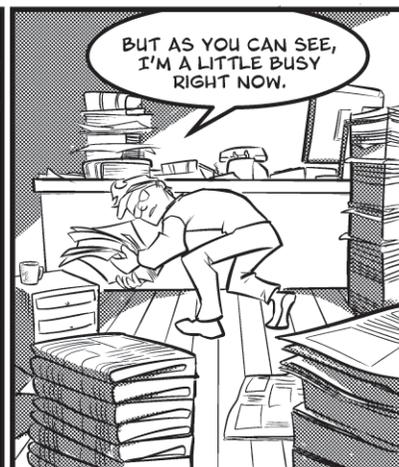
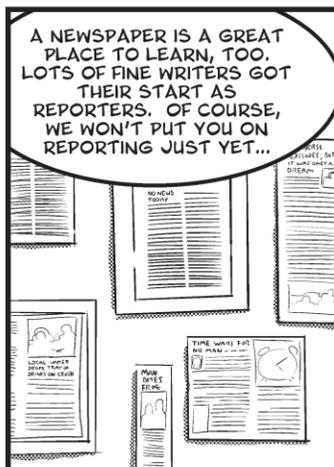
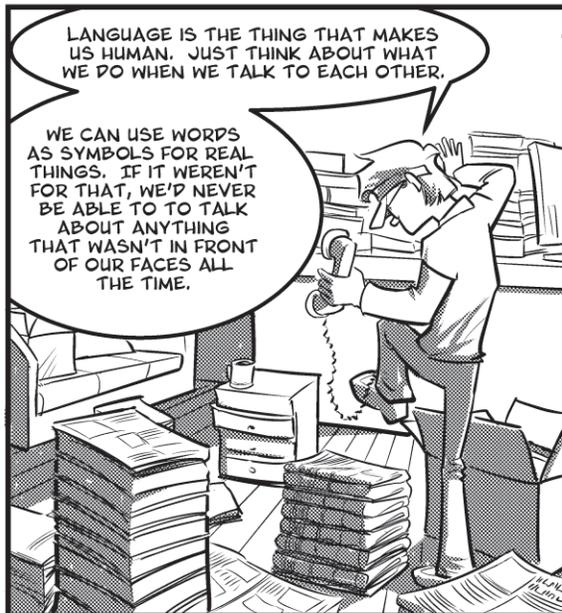
That's how we learn to write: by learning the skills and practicing them. By going slowly, step by step and year by year, we become writers. This book will help you get started on that road. To make the journey more interesting, we'll pretend you've got a job! You're going to work for a small-town newspaper.

Newspaper work involves all kinds of writing, from short and simple to long and complex. Besides this book, you'll need a notebook or notebook paper and several pencils. You should also keep a few copies of your local newspaper nearby because you will be using them for reference.

We'll start with little jobs like classified ads, picture captions, and "fillers." You will practice writing complete sentences and then use them in advertising, book reviews, and recipes. When you become a "staff reporter" you'll be ready to write news stories and editorials.

But first things first. Let's meet the editor of our newspaper

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A TOUR OF THE NEWSPAPER

Newspapers are divided into sections about different kinds of “news.” The larger the newspaper, the more sections it will have. Most newspapers follow a general pattern like the one below.

All these departments are included in our paper. During the time you’ll be working with us, you can expect to get at least a little experience in most of them.

NEWS



WORLD – NATIONAL - LOCAL

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

MOVIES
TV LISTINGS
ART EXHIBITS
BOOK REVIEWS



SPORTS



LIFESTYLES

INTERVIEWS
PUZZLES
COMICS
ADVICE COLUMNS



STYLE

FASHION
SOCIAL EVENTS
WEDDINGS



OPINION

EDITORIALS
COLUMNS
LETTERS TO THE
EDITOR



HOME

FOOD AND RECIPES
HOUSEHOLD HINTS
GARDENING



CLASSIFIED ADS

“FOR SALE”
“HELP WANTED”
REAL ESTATE
VEHICLES AND BO



TRAVEL

TRAVEL NARRATIVES AND TIPS



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WRITING IS ESSENTIAL, EDITOR INSISTS

As our editor said, writing is more than putting words on paper—that’s the easy part. Here, right at the beginning, is the most important writing tip I can give you:

**BEFORE YOU WRITE ANYTHING,
THINK!**

Who are you writing to? What is the main idea you want to get across? How do you feel about it? How can you lead up to it? Should you be serious, or is there room for laughs? How many words will it take to get the job done? What words will work best?

Thinking leads to writing and writing to more thinking. In fact, learning to write will also help teach you to think!

EAGER ROOKIE JOINS NEWSPAPER STAFF

“THIS KID SHOWS PROMISE,” EDITOR SAYS

Before joining the staff, you’ll have to fill out a job application. There’s nothing to it; just complete the blanks below and on the next page. You should know all the answers except perhaps your Social Security Number. Businesses that pay their employees must have that number for complicated reasons that have to do with taxes. Ask your parents about your Social Security Number, and if you don’t have one, we can still put you to work—that’s because we don’t pay anything!

APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT

NAME (last, first, middle) _____

STREET ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (if any) _____ BIRTHDATE _____

FATHER’S NAME _____

OCCUPATION AND JOB TITLE _____

MOTHER’S NAME _____

OCCUPATION AND JOB TITLE _____

BEST FRIEND _____

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NAME TWO ADULTS WHO ARE NOT RELATED TO YOU BUT KNOW YOU WELL:

NAME OF YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER _____

LIST THREE NEWSPAPER FEATURES THAT YOU WOULD MOST LIKE TO WRITE (see "Tour of the Newspaper" on p. 7):

LIST FOUR PLACES THAT YOU ENJOY VISITING:

LIST TWO PEOPLE YOU KNOW WHO HAVE DONE SOMETHING INTERESTING:

LIST THREE THINGS (besides money) THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE AS COMPENSATION (that is, pay) FOR YOUR WORK:

LIST ONE IDEA YOU ENJOY THINKING ABOUT:

PLEASE MARK ANY OF THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS THAT AFFECT YOU:

_____ Writer's Cramp

Allergies:

_____ Nosittus Toolongus

_____ Pencils

_____ Ink

_____ Wiggles

_____ Paper

_____ Thinking

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IMAGINATION STRETCHERS

We like employees who enjoy their work, even though that work can be demanding. That's why we encourage our writers to use their imaginations on assignments done "just for fun." Speaking of imagination—do you have one? Give yourself the following test to find out.

Close your eyes. Can you picture the following objects in your mind?

- A carousel (or merry-go-round)
- The local park
- The outside of your house or apartment building
- A zebra
- Your grandmother
- An oak tree

If you can picture any of these things, congratulations! You have an imagination.

Now suppose someone were applying for the position of your best friend, or your ideal little brother or big sister. What would you want to know about him or her?

Or, suppose you needed someone to fill an unusual job position. What would the application for a human cannonball or a rubber-chicken inspector look like?

In your notebook, write at least two application forms: one for an unusual job, and one for the position of friend or relative.

Is it a good thing we don't have to "apply" to be someone's friend?

PART ONE:

NOUNS, VERBS, AND BASIC SENTENCES

Almost 300 years ago, an Irish writer named Jonathan Swift wrote about the “Academy of Lagado,” a made-up place where scientists conducted weird experiments and taught some strange ideas. Among the learned experts at this school were a group of linguists (people who study language) who had decided that words were not necessary. Words, they believed, were not real things. To communicate, they carried sacks of “real things” on their backs at all times, and had “conversations” by showing these objects to each other.

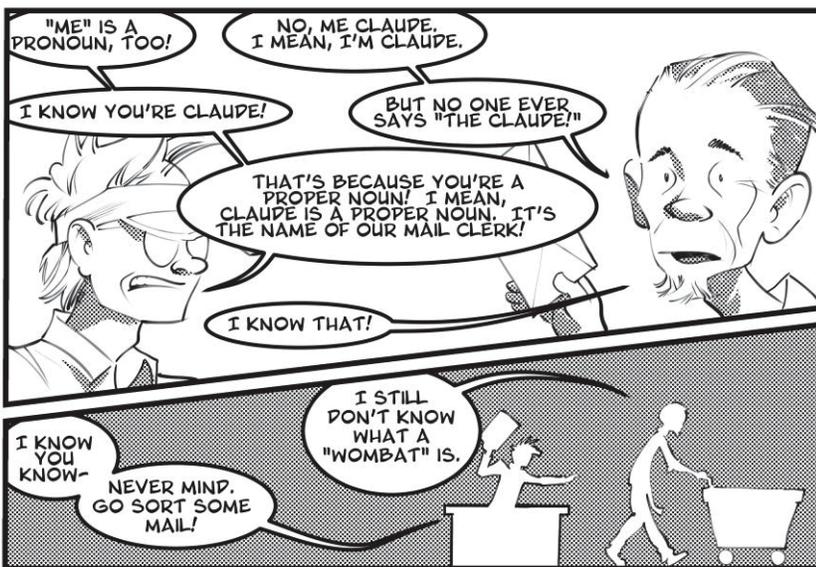
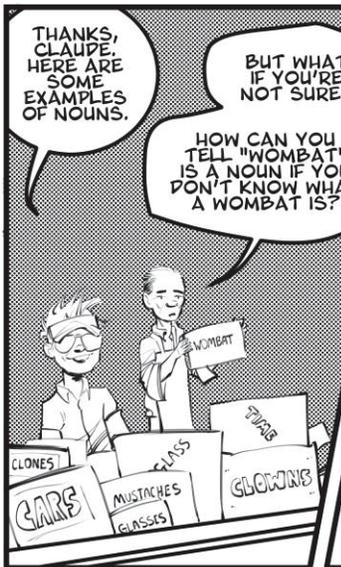
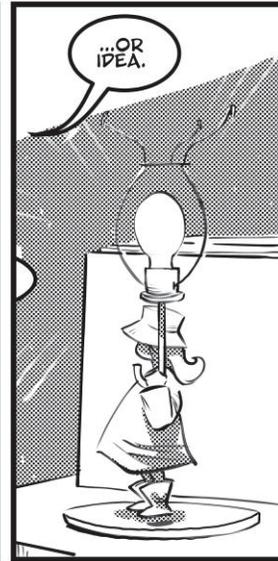
I’m glad this idea never caught on in the real world.

Remember what our editor said on page 6? Because of language, we can use words as symbols for real things. One hundred objects in your backpack could get very heavy, but 100, or even 1000 words in your brain weigh nothing at all! From the time you learned to talk you have used hundreds of words every day without even thinking about them.

Part of learning to write, however, means learning to think about words and how they join up to make sentences. That’s what the first two sections of this book are about. We’ll start with nouns and verbs, the two most important word groups a writer must know.

Our editor would like to talk to you about that . . .

PART I: NOUNS, VERBS, AND BASIC SENTENCES



EXPERTS AGREE: NOUNS AND VERBS ARE KEY TO LANGUAGE

Take a moment to look back at your application on pages 8-9. You'll see that almost all the answers you wrote were **nouns**: people, places, things, and ideas. Many of your answers were **proper nouns**, or names of particular persons and places (such as *PlayStation, Texas, George Washington, and Binky*). **Common nouns** are words that can apply to anything of a particular kind (such as *game, state, president, and teddy bear*).

Proper nouns are easy to recognize because they always begin with a capital letter. In the list below, write the common noun that shows what kind of object the proper noun is. The first two are done for you as an example. When you are finished, write today's date on the line below that reads, "I COMPLETED THIS LIST ON _____."

Schwinn _____ *bicycle* _____

Christmas _____ *holiday* _____

Burger King _____

WalMart _____

North Carolina _____

Dr. Smith _____

Houston _____

Canada _____

Roget's Thesaurus _____

Abraham Lincoln _____

I COMPLETED THIS LIST ON _____.

Sometimes nouns are difficult to recognize. Remember the editor's advice:

If a word that is *not* a proper name can be used in a sentence with "a," "an," or "the" in front of it, the word is a noun.

The little words *a, an, and the* are called **articles**, but we think of them as "noun markers," because they *only* appear with nouns.

LIST MANIA STRIKES NEWSPAPER STAFF

Do you know someone who makes lists? List-makers are usually people who like to organize their thoughts or remember what they need to do that day or week. A list can also help us sort out what's important to us, or let someone know what we like or what we've done. You made several short lists on your job application—lists of persons, places, and things. Turn back a few pages and look at your answers again. How many proper and common nouns did you list? Count them and put the number here. _____

Every word in the following lists should be a noun. If you're having a hard time thinking of enough people, places, things, and ideas to fill the blank lines, it may help to

PART I: NOUNS, VERBS, AND BASIC SENTENCES

brainstorm with a friend or relative. But don't give up: keep thinking until you fill in all the blanks.

List A: Two of my favorite foods from each of these food groups

Meat:

Dairy:

Grains and cereals:

Fruits and vegetables:

List B: Six sounds I like hearing (such as musical instruments, someone's voice, etc.)

List C: My five favorite places to go

List D: Four things I don't like to hear people say

List E: The perfect birthday present for each of three people in my family

List F: Four qualities* I like in a best friend

*A quality is any feature of a thing (or person) that helps make it what it is. Qualities of people could be selfishness, intelligence, kindness, temper, generosity, etc.