

# Open Education Resources Book

# High School Equivalency

## Language Arts – Writing



**HEP**



**WEST HILLS**  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT  
HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY PROGRAM

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**High School Equivalency Program**



# Contents

Language Arts - Writing .....	5
Information on what is on the HiSET Exam: .....	5
Chapter 1: Basic English: Usage .....	5
Subject- Verb Agreement .....	5
Gerunds .....	6
Verb Tense .....	7
Simple Verb Tenses.....	7
Perfect Verb Tenses.....	8
Verbs.....	10
Helping Verbs.....	11
Modal Auxiliaries .....	11
Subjects.....	11
Adjective .....	12
Adverbs .....	12
Prepositions.....	13
Nouns.....	13
Pronouns.....	13
Attribution: .....	15
Chapter 2: Writing Conventions: Mechanics .....	15
Punctuation .....	15
Coordinating Conjunctions .....	15
Dependent Words .....	16
Capitalize .....	17
Commas .....	17
Commas in a List of Items.....	18
Commas before Conjunctions in Compound Sentences.....	18
Commas before and after Interrupting Words .....	19
Commas in Dates, Addresses, and the Greetings and Closings of Letters .....	19
Semicolons to Join Two Independent Clauses .....	21
Colons .....	21

Quotation.....	21
Apostrophes.....	22
Contractions .....	22
Parentheses .....	23
Dashes.....	23
Hyphens .....	23
Homonyms.....	23
Synonyms.....	24
Antonyms.....	24
Context Clues.....	24
Attribution: .....	24
Chapter 3: Language Facility: Sentence Structure .....	24
Components of a Sentence .....	24
What are Fragments? .....	25
Common Sentence Errors.....	25
Run-on Sentences .....	25
What Is a Relative Clause?.....	26
Subjects.....	26
Prepositional Phrases .....	27
Attributions:.....	27
Chapter 4: Preparing for the HiSET Exam essay.....	28
How to write an essay: .....	28
Outlining an Essay.....	28
Thesis Statement .....	28
Select Primary Support Details for Your Thesis.....	29
Choose Supporting Topic Sentences .....	30
Organizing your Writing.....	30
Chronological order .....	31
Transitions Words.....	31
Orden of Importance .....	33
Writing an Introduction .....	34

Writing a Conclusion.....	34
Attributions:.....	37
Practice Exams.....	38
HSE Open Education OER Team: .....	38

# Language Arts - Writing

## Information on what is on the HiSET Exam:

For information on what is on the HiSET exam, refer to the website link below:

<https://hiset.ets.org/about/content>

## Chapter 1: Basic English: Usage

### Subject- Verb Agreement

Subject-verb agreement describes the proper match between subjects and verbs.

Agreement in speech and in writing refers to the proper grammatical match between words and phrases. Parts of sentences must agree, or correspond with other parts, in number, person, case, and gender.

- **Number.** All parts must match in singular or plural forms.
- **Person.** All parts must match in first person (I), second person (you), or third person (he, she, it, they) forms.
- **Case.** All parts must match in subjective (I, you, he, she, it, they, we), objective (me, her, him, them, us), or possessive (my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, their, theirs, our, ours) forms.
- **Gender.** All parts must match in male or female forms.

Because subjects and verbs are either singular or plural, the subject of a sentence and the verb of a sentence must agree with each other in number. That is, a singular subject belongs with a singular verb form, and a plural subject belongs with a plural verb form.

Examples:

**Singular:** The cat jumps over the fence.

**Plural:** The cats jump over the fence.

### Regular Verbs

Regular verbs follow a predictable pattern. For example, in the third person singular, regular verbs always end in -s. Other forms of regular verbs do not end in -s. Study the following regular verb forms in the present tense.

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I live	We live
Second Person	You live	You live
Third Person	He/She/It lives	They live

### Practice Activity

On your own sheet of paper, write the correct verb form for each of the following sentences.

- 1) I (brush/brushes) my teeth twice a day.
- 2) You (wear/wears) the same shoes every time we go out.
- 3) He (kick/kicks) the soccer ball into the goal.
- 4) She (watch/watches) foreign films.
- 5) Catherine (hide/hides) behind the door.
- 6) We (want/wants) to have dinner with you.
- 7) You (work/works) together to finish the project.
- 8) They (need/needs) to score another point to win the game.
- 9) It (eat/eats) four times a day.
- 10) David (fix/fixes) his own motorcycle.

### Gerunds

A gerund is a form of a verb that is used as a noun. All gerunds end in **-ing**. Since gerunds function as nouns, they occupy places in a sentence that a noun would, such as the subject, direct object, and object of a preposition. You can use a gerund in the following ways:

- **As a subject**  
Traveling is Cynthia's favorite pastime.
- **As a direct object**  
I enjoy jogging.
- **As an object of a preposition**  
The librarian scolded me for laughing.

Often verbs are followed by gerunds.

Gerund Verb	Followed by a Gerund
moving	Denise considered moving to Paris.
cleaning	I hate cleaning the bathroom.
winning	Nate imagines winning an Oscar one day.
worrying	Mom says she has stopped worrying.
taking	She admitted taking the pumpkin.

## Verb Tense

You must always use a verb in every sentence you write. Verbs are parts of speech that indicate actions or states of being. The most basic sentence structure is a subject followed by a verb.

### Simple Verb Tenses

Verb tenses tell the reader when the action takes place. The action could be in the past, present, or future.

Past	← Present →	Future Yesterday
I jumped.	Today I jump.	Tomorrow I will jump.

**Simple past verbs are used when the action has already taken place and is now finished:**

- I washed my uniform last night.
- I asked for more pie.

- I coughed loudly last night.

**Simple present verbs are used in the following situations:**

- When the action takes place now  
I drink the water greedily.
- When the action is something that happens regularly  
I always cross my fingers for good luck.
- When describing things that are generally true  
College tuition is very costly.

**Simple future verbs are used when the action has not yet taken place:**

- I will work late tomorrow.
- I will kiss my boyfriend when I see him.
- I will erase the board after class

**Practice Activity**

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by adding the verb in the correct simple tense.

1. Please do not (erase, erased, will erase) what I have written on the board.
2. They (dance, danced, will dance) for hours after the party was over.
3. Harrison (wash, washed, will wash) his laundry after several weeks had passed.
4. Yesterday Mom (ask, asked, will ask) me about my plans for college.
5. I (bake, baked, will bake) several dozen cookies for tomorrow's bake sale.

**Perfect Verb Tenses**

Up to this point, we have studied the three simple verb tenses—simple present, simple past, and simple future. Now we will add three more tenses, which are called perfect tenses. They are present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect. These are the three basic tenses of English. A past participle is often called the -ed form of a verb because it is formed by adding -d or -ed to the base form of regular verbs. Past participles can also end in -t or -en. Keep in mind, however, the past participle is also formed in various other ways for irregular verbs. The past participle can be used to form the present perfect tense.



Review the following basic formula for the present perfect tense:

Subject	+ has or have	+ past participle
I	have	helped

The present perfect tense has a connection with the past and the present.

Use the present perfect tense to describe a continuing situation and to describe an action that has just happened.

- I have worked as a caretaker since June.

This sentence tells us that the subject has worked as a caretaker in the past and is still working as a caretaker in the present.

- David has just received an award from the Dean of Students.

This sentence tells us that David has very recently received the award. The word just emphasizes that the action happened very recently.

Study the following basic formula for the past perfect tense:

Subject +	had or have +	past participle
I	had	listened

The bus had left by the time Juan arrived at the station. Notice that both actions occurred entirely in the past, but one action occurred before the other. At some time in the past, Juan arrived (simple past tense) at the station, but at some time before that, the bus had left (past perfect).

Look at the following basic formula for the future perfect tense:

Subject +	will have +	past participle
I	will have	graduated

The future perfect tense describes an action from the past in the future, as if the past event has already occurred. Use the future perfect tense when you anticipate completing an event in the future, but you have not completed it yet.

- You will have forgotten me after you move to London.

Notice that both actions occur in the future, but one action will occur before the other. At some time in the future, the subject (you) will move (future tense) to London, and at some time after that, the subject will have forgotten (future perfect tense) the speaker, me.

## Verbs

A verb is often an action word that shows what the subject is doing. A verb can also link the subject to a describing word. There are three types of verbs that you can use in a sentence: action verbs, linking verbs, or helping verbs.

### Action Verbs

A verb that connects the subject to an action is called an action verb. An action verb answers the question what is the subject doing? In the following sentences, the words underlined twice are action verbs.

- He **gave** a short speech after we ate.
- The dog **barked** at the jogger.

### Linking Verbs

A verb can often connect the subject of the sentence to a describing word. This type of verb is called a linking verb<sup>11</sup> because it links the subject to a describing word. In the following sentences, the words underlined twice are linking verbs.

- The coat **was** old and dirty.
- The clock **seemed** broken.

If you have trouble telling the difference between action verbs and linking verbs, remember that an action verb shows that the subject is doing something, whereas a linking verb simply connects the subject to another word that describes or modifies the subject. A few verbs can be used as either action verbs or linking verbs.

**Action Verb:** The boy looked for his glove.

**Linking Verb:** The boy looked tired.

## Helping Verbs

A third type of verb you may use as you write is a helping verb. Helping verbs are verbs that are used with the main verb to describe a mood or tense. Helping verbs are usually a form of be, do, or have. The word can is also used as a helping verb.

- She **can tell** when someone walks on her lawn.
- We **have seen** the movie three times.

## Modal Auxiliaries

Modal auxiliaries are a type of helping verb that are used only with a main verb to help express its mood. The following is the basic formula for using a modal auxiliary:

Subject	Modal Auxiliary	Main verb
James	may	call

A type of helping verb that is possibility only used with a main verb to help express its mood.

### Remember

- ✓ Verb tenses tell the reader when the action takes place. • Actions could be in the past, present, or future.
- ✓ There are some irregular verbs in English that are formed in special ways. The most common of these irregular verbs are the verbs to be, to have, and to do.
- ✓ There are six main verb tenses in English: simple present, simple past, simple future, present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect.
- ✓ Verbs can be followed by either gerunds or infinitives.

## Subjects

When you read a sentence, you may first look for the subject, or what the sentence is about. The subject usually appears at the beginning of a sentence as a noun or a pronoun. A noun is a word that identifies a person, place, thing, or idea. A pronoun is a word that replaces a noun. Common pronouns are I, he, she, it, you, they, and we. In the following sentences, the subject is underlined once.

## Tip

Whenever you write or edit sentences, keep the subject and verb in mind. As you write, ask yourself these questions to keep yourself on track:

**Subject:** Who or what is the sentence about?

**Verb:** Which word shows an action or links the subject to a description?

## Practice Activity

Underline the verb(s) twice. Name the type of verb(s) used in the sentence in the space provided (LV, HV, or V).

1. The cat sounds ready to come back inside. \_\_\_\_\_
2. We have not eaten dinner yet. \_\_\_\_\_
3. It took four people to move the broken-down car. \_\_\_\_\_
4. The book was filled with notes from class. \_\_\_\_\_
5. We walked from room to room, inspecting for damages. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Harold was expecting a package in the mail. \_\_\_\_\_
7. The clothes still felt damp even though they had been through the dryer twice. \_\_\_\_\_
8. The teacher who runs the studio is often praised for his restoration work on old masterpieces.  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Adjective

An adjective is a word that describes a noun or a pronoun. It often answers questions such as which one, what kind, or how many?

1. The green sweater belongs to Iris.
2. She looks beautiful.
  - In sentence 1, the adjective green describes the noun sweater.
  - In sentence 2, the adjective beautiful describes the pronoun she.

## Adverbs

An adverb is a word that describes a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. Adverbs frequently end in -ly. They answer questions such as how, to what extent, why, when, and where.

1. Bertrand sings horribly.
2. My sociology instructor is extremely wise.
3. He threw the ball very accurately.
  - In sentence 1, horribly describes the verb sings. How does Bertrand sing? He sings horribly.

- In sentence 2, extremely describes the adjective wise. How wise is the instructor? Extremely wise.
- In sentence 3, very describes the adverb accurately. How accurately did he throw the ball? Very accurately.

## Prepositions

Prepositions connect a noun, pronoun, or verb to another word that describes or modifies that noun, pronoun, or verb. Common prepositions include in, on, under, near, by, with, and about.

## Nouns

A noun is a word that names a person, place, or thing. There are two types of nouns, the proper noun and the common noun. A proper noun is a specific name for a person, place, or thing. On the contrast, the common noun refers to any person, place, or thing.

Person	Place	Thing
Jose Romero (Proper)	Yosemite Park (proper)	building (common)
boy (Common)	Tahoe Lake (proper)	book
doctor (Common)	ocean (Common)	bread
Kayle Smith (Proper))	city (common)	shoe

## Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of (or refers back to) a noun or another pronoun. The word or words a pronoun refers to is called the antecedent of the pronoun. Pronouns refer to either a noun that has already been mentioned such as a name or to a noun that does not need to be named specifically.

**Agreement in a person:**

	Singular Pronouns			Plural Pronouns		
<b>First Person</b>	I	Me	My (Mine)	We	Us	Our (Ours)
<b>Second Person</b>	You	You	Your	You	You	Your (Your)
<b>Third Person</b>	He, She, It	Him, Her, It	His, Hers, Its	They	Them	Their (Theirs)

**Subject and Object Pronouns:**

Subject pronouns function as subjects in a sentence. Object pronouns function as the object of a verb or of a preposition.

	Singular Pronouns		Plural Pronouns	
	Subject	Object	Subject	Object
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Person</b>	I	me	we	us
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Person</b>	you	you	you	you
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Person</b>	he, she, it	him, her, it	they	them

**The following sentences show pronouns as subjects:**

1. She loves the Blue Ridge Mountains in the fall.
2. Every summer, they picked up litter from national parks.

**The following sentences show pronouns as objects:**

1. Marie leaned over and kissed him.
2. Jane moved it to the corner.

**Attribution:**

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## **Chapter 2: Writing Conventions: Mechanics**

### **Punctuation**

One way to correct run-on sentences is to correct the punctuation. For example, adding a period will correct the run-on by creating two separate sentences.

*Run-on:* There were not seats left; we had to stand in the back.

*Correct:* There were no seats left. We had to stand in the back.

Using a semicolon between the two complete sentences will also correct the error. A semicolon allows you to keep the two closely related ideas together in one sentence. When you punctuate with a semicolon, make sure that both parts of the sentence are independent clauses.

*Run-on:* The accident closed both lanes of traffic we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

*Complete sentence:* The accident closed both lanes of traffic; we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

When you use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses, you may wish to add a transition word to show the connection between the two thoughts. After the semicolon, add the transition word and follow it with a comma.

### **Coordinating Conjunctions**

You can also fix run-on sentences by adding a comma and a coordinating conjunction<sup>21</sup>. A coordinating conjunction acts as a link between two independent clauses.

## Tip

These are the seven coordinating conjunctions that you can use: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so. Use these words appropriately when you want to link the two independent clauses. The acronym FANBOYS will help you remember this group of coordinating conjunctions.

**Run-on:** The new printer was installed, no one knew how to use it.

**Complete sentence:** The new printer was installed, but no one knew how to use it.

## Dependent Words

Adding dependent words is another way to link independent clauses. Like the coordinating conjunctions, dependent words show a relationship between two independent clauses.

**Run-on:** We took the elevator, the others still got there before us.

**Complete sentence:** Although we took the elevator, the others got there before us.

**Run-on:** Cobwebs covered the furniture, the room had not been used in years.

**Complete sentence:** Cobwebs covered the furniture because the room had not been used in years.

## Remember

- ✓ A sentence is complete when it contains both a subject and verb. A complete sentence makes sense on its own.
- ✓ Every sentence must have a subject, which usually appears at the beginning of the sentence. A subject may be a noun (a person, place, or thing) or a pronoun.
- ✓ A compound subject contains more than one noun.
- ✓ A prepositional phrase describes, or modifies, another word in the sentence but cannot be the subject of a sentence.
- ✓ A verb is often an action word that indicates what the subject is doing. Verbs may be action verbs, linking verbs, or helping verbs.
- ✓ Variety in sentence structure and length improves writing by making it more interesting and more complex.
- ✓ Focusing on the six basic sentence patterns will enhance your writing.
- ✓ Fragments and run-on sentences are two common errors in sentence construction.
- ✓ Fragments can be corrected by adding a missing subject or verb. Fragments that begin with a preposition or a dependent word can be corrected by combining the fragment with another sentence.



- ✓ Run-on sentences can be corrected by adding appropriate punctuation or adding a coordinating conjunction.

Do not capitalize nouns for people, places, things, streets, buildings, events, and titles when the noun is used in general or common way. See the following chart for the difference between proper nouns and common nouns.

## Capitalize

knowing the basic rules of capitalization and using capitalization correctly gives the reader the impression that you choose your words carefully and care about the ideas you are conveying.

- Capitalize the First Word of a Sentence.

**Incorrect:** the museum has a new butterfly exhibit.

**Correct:** The museum has a new butterfly exhibit.

- Capitalize Proper Nouns Proper nouns

The names of specific people, places, objects, streets, buildings, events, or titles of individuals—are always capitalized.

**Incorrect:** He grew up in hatmen, in new york.

**Correct:** He grew up in Hatmen, in New York.

## Tip

- a) Always capitalize nationalities, races, languages, and religions. For example, American, African American, Hispanic, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and so on.
- b) Do not capitalize nouns for people, places, things, streets, buildings, events, and titles when the noun is used in general or common way.

## Commas

Commas after an introductory word or phrase. You may notice a comma that appears near the beginning of the sentence, usually after a word or phrase. This comma lets the reader know where the introductory word or phrase ends and the main sentence begins. See the example below.

1. Without spoiling the surprise, we need to tell her to save the date.

In this sentence, without spoiling the surprise is an introductory phrase, while we need to tell her to save the date is the main sentence. Notice how they are separated by a comma. When only an introductory word appears in the sentence, a comma also follows the introductory word.

### **Commas in a List of Items**

When you want to list several nouns in a sentence, you separate each word with a comma. This allows the reader to pause after each item and identify which words are included in the grouping. When you list items in a sentence, put a comma after each noun, then add the word and before the last item. However, you do not need to include a comma after the last item.

- We will need to get flour, tomatoes and cheese at the store.
- The pizza will be topped with olives, peppers, and pineapple chunks.

### **Commas and Coordinating Adjectives**

You can use commas to list both adjectives and nouns. A string of adjectives that describe a noun are called coordinating adjectives<sup>2</sup>. These adjectives come before the noun they modify and are separated by commas. One important thing to note, however, is that unlike listing nouns, the word and does not always need to be before the last adjective.

- It was a bright, windy, clear day.
- Our kite glowed red, yellow, and blue in the morning sunlight.

### **Practice Activity**

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned so far about comma use to add commas to the following sentences.

1. Monday Tuesday and Wednesday are all booked with meetings.
2. It was a quiet uneventful unproductive day.
3. We will need to prepare statements for the Franks Todds and Smiths before their portfolio reviews next week.
4. Michael Nita and Desmond finished their report last Tuesday.
5. With cold wet aching fingers he was able to secure the sails before the storm.
6. He signed his name on the board in clear precise delicate letters.

### **Commas before Conjunctions in Compound Sentences**

Commas are sometimes used to separate two independent clauses. The comma comes after the first independent clause and is followed by a conjunction, such as for, and, or but.

1. He missed class today, and he thinks he will be out tomorrow, too.
2. He says his fever is gone, but he is still very tired.

## **Commas before and after Interrupting Words**

In conversations, you might interrupt your train of thought by giving more details about what you are talking about. In a sentence, you might interrupt your train of thought with a word or phrase called interrupting words. Interrupting words can come at the beginning or middle of a sentence. When the interrupting words appear at the beginning of the sentence, a comma appears after the word or phrase.

1. If you can believe it, people once thought the sun and planets orbited around Earth.
2. Luckily, some people questioned that theory.

When interrupting words come in the middle of a sentence, they are separated from the rest of the sentence by commas. You can determine where the commas should go by looking for the part of the sentence that is not essential for the sentence to make sense.

1. An Italian astronomer, Galileo, proved that Earth orbited the sun.
2. We have known, for hundreds of years now, that the Earth and other planets exist in a solar system.

## **Practice Activity**

insert commas to separate the interrupting words from the rest of the sentence.

1. I asked my neighbors the retired couple from Florida to bring in my mail.
2. Without a doubt his work has improved over the last few weeks.
3. Our professor Mr. Alamut drilled the lessons into our heads.
4. The meeting is at noon unfortunately which means I will be late for lunch.
5. We came in time for the last part of dinner but most importantly we came in time for dessert.
6. All of a sudden, our network crashed, and we lost our files.
7. Alex hand the wrench to me before the pipe comes loose again.

## **Commas in Dates, Addresses, and the Greetings and Closings of Letters**

You also use commas when you write the date, such as in cover letters and e-mails. Commas are used when you write the date, when you include an address, and when you greet someone.

If you are writing out the full date, add a comma after the day and before the year. You do not need to add a comma when you write the month and day or when you write the month and the year. If you need to continue the sentence after you add a date that includes the day and year, add a comma after the end of the date.

1. The letter is postmarked May 4, 2021.
2. Her birthday is May 5.
3. I registered for the conference on March 7, 2021, so we should get our tickets soon.
4. We moved to 4542 Boxcutter Lane, Hope, Missouri 70832.
5. After moving to Boston, Massachusetts, Eric used public transportation to get to work.
6. Hello,
7. Thank you.
8. Sincerely,

### Activity

Use what you have learned about using commas to edit the following letter.

March 27 2021

Alexa Marché

14 Taylor Drive Apt. 6

New Castle Maine 90342

Dear Mr. Timmons

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. I am available on Monday the fifth. I can stop by your office at any time. Is your address still 7309 Marcour Circle #501? Please get back to me at your earliest convenience.

Thank you Alexa

### Remember

- ✓ Punctuation marks provide visual cues to readers to tell them how to read a sentence.
- ✓ Commas indicate a pause or a list in a sentence.
- ✓ A comma should be used after an introductory word to separate this word from the main sentence.
- ✓ A comma comes after each noun in a list. The word and is added before the last noun, which is not followed by a comma.
- ✓ A comma comes after every coordinating adjective except for the last adjective.
- ✓ Commas can be used to separate the two independent clauses in compound sentences if a conjunction follows the comma.

- ✓ Commas are used to separate interrupting words from the rest of the sentence.
- ✓ When you write the date, you add a comma between the day and the year. You also add a comma after the year if the sentence continues after the date.
- ✓ When they are used in a sentence, addresses have commas after the street address, and the city. If a sentence continues after the address, a comma comes after the zip code.
- ✓ When you write a letter, you use commas in your greeting at the beginning and in your closing at the end of your letter.

## Semicolons to Join Two Independent Clauses

Use a semicolon to combine two closely related independent clauses. Relying on a period to separate the related clauses into two shorter sentences could lead to choppy writing. Using a comma would create an awkward run-on sentence.

1. **Correct:** Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview; appearances are important.
2. **Incorrect:** Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview, appearances are important.

## Colons

The colon (:) is another punctuation mark used to indicate a full stop. Use a colon to introduce lists, quotes, examples, and explanations. You can also use a colon after the greeting in business letters and memos.

- Dear Hiring Manager:
- To: Human Resources
- From: Deanna Dean

Use a colon to introduce a list of items. Introduce the list with an independent clause. Also, you can use a colon to introduce a quote.

- The team will tour three states: New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.
- Mark Twain said it best: “When in doubt, tell the truth.”

## Quotation

Quotation marks (“ ”) set off a group of words from the rest of the text. Use quotation marks to indicate direct quotations of another person’s words or to indicate a title. Quotation marks always appear in pairs.

A direct quotation is an exact account of what someone said or wrote. To include a direct quotation in your writing, enclose the words in quotation marks. On the other hand, an indirect

quotation<sup>8</sup> is a restatement of what someone said or wrote. An indirect quotation does not use the person's exact words. You do not need to use quotation marks for indirect quotations.

**Direct quotation:** Carly said, "I'm not ever going back there again."

**Indirect quotation:** Carly said that she would never go back there.

## Apostrophes

An apostrophe (') is a punctuation mark that is used with a noun to show possession or to indicate where a letter has been left out to form a contraction. An apostrophe and the letter s indicate who or what owns something. To show possession with a singular noun, add 's.

- Jen's dance routine mesmerized everyone in the room.
- The dog's leash is hanging on the hook beside the door.

Notice that singular nouns that end in s still take the apostrophe s ('s) ending to show possession. To show possession with a plural noun that ends in s, just add an apostrophe ('). If the plural noun does not end in s, add an apostrophe and an s ('s).

## Contractions

A contraction<sup>11</sup> is a word that is formed by combining two words. In a contraction, an apostrophe shows where one or more letters have been left out. Contractions are commonly used in informal writing but not in formal writing.

- I do not like ice cream. I don't like ice cream.

Notice how the words do and not have been combined to form the contraction don't. The apostrophe shows where the o in not has been left out.

### Tip

- Be careful not to confuse it's with its. It's is a contraction of the words it and is. Its is a possessive pronoun.
- It's cold and rainy outside. (It is cold and rainy outside.)
- The cat was chasing its tail. (Shows that the tail belongs to the cat.)
- When in doubt, substitute the words it is in a sentence. If sentence still makes sense, use the contraction it's.
- Use apostrophes to show possession. Add 's to singular nouns and plural nouns that do not end in s. Add ' to plural nouns that end in s.
- Use apostrophes in contractions to show where a letter or letters have been left out.

## Parentheses

Parentheses ( ) are punctuation marks that are always used in pairs and contain material that is secondary to the meaning of a sentence. Parentheses must never contain the subject or verb of a sentence. A sentence should make sense if you delete any text within parentheses and the parentheses.

- Attack of the Killer Potatoes has to be the worst movie I have seen (so far).
- Your spinach and garlic salad are one of the most delicious (and nutritious) foods I have ever tasted!

## Dashes

A dash (—) is a punctuation mark used to set off information in a sentence for emphasis. You can enclose text between two dashes, or use just one dash. To create a dash in Microsoft Word, type two hyphens together. Do not put a space between dashes and text. Dashes indicate a pause in text and dashes set off information in a sentence to show emphasis.

- Arrive to the interview early—but not too early.
- Any of the suits—except for the purple one—should be fine to wear.

## Hyphens

A hyphen (-) looks similar to a dash but is shorter and used in different ways. Use a hyphen to combine words that work together to form a single description.

- a. The fifty-five-year-old athlete was just as qualified for the marathon as his younger opponents.
- b. My doctor recommended against taking the medication, since it can be habit-forming

## Homonyms

Homonyms are words that sound like one another but have different meanings.

Example: Where, Wear, Ware

- a. Where (adverb). The place in which something happens. Where is the restaurant?
- b. Wear (verb). To carry or have on the body. I will wear my hiking shoes when go on a climb tomorrow morning.
- c. Ware (noun). Articles of merchandise or manufacture (usually, wares). When I return from shopping, I will show you my wares.

## Synonyms

Synonyms<sup>10</sup> are words that have the same, or almost the same, meaning as another word. You can say an “easy task” or a “simple task” because easy and simple are synonyms. You can say Hong Kong is a “large city” or a “metropolis” because city and metropolis are synonyms.

## Antonyms

Antonyms are words that have the opposite meaning of a given word. The study of antonyms will not only help you choose the most appropriate word as you write; it will also sharpen your overall sense of language. Table 4.3 "Common Antonyms" lists common words and their antonyms

## Context Clues

Context clues<sup>12</sup> are bits of information within a text that will assist you in deciphering the meaning of unknown words. Since most of your knowledge of vocabulary comes from reading, it is important that you recognize context clues. By becoming more aware of particular words and phrases surrounding a difficult word, you can make logical guesses about its meaning. The following are the different types of context clues:

- Brief definition or restatement
- Synonyms and antonyms
- Examples

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## Chapter 3: Language Facility: Sentence Structure

Sentences are like puzzles. If you only have one or two pieces, it will not work. On the other hand, if you have all the pieces and try to fit them in the wrong places, it will still not work. However, if you have all of the pieces in the right places, you have created a complete picture!

### Components of a Sentence

Clearly written, complete sentences require key information: a subject, a verb and a complete idea. A sentence needs to make sense on its own. Sometimes, complete sentences are also called independent clauses. A clause<sup>1</sup> is a group of words that may make up a sentence. An independent clause<sup>2</sup> is a group of words that may stand alone as a complete, grammatically correct thought. The following sentences show independent clauses.

#### Independent Clause

- We went to the store.



- We bought the ingredients on our list.
- We went home.

## Remember

1. A group of words that contains a subject and a verb and may make up a complete sentence.
2. A group of words that contains a subject and a verb and can stand alone as a complete, grammatically correct thought. An independent clause is a complete sentence.

## What are Fragments?

A sentence that is missing a subject or a verb is called a fragment<sup>14</sup>. A fragment may include a description or may express part of an idea, but it does not express a complete thought.

- *Fragment*: Children helping in the kitchen.
- *Complete sentence*: Children helping in the kitchen *often makes a mess*.

## Common Sentence Errors

Fragments often occur because of some common error, such as starting a sentence with a preposition, a dependent word, an infinitive<sup>15</sup>, or a gerund<sup>16</sup>. If you use the six basic sentence patterns when you write, you should be able to avoid these errors and thus avoid writing fragments. When you see a preposition, check to see that it is part of a sentence containing a subject and a verb. If it is not connected to a complete sentence, it is a fragment, and you will need to fix this type of fragment by combining it with another sentence. You can add the prepositional phrase to the end of the sentence. If you add it to the beginning of the other sentence, insert a comma after the prepositional phrase.

- **Incorrect**: After walking over two miles. John remembered his wallet.
- **Correct**: After walking over two miles, John remembered his wallet.
- **Correct**: John remembered his wallet **after** walking over two miles.

## Run-on Sentences

Just as short, incomplete sentences can be problematic, lengthy sentences can be problematic too. Sentences with two or more independent clauses that have been incorrectly combined are known as run-on sentences<sup>18</sup>. A run-on sentence may be either a fused sentence or a comma splice.

**Fused sentence**: A family of foxes lived under our shed young foxes played all over the yard.

**Comma splice:** We looked outside, the kids were hopping on the trampoline.

When two complete sentences are combined into one without any punctuation, the result is a fused sentence<sup>19</sup>. When two complete sentences are joined by a comma, the result is a comma splice<sup>20</sup>. Both errors can easily be fixed.

## What Is a Relative Clause?

A relative clause is one kind of dependent clause. It has a subject and verb, but can't stand alone as a sentence. It is sometimes called an "adjective clause" because it functions like an adjective—it gives more information about a noun. A relative clause always begins with a "relative pronoun," which substitutes for a noun, a noun phrase, or a pronoun when sentences are combined.

Relative pronoun as subject (in red):

- I like the person. **The person** was nice to me.
- I like the person **who** was nice to me.
- I hate the dog. **The dog** bit me.

### Remember

- a) Simple sentences contain one independent clause.
- b) Compound sentences contain more than one independent clause.
- c) Complex sentences contain at least one independent clause joined with one or more dependent clauses.
- d) Compound-complex sentences contain at least two independent clauses, joined by one or more dependent clauses.

Learning to use a variety of sentences can enhance your writing. Figurative language is used to enhance writing by taking words beyond their literal meaning. This can be done with similes, metaphors, allusion, hyperbole, alliteration, and many other examples. These examples can be found both in descriptive writing and poetry. Descriptive writing can be written in paragraph form and in poetic form. The purpose of descriptive writing and descriptive poetry is to show the reader, not tell. Descriptive writing should paint pictures with words.

## Subjects

When you read a sentence, you may first look for the subject<sup>3</sup>, or what the sentence is about. The subject usually appears at the beginning of a sentence as a noun<sup>4</sup> or a pronoun. A noun is a word that identifies a person, place, thing, or idea. A pronoun is a word that replaces a noun. Common pronouns are I, he, she, it, you, they, and we. In the following sentences, the subject is underlined once.

## Prepositional Phrases

A prepositional phrase begins with a preposition and modifies or describes a word. It cannot act as the subject of a sentence. The following circled phrases are examples of prepositional phrases.

### Practice Activity

Read the following sentences. Underline the subjects, and circle the prepositional phrases.

1. The gym is open until nine o'clock tonight.
2. We went to the store to get some ice.
3. The student with the most extra credit will win a homework pass.
4. Maya and Tia found an abandoned cat by the side of the road.
5. The driver of that pickup truck skidded on the ice.
6. Anita won the race with time to spare.
7. The people who work for that company were surprised about the merger.
8. Working in haste means that you are more likely to make mistakes.
9. The soundtrack has over sixty songs in languages from around the world.
10. His latest invention does not work, but it has inspired the rest of us.

### Remember

- The most basic sentence structure is a subject plus a verb that expresses a complete thought.
- Adding a prepositional phrase or a direct or indirect object to a sentence makes it more complex.
- English speakers change a sentence into a question in one of the following two ways: moving the helping verb and adding a question mark or adding the verb do, does, or did and adding a question mark.
- Adjectives follow a particular order before the noun they describe. The order is opinion, size, shape, age, color, ethnicity, and material.

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## Chapter 4: Preparing for the HiSET Exam essay

### How to write an essay:

#### Outlining an Essay

**Step 1:** Create a thesis statement if you are writing an essay, you will begin by writing a draft thesis statement. A thesis statement is a concise presentation of the main argument you will develop in your essay. Write the thesis statement at the top of your paper. You can revise this later if needed. The rest of your outline will include the main point and sub-points you will develop in each paragraph.

**Step 2:** Identify the main ideas that relate to your thesis statement. Based on the reading you have already done, list the main points that you plan to discuss in your essay. Consider carefully the most logical order, and how each point supports your thesis. These main ideas will become the topic sentences for each body paragraph.

**Step 3:** Identify the supporting points and evidence for each major idea. Each main point will be supported by supporting points.

**Step 4:** Create your outline. Outlines are usually created using a structure that clearly indicates main ideas and supporting points.

**In academic writing, a paragraph is a group of sentences about a single topic. Paragraphs can be different lengths depending on the writing situation.**

**A good paragraph has three parts:**

- a topic sentence that states what you will write about
- supporting sentences (the body) that add explanations and details about the topic
- a conclusion sentence that wraps up the paragraph, similar to the topic sentence

**A paragraph is indented. Each sentence comes right after the other one, not on a new line. Each sentence ends with a period.**

#### Thesis Statement

For every essay you write, you must focus on a central idea. This idea stems from a topic you have chosen or been assigned or from a question your teacher has asked. It is not enough merely to discuss a general topic or simply answer a question with a yes or no. You have to form a specific opinion, and then articulate that into a controlling idea—the main idea upon which you build your thesis. Remember that a thesis is not the topic itself, but rather your interpretation of the question or subject. For whatever topic your professor gives you, you must ask yourself, “What do I want to say about it?” Asking and then answering this question is vital to forming a thesis that is precise, forceful, and confident.

1. Make an outline
2. Brainstorm
3. Write Thesis Statement (Main Idea)

## Remember

- Proper essays require a thesis statement to provide a specific focus and suggest how the essay will be organized.
- A thesis statement is your interpretation of the subject, not the topic itself.
- A strong thesis is specific, precise, forceful, confident, and is able to be demonstrated.
- A strong thesis challenges readers with a point of view that can be debated and can be supported with evidence.
- A weak thesis is simply a declaration of your topic or contains an obvious fact that cannot be argued.
- Depending on your topic, it may or may not be appropriate to use first person point of view.
- Revise your thesis by ensuring all words are specific, all ideas are exact, and all verbs express action.

## Select Primary Support Details for Your Thesis

Without primary support, your argument is not likely to be convincing. Primary support can be described as the major points you choose to expand on your thesis. It is the most important information you select to argue for your point of view. Each point you choose will be incorporated into the topic sentence for each body paragraph you write. Your primary supporting points are further supported by supporting details within the paragraphs.

In order to fulfill the requirements of good primary support, the information you choose must meet the following standards:

- **Be specific.** The main points you make about your thesis and the examples you use to expand on those points need to be specific. Use specific examples to provide the evidence and to build upon your general ideas.
- **Be relevant to the thesis.** Primary support is considered strong when it relates directly to the thesis. Primary support should show, explain, or prove your main argument without delving into irrelevant details.
- **Be detailed.** Remember that your thesis, while specific, should not be very detailed. The body paragraphs are where you develop the discussion that a thorough essay requires. Using detailed support shows readers that you have considered all the facts and chosen only the most precise details to enhance your point of view.

When you support your thesis, you are revealing evidence. Evidence includes anything that can help support your stance.

## Choose Supporting Topic Sentences

Each body paragraph contains a topic sentence that states one aspect of your thesis and then expands upon it. Like the thesis statement, each topic sentence should be specific and supported by concrete details, facts, or explanations. Each body paragraph should comprise the following elements.

**topic sentence + supporting details (examples, reasons, or arguments)**

### Remember

- Your body paragraphs should closely follow the path set forth by your thesis statement.
- Strong body paragraphs contain evidence that supports your thesis.
- Primary support comprises the most important points you use to support your thesis.
- Strong primary support is specific, detailed, and relevant to the thesis.
- Prewriting helps you determine your most compelling primary support.
- Evidence includes facts, judgments, testimony, and personal observation.
- Reliable sources may include newspapers, magazines, academic journals, books, encyclopedias, and firsthand testimony.
- A topic sentence presents one point of your thesis statement while the information in the rest of the paragraph supports that point.
- A body paragraph comprises a topic sentence plus supporting details.

## Organizing your Writing

The method of organization you choose for your essay is just as important as its content. Without a clear organizational pattern, your reader could become confused and lose interest. The way you structure your essay helps your readers draw connections between the body and the thesis, and the structure also keeps you focused as you plan and write the essay. Choosing your organizational pattern before you outline ensures that each body paragraph works to support and develop your thesis.

This section covers three ways to organize body paragraphs:

1. Chronological order
2. Order of importance

A solid organizational pattern gives your ideas a path that you can follow as you develop your draft. Knowing how you will organize your paragraphs allows you to better express and analyze your thoughts. Planning the structure of your essay before you choose supporting evidence helps you conduct more effective and targeted research.

## Chronological order

Chronological order is mostly used in expository writing, which is a form of writing that narrates, describes, informs, or explains a process. When using chronological order, arrange the events in the order that they actually happened, or will happen if you are giving instructions. This method requires you to use words such as first, second, then, after that, later, and finally. These transition words guide you and your reader through the paper as you expand your thesis.

## Transitions Words

The best stylists become masters at artfully placing transition words in pivotal positions—i.e., places where the sentence or paragraph meaning “shifts” slightly. What follows is a handy list of common transition words and their functions. If you open sentences appropriately with these words, it will help your writing to flow. One caveat though: Always keep the literal meaning of a transition word in mind as you use it—therefore, do not use “for example” unless you are introducing an example that links to the preceding information; do not use “nevertheless” unless you are offering a contrasting point. Note how this paragraph has required a minimal use of transition words; they should not be forced in where they do not belong. When you do use them, keep their broader functions (i.e., “causality,” “emphasis,” etc.) directly in mind.

<b>Causality</b>	<b>Emphasis</b>	<b>Amplification</b>
Accordingly	Above all	Again
Consequently	Certainly	Also
For this reason	Clearly	Apparently
Hence	Indeed	Besides
Therefore	In fact	Equally important
Thus	In short	Finally
	Obviously	First, Second, etc.
<b>Intention</b>	Of course	Further

For this purpose		In addition
In order to do this	<b>Closure</b>	Moreover
To this end	In conclusion	
With this in mind	In sum	<b>Detail</b>
	On the whole	Especially
<b>Location</b>	To summarize	In particular
Beyond		In regard to
Here	<b>Similarity</b>	Namely
Nearby	Likewise	Specifically
Opposite	Similarly	To enumerate
Overlying (underlying)		
There	<b>Time</b>	<b>Comparison/Contrast</b>
To the right (left)	Afterward	However
	At the same time	In contrast
<b>Concession</b>	Before	In relation to
At any rate	Earlier	Nevertheless



At least	Eventually	On the other hand
	In the meantime	Still
<b>Example</b>	Sometimes	
For example	Later	<b>Interpretation</b>
For instance	Next	Fortunately
To demonstrate	Preceding this	Interestingly
To illustrate	Simultaneously	Significantly
	Soon	Surprisingly

## Orden of Importance

Most essays move from the least to the most important point, and the paragraphs are arranged in an effort to build the essay's strength. Sometimes, however, it is necessary to begin with your most important supporting point, such as in an essay that contains a thesis that is highly debatable. When writing a persuasive essay, it is best to begin with the most important point because it immediately captivates your readers and compels them to continue reading.

### Remember

- The way you organize your body paragraphs ensures you and your readers stay focused on and draw connections to, your thesis statement.
- A strong organizational pattern allows you to articulate, analyze, and clarify your thoughts.
- Planning the organizational structure for your essay before you begin to search for supporting evidence helps you conduct more effective and directed research.
- Chronological order is most commonly used in expository writing. It is useful for explaining the history of your subject, for telling a story, or for explaining a process.
- Order of importance is most appropriate in a persuasion paper as well as for essays in which you rank things, people, or events by their significance.

## Writing an Introduction

Picture your introduction as a storefront window: You have a certain amount of space to attract your customers (readers) to your goods (subject) and bring them inside your store (discussion). Once you have enticed them with something intriguing, you then point them in a specific direction and try to make the sale (convince them to accept your thesis). Your introduction is an invitation to your readers to consider what you have to say and then to follow your train of thought as you expand upon your thesis statement.

First impressions are crucial and can leave lasting effects in your reader's mind, which is why the introduction is so important to your essay. If your introductory paragraph is dull or disjointed, your reader probably will not have much interest in continuing with the essay.

Your introduction should begin with an engaging statement devised to provoke your readers' interest. In the next few sentences, introduce them to your topic by stating general facts or ideas about the subject. As you move deeper into your introduction, you gradually narrow the focus, moving closer to your thesis.

## Writing a Conclusion

Keep in mind that the ideas in your conclusion must conform to the rest of your essay. In order to tie these components together, restate your thesis at the beginning of your conclusion. This helps you assemble, in an orderly fashion, all the information you have explained in the body. Repeating your thesis reminds your readers of the major arguments you have been trying to prove and also indicates that your essay is drawing to a close. A strong conclusion also reviews your main points and emphasizes the importance of the topic. The construction of the conclusion is similar to the introduction, in which you make general introductory statements and then present your thesis. The difference is that in the conclusion you first paraphrase, or state in different words, your thesis and then follow up with general concluding remarks. These sentences should progressively broaden the focus of your thesis and maneuver your readers out of the essay.

### Tip

It is wise to avoid doing any of the following in your conclusion:

- Introducing new material
- Contradicting your thesis
- Changing your thesis
- Using apologies or disclaimers

Introducing new material in your conclusion has an unsettling effect on your reader. When you raise new points, you make your reader want more information, which you could not possibly provide in the limited space of your final paragraph.

Contradicting or changing your thesis statement causes your readers to think that you do not actually have a conviction about your topic. After all, you have spent several paragraphs adhering to a singular point of view. When you change sides or open up your point of view in the conclusion, your reader becomes less inclined to believe your original argument.

By apologizing for your opinion or stating that you know it is tough to digest, you are in fact admitting that even you know what you have discussed is irrelevant or unconvincing. You do not want your readers to feel this way. Effective writers stand by their thesis statement and do not stray from it.

### Essay Practice Activity

#### The disadvantages against the flu vaccine

Today vaccines are a subject of controversy; I am personally against the flu vaccine for the following reasons. The flu vaccine is not 100% effective, not everyone is a candidate to get it, and there is no evidence that shows that we will be exempt from contracting the virus every year.

#### ESSAY

Write the introduction of the topic, clarify your position (are you in favor or against it), write 3 points explaining why you are in favor or against it.

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#### First Paragraph (item #1)

Write the introduction of your first point, state your opinion with details.

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**Second Paragraph (item #2)**

Write the introduction of your second point, state your opinion with details.

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**Third Paragraph (item #3)**

Write the introduction of your third point, state your opinion with details.

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**Counter argument (Optional)**

Use transitional words or phrases to reaffirm the argument without forgetting your point of view.

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**Conclusion**

Write a summary of your position on the topic and emphasize why are you in favor or against it.

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## Practice Exams

Complete the two reading practice exams in the websites links listed below:

- <https://www.hisetpracticetest.org/hiset-writing-practice-test/>
- <https://www.ets-cls.org/hiset/>

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