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There Has to Be a Better Way:

Teaching Grammar and Structure in Context

Building Capacity for Florida ABE to GED® Preparation Programs

There Has to Be a Better Way:
Teaching Grammar and Structure in Context

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Are You Up for the Challenge? Name that Punctuation Mark!

There are fourteen punctuation marks used in English Grammar. Can you name and use them all?

Mark	Name	Example

Let's Combine!

Example 1

Meditation can help you relax.
Meditation is a technique.
The technique can be learned.

Example 2

Some people argue that pets are a waste of time and money.
Pets can actually alleviate stress.
Pets can increase the longevity of their owners.

Example 3

Shannon studied hard.
She wanted to go to medical school.
She suffered from arthritis.

Example 4

Sometimes students use texting to share answers.
The answers are for a test.
Sharing answers isn't fair to other students.

Example 5

The boy struggled to ride his bike.
The boy is four years old and he is feisty.
The bike is new and it is a light blue color.
The boy received the bike for his birthday.
He struggled for two hours.
However, he was unsuccessful in riding the bike.

Example 6 – Use a colon to effectively combine the sentences.

The principal made one request.
The request was simple.
The request was to leave cell phones at home.

Example 7

I have thought of something.
I have always thought of it.
I have thought a man was entitled in this country.
He was entitled to have opinions.
The opinions are unpopular.

Example 8 – Break down the following sentence into sentence kernels.

When the weather was nice, the two women would drink their aunt's peach tea and sit in the garden having long, meandering conversations, while their children played noisily in the backyard, enjoying the few remaining days of summer.

Three-Day Mini-Lesson Example

Day One – Notice it and Name it

- Introduce the convention by showing students examples from authentic (mentor) text(s)
- Have students determine the conventions used
- Study and find additional examples

Day Two – Try it (Experience the skill)

- Review the convention
- Complete examples as a group
- Integrate skills into personal writing (have students go back to an old piece of writing and determine whether they used the convention correctly and/or correct where they used it incorrectly and/or insert an example of the skill used correctly

Day Three – Apply it!

- Review the convention
- Have students weave the skill into their own, current writing
- Have students transfer the skill into new drafts and writing samples

Applying Skills with Authentic Text

bruce, the coffee machine is not working it needs to be fixed before the morning rush arrives i have tried fixing it but I can't get it to work i am so fustrated i know that John has fixed it in the past please make sure that this is the first thing that John does in the morning before he begins his regular shift i hope that this works for you will you please give me a call to let me know that John was able to fix the machin i would very much apreciate it i am so sorry that I had to leave you with this problem you are always a great help to me thank you

Cindi

Name that Idea!

Florida Department of Education
Adult Basic Education-Language Arts Curriculum Framework

Language Arts Standards (LA)
Anchor Standards and Benchmark Skills

NRS LEVEL 1	NRS LEVEL 2	NRS LEVEL 3	NRS LEVEL 4
GE: 0.0-1.9	**GE: 2.0-3.9**	**GE: 4.0-5.9**	**GE: 6.0-8.9**
CCR.LA.ABE.1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.			

CCR.LA.ABE.1: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

NRS LEVEL 1	NRS LEVEL 2	NRS LEVEL 3	NRS LEVEL 4
1.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking. a) Print all upper- and lowercase letters. b) Use common, proper, and possessive nouns. c) Use singular and plural nouns with matching verbs in basic sentences (e.g., *He hops*; *We hop*). d) Use personal, possessive, and indefinite pronouns (e.g., *I, me, my*; *they, them, their*; *anyone, everything*). e) Use verbs to convey a sense of past, present, and future (e.g., *Yesterday I walked home*; *Today I walk home*; *Tomorrow I will walk home*). f) Use frequently occurring adjectives. g) Use frequently occurring nouns and verbs. h) Use frequently occurring conjunctions (e.g., *and, but, or, so, because*). i) Use determiners (e.g., articles, demonstratives). j) Use frequently occurring prepositions	**1.2 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.** a) Use collective nouns (e.g., *group*). b) Explain the function of nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs in general and their functions in particular sentences. c) Form and use regular and irregular plural nouns. d) Use reflexive pronouns (e.g., *myself, ourselves*). e) Form and use the past tense of frequently occurring irregular verbs (e.g., *sat, hid, told*). f) Use abstract nouns (e.g., *childhood*). g) Form and use regular and irregular verbs. h) Form and use the simple (e.g., *I walked*; *I walk*; *I will walk*) verb tenses. i) Ensure subject-verb and pronoun-antecedent agreement. j) Form and use comparative and superlative adjectives and adverbs, and choose	**1.3 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.** a) Explain the function of conjunctions, prepositions, and interjections in general and their function in particular sentences. b) Use relative pronouns (*who, whose, whom, which, that*) and relative adverbs (*where, when, why*). c) Form and use the progressive (e.g., *I was walking*; *I am walking*; *I will be walking*) verb tenses. d) Use modal auxiliaries (e.g., *can, may, must*) to convey various conditions. e) Form and use the perfect (e.g., *I had walked*; *I have walked*; *I will have walked*) verb tenses. f) Use verb tense to convey various times, sequences, states, and conditions. g) Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb tense. h) Order adjectives within	**1.4 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.** a) Ensure that pronouns are in the proper case (subjective, objective, and possessive). b) Use intensive pronouns. c) Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in pronoun number and person. d) Recognize and correct vague or unclear pronouns. e) Recognize variations from standard English in their own and others' writing and speaking, and identify and use strategies to improve expression in conventional language. f) Explain the function of verbals (gerunds, participles, infinitives) in general and their function in particular sentences. g) Form and use verbs in the active and passive voice. h) Form and use verbs in the indicative, imperative, interrogative, conditional, and subjunctive mood. i) Recognize and correct inappropriate shifts in verb

(e.g., *during*, *beyond*, *toward*). k) Understand and use question words (interrogatives) (e.g., *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, *how*). l) Produce and expand complete simple and compound declarative, interrogative, imperative, and exclamatory sentences in response to prompts.	between them depending on what is to be modified. k) Use coordinating and subordinating conjunctions. l) Produce simple, compound, and complex sentences. m) Produce, expand, and rearrange complete simple and compound sentences (e.g., *The boy watched the movie*; *The little boy watched the movie*; *The action movie was watched by the little boy*).	sentences according to conventional patterns (e.g., *a small red bag* rather than *a red small bag*). i) Form and use prepositional phrases. j) Use correlative conjunctions (e.g., *either/or*, *neither/nor*). k) Produce complete sentences, recognizing and correcting inappropriate fragments and run-ons. l) Correctly use frequently confused words (e.g., *to, too, two; there, their*).	voice and mood. j) Explain the function of phrases and clauses in general and their function in specific sentences. k) Choose among simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences to signal differing relationships among ideas. l) Place phrases and clauses within a sentence, recognizing and correcting misplaced and dangling modifiers.

CCR.LA.ABE.2: Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

NRS LEVEL 1	NRS LEVEL 2	NRS LEVEL 3	NRS LEVEL 4
GE: 0.0-1.9	GE: 2.0-3.9	GE: 4.0-5.9	GE: 6.0-8.9
2.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing. a) Capitalize the first word in a sentence and the pronoun *I*. b) Capitalize dates and names of people. c) Recognize and name end punctuation. d) Use end punctuation for sentences. e) Use commas in dates and to separate single words in a series. f) Write a letter or letters for most consonant and short-vowel sounds (phonemes). g) Spell simple words phonetically, drawing on knowledge of sound-letter	**2.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.** a) Capitalize holidays, product names, and geographic names. b) Capitalize appropriate words in titles. c) Use commas in greetings and closings of letters. d) Use commas in addresses. e) Use commas and quotation marks in dialogue. f) Use an apostrophe to form contractions and frequently occurring possessives. g) Form and use	**2.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.** a) Use correct capitalization. b) Use commas and quotation marks to mark direct speech and quotations from a text. c) Use punctuation to separate items in a series. d) Use a comma to separate an introductory element from the rest of the sentence. e) Use a comma to set off the words *yes* and *no* (e.g., *Yes, thank you*), to set off a tag question from the rest of the sentence (e.g., *It's true, isn't it?*),	**2.1 Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.** a) Use punctuation (commas, parentheses, ellipsis, dashes) to set off nonrestrictive/parenthetical elements. b) Use a comma to separate coordinate adjectives (e.g., *It was a fascinating, enjoyable movie* but not *He wore an old[,] green shirt*). c) Use an ellipsis to indicate an omission. d) Spell correctly.

relationships. h) Use conventional spelling for words with common spelling patterns and for frequently occurring irregular words. i) Spell untaught words phonetically, drawing on phonemic awareness and spelling conventions.	possessives. h) Use conventional spelling for high-frequency and other studied words and for adding suffixes to base words (e.g., *sitting*, *smiled*, *cries*, *happiness*). i) Generalize learned spelling patterns when writing words (e.g., *cage → badge*; *boy → boil*). j) Use spelling patterns and generalizations (e.g., word families, position-based spellings, syllable patterns, ending rules, meaningful word parts) in writing words. k) Consult reference materials, including beginning dictionaries, as needed to check and correct spellings.	and to indicate direct address (e.g., *Is that you, Steve?*). f) Use underlining, quotation marks, or italics to indicate titles of works. g) Use a comma before a coordinating conjunction in a compound sentence. h) Spell grade-appropriate words correctly, consulting references as needed.	

GED Testing Service® Reasoning through Language Arts
Trait 3: Clarity and Command of Standard English Conventions

Score	Description
Trait 3: Clarity and Command of Standard English Conventions	

2	• demonstrates largely correct sentence structure and a general fluency that enhances clarity with specific regard to the following skills:
	  1) varied sentence structure within a paragraph or paragraphs
	  2) correct subordination, coordination and parallelism
	  3) avoidance of wordiness and awkward sentence structures
	  4) usage of transitional words, conjunctive adverbs and other words that support logic and clarity
	  5) avoidance of run-on sentences, fused sentences, or sentence fragments
	
	• demonstrates competent application of conventions with specific regard to the following skills:
	  1) frequently confused words and homonyms, including contractions
	  2) subject-verb agreement
	  3) pronoun usage, including pronoun antecedent agreement, unclear pronoun references, and pronoun case
	  4) placement of modifiers and correct word order
	  5) capitalization (e.g., proper nouns, titles, and beginnings of sentences)
	  6) use of apostrophes with possessive nouns
	  7) use of punctuation (e.g., commas in a series or in appositives and other non-essential elements, end marks, and appropriate punctuation for clause separation)
	
	• may contain some errors in mechanics and conventions, but they do not interfere with comprehension; overall, standard usage is at a level appropriate for on-demand draft writing.

1	• demonstrates inconsistent sentence structure; may contain some repetitive, choppy, rambling, or awkward sentences that may detract from clarity; demonstrates inconsistent control over skills 1-5 as listed in the first bullet under Trait 3, Score Point 3 above • demonstrates inconsistent control of basic conventions with specific regard to skills 1 – 7 as listed in the second bullet under Trait 3, Score Point 3 above • may contain frequent errors in mechanics and conventions that occasionally interfere with comprehension; standard usage is at a minimally acceptable level of appropriateness for on-demand draft writing.
0	• demonstrates consistently flawed sentence structure such that meaning may be obscured; demonstrates minimal control over skills 1-5 as listed in the first bullet under Trait 3, Score Point 3 above • demonstrates minimal control of basic conventions with specific regard to skills 1 – 7 as listed in the second bullet under Trait 3, Score Point 3 above • contains severe and frequent errors in mechanics and conventions that interfere with comprehension; overall, standard usage is at an unacceptable level for on-demand draft writing. OR • response is insufficient to demonstrate level of mastery over conventions and usage

*Because test-takers will be given only 45 minutes to complete Extended Response tasks, there is no expectation that a response should be completely free of conventions or usage errors to receive a score of 3.

Summary of Punctuation Marks

Mark	Name	Example
.	**full stop/period**	I like English.
,	**comma**	I speak English, French, and Thai.
;	**semi-colon**	I don't often go swimming; I prefer to play tennis.
:	**colon**	You have two choices: finish the work today or lose the contract.
-	**hyphen**	This is a rather out-of-date book.
—	**dash**	In each town—London, Paris and Rome—we stayed in youth hostels.
?	**question mark**	Where is Shangri-La?
!	**exclamation mark**	"Help!" she cried. "I'm drowning!"
/	**oblique/slash**	Please press your browser's Refresh/Reload button.
"	**quotation marks**	"I love you," she said.
'	**apostrophe**	This is John's car.
( )	**round brackets**	I went to Bangkok (my favorite city) and stayed there for two weeks.
[ ]	**square brackets**	The newspaper reported that the hostages [most of them French] had been released.
...	**ellipsis**	One happy customer wrote: "This is the best program...that I have ever seen."

Key Concepts for Sentence Combining

1. **Sentence construction ability is a critical skill for a writer to master.** Sentences are the structures that words are placed into in writing in order to convey meaning. While there are no set rules for what type of sentence works best in a particular situation, well-crafted sentences can improve writing, make it more enjoyable to read, and lead to higher grading of written products.

2. **Sentence combining is an effective method to directly teach sentence construction skills.** Sentence combining instruction generally begins with combining kernel, or irreducible, sentences into effective longer sentences. Students can combine the kernels in any grammatically acceptable way, and begin to explore adding or removing details, and rearranging words or phrases. This method has been found to be effective with students from elementary age to college age. Sentence combining teaches students a method of manipulating sentences that results in more mindful writing practice. Sentence combining teaches sentence structure, sentence editing, punctuation, and paragraph organization. It also provides students with practice controlling syntax, which may improve students' ability to create variety in their writing.

3. **Sentence combining has benefits on the physical demands of writing.** The activities involved in sentence combining often increase student motivation, and reduce the use of choppy or run-on sentences. Sentence combining may also increase students' willingness to experiment with syntactical variations in their writing. Sentence combining activities may also improve students' understanding and use of punctuation, and foster an increased awareness of how readers might respond to their writing, thereby prompting students to consider revision.

4. **Revision is often a sentence-combining act.** Revision is the process of taking already written sentences and transforming or manipulating them to improve them. Sentence combining gives students experience and confidence in the act of revision, and area that is often difficult.

5. **Sentence combining has benefits on the cognitive demands of writing.** Students become more familiar with the syntactic structures used in writing by experimenting with sentence combining, and can free mental energy. Students can also experiment with word order and sentence construction without focusing on generating content.

Implications for Teachers:

1. Organize lessons to include teacher modeling, supported practices, and independent practice. Introduce: Explain to students that sentence combining is an activity that will help them write more interesting sentences that sound better to readers. Explain that good writers often work with their sentences to make them sound better. Let students know that there can and most often will be more than one right answer, and explain that when there are "mistakes" it's okay. Model: Display clusters of kernel sentences and model or collaboratively model with students how to combine: (The students are happy. The students are smart.) Be sure to explain that many combinations are possible. Discuss the different features of the different sentences. (The smart students are happy. The happy students are smart. The students are smart and happy. Happy and smart are the students.) Supported Practice: Work with students collaboratively, or have students work alone or in groups to practice. Teachers can also provide cues, such as underlining the word that should be combined, providing a cue word in parenthesis, or giving a specific direction as to what types of words to add or remove. (The girl fell over the log. She lost her balance. (because) = The girl fell over the log because she lost her balance. The cake

was delicious. The cake was chocolate. = The chocolate cake was delicious.) Independent Practice: Assign activities and have students complete. Share several options at the end, and have students discuss which are the best options, and why.

2. Teach students techniques to use in their sentence combining. Suggest that students try some of the following when combining sentences. (a) Combine the kernels in any grammatically acceptable way. (b) Change the form of words ("threw" to "was throwing"). (c) Add appropriate function words (because). (d) Rearrange by moving words, phrases, and clauses around to produce the best effect. (e) Add or eliminate details.

3. Make sentence-combining activities meaningful. Sentence combining activities can be organized in set sequence, but can also be taught depending areas of need in student writing. These activities can also be organized around content areas, or used with classroom books or literature. Reduce these passages down to kernel sentence levels, and have students combine into new sentences. Compare to the author's original work, discuss the differences, and reinforce content.

4. Sentence-combining activities must be without risk. Students should be encouraged to experiment in sentence-combining activities. If a combined sentence is grammatically acceptable, there should not be a "right" or "wrong" answer. Rather encourage students to explore and discuss what makes sentences more or less effective for different purposes.

5. Build activities and instruction that will help students' transfer sentence combining into their own writing. Sentence combining activities must not be stand-alone skill building exercises, but rather transfer to students' actual writing. Use student-writing examples for sentence combining and include sentence combining as a key element on rubrics for student writing pieces.

Sentence Combining Types and Examples
Adapted from Graham, Perrin, Saddler, Strong

Types of Sentences	Sentence Combining Activity
Multiple (Compound) Sentence Subjects or Objects: Two or more subjects can be combined with a conjunction (e.g., or, and). Two or more direct or indirect objects can be combined with a conjunction (e.g., or, and).	• **Base Clause:** Skyscrapers in the city were damaged in the hurricane. • **Sentence to Be Embedded:** <u>Bridges</u> in the city were damaged in the hurricane. • **Solution:** Skyscrapers and bridges in the city were damaged in the hurricane. • **Base Clause:** When they travel, migratory birds need safe habitat. • **Sentence to Be Embedded:** When they travel, migratory birds need <u>regular supplies of food</u>. • **Solution:** When they travel, migratory birds need safe habitat and regular
Adjectives & Adverbs: When a sentence simply contains an adjective or adverb that modifies the noun or verb of another sentence, the adjective or adverb from the first sentence can be embedded in the related sentence.	• .**Base Clause:** Dry regions are at risk for chronic water shortages. • **Sentence to Be Embedded:** Overpopulated regions are at risk for chronic water shortages. • **Solution:** Dry and overpopulated regions are at risk for chronic water shortages. • **Base Clause:** Health care costs have risen nationwide. • **Sentence to Be Embedded:** Those health care costs have also risen <u>quickly</u>. • **Solution:** Health care costs have risen quickly nationwide.
Connecting Words: One or more sentences are combined with connecting words. Coordinating conjunctions (e.g., and, but) link sentences on an equal basis. Subordinating conjunctions (e.g., after, until, unless, before, while, because) link sentences with one of the sentences subordinate or dependent on the other.	• **Base Clause:** The house was falling apart. • **Sentence to Be Combined:** No one seemed to care. (but) • **Solution:** The house was falling apart, but no one seemed to care. • **Base Clause:** The glaciers began to melt. • **Sentence to Be Combined:** The earth's average temperature increased. (because) • **Solution:** The glaciers began to melt because the earth's average temperature increased.
Relative Clauses: Sentence contains an embedded, subordinate clause that	• **Base Clause:** The artist was the most popular in the city. • **Sentence to Be Combined:** The artist

modifies a noun. Sentence contains an embedded, subordinate clause that modifies a noun.	painted watercolors of sunsets. (who) • **Solution:** The artist who painted watercolors of sunsets was the most popular in the city.
Appositives: Sentence contains two noun phrases that refer to the same object. When two sentences refer to the same noun, one sentence be reduced to an appositive and embedded in the other sentence.	• **Base Clause:** The explorer paddled the kayak across the raging river. • **Sentence to Be Embedded:** The explorer <u>was an expert in handling boats</u>. • **Solution:** The explorer, an expert in handling boats, paddled the kayak across the raging river.
Possessive Nouns: A sentence that describes possession or ownership can be reduced to a possessive noun and embedded in another sentence.	• **Base Clause:** Some historians view the Louisiana Purchase as the most important expansion of United States territory. • **Sentence to Be Embedded:** The Louisiana Purchase was <u>President Jefferson's</u> achievement. • **Solution:** Some historians view President Jefferson's Louisiana Purchase as the most important expansion of United States territory.

Resources from the World Wide Web

ChompChomp. Grammar PowerPoints for the Classroom. Entertaining materials to use as a part of mini-lessons. http://www.chompchomp.com/presentations.htm

Daily Teaching Tools. Tools from classroom teachers in a multitude of areas. https://www.dailyteachingtools.com/

National Council for Teachers of English. This site provides lessons and strategies. http://www.ncte.org/Default.aspx

PBS Teacher Source. Lesson plans and lots of activities are included in the teacher section of PBS. http://www.pbs.org/teachers

Purdue University's OWL. One of the most extensive collections of advice about writing found on the web. http://owl.english.purdue.edu/

Quill Connect. Online activities, such as sentence combining. https://www.quill.org/tools/connect

ReadWriteThink. From the International Reading Association and the National Council of Teachers of English, this site has classroom resources and professional development activities in the area of integrated reading, writing, and thinking skills. http://www.readwritethink.org/

ReadWorks provides research-based units and lessons for the classroom. The ReadWorks curriculum is aligned to the Common Core State Standards and the standards of all 50 states. http://www.readworks.org

Teach 4 Results. A list of resources for teaching the writing process. http://iteach4results.wikispaces.com/*Writing

Teaching That Makes Sense. A K-12 site with lots of free resources and graphic organizers from Steve Peha. http://ttms.org/

University of West Florida. Mini Lessons. Short lessons and PowerPoints on the basic grammar skills to incorporate into your writing craft. https://uwf.edu/cassh/support-resources/the-uwf-writing-lab/expand-your-skills/grammar-mini-lessons-powerpoints/

Writer's Toolbox http://www.gtps.k12.nj.us/curric/writing/index_files/page0001.htm

Writer's Web. Materials from the University of Richmond's Writing Center. http://writing2.richmond.edu/writing/wweb.html

Woe Is I. Patricia O'Connor. file:///C:/Users/bonnie/Desktop/Woe%20Is%20I.pdf