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# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> - - - - -	<b>ix</b>
<b>Unit 1 Thinking and Writing</b> - - - - -	<b>1</b>
LESSON 1: WHAT IS MY GOAL?- - - - -	2
LESSON 2: WHO IS MY AUDIENCE?- - - - -	6
LESSON 3: WHAT IS MY TOPIC? - - - - -	7
LESSON 4: WHAT IS MY STANCE TOWARD THE TOPIC? - - - - -	9
LESSON 5: HOW AM I GOING TO SUPPORT MY TOPIC?- - - - -	11
LESSON 6: WRITING STRATEGY - - - - -	13
LESSON 7: TOPIC BUILDERS - - - - -	17
LESSON 8: UNITY AND COHERENCE- - - - -	21
LESSON 9: TRANSITIONAL MATERIAL - - - - -	26
LESSON 10: RESOURCES AND WRITING - - - - -	28
LESSON 11: UNIT REVIEW- - - - -	34
<b>Unit 2 Writing a Research Paper</b> - - - - -	<b>37</b>
LESSON 12: WHAT IS A RESEARCH PAPER? - - - - -	37
LESSON 13: WHERE DO I BEGIN? - - - - -	40
LESSON 14: SELECTING AND LIMITING YOUR TOPIC - - - - -	43
LESSON 15: INITIAL LIBRARY RESEARCH- - - - -	44
LESSON 16: FOCUS YOUR THOUGHTS - - - - -	47
LESSON 17: PREPARE A GENERAL OUTLINE- - - - -	48
LESSON 18: IN-DEPTH RESEARCH- - - - -	51
LESSON 19: PREPARE A DETAILED OUTLINE - - - - -	54
LESSON 20: WRITE YOUR FIRST DRAFT - - - - -	54
LESSON 21: DO ADDITIONAL RESEARCH - - - - -	54
LESSON 22: EDIT THE FIRST DRAFT AND WRITE THE SECOND- - - - -	55
LESSON 23: TYPING YOUR FINAL DRAFT - - - - -	55
LESSON 24: PROOFREAD YOUR PAPER- - - - -	63
LESSON 25: PRODUCE THE FINAL DRAFT- - - - -	63
<b>Unit 3 Writing an Article of Opinion</b> - - - - -	<b>75</b>
LESSON 26: THE ARTICLE OF OPINION - - - - -	75
LESSON 27: SOUNDNESS OF ARGUMENT—PART 1- - - - -	76

LESSON 28: SOUNDNESS OF ARGUMENT—PART 2	81
LESSON 29: SOUNDNESS OF ARGUMENT—PART 3	84
LESSON 30: PRESENTATION	95
LESSON 31: THINK BEFORE YOU WRITE	98
LESSON 32: THE WRITING PROCESS	100
LESSON 33: UNIT REVIEW	103
<hr/>	
<b>Unit 4 The Mechanics of Good Writing</b>	<b>109</b>
LESSON 34: PROPER NOUNS AND ADJECTIVES	109
LESSON 35: GROUPS AND EVENTS	110
LESSON 36: OTHER PROPER NAMES	112
LESSON 37: TITLES AND OTHER CAPITALIZATION	113
LESSON 38: END PUNCTUATION	115
LESSON 39: A CAUSE TO PAUSE	116
LESSON 40: SIGNS ALONG THE WAY	124
LESSON 41: INDENTATION AND ALTERNATIVES	130
LESSON 42: SPACING AND ALIGNMENT	132
LESSON 43: UNIT REVIEW	133
<hr/>	
<b>Unit 5 Colorful Writing</b>	<b>139</b>
LESSON 44: SYNONYMS AND ANTONYMS	139
LESSON 45: HOMONYMS AND HOMOGRAPHES	140
LESSON 46: TROPES	142
LESSON 47: DIALOGUE	146
LESSON 48: PARAPHRASING	148
LESSON 49: AMPLIFYING MEANING	150
LESSON 50: DESCRIPTIVE WRITING	152
LESSON 51: SKETCHES	154
LESSON 52: UNIT REVIEW	157
<hr/>	
<b>Unit 6 Nouns and Pronouns</b>	<b>161</b>
LESSON 53: NOUNS	161
LESSON 54: PLACING NOUNS	163
LESSON 55: PLURALS OF NOUNS	165
LESSON 56: MORE ABOUT NOUNS	169
LESSON 57: PRONOUNS	173
LESSON 58: PLACING PRONOUNS	176
LESSON 59: UNIT REVIEW	180

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**Unit 7 Verbs, Verbals, and Participles - - - - - 183**

LESSON 60: VERBS - - - - - 183  
LESSON 61: PLACING VERBS - - - - - 186  
LESSON 62: VERBALS - - - - - 193  
LESSON 63: PRINCIPAL PARTS OF VERBS - - - - - 196  
LESSON 64: UNIT REVIEW - - - - - 201

---

**Unit 8 Five Other Parts of Speech - - - - - 205**

LESSON 65: ADJECTIVES - - - - - 205  
LESSON 66: ADVERBS - - - - - 207  
LESSON 67: PREPOSITIONS - - - - - 209  
LESSON 68: CONJUNCTIONS - - - - - 210  
LESSON 69: INTERJECTIONS, ETC. - - - - - 212  
LESSON 70: UNIT REVIEW - - - - - 214

---

**Unit 9 Phrases and Clauses - - - - - 217**

LESSON 71: PHRASES - - - - - 217  
LESSON 72: CLAUSES - - - - - 221  
LESSON 73: UNIT REVIEW - - - - - 225

---

**Unit 10 Sentences - - - - - 227**

LESSON 74: COMMON SENTENCE ERRORS - - - - - 227  
LESSON 75: CORRECTING FAULTY COORDINATION - - - - - 230  
LESSON 76: PRONOUN AND ANTECEDENT AGREEMENT - - - - - 237  
LESSON 77: PLACEMENT OF MODIFIERS - - - - - 240  
LESSON 78: PARALLEL STRUCTURE - - - - - 243  
LESSON 79: UNNECESSARY SHIFTS IN SENTENCES - - - - - 246  
LESSON 80: SENTENCE CONCISENESS - - - - - 248  
LESSON 81: COMBINING AND REVISING SENTENCES - - - - - 252  
LESSON 82: UNIT REVIEW - - - - - 258

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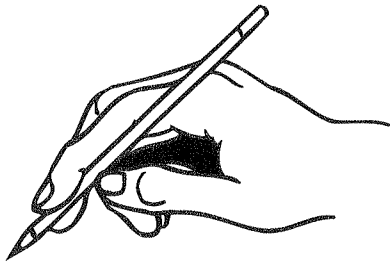
**Appendix Irregular Verbs - - - - - 263**

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**Glossary - - - - - 265**

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**Index - - - - - 271**



# Unit 1

## Thinking and Writing

### INTRODUCTION

*Applications of Grammar, Book 4*, is designed as a review of the basic elements of effective writing and a reenforcement of the fundamentals of grammar. This course is essentially divided in two parts—**composition** and **grammar**. The first part emphasizes the *thinking process* and develops a sound *writing strategy*. These basic elements of effective writing are then applied to writing an essay, a research paper, and an article of opinion. The second part focuses on grammar, highlighting various grammatical issues that are challenging or prone to errors.

As you approach this course, you must keep in mind that there is a vital connection which exists between *thought* and *language*—both being gifts of God which were given to mankind at creation. It is your responsibility, therefore, to master how you *think* and *communicate* so that you might use these God-given abilities with power and for His glory, as He intended them to be used. In this unit, you will learn how to use **thought** to write effectively. You will learn to **think before you write**. As God thought and then spoke the universe into existence, you too must begin with the thinking process before you proceed to the writing process.

### WRITING WITH A PURPOSE

Writing should be done with a **purpose**—a purpose that conforms to God’s Word. As you study the principles of composition and grammar, you should also seek to *glorify God* in the simplest essay to the most sophisticated paper.

The **key to effective writing** is a *deep understanding of the greatest story of all time*. This story encompasses all the conflicts of history, beginning with the wonderful yet tragic story of God breathing life into man, and man rebelling against his Creator. It then flows through the lives of the people of Israel, reaching its powerful climax in the drama of the cross. “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). The story advances in the life of the church as it comes into conflict with the kingdom of darkness, coming to a grand finale at the return of Christ as King.

Every endeavor to write effectively does not need to embrace all aspects of God’s great story, but each effort should **mirror key aspects** of that drama. *God must be glorified in Christ by your thoughts and, subsequently, your words*—whether they reveal the great truths of salvation and how they change lives; or how biblical values triumph over the world’s values; or the conflict between the children of darkness and the children of light; or, indeed, the struggle that each child of God fights in this world. This is what distinguishes effective writing that is *Christian*. Writing that is truly Christian arises from a heart that knows and loves the Lord, demonstrating a devotion that pleases Him and a creativity that is subject to the Lordship of Christ.

## THE THINKING PROCESS

Putting your thoughts down on paper does not take place in one sitting; nor is it something that you should try to accomplish in a hasty or haphazard manner. Whenever you write, even the simplest paragraph, you are involved in *an ongoing process* which includes using your mind, making decisions, and organizing your thoughts *before* you write them down in a meaningful and orderly way. Start by taking time to let your creative thoughts flow. Quiet your heart and let your thoughts soar the heights of your imagination and search the depths of your soul.

In the first part of this unit, you will answer the following questions: “What is my goal in writing?” “Who is my audience?” “What is my topic?” “What is my stance toward the topic?” and “How am I going to support my topic?” This is the **thinking process** that precedes the process of writing. Subsequently, in the rest of the unit, you will learn how to develop a sensible **writing strategy**, using *public resources* to write an essay of about 750 words.

## LESSON 1: WHAT IS MY GOAL?

Whenever you write poetry, prose, or any other sort of literary piece, you *write with a goal in mind*. Naturally, there may be other underlying purposes, but it is your main goal that guides your thoughts as you put them down on paper.

There are *four basic writing goals*, each with its own distinctive perspective: (1) to tell a story (*narrative*), (2) to inform or explain (*expository*), (3) to describe something (*descriptive*), and (4) to persuade or convince (*argumentative*). The following table defines and gives examples for each of these goals:

WRITING GOAL	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
<b>Narrative</b>	tells a story or recounts a chain of events	recounting the first time you sang a solo in church
<b>Expository</b>	reveals information or explains	explaining electromagnetism
<b>Descriptive</b>	describes a person, place, or thing	describing the Grand Canyon
<b>Argumentative</b>	persuades or convinces	persuading your parents to let you go on a short term mission project

### ■ Narrative

*Narrative* writing is the telling of a story or recounting of a chain of events. Often you tell a story about what happened to you. It does not need a plot, characters, or setting, because you are only concerned about conveying to your reader a short synopsis of what happened to you. On the other hand, if you are writing a short story, biographical narrative, or novel about one or more people, you would include the above elements of a story.

### ■ Expository

*Expository* writing reveals information or explains. This kind of writing *gives reasons for something happening, presents facts on how something works, explains an idea, or gives a definition* in a detailed manner. For example, you may want to **give reasons** why you learned to drive before you were fifteen or why you were late to an activity or why your family is planning to move to a new location. These kinds of explanations are easy to write because they are derived from your experience, but explaining an *idea* or *how something works* is more involved.

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### To Present Facts

To present **facts on how something works** calls for your ideas to be given in a logical way. Your reader needs enough information so he will be able to follow your train of thought and grasp what you are saying.

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### To Explain an Idea

To explain an **idea** or concept is probably the most difficult kind of expository writing. It is much more complex because you are trying to communicate something that is *abstract*—as opposed to something *concrete* like the anatomy of the human body.

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### To Give a Definition

In expository writing, giving a **definition** of a particular term involves more than merely restating an entry from your dictionary. It tries to explain the meaning of a word in a more conversational way. This informal approach includes the detailed explanation of the various denotations and connotations of the word.

### ■ **Descriptive**

*Descriptive* writing describes a *person, place, or thing*. Describing the external aspects of such subjects is relatively easy, but seldom adequate. A superficial description may be sufficient for a medical profile, travel brochure, or sales advertisement, but it is not a complete picture of the entity under consideration. Revealing the deeper, inner qualities or aspects of the person, place, or thing should be your goal.

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#### Describing a Person

A description of a **person** does not merely reveal his physical features; it includes insights into the inner qualities of that person. When describing a person, include particular faults, strengths, and idiosyncrasies which put “flesh” on the bare “bones” of his outward appearance.

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#### Describing a Place

Describing a **place** attempts to capture the essence of that location by choosing words that paint a plausible picture in detail. It is as if you transport your reader to the very place that you are describing. Remember to appeal to the five senses of touch, taste, smell, hearing, and sight, to bring the description to life.

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#### Describing a Thing

A **thing** is described in much the same way as a place. You appeal to the five senses to help your reader “see” or “feel” the thing you are describing. It is also helpful to compare that thing with something else that has similar aspects or qualities. **Similes** and **metaphors** are devices that may be used to look at such things side by side (*See page 144*).

### ■ **Argumentative**


*Argumentative* writing tries to persuade or convince. This type of writing *influences, reasons, or gives opinions*. If you desire to persuade someone, you must take him through the specific steps which you have taken to reach your conclusion. In essence, you are engaging your reader with reasoned arguments that you set forth in writing. An **argument** may be defined as follows: a claim that should be relevant to proving or establishing the arguer’s conclusion. Each argument is used to build or refute a case in support of one’s side of a debatable issue.

The first task in argumentative writing is clarifying what the **debatable issue** is and what **approach** is going to be taken. Often in a given argument, the approach to a particular issue is difficult to pin down and even the issue itself is unclear. Seek therefore to have a clear-cut understanding of what the debatable issue is and what approach you will take. We will primarily focus on the *persuading* approach, but the others may apply in certain circumstances; *quarreling*, though common, is the only approach that is unacceptable at all times. The following chart describes the various approaches to this type of writing:<sup>4</sup>

APPROACH	SETTING	METHOD	GOAL
Quarreling	emotional conflict	personal attack	"strike out" at other
Debating	public contest	verbal victory	impress audience
Persuading	difference of conviction or opinion	internal and external proof	persuade others
Inquiring	lack of proof	argumentation based on knowledge	establish proof
Negotiating	difference of interests	bargaining	personal gain
Seeking information	lack of information	questioning	find information
Seeking action	need for action	issuing imperatives	produce action
Gaining knowledge	lack of knowledge	teaching	impart knowledge

According to Douglas Walton, there are four stages to argumentative communication: the *opening stage*, *confrontation stage*, *argumentation stage*, and *closing stage*. In the opening stage the approach that will be taken is clarified and the "rules of argumentation" agreed upon. These may be specific rules as used in a court of law or informal guidelines of customary, polite conversation or discussion.


In the confrontation stage, the debatable issue is announced, agreed upon (if there is another party involved), or clarified. The argumentation stage is the stage where the agreed method (see chart above) is used to argue a given position. Finally, the closing stage is the point where you achieve your goal.<sup>5</sup>

 **EXERCISE A** Identify the *writing goal* for each of the following topics. In the blanks at the left, write **N** for narrative, **E** for expository, **D** for descriptive, and **A** for argumentative.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. How to arrange a bouquet of flowers
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. A terrifying experience while traveling to a strange place
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Why Christians should run for public office
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. What Victoria Falls (in southern Africa) looks like
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. A biographical sketch of the Apostle Peter

4. This chart is adapted from Douglas N. Walton's *Informal Logic*, page 10, Table 1.0, "Types of Dialogue."

5. *Ibid.*, pages 9–11.

 **EXERCISE B** Write a short paragraph (3 to 4 sentences) for each goal of writing: *narrative*, *expository*, *descriptive*, and *argumentative*. Use the topics suggested or choose ones of your own.

**Narrative**—Tell about the first time you drove a car or placed in a sports event.

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**Expository**—Explain the idea of entropy, how to “surf” the Internet, how to audition for a part in a play, or how the pyramids were built.

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**Descriptive**—Describe the Golden Gate Bridge, your favorite dessert, or the appearance and personality of your best friend.

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