



GROUNDWERK 6.5 // LEARN TO MIS-USE ENGLISH GRAMMAR
developed by Taylor Le Melle

Estimated Time to Complete: up to 2 hours
(including breaks)

Schedule (Set a timer for each exercise):

Exercise 1: Gather your things
-15 minutes

Exercise 2: Write one sentence
-30 minutes

Break: 15 minutes

Exercise 3: Change a sentence
-30 minutes

Exercise 1: Gather your things. 15 minutes.

bring, to an empty writing table, something:

1. to write with [2 different types of writing instrument]
2. to write on [5 sheets of paper, loose sheets of different sizes]
3. to read [a combination of no more than 3 books -or- magazines -or- letters -or- record sleeves, should be physical not digital. pick according to your current whim. do not spend more than a minute considering each choice.]

Exercise 2: Write one sentence. 20 minutes.

- Part 1: On one of your sheets of paper, write a sentence. The most basic sentence. Pack light. This means: gather up the minimum amount of words that you will need in order to construct a sentence *describing* (i.e. - the following are prompts only - write about whatever!) the furnishings in the room you're in or the behaviour of any others in the house with you or the quality of the sky today where you are or what you ate for breakfast. But, do not make anything up. Observe what you can see and write that, using as few words as you can.

Exercise 2: Write one sentence. 20 minutes.

Part 2: What makes that which you just wrote be considered *a sentence*, as opposed to any other random gathering of discrete words?

- On another sheet of paper, consider and list the qualities that a group of words needs to have to 'qualify' as a sentence.
 - *i.e. a sentence is ...*
- Next, on that same sheet of paper, also list qualities that a sentence can have and what a sentence can do
 - *i.e. a sentence can...*

Compare your list to these examples.

- A sentence is more than one word.
- A sentence can be a statement of intention.
- A sentence distills multiple ideas into a common one.
- A sentence can be an observation or a description.
- A sentence can communicate emotional value.
- A sentence represents a shifting awareness.
- A sentence has punctuation. stillness v. liveness / aliveness
- A sentence can lead us to other ideas or can be a remnant of ideas (Linking sentences).
- A sentence can be origin point or a conclusion point for other sentences.

(continued)

- A sentence can be direct or playful.
 - A sentence can tell the truth.
- Groups of sentences can use repetition to form a relationship to each other.
 - A sentence has a subject and an object.
 - A sentence can tell us who is speaking.
 - A sentence can tell us who is being spoken to.
 - A sentence can capture action.
 - A sentence can reveal information.
 - A sentence can obscure information.

An English grammar textbook says a sentence is:

The four English BASE SENTENCE PATTERNS are

1.

Noun Verb Intransitive

(subject)

Dylan sings.

Notes: This pattern is complete in two words. An intransitive verb is one that does not require a second noun to complete the structure.

An English grammar textbook says a sentence is:

2.

Noun	Verb	Transitive Noun
(subject)		(object)
Dylan	sings	songs.

Notes: In a Pattern 2 sentence, the subject acts on something through the verb, and that something is called the verb's object.

An English grammar textbook says a sentence is:

3.

Noun

Linking Verb

Noun

(subject)

(predicate noun)

Adolescents

become

adults.

Notes: A "linking verb" is one that functions more or less as an equals sign does in arithmetic. A transitive verb in a sense "links" the subject with the object, but it does not equate them: except in those relatively rare sentences where the subject acts on itself, subject and object are two different things.

An English grammar textbook says a sentence is:

4.

Noun	Verb Linking	Adjective
(subject)		(predicate adjective)
Krusty	seemed	irritable.

Notes: In Pattern 4, the linking verb links the subjects to an adjective that modifies it.

Exercise 2: Your conclusions

What parts of what you wrote on your own sheet of paper in exercise 2 resonated with the example conclusions (on pages 6 -7)?

What do you make of the English textbook's approach to sentence-building (on pages 8 -11)?

Take a break.

Think about what you might need. A short walk? Come back to this pdf in no fewer than 15 minutes.

Exercise 3: Change a sentence. 30 minutes.

- Pick a page at random from one of the texts you brought to the session. Pick a passage and change the structure of the sentence or sentences using what tools we have generated (your list or the example list on pages 6-7).
- Write down these new sentences on your remaining pieces of paper.

Some guiding examples ...

Consider long, meandering sentences and ask yourself how you might use repetition or punctuation or some other tool from the list – the list you made or the example list – to change the sentence; make it speak in a different way..

*A
Sort
of
Preface*

It does no good to write autobiographical fiction cause the minute the book hits the stand here comes your mama screamin how could you and sighin death where is thy sting and she snatches you up out your bed to grill you about what was going down back there in Brooklyn when she was working three jobs and trying to improve the quality of your life and come to find on page 42 that you were messin around with that nasty boy up the block and breaks into sobs and quite naturally your family strolls in all sleepy-eyed to catch the floor show at 5:00 A.M. but as far as your mama is concerned, it is nineteen-forty-and-something and you ain't too grown to have your ass whipped.

And it's no use using bits and snatches even of real events and real people, even if you do cover, guise, switch-around and change-up cause next thing you know your best friend's laundry cart is squeaking past but your bell ain't ringing so you trot down the block after her and there's this drafty cold pressure front the weatherman surely did not predict and your friend says in this chilly way that it's really something when your own friend stabs you in the back with a pen and for the next two blocks you try to explain that the character is not her at all but just happens to be speaking one of her

Consider short sentences.
Insert playfulness.
Commands become observations.

William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*

CASH

I MADE it on the bevel.

1. There is more surface for the nails to grip.
2. There is twice the gripping-surface to each seam.
3. The water will have to seep into it on a slant. Water moves easiest up and down or straight across.
4. In a house people are upright two-thirds of the time. So the seams and joints are made up-and-down. Because the stress is up-and-down.
5. In a bed where people lie down all the time, the joints and seams are made sideways, because the stress is sideways.
6. Except.
7. A body is not square like a cross-tie.
8. Animal magnetism.
9. The animal magnetism of a dead body makes the stress come slanting, so the seams and joints of a coffin are made on the bevel.
10. You can see by an old grave that the earth sinks down on the bevel.
11. While in a natural hole it sinks by the centre, the stress being up-and-down.
12. So I made it on the bevel.
13. It makes a neater job.

- can you change a command into an observation?
- can you change the emotional register of the chosen passage?
- can you elaborate on what someone else has written, extrapolating one sentence into many?
- can you change the mode of address, who the text is speaking to ?

Give yourself about 10 minutes per chosen passage, aiming to work with two or three different passages over the course of the 30 minutes given for this exercise.

THE END

Credits:

- Slide 6 and 7: List compiled with participants of two previous iterations of this workshop. With thanks to Norwich University of the Arts BA Fine Art students Steve, Ruby, Maddie, Melina, Hannah and Emily and Lecturer Carl Rowe; and with thanks to not/nowhere 4 April Writing Sentence Structure workshop participants Jasleen, Khadea, Myriam, Sally, Judah, Noor Afshan, Priya, Shama and Tako
- Slide 8 through 11: <https://mymustangs.milton.edu/grammar/lessons.cfm>
- Slide 15: Bambara, Toni Cade. Gorilla, My Love. New York: Random House, 1972.
- Slide 16: Faulkner, William. As I Lay Dying. 1930.



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