

**AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY'S**

**PREPARING FOR THE  
TENNESSEE  
WRITING  
ASSESSMENT**

**SAMPLE PAGES**

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and BRIAN FREEL**

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# Preface

## About the Book

*Preparing for the Tennessee Writing Assessment for the Eleventh Grade* provides students with instruction and practice in planning, drafting, revising, and editing an essay, with primary emphasis on persuasive writing. The skills taught in this book will help students prepare for the Tennessee Writing Assessment administered to students in the eleventh grade. We recommend that students keep a portfolio of their writing, so they can see their skills progress over time.

After each lesson, practice exercises help students master the concept that they learned in the lesson. Individual and group activities provide opportunities for further student practice in classes or in individualized study sessions. Students and teachers can rehearse the test situation by responding to the list of sample writing prompts in Appendix A. The next section, Appendix B, contains lists of books and Web sites that may also help students develop their writing skills.

For students who may need more review of grammar and usage skills, American Book Company offers a companion book, *Basics Made Easy: Grammar and Usage Review* as well as *Grammar and Usage* software that is correlated with the lessons in the book.

The authors welcome comments and suggestions about the book. Please contact them at:

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These writers have produced best-selling books on passing graduation exams in Alabama, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, Minnesota, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

# Diagnostic Essay

The **Tennessee Writing Assessment** requires that students produce an essay on an assigned topic within a specified amount of time. Eleventh grade students will have approximately **35 minutes** to write a **persuasive essay** intended to convince or influence the reader to agree with the writer's point of view. The purpose of this assessment is to help identify strengths and weaknesses in individual writing as well as to help identify group writing trends in the public schools of Tennessee.

In this chapter, you will write an essay in response to a writing prompt similar to those given on the Tennessee Writing Assessment. This **diagnostic essay** will show you and your instructor where your strengths are and which writing skills you need to practice more. You can then focus on the chapters in this book which will benefit you the most. You will also have the opportunity in this chapter to read and evaluate a sample essay that another student wrote.

## How to Use Your Time

You will have no more than 35 minutes to complete your essay for the Tennessee Writing Assessment. To use your time wisely, you may want to follow the suggestions below.



### Planning/Prewriting (5 minutes)

During this part of the test, you will read the writing prompt carefully, make brainstorming lists of your ideas, and organize those ideas in a clustering diagram or outline.

### Drafting (20 minutes)

Once you have organized your ideas, you will write them in complete sentences developed into well-formed paragraphs.

### Revising (5 minutes)

Now is the time to read over your draft and make improvements. You want to make sure all of your ideas are developed in a logical order and supported by relevant reasons and examples. You also want to eliminate unrelated ideas and unnecessary words. This is a good time to improve your word choice as well. Make sure all of your corrections are neat and legible.

### Proofreading (5 minutes)

Take advantage of the last few minutes of the testing time to review your essay one more time. This time look for errors in capitalization, punctuation, and grammar. These small corrections can make a big difference.

The times given for each part are only suggestions. You may spend more or less time on any one part. Use all of the thirty-five minutes you are given.

# Chapter 1

## Writing Paragraphs

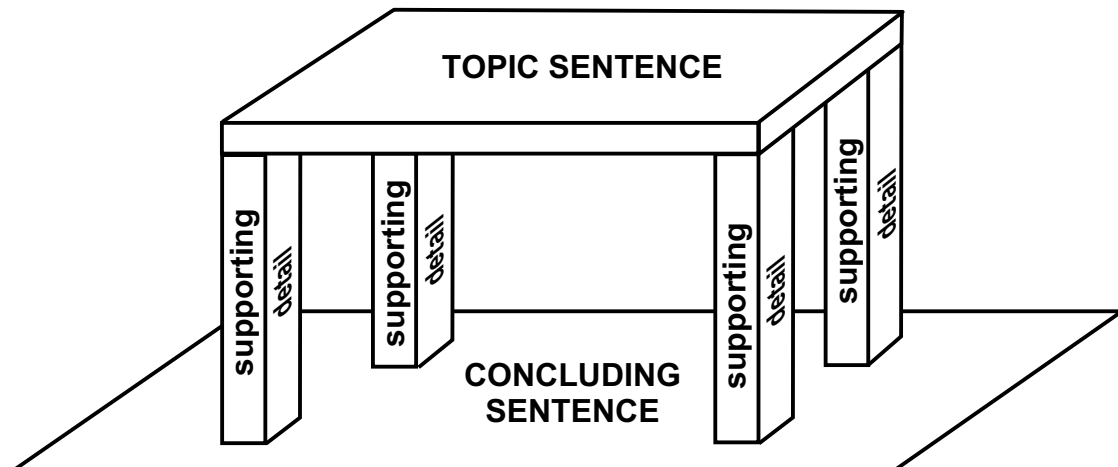
The Tennessee Writing Assessment requires you to produce an essay on an assigned topic within a specified amount of time. Each chapter in this book will help you with different aspects of this task. You will begin by writing well-organized paragraphs because any well-written essay is composed of effective paragraphs. In this chapter, you will learn about the following aspects of writing paragraphs:

- Paragraph Structure
- Writing a Topic Sentence
- Improving a Topic Sentence
- Supporting Details
- Developing Supporting Details
- Organizing Paragraphs
- Writing a Concluding Sentence

### PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

A **paragraph** is a series of related sentences that make a single point about one subject. That single point is called the **main idea**, and it is usually stated in the **topic sentence** of a paragraph. The topic sentence often begins a paragraph, though it may also be at the end or in the middle of a paragraph. The **supporting details** in the paragraph explain the main idea. If the topic sentence does not end the paragraph, a **concluding sentence** can bring the paragraph to a close, and if appropriate, lead into the next paragraph.

An easy way to understand the structure of a paragraph is to compare it to a table. The main idea is like the table top. Just as the table's purpose is to provide a flat surface for writing or eating, the paragraph's purpose is to tell the reader about the main idea. Of course, without legs, the table top will not stand. In a similar way, the main idea must be supported by details, examples, and explanations. Finally, a table that rocks on an uneven floor makes people wonder if objects they place on it will fall off. Similarly, a paragraph that does not provide a clear conclusion may leave the reader unsure if the supporting details relate to each other.



## WRITING A TOPIC SENTENCE

---

The previous section shows that a paragraph is organized around a single idea, called the **main idea**. The statement of the main idea is called the **topic sentence**. The topic sentence tells the reader two important pieces of information:

- 1) **the subject of the paragraph**
- 2) **what the author wants the reader to know about that subject**

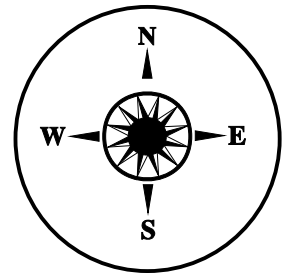
As a writer, you can use these statements to help you develop a topic sentence. Begin by answering the following two questions:

- What is the subject of the paragraph?**  
**What do I want the reader to know about that subject?**

Then, use the answers to these questions to form a topic sentence. For example,

<b>Subject:</b>	fuel-efficient cars
<b>Want reader to know:</b>	help the environment
<b>Sentence:</b>	Buying a fuel-efficient car is one way you can help the environment.

This simple method of forming a topic sentence can help you stay focused in your writing. The topic sentence is like your compass while you write. It tells you what direction you want to go. Then, if you feel yourself getting lost in your writing, you can return to your topic sentence to get your bearings. For each sentence in a paragraph, ask the two questions above. If the sentence doesn't relate in some way to the subject and what you want the reader to know about the subject, it doesn't belong in the paragraph.



***The topic sentence states the subject of the paragraph and what the author wants the reader to know about that subject.***

### Practice 2: Writing a Topic Sentence

**For each of the following, write a topic sentence based on the subject and what you want the reader to know.**

1. Subject: baseball cards  
Want reader to know: it's an interesting hobby

Topic Sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## CHAPTER 1 SUMMARY: WRITING PARAGRAPHS

### STRUCTURE OF A PARAGRAPH

Topic Sentence (Introduction)



Supporting Details (examples, reasons, testimony, observations)



Concluding Sentence (Summary)

- *The topic sentence states the subject of the paragraph and what the author wants the reader to know about that subject.*
- *A good topic sentence must be a single idea that is broad enough to invite discussion.*
- *Supporting details are specific statements that are related to the topic of the paragraph, but they do more than just restate the main idea.*
- *Supporting details answer questions the reader may have.*
- *Paragraphs can be organized according to time, space, importance, or contrasting ideas.*
- *A concluding sentence may achieve one or more of the following:*

*Emphasize an important point;  
Provide a summary of the topic and details;  
Suggest a response for the reader;  
Link one paragraph to another.*

# Chapter 2

## Writing to Persuade

The Tennessee Writing Assessment requires you to write a **persuasive essay** in which you must try to convince the reader to agree with your point of view. In order to do this effectively, you must be aware of the following aspects of writing which you will study and practice in this chapter:

- Author's Purpose
- Audience
- Language and Tone
- Using Persuasive Language
- Building an Argument

### AUTHOR'S PURPOSE

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There are many reasons why an author puts pen to paper or clicks away at the keyboard. Just think of the reasons why you write: you write essays for English class because the teacher requires it; you may write a note in a birthday card to your mother to express your love; or you may send e-mails to Internet friends just to keep in touch. Every author writes for a specific purpose. You can infer the **author's purpose** from the way an author writes. See if you can determine the author's purpose in the following two paragraphs.

**Example 1:** *The common opossum is the only kind of opossum found in the United States. This species grows about as big as a house cat. It has rough grayish-white hair, a long snout, dark eyes, and big hairless ears. This opossum has a long tail that does not have much hair on it. The animal can hang upside down by wrapping its tail around a tree branch. Its teeth and claws are sharp.*



**Example 2:** *One warm fall evening, our son Tom went out to the garage to feed the cat. Suddenly we heard him yell out, "A rat! A Texas-sized rat!" His older brother Joey went to investigate and reported back, "Sure enough, Mom. It is a rat!" Finally, Barb and I went to look at this "rat." When the little critter turned around to see us gawking, we realized that it was a 'possum . . . a fat 'possum.*

Both paragraphs discuss opossums, but they do so in very different ways. **Example 1** provides basic information about the physical features of one type of opossum. Though the paragraph contains descriptive words, there is no dialogue and no action. This paragraph would fit well in a science textbook. The author's purpose is **to inform**.

**Example 2**, on the other hand, describes characters and events with expressive words and interesting dialogue. It is part of a brief story about a surprising and funny event. Perhaps you would find it in a book of short stories. The author's purpose is **to entertain**.

## CHAPTER 2 REVIEW: WRITING TO PERSUADE

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Read the following two reports. Then answer the questions below, using complete sentences.

### Report 1

The County Government meeting broke up after a long debate. Bill Smith's supporters claim that he is the duly elected representative of the people and should be allowed to take his seat on the council. His opponents disputed this, saying that his previous protests of council activities disqualify him from holding public office.

### Report 2

We elected Bill Smith, and he's our man. His enemies are just jealous. They think they can throw some mud around and make it stick to Bill. No way! He's squeaky clean. There ain't nothin' they can do to make him look bad. He stood up for us before, makin' sure the council listened to us. Now those jokers say that's a bad thing. Stick by Bill. He stuck by us!

1. What is the author's purpose in each report?
2. Compare and contrast the language and tone of these two reports.

Read the following excerpt, and complete the writing exercise that follows.

I stand as firm as the rock of Gibraltar on the right that women have to shape the thoughts, socially and politically, of the world. They can make our country better and purer, just as they appreciate their own rights. I am in favor of women's rights in their rights to rise up in the majesty of the nature their Creator gave them and emancipate themselves from the foolish fashions and sentiments of the age. When they do rise, they will be more respected by all mankind than all the rulers of the earth from Adam down to the present day.

Clarissa's speech in *Shams* by John S. Draper

3. Write one paragraph in which you evaluate the language and tone of this excerpt. What are some strengths of the author's choices in language and tone, and what are some weaknesses? How do these affect the persuasiveness of the writing?

Read the following excerpt, and complete the writing exercise on the next page.

There is still a great deal of controversy about the future of the space program. While some people believe it is a waste of much needed funds, others point to the great scientific and technological advances that have resulted from the exploration of space. Supporters of the program most frequently cite the wide uses of microprocessors as one of the major contributions to space-related research. Opponents believe the billions of dollars dedicated to the space program would be better spent on the needs of education, health care, and job training for the poor and disadvantaged.

# Chapter 3

## Planning The Essay

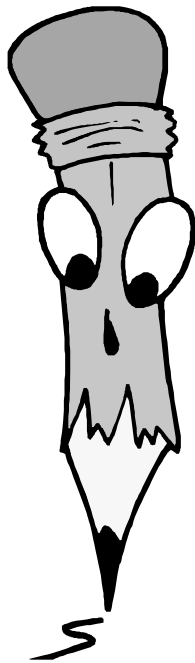
After practicing writing persuasive paragraphs, you are ready to focus specifically on mastering the Tennessee Writing Assessment. In this chapter, you will learn about the following:

- The Basic Structure of an Essay
- The Writing Process
- Generating Ideas
- Focusing Ideas
- Making a Plan for Your Essay

### BASIC STRUCTURE OF AN ESSAY

The essay you will create for the Tennessee Writing Assessment should include three main parts: the **introduction**, the **body**, and the **conclusion**.

#### Basic Structure of an Essay



**INTRODUCTION**  
1 Paragraph:  
General Discussion  
& Statement of  
Controlling Idea



**BODY**  
2-3 Paragraphs:  
Elaboration of  
Controlling Idea with  
Supporting Details



**CONCLUSION**  
1 Paragraph:  
Summary of Discussion



The **introduction** is the first paragraph of your essay. It gets the reader's attention, prepares the reader for what will follow, and states the **controlling idea** of the essay. The controlling idea of an essay is much like the main idea of a paragraph.

The **body** consists of two to three paragraphs which support the controlling idea. Each paragraph is focused around a topic sentence which can be drawn from the key points of the controlling idea. In turn, the topic sentence of each paragraph is supported by the details explained in the rest of that paragraph.

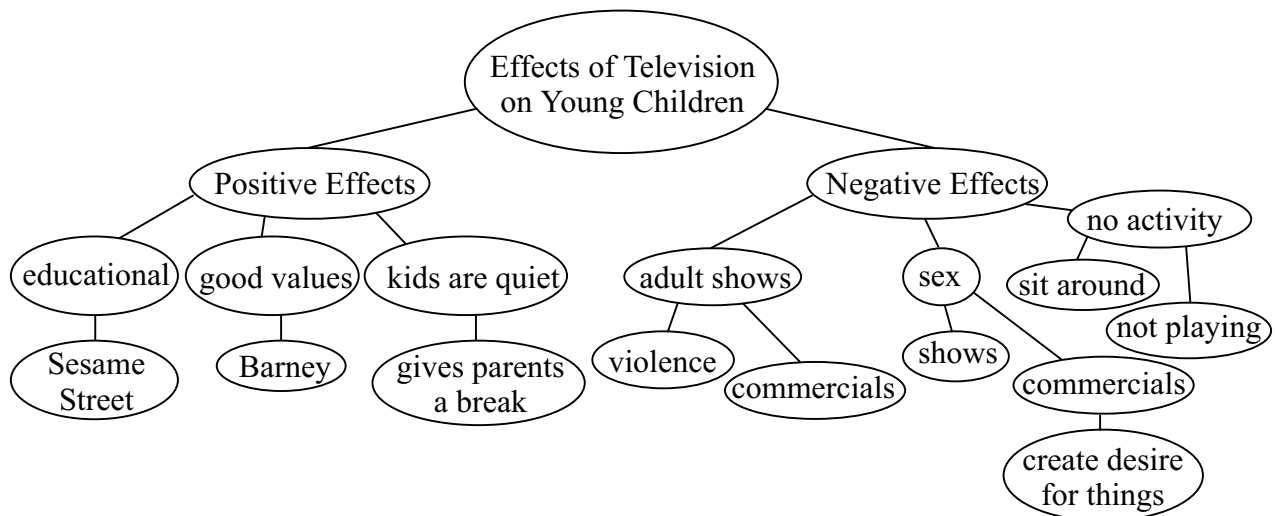
## FOCUSING IDEAS

Obviously, you cannot create an essay directly from a brainstorming list or a freewriting sample. The ideas don't follow any logical order. Also, there are too many ideas. You can't use them all. You need to choose a group of related ideas that you can develop into a coherent, well-organized essay. **Clustering** can help you organize your thoughts and develop the **controlling idea** for your essay.

### CLUSTERING

**Clustering** is one helpful way to start organizing your ideas by grouping related thoughts together. In the clustering process, you put the main question of the writing prompt in the center of the page, and draw a circle around it. Then, you draw branches off from this circle to add topics and supporting details.

#### Sample Clustering for Effects of Television on Young Children



The clustering process can help you narrow your ideas, but these ideas still need to be limited further. You can choose only one portion of your cluster to develop your essay. For example, in the cluster diagram above, there are more ideas grouped around the negative effects of television. This indicates interest, enthusiasm, and support for this idea, and would, therefore, make a good focus for an essay.

### Practice 3: Clustering

**Choose four of the topics from Practice 1 or Practice 2, and create a clustering diagram for each one. (You will use these diagrams for Practice 5, so keep them in a safe place, like your portfolio or writing folder.)**

# Chapter 4

## Drafting The Essay

Once you have generated ideas, focused the ideas, and made a plan for your essay, you are ready to start writing a **draft**. A draft is an attempt to put all of your ideas and planning onto paper in the form of an essay. You develop this draft by organizing complete sentences into paragraphs.

Some people like to write several drafts, changing and improving each one significantly. Other people spend more time being precise the first time and may write only two or three drafts. For the Tennessee Writing Assessment, you will have only enough time to write one draft, revise it, and proofread it. That is why it is important for you to practice writing essays now, so it will be easier for you to do during the writing assessment.

This chapter will help you prepare for the Tennessee Writing Assessment by providing practice in the following areas:

- **Improving Word Choice**
- **Choosing Active Voice**
- **Writing Introductions and Conclusions**
- **Using Transitional Words**
- **Developing Coherence**
- **Writing the Draft**

### IMPROVING WORD CHOICE

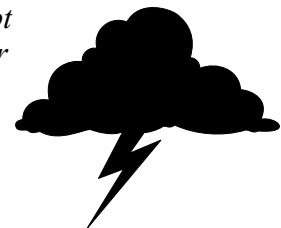
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Your draft is an attempt to convey your ideas accurately and in an interesting way to the reader. Once you have identified your audience and decided which tone and language would be appropriate, you will select certain words and phrases to reflect these decisions. Your **word choice** is an important way to interest the reader, accurately convey your ideas, and persuade the reader to agree with you. Improving word choice involves **selecting specific words, using a dictionary and thesaurus, being aware of connotations and denotations, and avoiding clichés and sweeping generalizations.**

### SELECT SPECIFIC WORDS, NOT GENERAL WORDS

One aspect of good word choice is selecting specific and concrete words rather than general or abstract words. Avoid vague, overused words like *thing, nice, great, bad, good, and a lot*. These words have many meanings, but none are very clear or specific. Specific words provide the reader with a clear image of what you are describing. For example, compare the two passages below which describe the same event.

**Example 1:**      *As we rode down away from the hill, the lightning kept flashing and flashing. One thunderclap followed right after another, but each sounded very strange. The lightning made it hard to see, and hail hit the windshield as I continued to drive.*



## WRITING INTRODUCTIONS

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In Chapter 1, you learned that the beginning and the end of a paragraph are important. The same is true of an essay, where the **introduction** and the **conclusion** should each consist of one paragraph. In this section, you will learn **how to write an introduction** and about **different types of introductions**. In the next section, you will learn to write **conclusions**.

### HOW TO WRITE AN INTRODUCTION

The **introduction** is the first paragraph of your essay. Usually, it is shorter than the body paragraphs, but it serves an important purpose. It tells the reader where you are going and invites him or her to join you. It should catch the reader's interest and clearly describe the controlling idea of the essay. The introduction may also inform the reader of the order of support for the controlling idea.

You probably have seen stores that try to attract customers by placing a huge, fluorescent-colored sign outside, advertising an incredible sale. This catches the interest of potential buyers and leads them into the store. Then, the sales people can show the customers other merchandise that is of higher quality, but is also higher priced. This is what the store managers really want to sell.



This approach to sales is somewhat similar to how you want to lead a reader into your essay. You want to catch the reader's attention, lead him or her into your essay, and then, explain the purpose of your essay. A simple way to build an introduction is by using the following three components: **lead**, **tie-in**, and **controlling idea**.

#### Lead

Sometimes you can start your essay by stating the controlling idea of your essay, but often, that type of beginning is too abrupt. You need to grab the reader's attention first, and make the reader want to read further. You can do this with the first sentence, called a **lead**. The lead may be one of the following:

- **statement of your position on the topic**
- **problem or riddle**
- **surprising statistic or fact**
- **question**
- **brief story**
- **quotation**
- **catchy remark**
- **general, thought-provoking statement**

#### Tie-In

Once you have captured the reader's attention with your lead, you need to draw his or her attention to the controlling idea of your essay. You need to consider the audience, the topic of your essay, and your personal preference in developing a creative link between the lead and the statement of your controlling idea.

#### Controlling Idea

You practiced developing controlling ideas in the last chapter. The first paragraph is a good place to state the controlling idea because it lets the reader know the topic of the essay, your position on the topic, and how you are going to order your supporting points.

# Chapter 5

## Revising The Essay

Even if you plan your essay very carefully and try to write your draft precisely, you will still have room for improvement. The professional readers who grade essays for the Tennessee Writing Assessment will look only at your final product. You want them to see your *best* effort, not your *first* effort. Remember, writing is a process of thinking, writing, and reviewing. Once the draft is finished, it is time for reviewing which includes **revising** and **proofreading**. This chapter will help you with revising, and the next chapter will show you how to proofread.

**Revising** is looking again at the draft of your essay with the intention of making changes to improve it. Revising involves:

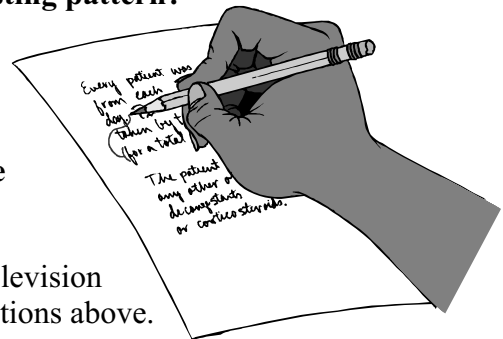
- Adding Clarifying Information
- Deleting Unrelated Sentences
- Eliminating Unnecessary Words
- Correcting Shifts in Tense or Person
- Checking for Parallel Sentence Structure
- Developing Sentence Variety

### HOW TO REVISE

Before revising your draft, you may want to take a short break of a minute or so to think about something else. Then, return to your essay, and read it as if you were the audience. Put yourself in the place of the people who will be reading it, and read as if you were seeing the essay for the first time. Make your changes by using the spaces in between the lines and in the margins. While you read your essay during the revising stage, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Is the introduction a good preview of the rest of the essay?
2. Does my statement of the controlling idea give my essay a clear purpose?
3. Do the body paragraphs support the controlling idea with logically arranged supporting details?
4. Will my audience clearly understand how my ideas fit together?
5. Is there any irrelevant or repeated information that I can cut out?
6. Is there information that I need to add to make my ideas clearer?
7. Do my sentences fall into a repetitive and uninteresting pattern?
8. Have I used transitional words appropriately?
9. How can I improve my word choice?
10. Are there unexpected shifts in person or tense?
11. Are there unnecessary words that I can delete?
12. Does my conclusion tie the essay together and leave the reader with an action or thought to consider?

Return to the draft of the essay about how watching television affects young children (pages 89-90), and consider the questions above.



## Practice 5: Parallel Sentence Structure

**Rewrite the following sentences using parallel sentence structure.**

1. The coach told us to go to bed early, to eat a good breakfast and don't arrive late for the game.

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2. The school lunches need more fresh fruit, less fried food, and there should be more choices.

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3. We searched for Sadie upstairs, downstairs, and crawled under the house.

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4. My hobbies include reading books, watching movies, and stamp collecting.

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5. In this class, we will learn to blend various colors, to use different types of paper, and how to draw realistic portraits.

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6. Did you make your bed, wash your clothes, and cleaned your room today?

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7. Statistics show that the world's population will increase rapidly while the world's resources are declining at an alarming rate.

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# Chapter 6

## Proofreading The Essay

Your essay has been written and revised, and now it is ready for scoring, right? Well, it is almost ready, but not even the best writers turn in a piece of writing before they do a careful **proofreading**. Proofreading is the process of checking your essay for errors in capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and grammar as well as for repeated words or omitted words. Before turning in your final copy, take time to look for these small, but important, errors.



The Tennessee Writing Assessment requires you to demonstrate knowledge of Standard American English through grammar and usage, punctuation, and sentence formation. Proofreading the final copy of your essay will help you demonstrate these skills. In this chapter, you will review proofreading notation, and then practice proofreading for errors in the following areas of writing:

- Capitalization
- Internal Punctuation
- Grammar and Usage
- Spelling
- Sentence Formation

If you or your teacher feels more practice or review of grammar would be beneficial, read the text and complete the exercises in American Book Company's companion resources, *Basics Made Easy: Grammar & Usage Review* or *Basics Made Easy: Grammar & Usage* software.

### PROOFREADING NOTATION

Handwriting is not graded on the Tennessee Writing Assessment, but if your paper cannot be read, it will not be graded. So, write neatly and clearly even for your proofreading corrections. **Proofreading notation** refers to certain ways of making corrections that are standard among writers. Below is an example of how you might make corrections to the third paragraph from the essay about the effects of children watching television (on page 89).

*Commerci~~als~~ are another problem with television. As well as advertising shows with adult content, commercials persuade children to buy products th~~z~~at they do not need. ~~Thats~~<sup>That is</sup> how television pays for itself: <sup>C</sup>Companies pay to put commercials on television, and they hope children will buy <sup>their</sup> ~~there~~ stuff. The voice on commercials tell<sup>s</sup> children that they will be happy if they buy a certain toy or cereal. They will be like other children, <sup>a</sup> And other children will like them if they have those products. It is difficult enough for adults to tell the difference between reality <sup>and</sup> fiction in commercials. How <sup>is</sup> ~~are~~ a three-year-old supposed to do that?*



The action of writing an essay has a certain flow and thought process in drafting and even in revising. This flow can create an engaging paper, but it can also lead to omissions of certain punctuation. **Commas** are often forgotten in the flow of writing. Proofreading for any missing commas is important for the clarity of your paper.

Commas can signal a contrast, set off extra information, or separate items in lists. There are other uses for commas as well. Consider what you know about using commas, and then begin the next exercise.

### Practice 2: Commas

**Read the story below carefully, looking for all missing commas. Insert commas where they are needed, and circle them. *Hint:* There are thirty-five (35) commas that are missing.**

#### What's in a Car's Name?

In our college library I fingered the book's jacket in disbelief. The title had to be a joke or was it? The letters stood out lemon yellow on a cobalt blue background spelling out the words "How To Name Your Car." I told my best friend Renatta "Hey look at this!"



"Well yeah" she remarked in a bored tone "I saw a book like that in my lit class by T. S. Eliot about how to name your car. Crazy huh?" Still curious I headed to the nearest table to find out why this book would have been written and what it said.

When I began reading the book I realized that it detailed not only car names but also who would choose to name a car. Apparently Southerners who have not gone past the high school level in their education are more likely than other people to name their vehicles especially their mud-caked trucks and open-air jeeps. Sitting at that table I felt my past revealed exposed. My parents with their two semesters of college between them had named our huge maroon station wagon had named her "Battle Axe." It was a righteous and well-deserved title. My family also according to the book fell into the common masses category by referring to this hulking machine with the pronoun "she." In her glory days she plowed into several smaller cars usually in the shopping center parking lot where my mother vainly tried to overcome the "blind spot" that came with the car. Battle Axe always came away unscarred from the crashes but the other cars weren't so lucky.

After fourteen years we got our next car on May 17 1988. This new "she" had been pre-owned by my grandparents who lived in Baltimore Maryland. She was a pale yellow black-topped Chevelle with a sweet 350 engine she could move out! What did we name her? We named her "Cream Puff." She and her name lasted until the puff from her engine became a black oily cloud of smoke.

For myself I have named cars; however with my college experience it seems as if I don't have enough sense to remember to use the names and the cars don't last as long. I've used the names "Blue Meanie" "Behemoth" and "W. G." or "Wise Guy" HE was quite a car. This soon-to-be graduated Southern female has at least broken through the sexist mold when naming her cars.

# Chapter 7

## Scoring the Essay

Since you are a student writing the essay, not a professional reader grading the essay, why should you practice scoring essays? There are two reasons: it will help you become a better writer, and it will help you perform better on the Tennessee Writing Assessment.

An important part of the writing process is reviewing. A good writer steps back from his or her work, takes time away from the work, and returns to the work with a fresh outlook. Then, the writer can see more clearly which ideas are unrelated and which need more development. Errors in grammar and punctuation stand out more, and the writer can determine whether the tone is appropriate and consistent throughout the essay.

Scoring your own work or the work of student peers is excellent practice for reviewing. To determine a score for an essay, you must distance yourself from the work and use an objective scale to evaluate the work. This process will help you develop better skills in reviewing your own written works, thus making you a better writer.

As you score your own paper and the papers of your student peers, you will be using the **criteria** (or standards) for the Tennessee Writing Assessment. In this process, you will become more familiar with the writing skills that the professional graders will evaluate. Then, you will be more able to include those skills in your own writing, so you can write a better essay for the Tennessee Writing Assessment.



Professional readers will grade the essay you write for the Tennessee Writing Assessment. In evaluating your writing, the readers will consider the scoring **rubric** approved by a committee of Tennessee teachers and administrators. The rubric is a six-point guideline for evaluating student papers. Look at the rubric on the next page.

As you can see, the rubric describes evaluation of the following five categories:

- **organization and development**
- **explanation and illustration of key ideas**
- **syntactic variety (variety in the use and arrangement of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences)**
- **facility in the use of language**
- **proper mechanics, usage, sentence structure**

In earlier chapters of this book, you practiced these skills. In this chapter, you will evaluate those skills in sample essays, in your own writing, and in the writing of your peers.

Second, it takes at least two people to take care of children. It's really hard to be a single parent. I know because my mom is one. She has a really hard time taking care of my little brother and I. It would be a lot easier on her if my dad were still around to help take care of us.

Third, some people say birth control is a good idea, but it doesn't work all the time. I know because a friend of mine was using birth control and she got pregnant. A lot of people use condoms but the only work about 80% or something like that.

So, you can see that there a lot of good reasons for abstinence from sex before you are married.

## FACILITY IN THE USE OF LANGUAGE

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**Facility in the use of language** means that you choose effective words to convey your ideas and feelings through writing. You are able to find the right words to correctly express yourself, and you use words that are appropriate to your tone and audience. For example, if you were writing a letter to the principal apologizing to the principal for shoving another student into a locker, you wouldn't say, "Hey man, like I shoved that dude! Get my drift?" A more appropriate response would be, "Mr. Henderson, I'm really sorry I shoved Billy Ray into the locker."

**Students wrote the following two essays in response to the question, "Should there be a regular time of prayer in public schools? On your own or as a class, compare the two essays in regard to *Facility in the Use of Language*. Which essay is more effective? Why? Be able to give reasons for your evaluation.**

1. There has been a lot of controversy over the topic of prayer in schools. It seems like every few years, parents, teachers, and students return to this subject to try to arrive at a conclusion. I think we should just make up our mind and stick with it. I propose a time of silence at the beginning of the school day and let everybody do what they want.

Silence is a good idea because everyone is so busy. We get up early and rush to school. Then, we rush from class to class. After school we're off to work or extracurricular activities. We eat on the run and do our homework in the car or on the bus. A little time in the morning would be a welcome break from this hectic pace.

A time of silence in the morning would also be a welcome break from the noise that fills our lives. From the radio alarm that wakes us up to the bells that tell us which class to go to, our ears are constantly hearing noise. If you have any doubt, just think about trying to carry on a conversation in a school cafeteria. The background noise makes it nearly impossible. A brief time of silence would give us all a chance to catch our breaths.

Finally, a time of silence does not impose religious beliefs on anyone. You have to be quiet in the library, don't you? And how about the movie theater? You can't just talk as loud as you want in there. So a few moments of silence at the beginning of the day could be described as nothing more than common courtesy.

Some people say, "As long as there are tests, there will always be prayer in schools." This is true because prayer is up to the individual. However, a time of silence at the beginning of the school day does not force everyone to pray. It just makes people stop, think, and even catch their breath. I think that would make everyone a little happier.

