

# TEACH ESSENTIAL WRITING SKILLS



22 lessons that foster fluency,  
proficiency, style and inquiry-based reasoning

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## INTRODUCTION

The principle aim of this ebook is to provide English teachers with classroom resources that help their intermediate level+ students become better writers. I don't mean great writers, or even good. Just better.

To become better writers, students need to read a lot, write a lot and learn the fundamentals (King, 2010). Though extensive reading (ER) is an important habit that nurtures writing skills, it is one which students must initiate on their own; few schools allocate resources for ER programs.

How much should students write? The short answer, as much as possible. Producing large amounts of text is vital because students learn to write by writing (Moffett, 1983). A slightly less ambiguous answer suggests the measure of *how much* is teacher workload: if the instructor can read and comment on every piece of writing, the students aren't writing enough.<sup>1</sup>

### Fundamentals

Stephen King wrote every aspiring writer needs to master vocabulary, grammar and style (King, 2010).

That's sage advice coming from one of the most prolific authors of the modern age, and a good general description of the needs of non-native speaker (NNS) students.

For would-be writers in the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom, I've adapted King's ideas based on my 15 years' teaching experience and sorted through a list of gaps in student capacity, which is the *raison d'être* of this ebook. The result is four essential skills that EFL students must learn in order to become better writers:

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<sup>1</sup> This idea was attributed to Douglas Fisher, a US literacy expert, on a Teaching Channel blog post: [www.teachingchannel.org/blog/2014/03/31/writing-fluency/](http://www.teachingchannel.org/blog/2014/03/31/writing-fluency/). There is no evidence of this quote on Mr Fisher's website, <http://fisherandfrey.com>.

1. Fluency
2. Proficiency
3. Style
4. Inquiry-based Reasoning

## Part 1. Fluency and Proficiency

### Fluency

Writing fluency is the ability to produce lots of output with few hesitations. It's sometimes measured as the number of written words per minute (Nguyen, 2015).

To promote fluency, Part 1 has two exercises that can be run throughout the term. Both are variations of free writing, a category of activities which asks students to write any idea that comes to mind without hesitation or editing (Hwang, 2010).

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*“to become better writers, students need to read a lot, write a lot and learn the fundamentals”*

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Free writing promotes fluency in several ways. When performed regularly, it has been found to correlate with increased productivity (Hwang, 2010) as well as better content and organization (Nguyen, 2015). Free writing also fosters automaticity, the ability to create text without relying on conscious decision-making (Lenski

& Verbruggen, 2010). As the performance of simple tasks (e.g. spelling, punctuation, subject-verb agreement) moves into the domain of subconscious action, EFL students can focus on higher order activities like effective redrafting, better ideas, and paragraph cohesion.

Based on current research, free writing exercises, by themselves, probably do not lead to improved fluency. However, it does seem likely they contribute to a net benefit.

### Proficiency

When it comes to proficiency, some teachers and a good number of testing centres seem to focus on measurable elements like grammar,

vocabulary and mechanics (Casanave, 2004). While these easy to count features may be part of the total proficiency skill set, it's not a complete list. Proficiency includes subjective elements such as sequencing, sentence variety and word choice as well as genre-specific conventions (e.g. academic or business writing) like the ability to evaluate abstract ideas and other higher order thinking skills (Ofte, 2014).

The question for the writing teacher, then, is what to teach and how to teach it? Based on my experience, NNS writing proficiency can be enhanced in a semester by focusing on five micro skills. This knowledge can be taught with an eclectic range of techniques including controlled, language-focused exercises like sentence combining and drills.

Fans of modern pedagogy sensing a pang of disbelief might question the utility of restrictive techniques. Doesn't the *laissez-faire* process writing approach provide EFL students with a framework to improve proficiency?

Consider this example. A student writes a passage and, through a process of teacher feedback and redrafting, produces a cogent piece of text. Can we say the student has become more proficient by moving through the process? Research suggests the link between process writing and proficiency improvement in NNS students, in terms meaningful interlanguage changes, is not proven (Casanave, 2005).

My own classroom experience parallels that tenuous correlation. I have, for instance, seen motivated students demonstrate terrific improvement through a process of prompts, drafts and feedback while disinterested souls were unable to complete simple tasks, like including margins on a page of handwritten text.

Process writing seems to help some students become more proficient, but not everyone and not all of the time. Instead of relying on a single technique, an eclectic instructional approach seems to offer a better chance for broad student achievement (Brown, 2007). For that reason, a measure of language-focused teaching ought to be added to the methodological mix in order to, paraphrasing Paul Nation, bring multiple strands of learning to the classroom (Nation, 1998).

Given the panoply of options, which aspects of proficiency make sense for EFL students at or above the intermediate level? My choices - improving accuracy in five specific parts of writing - and rationale, are presented below.

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*“the quality of student writing increases once they know how to manipulate a variety of sentence patterns”*

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### Foundations

- **Parts of speech.** The nuts and bolts of writing. Students must know these terms otherwise it's like talking to a carpenter who doesn't know the difference between a hex nut and a lag bolt.
- **Definite and indefinite articles.** Maybe the most difficult aspect of proficiency. Takes years of practice to learn and internalize. Thus, it makes sense to include them here.
- **Proofreading.** Students need to develop a sense of responsibility for the quality of their work, including error detection and correction, because teachers can't, nor shouldn't, do it all.

### Sentence Patterns

The quality of student writing increases once they know how to manipulate a variety of sentence patterns. Inspired introductions that grab the reader's attention. Mid-paragraph phrases that deliver meaty details. A paragraph hook that adds a dash of cohesion.

Elements of clarity and style like these are available to NNS students once they learn to write different kinds of sentences. To that end, Part 1 focuses on two sentence patterns, appositives and complex sentences, for three reasons.

- Many students can't write them well. Thus, knowing how to use them correctly aids accuracy, a component of proficiency.
- Many students can write simple sentences. It's the long, complex ones densely packed with rich details that can cause syntactical problems. Hence, knowing how to write appositives and complex sentences gives NNS students the ability to vary sentence length, a modest, though pithy, aspect of style (covered more in Part 2).
- These sentence patterns and the accompanying exercises are akin to what George Hilllocks Jr. calls *gateway activities*, skills-based lessons that dovetail into cognitively demanding exercises (Hillocks, 2005). Familiarity with these patterns will be useful when tackling Part 3 exercises.

To sum up, Part 1 consists of 10 activities that aim to help EFL students become more fluent writers capable of producing progressively more accurate text. A variety of instructional techniques are used, including free writing, guided writing, process writing, sentence combining, drills and language-focused teaching.

## Part 2. Style

The activities in Part 2 teach students how to write stylish paragraphs. By style, I mean organized, cogent and purposeful text that is a pleasure to read and reflects to some degree the

author's character and intentions.

Building on the fluency and proficiency skills developed in Part 1, four essential elements of style are covered in Part 2.

- 1. Sentence Fluency.** It's the ability to include a variety of sentence forms and lengths in a text. Students practice this skill with a high-interest activity that asks them to put pictures in the correct sequence and then write a story with appositives and complex sentences.
- 2. More Details.** This guided writing exercise tackles a common problem with student writing: dull text due to a lack of detail. Beginning with a simple paragraph, this exercise teaches students to ask questions in order to identify information gaps.

**3. Better Paragraphs.** A simple truism is taught by this guided writing activity: a new idea gets a new paragraph.

**4. Basic Cohesion.** Students learn to use pointers and transition words to write cohesive paragraphs.

To sum up, Part 2 helps EFL students improve writing style. Though subjective, style does contain teachable elements, like sentence fluency, rich descriptions, strong paragraphs and cohesive elements. Various instructional techniques are

used, including language-focused teaching, pair work, text analysis, modeling, and multi-paragraph passage writing.

## Part 3. Inquiry-Based Reasoning

The essential writing skills developed in Parts 1 and 2 (i.e. fluency, proficiency, style) prepare students for the challenging tasks in Part 3.

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*“knowing how to write appositives and complex sentence gives NNS students the ability to vary sentence length, a modest, though pithy, aspect of style”*

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The focus here is to help NNS students learn an inquiry-based approach to writing well-reasoned, logical arguments, a type of critical thinking (Hillocks, 2011).

The inquiry method is not an essay template, such as you might find in a class teaching the five-paragraph format. Rather, it is a four-step analytical process that breaks arguments into constituent parts. It is a thinking and writing tool that helps students put forward articulate and reasoned arguments.

### Value of the Inquiry Method

Why teach EFL students an inquiry-based approach to reasoning?

The inquiry method is a model to analyze and construct ideas. Writing activities that promote meaning-focused output (i.e. ideas and arguments) are an essential component of a balanced language learning program (Nation, 2007). Therefore, the inquiry-based approach appears grounded in sound pedagogical theory.

The inquiry method is an accessible and teachable critical thinking model. Critical thinking, plus the language skills which accompany that thought process, are the hallmark of higher education (Chaffee, 2012). As such, an inquiry-based approach to writing appears to be in line with the ideals of education in terms of fostering intellect and reasoning.

Finally, the inquiry method is an intellectual framework that facilitates knowledge creation rather than information processing. The importance of knowing how to construct a well-reasoned argument goes far beyond the hallowed halls of academia or the hushed classrooms of high-risk test centres. It is a personal tool for making sense of the world, for synthesizing information and experience,

for creating meaning. According to some social commentators, skills like these are in demand as the Information Age gives way to the Conceptual Age (Pink, 2006). Thus, it seems that students need this type of training to thrive in the new economy.

There are good reasons to bring the inquiry method into the classroom. Grounded in theory and tested in practice, it's a systematic approach that teaches students to notice, create and communicate with reason. Intellectual training of this order seems to offer the promise of nurturing creative minds capable of seeing what others do not, of uncovering meaning where none existed before. Lofty expectations, to be sure, but if teachers don't set high standards, who will?

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*“the inquiry method is an accessible and teachable critical thinking model”*

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### Four Steps of the Inquiry Method

Some of the activities presented in Part 3 are adaptations of work by George Hillocks Jr, an educator who dedicated part of his professional career to helping students improve their lot through better thinking.

Key elements of his work, like the structure of arguments, are based on ideas in Stephen Toulmin's book, *The Uses of Argument*.

Below is my synthesis of that work in a four-step format suitable for EFL students.

#### 1. What's the Question?

A typical inquiry-based writing assignment begins with a question. This differs from the five-paragraph essay template which tells students to write the answer in the first paragraph (i.e. thesis statement) prior to considering the evidence (Hillocks, 2011).

#### 2. Collect Evidence

Students look at the data and decide which pieces are relevant to the question (i.e.

evidence). Not everything is important and in this age of information overload, students need to filter and discriminate.

### 3. Create a Supporting Rule

A *rule* is a proposition, general truth, or principle that connects evidence to the conclusion (Hillocks, 2011). For many of my students, this is the most difficult part of the method to grasp, so I have included three gateway activities to demonstrate the importance of this vital link in the chain of logical thinking. (Both Hillocks and Toulmin use the word *warrant*, not *rule*. The word *warrant* is not easily understood by NNS students, so I changed it.)

### 4. Make a Conclusion

Take a piece of evidence, add a rule, now form a conclusion. This conclusion is not likely the final answer to the initial question. To do that, we need to compile conclusions from several pieces of evidence.

Conclusions often deal with probabilities, not certainties. Therefore, students should learn the language of hedging (e.g. probably, likely, it seems possible).

Part 3 contains seven lessons: three gateway activities that demonstrate the inquiry method in a compact form, three longer problems and an email message lesson that integrates these skills into a practical, business application. In this role play exercise, students answer a customer query with technical information in an email layout following the inquiry method.

In sum, Part 3 teaches students to develop well reasoned arguments with the inquiry method and apply that knowledge in a business communication exercise. Several learning

techniques are used, including pair work, small group work, class discussions, data analysis and synthesis, role play and long passage writing.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Originally from Canada, Rob is a long-time resident of South Korea. He teaches at a university where his course work includes English conversation and composition classes; occasionally he leads courses in political science, cross cultural communication and teaching

methodology. A long-time teacher trainer, he has created and lead modules in composition, extensive reading, and critical thinking.

Outside the classroom, he runs a small ebook publishing firm specializing in teacher support material, and sometimes writes about Korean travel and food for Lonely Planet.




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*“Part 3 teaches students to develop well-reasoned arguments with the inquiry method and apply that knowledge in a business communication exercise”*

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## 2. Timed Repeated Writing

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 10 min	 One recording sheet per student
 Fluency, automaticity, reduced hesitation.	

### What is it?

A timed, free writing activity that begins with a prompt.

Its primary objective is to increase student productivity by ameliorating poor writing habits like self-editing while composing the first draft. The quality and quantity of writing is not assessed.

Running this activity on a weekly basis (twice weekly is better) does not require much time. Each session takes about 10 minutes. The first time it is introduced to the class takes longer because you need to explain the task, underscore the rationale and secure student buy-in.

### Set Up

Hand out a recording sheet to each student when the activity is first introduced. Students should safeguard the sheet until the end of the term.

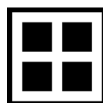
### Flow

1. Write a word or phrase on the board. This is the writing prompt. Typically, the prompt is related to a topic or content recently covered in class.

2. Teacher instructions: “Write as much as you can, as well as you can, in 60 seconds on a topic related to the prompt.”
3. Start the count down; students begin writing.
4. Call time after one minute.
5. Students stop writing and count the number of written words. This number is written down on the recording sheet.
6. Students scan and circle errors in their text.
7. Repeat the 60-second writing exercise with the same prompt two more times.

### Benefits for the Teacher

Over a semester, the students will produce a body of work that can be used by the teacher to gain insight into individual progress. Indicators of progress include the number of written words per minute (wpm). Additionally, teachers can compile a list of universal errors which could inform future lessons by targeting specific needs.



### Resource

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If you have access to a classroom computer with internet and a projection screen, an on-line timer adds a bit of zip to this exercise.

Try one these timers:

- [www.timerland.net](http://www.timerland.net)
- [www.online-stopwatch.com/bomb-countdown/full-screen/](http://www.online-stopwatch.com/bomb-countdown/full-screen/)






Recording Sheet. Name \_\_\_\_\_

Session	Number of Words 1st Writing	Number of Words 2nd Writing	Number of Words 3rd Writing
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			

Recording Sheet. Name \_\_\_\_\_

Session	Number of Words 1st Writing	Number of Words 2nd Writing	Number of Words 3rd Writing
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			

## 6. A Puzzling Story

 15-25 min	 Worksheets 6-1 and 6-2
 Short story, articles, synonyms, problem solving.	

### What is it?

A short story writing exercise with an emphasis on articles, vocabulary and sentence fluency.

On the surface, it may look like a simple exercise, but it's a much richer assignment if the teacher brings out the subtle points.

### Set Up

Make copies of Worksheets 6-1 and 6-2, or display on a projection screen.

### Flow

Introduce assignment by looking at Worksheet 6-1. It's a logic puzzle about a man who has to move a wolf, a goat and a head of cabbage. The man is home on the left side and wants to cross the river to an island with all of his things, but there are a few barriers.

- His boat is small, so he can only transport one item at a time.
- He can't leave the goat alone with the cabbage because the former will eat the latter.
- He can't leave the wolf with the goat because the latter will be eaten by the former.

The seven pictures tell the story of how the man moved everything across the river. But the images are out of order.

1. Students work with a partner to put the pictures in order.
2. After a few minutes, review correct picture order with the class.

3. Students write first draft of the story.
4. Collect student writing. Review the sample answer on Worksheet 6-2, if necessary. Point out the different synonyms used to describe movement between the man's home and the island.
5. Picture sequence: 5-1-6-4-7-2-3.

### Teaching Points

The output of this task is probably just two to four paragraphs. But, there are three solid lessons to learn.

#### Proper use of articles

Some of the grammar rules identified in Lesson 5 are used here. Because this assignment is designed to improve proficiency, be tough on the correct use of articles when reviewing student papers.

#### Word choice and sentence fluency

Because of the repetitive nature of tasks in the puzzle (e.g. the man travels several times between two places) it's easy for students to write a drab piece using the same verbs and sentence patterns. Encourage students to expand their vocabulary with synonyms and improve style with sentence variety.

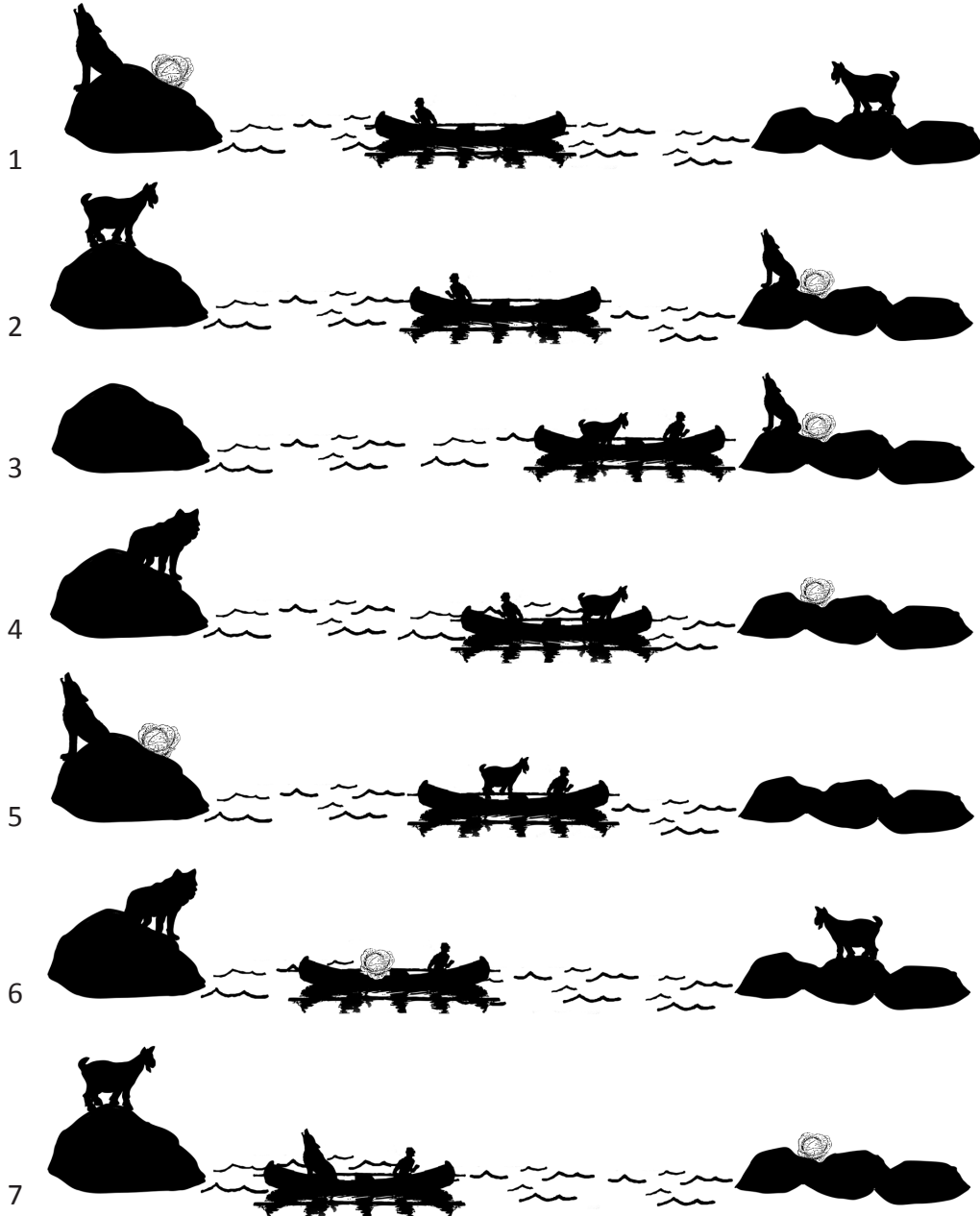
#### Cohesion

Unless you're using this activity with young learners who can't write more than one sentence per picture, expect students to write a proper story: that means a beginning, middle and suitable ending.

More details about adding cohesion to paragraphs can be found in Lesson 14.

## A Puzzling Story Worksheet 6-1

The pictures tell a story about man who wants to move a wolf, goat and head of cabbage from his home on the left side to an island on the right side. There are a few problems. He can only carry one thing in his boat at a time. Plus, the goat will eat the cabbage, if left alone together, and the wolf will eat the goat, if left alone together. Your job: solve the puzzle by putting the pictures in the correct order. Then, write the story.



## A Puzzling Story: Sample Answer Worksheet 6-2

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### Picture Sequence

5-1-6-4-7-2-3.

### Model Story

These pictures tell a story. The story is about a man who wants to move three things across the river: a wolf, a goat and a head of cabbage. Moving the three things is not easy because there are some problems. He can't leave the goat and cabbage together because the goat likes to eat vegetables. He can't put the wolf and goat together because the wolf is strong and likes to eat meat. Here is how the man solved the problem.

First, the man put the goat in the boat and went to the other side of the river. Second, he put the goat on the island and went back home. Third, he crossed the river with the cabbage in his boat.

Fourth, the man dropped off the cabbage, placed the goat in his boat and returned home. Fifth, the man took the goat out of the boat, put it on the land and traveled back to the island with the wolf. Sixth, he left the wolf with the cabbage and headed back home with an empty boat.




Finally, he transported the goat to the island. In the end, everything was on the island and nothing was lost.

### Verbs that describe movement

- went
- went back
- crossed the river
- returned home
- traveled back
- headed back
- transported

# 8. Appositives

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 15-30 min	 Worksheets 8-1 to 8-7
 Improve fluency by learning to write this pithy sentence.	

### What is it?

It's a noun or noun phrase that describes another noun. There are several ways to write an appositive, but this lesson keeps it simple by focusing on appositives between two commas.

Appositives present loads of information in one compact sentence. Thus, they are an essential tool that enables sentence variety and style.

### Set Up

Copy Worksheets 8-1 and 8-7 for students, or display on projection screen.

### Flow

There are three sets of practice questions and answer keys. I suggest completing one set of worksheets every other week in order to reinforce learning through long term memory.

### Micro Lesson 1

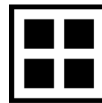
1. Introduce lesson and review concepts on Worksheet 8-1.
2. Review Worksheet 8-2. Give students time to complete the practice questions.
3. Check answers on Worksheet 8-3.

### Micro Lesson 2

Complete Worksheet 8-4. Check answers on Worksheet 8-5.

### Micro Lesson 3

Complete Worksheet 8-6. Check answers on Worksheet 8-7.



### FYI

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What is the difference between a clause and a phrase?

- Clause: a group of words with a subject and verb. For example: *While she waited for the bus, ...*
- Phrase: a group of words that does not have a subject or verb. For example: *on the table.*

## Micro Lesson 1: Introduction to Appositives Worksheet 8-1

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### Part 1. What are They?

A noun, or noun phrase, that gives readers extra information. For example:

- Benny, my first dog, loved to chase birds. (The appositive is *my first dog*.)

### Part 2. Two Kinds of Appositives

a) Necessary. We need the appositive to understand the sentence.

- Have you read the novel War and Peace?
- Have you read the novel? (huh, what novel?)

b) Optional. The appositive gives extra information, but we don't need it to understand the sentence.

- My uncle, an engineer, is moving to China.
- My uncle is moving to China. (okay)

### Part 3. Position and Commas

The appositive is often in the middle of the sentence and close to the main noun. In these cases, the appositive is between two commas.

- Marie Curie, a scientist from Poland, was the first person to win two Noble prizes.

Sometimes, the appositive can go in the front of the sentence (with one comma).

- A scientist from Poland, Marie Curie was the first person to win two Noble prizes.

Or at the end of the sentence (with one comma).

- The first person to win two Noble prizes was Marie Curie, a scientist from Poland.

## Micro Lesson 1: Appositives Practice Worksheet 8-2

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### Part 1. Sentence Practice

Use an appositive to combine sentences.

For example:

I left my water bottle on the mountain. My bottle is a white plastic container.

- I left my water bottle, **a white plastic container**, on the mountain.

### Questions:

1. The Han River flows through Seoul. It is South Korea's second longest river.
2. The first man in space was from Russia. His name was Yuri Gagarin.
3. I sat beside Mr. Jones during the wedding ceremony. He is a city policeman.
4. Jack's dog sat beside a tree and panted. His dog is a black mutt.
5. Jenny loves to bake bread, cake and cookies. She is a prize-winning baker.
6. I just purchased a house near Children's Park. The house is a 30-year old duplex.
7. Polar bears are large and furry animals. They eat seals, but not penguins.
8. Mexico City is the biggest city in the world. Mexico City has many interesting places to visit.

### Part 2. Paragraph Practice

Read the text. Rewrite some of the sentences with appositives.

Winter is the coldest time of the year and it's when our skin often gets dry. To cure dry hands, people often buy moisturizers. A moisturizer is a white cream made from oil, fruit and other ingredients. Skin care products come in different prices, from \$2 to \$200 and more. Creme Royal is a French cream made with gold and royal jelly and costs \$650 per bottle.

## Micro Lesson 1: Appositives Practice Answers Worksheet 8-3

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### Part 1. Sentence Practice

1. The Han River flows through Seoul. It is South Korea's second longest river.
  - The Han River, **South Korea's second longest river**, flows through Seoul.
2. The first man in space was from Russia. His name was Yuri Gagarin.
  - The first man in space, **Yuri Gagarin**, was from Russia.
3. I sat beside Mr. Jones during the wedding ceremony. He is a city policeman.
  - I sat beside Mr. Jones, **a city policeman**, during the wedding ceremony.
4. Jack's dog sat beside a tree and panted. His dog is a black mutt.
  - Jack's dog, **a black mutt**, sat beside a tree and panted.
5. Jenny loves to bake bread, cake and cookies. She is a prize-winning baker.
  - Jenny, **a prize-winning baker**, loves to bake bread, cake and cookies.
6. I just purchased a house near Children's Park. The house is a 30-year old duplex.
  - I just purchased a house, **a 30-year old duplex**, near Children's Park.
7. Polar bears are large and furry animals. They eat seals, but not penguins.
  - Polar bears, **large and furry animals**, eat seals, but not penguins.
8. Mexico City is the biggest city in the world. Mexico City has many interesting places to visit.
  - Mexico City, **the biggest city in the world**, has many interesting places to visit.

### Part 2. Paragraph Practice

Read the text. Rewrite some of the sentences appositives. One possible answer:

Winter, **the coldest time of the year**, is when our skin often gets dry. To cure dry hands, people often buy moisturizers, **a white cream made from oil, fruit and other ingredients**. Skin care products come in different prices, from \$2 to \$200 and more. Creme Royal, **a French cream made with gold and royal jelly**, costs \$650 per bottle.

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Winter is the coldest time of the year and it's when our skin often gets dry. To cure dry hands, people often buy moisturizers. A moisturizer is a white cream made from oil, fruit and other ingredients. Skin care products come in different prices, from \$2 to \$200 and more. Creme Royal is a French cream made with gold and royal jelly and costs \$650 per bottle.



## 22. Recommend a Phone

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 30-60 min	 Worksheets 22-1 to 22-3
 Apply inquiry method in a practical business communication exercise.	

### What is it?

A lesson to teach customer communication skills. By the end of this activity, students should be able to:

- write and format an email message that meets general business standards;
- assess two products by completing a comparative analysis;
- organize factual information and conclusions using the inquiry method.

On the surface, this writing exercise looks simple. On a deeper level, it's a complex assignment that integrates many skills that students might need to know if they work for an international, sales-oriented business.

### Set Up

Make copies of the worksheets, or display on a classroom projection screen.

Before undertaking this exercise, it might be a good idea to complete these lessons first:

- 21: how to write a business email;
- 18, 19 or 20: inquiry method practice;
- 15, 16 or 17: gateway activities to reinforce the importance of the rules in the inquiry method;
- 8 and 9: appositives and complex sentence patterns.

### Flow

Introduce lesson objective: to write a business email that answers a customer's questions about smart phones and provide a recommendation. In the answer, each student will compare and contrast two smart phones.

1. Review Worksheet 22-1. Check to ensure students understand the message's main points. Quickly review the email message layout, noting how it conforms to a standard design practices (e.g. lots of space, easy to scan, numbered questions).
2. Emphasize the importance of the inquiry method and the use of rules to connect evidence with conclusions.
3. Point out that some - not all - of the data on Worksheet 22-2 will be useful. Students need to sort out which data is important, a task that simulates a real world work environment (i.e. dealing information overload).

### Writing

The output will be a written email message. Although written on paper, it should resemble an email and include all of the elements of a proper message (e.g. subject line).

### Model

Present the model answer in Worksheet 22-3, if required. Be sure to highlight the rules in each of the numbered paragraphs as important links between the evidence and conclusions.

## Recommend a Phone Worksheet 22-1

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### Introduction

In this role-play exercise, you are working in a store that sells smart phones. One day, you receive an email from a potential customer. The email message is below.

---

mbrown@phones.com

Subject: a question about smart phones

Hi,

My name is Gerry and I would like to buy a smart phone, but I am not sure what to buy. Can you help me?

I am a writer and I often travel to rural areas without access to a computer or electricity. I need a smart phone which:

1. takes high quality pictures;
2. has lots of memory; and
3. has lots of battery life.

Price is important but getting a phone with the features I need is more important. I am looking at the Apple iPhone 4S and the Samsung galaxy S4.

Can you please compare these two products and recommend one that would work well for me?

Many thanks,

Gerry  
010-555-8474

## Smart Phone Specifications Worksheet 22-2

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### Writing Objective

Write an email message to the customer. Your message should answer all of the questions in an email with a professional layout.

Your message should present a logical, business-like argument about which phone is best for the customer. Use the inquiry method of reasoning. That means your message should include these four elements:

1. Question (from the customer's email)
2. Evidence (selected from the data presented below)
3. Rules (from your imagination)
4. Conclusion (your recommendation)

Table 1  
Smart Phone Specifications

	Apple iPhone 4S	Samsung Galaxy S4
RAM	1 gigabyte	2 gigabyte
Memory	Up to 64 gb	Up to 64 gb
Rear camera (megapixels)	8 mp	13 mp
Battery life	About 8 hours	About 11 hours
Replaceable battery	No	Yes
Screen size (length)	4 inches	5 inches
Expandable memory	No	Yes
Play HD video	No	Yes
Basic Price (USD)	\$699	\$549
Average customer rating	4 stars (out of five)	4.5 stars (out of five)

## Model Email Message Response Worksheet 22-3

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### Model Answer

This email message demonstrates one way to answer the customer's questions about which smart phone to purchase by comparing and contrasting three features: picture quality, memory and battery life.

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Subject: smart phone questions

Hi Gerry,

Thanks for your email and questions about which smart phone might be best for you. Please find my answers below.

1. **Picture Quality.** The Samsung camera phone can take pictures with 13 mp. In contrast, the Apple camera has 8 mp. Because digital pictures are made from pixels, we usually think more megapixels means better quality pictures. Therefore, the Samsung seems like the best choice for you because it takes better quality pictures.
2. **Memory.** Both smart phones come with up to 64 gig of memory. However, the Samsung has a card which can expand the phone's memory. If photographers take lots of pictures in rural areas, they need lots of extra memory. Therefore, the Samsung seems like a better choice for you.
3. **Battery Life.** The Apple battery lasts about 8 hours before it needs a recharge. In contrast, the Samsung battery lasts about 11 hours. The Apple battery is fixed and cannot be replaced. This is different from the Samsung, which uses a replacement battery system. When people work in the countryside, they cannot easily recharge their phone batteries, so it's a good idea to have extra battery power. Therefore, the Samsung phone seems like a better choice for you.

Based on the picture quality, memory and battery life, I recommend the Samsung Galaxy S4. It seems like the phone that will best meet your professional requirements.

I hope this information is useful. If you have any other questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Regards,

Ann Sullivan  
Assistant Manager  
ABC Phone Company  
010-555-6534