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PEARSON EDEXCEL INTERNATIONAL
GCSE (9–1)

ENGLISH LANGUAGE A

Student Book

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SANTIAGO

WRITING SKILLS

Assessment Objective 4

Communicate effectively and imaginatively, adapting form, tone and register of writing for specific purposes and audiences

Assessment Objective 5

Write clearly, using a range of vocabulary and sentence structures, with appropriate paragraphing and accurate spelling, grammar and punctuation

This chapter focuses on some core writing skills that you can apply to all parts of the English Language A course. Working through these lessons and activities will help you to develop the writing skills that you will need for the exams and non-examination assessment assignments.

The chapter is split into the following sections:

- Vocabulary
- Sentences
- Structure
- Punctuation and spelling.

In the writing sections of your exams, you will need to be able to meet the Assessment Objectives A04 and A05.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- appreciate a writer's choice of words
- develop your own choice of words.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT VOCABULARY

Your words need to attract the attention of a reader and keep them engaged so that they will continue to read what you have written. Choosing effective vocabulary is central to achieving this.

Words that engage the senses are particularly effective for this purpose. Look at the following opening sentences.

- It exploded in her face. (**sight**)
- Something was scratching under the door. (**sound**)
- From the kitchen came a waft of the garlic that she loved. (**smell**)
- He pulled a face as if he had swallowed sour milk. (**taste**)
- The wind brushed his skin. (**touch**)

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS INNOVATION

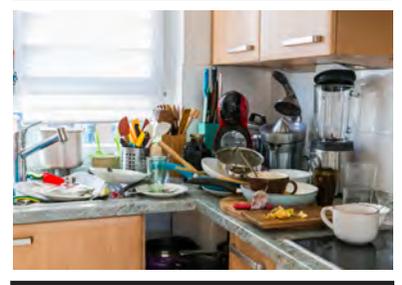
▼ ENGAGING THE SENSES

Work with a partner and write an opening sentence for each of the titles below using at least three of the five senses: sight, sound, smell, taste and touch.

THE STORM



Disaster in the Kitchen



PRECISION

When you write or speak, your choice of words can be very important, especially when you write. When you speak, the person who is listening can ask you to explain yourself if anything you say is not clear. However, when you write, your reader will probably not be able to ask for an explanation so you have to get things right first time.

There are times when you need to be precise in your choice of words. Compare the following sentences, then answer the question.

Some sort of animal was seen going down the road.

A thin, scruffy cat was seen hurrying anxiously into the distance down the middle of the road.

- Which of these two sentences is clearer and more precise? Which words and phrases create this clarity and precision?

Now try this for yourself.

Imagine you have witnessed a crime: a person breaking into a jeweller’s shop. Write one or two sentences describing the criminal and their actions as vaguely as possible. Then write one or two sentences describing the criminal as clearly and precisely as possible.

You could think about:

- the nouns you choose to focus on in your description
- the adjectives you choose to add detail and impact to those nouns
- the verbs you choose to describe the criminal’s movements
- the adverbs you choose to add descriptive detail to those verbs.

Swap your opening sentences with a partner. Which sentence do they feel uses the most engaging vocabulary choices? Ask them to explain their choice.



▲ Sinking of RMS *Titanic*

GENERAL VOCABULARY

stern rear of a boat
steerage the lower decks where the cheapest accommodation was provided

KEY POINT

The bigger your vocabulary, the more words you have to choose from and the easier it is to express yourself clearly. The best way to improve your vocabulary is by reading and taking an interest in the words that other people use.

ACTIVITY 2

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION

▼ **PRECISION IN ACTION**

In 1912, an enormous ship called the *Titanic* set sail from Britain to the USA carrying over 2000 passengers. It was described as unsinkable. On the fifth day of its voyage, the ship hit an iceberg and sank. More than 1500 people died. This extract is from an account of the disaster, written by one of the survivors. Read the extract carefully, noticing the choice of language used to convey the witness’s shock and horror. Then copy and complete the table, selecting key words and phrases that the writer uses to convey what they can see.

In a couple of hours, though, she [the *Titanic*] began to go down more rapidly. Then the fearful sight began. The people in the ship were just beginning to realise how great their danger was. When the forward part of the ship dropped suddenly at a faster rate, so that the upward slope became marked, there was a sudden rush of passengers on all the decks towards the **stern**. It was like a wave. We could see the great black mass of people in the **steerage** sweeping to the rear part of the boat and breaking through into the upper decks. At the distance of about a mile we could distinguish everything through the night, which was perfectly clear. We could make out the increasing excitement on board the boat as the people, rushing to and fro, caused the deck lights to disappear and reappear as they passed in front of them.

▼ KEY WORD OR PHRASE	▼ WHAT IT CONVEYS
Fearful	This word conveys the pitiful state of the panicking passengers who were still on the ship.
_____	_____

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- consider the effect of words and phrases
- demonstrate an ability to use words and phrases to good effect.

CONNOTATIONS

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

referend the thing or idea to which a word refers

connotations ideas linked to a word; ideas that have become associated with a word

GENERAL VOCABULARY

nauseous feeling sick

VOCABULARY FOR EFFECT

The words you use come from the vocabulary that you know and can use confidently and comfortably. Some words – *the, some, is, what, for example* – do not have the effect of other words such as *revolting, splendid, monster* and *eliminate*. Here you are going to look at the way writers choose words.

A word means more than just its **referend**. For example, the word ‘grease’ denotes or refers to an oily material often used to lubricate machinery or carry medication. Sometimes, however, the word is used to indicate distaste or revulsion, allowing the word’s **connotations**, such as ‘nauseous’, ‘slimy’ and ‘sticky’, to come into play.

Some words have positive or negative connotations, such as ‘success’ or ‘regrets’.

They talked all morning about her **success**.

In the first sentence, the use of the word ‘success’ means that you know that whatever she had done was approved of or appreciated as something positive.

Now she was left only with her **regrets**.

However, in the second sentence, the use of the word ‘regrets’ lets you know that the subject now wishes that she had not done something which is seen in a negative light.

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS

ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION,
INNOVATION, COLLABORATION

▼ CHOOSING VOCABULARY IN PRACTICE

- 1 Work in small groups to write complete sentences using each of the following words and phrases:
 - traitor
 - magic
 - cool
 - on the brink
 - totally helpless
 - awesome
 - readily available
 - desperate
 - cruel
 - adorable
- 2 Discuss the effect of the words and phrases in each of your sentences.
- 3 Read the following extract and choose some of the words and phrases in it that have a particular effect on you as a reader. Then copy and complete the table that follows, adding your own ideas. Try to find at least another six examples.

Once upon a time it was said that three trolls lived in a forest. Local people lived in fear of them and avoided at night the twisting path that wound its way between the trees. From time to time late-night travellers would find themselves lost in the forest, alone and bewildered, and they would imagine the sound of a foot snapping a twig or catch in the corner of their eye something moving in the shadows.

These close encounters with the trolls were reported widely and fed the imaginations of the locals. None of them realised that nobody had ever been harmed in any way by these trolls, but that did not

KEY POINT

In this section, you have seen how vocabulary choice allows the writer to achieve more. Powerful results are possible when words are carefully chosen.

restrain those people who really enjoyed terrifying their fellow citizens with outrageous tales of a death that could so easily catch up with them in the woods around the town.

The truth of the matter was that the three trolls were very shy. However, they craved the company of other beings and would approach them warily in the forest and then, before they could introduce themselves, their courage would fail and they would scuttle back into the undergrowth, safely out of sight.

▼ WORD OR PHRASE	▼ WHAT EFFECT IT HAS
Once upon a time	This phrase suggests that a fairy tale is about to be told.
Bewildered	This word creates a strong sense of uncertainty.

- 4 Complete the following sentence stem with six different words or phrases, indicating the effect you are aiming for in each case.

When it rains we...

SYNONYMS

A synonym is a word that means the same thing or nearly the same thing as another word. It can be used to avoid repeating a word, to echo or widen the reader's understanding or to reinforce an idea.

The young tree, **the sapling**, was the place chosen by the blackbird to build its nest.

Here the word 'sapling' provides a synonym for the tree. It helps to develop the referend (tree) by supplying more detail and further connotations.

- Write down as many synonyms as you can for the underlined word in these sentences.
 - There was a terrible smell in the room.
 - I dropped and broke my dad's phone.
 - I walked through the snow to school.
- Choose the best synonym to replace each of the underlined words in the sentences above.
- Write a sentence or two explaining why you chose each synonym and the effect you wanted it to have.



► 'Sapling' provides a synonym for 'tree'. Can you think of any other synonyms?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- appreciate how language can be used to bring about a wide variety of effects.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

transactional non-fiction writing for a purpose: to inform, explain, review, argue, persuade or advise

ironic using words to convey a meaning that is completely opposite to their apparent meaning

LANGUAGE FOR EFFECT

In every text, the writer has a purpose and an intention they want to achieve. For example, a writer might have the intention of helping visitors to enjoy their visit to a museum with the purpose of informing them about the things they can see and experience there. Or, a writer might have the intention of highlighting the positive consequences of an activity such as exercise with the purpose of persuading the reader to do more exercise in their daily lives. To achieve this purpose, the writer may use other, secondary, purposes.

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS PROBLEM SOLVING, ANALYSIS

▼ TYPE OF EFFECT IN WRITING

Look for examples of written material that is informative, **transactional**, emotive, persuasive, entertaining, inspirational, descriptive, **ironic** and advisory.

Record the source for each type and be aware that one source may include more than one of these types. You could look on the Internet, in newspapers or magazines, or in a library if you have access to one.

ACTIVITY 2

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION, CREATIVITY

▼ IDENTIFYING TYPES OF WRITING IN AN EXTRACT

Read the following extract.

- 1 Which of the following writing purposes can you identify?
description information explanation advice
- 2 Which of the following intentions has the writer tried to achieve?
humour shock fear sympathy encouragement

When you get home after a long day, what is the first thing you want to do? Get something delicious out of the fridge? Watch television? Get on the computer? All of these are fine in moderation – but how often do you go for a walk or a run, or play sport? The food you eat, and the amount of exercise you take, can have a significant impact on your physical and mental health. Ignoring your health can lead to heart problems, diabetes, arthritis and depression. Making healthy choices, on the other hand, can make you happier, fitter and less stressed..

Exercise isn't all about pounding the pavements in the pouring rain. You can visit the gym. Joining a sports team can improve your social life and your health. So why not try it? Your local leisure centre will have all the information you need.

Look at the following sentence.

Now stop.

Which of the two words in this sentence is emphasised? What is the effect of this?

If the order of the words is altered, something changes.

Stop now.

Instead of emphasising the action that is to be carried out, to stop, the emphasis is now on the timing of that action – it must be amended now, immediately.

The ordering of words in a sentence is important, particularly at the end of a sentence or before a pause. There is a brief moment before you hear the next word while the sound of the last word continues in your mind. Such a word is emphasised and brought to your attention.

Look at the following sentences. One is the first sentence of the extract in Activity 2, and the other is a re-ordered version. Consider the difference made by re-ordering the words. Which ending do you think is the more effective? Can you say why?

I expect that you will have often heard warnings about the dangers to your health of smoking.

I expect that you will have often heard warnings about the dangers of smoking to your health.

It may help you to analyse the phrases further by breaking them down into the following smaller phrases:

- about the dangers to your health / of smoking
- about the dangers of smoking / to your health.

There are three key words: ‘dangers’, ‘health’ and ‘smoking’. Which of these should be most closely connected? Perhaps it would help to put the three words together like this: *Smoking endangers health*. Can you see now why smoking was left at the end of the original sentence?

KEY POINT

Your choice of words and phrases, and the way that you arrange and adapt them, is crucial if you want to communicate effectively.

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

rhetorical questions questions that are asked to make a point rather than to get an answer

contrast where two objects, people or ideas are placed next to each other to highlight their differences

repetition saying the same thing more than once to highlight its importance

direct address using second person pronouns ‘you’ or ‘your’

triple structure where three words or ideas are linked in order to add emphasis to a key point

hyperbole exaggerating for effect

alliteration the use of several words together that begin with the same sound or letter

simile a description that says that an object is *like* an image

personification when something which is not human is made to sound human by attributing human qualities to it

ACTIVITY 3

SKILLS INNOVATION, TEAMWORK

OTHER LITERARY DEVICES

Look at the following literary devices. Can you think of an example of each? What effect do they have?

Rhetorical question

Contrast

Repetition

Direct address

Triple structure

Hyperbole

Alliteration

Simile

Personification

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- understand the importance of your choices when writing
- see how different choices can change meaning.

GENERAL VOCABULARY

clarity the quality of being expressed clearly



▲ Even relatively simple poems such as 'This is just to say' can create strong images.

WHY YOUR CHOICES MATTER

You must take care when choosing words, when arranging them and when you incorporate them into speech and writing.

- **Your choice of words** matters because it enables you to write with precision or exactness, **clarity** and an appropriate tone.
- **Your ordering of words** matters because it allows you to express ideas clearly and with impact.
- **Your use of language and literary techniques** matters because it enables you to achieve particular effects with writing.

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS

PROBLEM SOLVING, ANALYSIS,
INTERPRETATION, CREATIVITY,
INNOVATION

▼ HOW ARRANGEMENT OF WORDS AFFECTS MEANING

- 1 William Carlos Williams was an American poet and doctor. Because his medical work took him into homes where families were facing emergencies, he was able to learn a lot about them. This is one of his most famous poems, 'This is just to say'.

I have eaten 5
the plums
that were in
the ice box

and which 10
you were probably
saving
for breakfast.

Forgive me 15
they were delicious
so sweet
and so cold.

It is not difficult to imagine 'This is just to say' as a hasty note of apology scrawled on a sticky note and stuck on a fridge door.

Now look at the words of the poem arranged as ordinary sentences.

I have eaten the plums that were in the ice box and which you were probably saving for breakfast. Forgive me; they were delicious, so sweet and so cold.

KEY POINT

When writing, be clear of your purpose and your intention. Choose vocabulary that helps you achieve them.



▲ Stealing was often met with extreme forms of punishment, yet some had no choice.

- Work on your own and pick out key words in the poem which simply present clear facts. What words are left? What are the effects of these other words?
- 2 Work in a small group and consider the following questions.
 - ▶ **Which words describe the plums? What effect does this description have? Does it simply help you to imagine what the plums were like?**
 - ▶ **What happens to the tone or mood of the poem after the first sentence?**
 - ▶ **Which word is crucial here? What is the effect of the rest of the last sentence: ‘they were delicious I so sweet I and so cold’? What would be the effect of describing the plums in the first sentence?**
 - 3 Write a cheeky note of mock apology along the lines of ‘This is just to say’. For example, you could write an apology to a particular teacher for failing to do your homework.
 - 4 Remember the different effects of, or purposes for, writing: informative, transactional, emotive, persuasive, entertaining, inspirational, descriptive, ironic and advisory. How many of these can you find in Williams’s poem? Explain how these effects are brought about.

ACTIVITY 2

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, ANALYSIS

▼ CHECKING WRITTEN MATERIAL

When you check your work, look for words or phrases that could be improved. Check for words and phrases that could be revised to:

- make your writing more appropriately formal or informal
- make a more significant contribution to your intention.

The writer’s intention in this text is to shock the reader with information about how severely criminals were treated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Back in the old days, poor people who stole food just to survive were punished really badly. People as young as six could be hanged just for nicking a loaf of bread. With a choice of death by hunger or death by hanging, loads of people chose to steal to keep themselves alive.

- ▶ **Find a word or phrase that helps the writer to achieve their intention.**
- ▶ **Find a word or phrase that is appropriately formal.**
- ▶ **Find any words or phrases that should be more formal.**
- ▶ **Identify two words or phrases that could be replaced to help the writer achieve their intention.**

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- understand the ways in which sentences can be assembled
- see the way that the meaning of a sentence is made effective.

SENTENCE TYPES

Sentences must be structured for clarity so they can be easily understood. They can also be structured for effect, adding impact to the writer's ideas.

BUILDING SENTENCES

SUBJECT VOCABULARY

clause a group of words that make up part of a sentence

First look at some of the ways in which sentences can be structured. Here is a single clause sentence. It has one main verb, *grabbed*.

They grabbed their sunglasses.

To this, you can add something more:

They grabbed their sunglasses and (they) hurried outside.

The original sentence has become a multiclause sentence. Two single **clause** sentences have become joined by a conjunction: *and*. They have become two clauses in a multiclause sentence. Each clause has a verb; in this case, *grabbed* and *hurried*. These two components could also be linked by using one of the verbs in its non-finite (*-ing*) verb form:

Grabbing their sunglasses, they hurried outside.

They grabbed their sunglasses, **hurrying** outside.

You can develop the sentence further:

They grabbed their sunglasses and hurried outside although it was raining.

A third clause has been added: *although it was raining*. This clause also contains a verb, *was raining*; however, the clause, *although it was raining*, makes incomplete sense on its own. Without the main clause, you do not know what happened while it was raining.

You could link two of the components in other ways to form multiclause sentences:

They grabbed their sunglasses although it was raining.

Although it was raining they grabbed their sunglasses.

Each sentence here has a main clause and a subordinate clause.



▲ 'They took their sunglasses and (they) hurried outside' is a multiclause sentence.

Finally, look at another sentence:

He looked at the menu which was badly written.

A single clause sentence, *He looked at the menu*, has become a main clause to which a relative clause, *which was badly written*, has been added. This relative clause has been linked with a relative pronoun, *which*, to form another multiclausal sentence.

MINOR SENTENCES

One type of sentence does not follow the traditional rules of sentence structure. A minor sentence does not contain a verb. It could be just one or two words:

- Good. (A reaction to something.)
- Over here! (Some information.)
- A man. A tall, thin man with bright green eyes. (An element of a story structured as a minor sentence for effect.)

Minor sentences are much more common in speech. However, they can be used in narrative or descriptive writing to create tension, or in argument and persuasive writing for emphasis. It is generally better to avoid minor sentences in more formal, transactional writing.

EXPLORING SENTENCES

KEY POINT

Words and phrases can be built up into different types of sentences. By varying the sentences you use, you help the reader to stay engaged and strengthen the impact of what you write.

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS ANALYSIS

▼ SPOT THE VERB

- 1 Copy the sentences below. Underline the verbs. Some sentences may contain several verbs. One of the sentences contains no verbs.
 - i The windows rattled in their frames.
 - ii The wind howled and rain battered the ground.
 - iii Although it was only midday, the sky was black.
 - iv Peering through the window, I noticed a shadow in the trees where the statue had once stood.
 - v Then a sudden silence.
- 2 Look again at the sentences you copied down. Circle and label the words that link the clauses in each sentence. They could be:
 - linked with a conjunction, such as ‘and’, ‘when’, ‘although’
 - linked with a non-finite *-ing* verb, such as ‘running’, ‘hiding’, ‘looking’
 - linked with a relative pronoun, such as ‘which’, ‘who’, ‘where’.
- 3 Finally, label each sentence with its sentence type. It could be:
 - a single clause sentence
 - a multiclausal sentence
 - a minor sentence.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This lesson will help you to:

- build sentences.

SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION

Sentences can be structured in different ways without changing their meaning. Before you can decide on the most effective sentence structure to express your ideas, you need to be aware of the different structures you could use.

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, INNOVATION

▼ BREAKING DOWN AND BUILDING UP SENTENCES

- 1 Look at the sentence below.

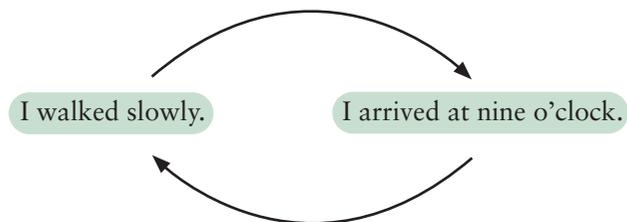
Although it was quiet, I knew there was someone in there because I could hear the sound of breathing which was short and shallow as if someone was frightened.

This sentence contains five clauses. Re-write the sentence as five single clause sentences.

- 2 Now you have tried breaking down a sentence, try building sentences up. Look at the two single clause sentences below.

I walked slowly. I arrived at nine o'clock.

- Link the sentences using a conjunction to form a multclause sentence.
- Link the sentences using a different conjunction to form a multclause sentence.
- Link the sentences by making one of the verbs a non-finite *-ing* verb to form a multclause sentence.
- Link the sentences by making a different verb a non-finite *-ing* verb to form a multclause sentence.
- Look at each of the sentences you have written. In how many sentences can the clauses be swapped without affecting the meaning of the sentence?



HINT

Some examples of conjunctions are:

'and', 'but', 'so', 'or', 'when', 'because', 'if', 'although'.

KEY POINT

In some multclause sentences, the sequence of the clauses can be altered without changing the sentence's meaning.

HINT

Some examples of relative pronouns are: 'that', 'which', 'who'.

3 Look at the three single clause sentences below.

I hurried to the end of the corridor. I looked in the classroom. It was empty.

- i Link all three clauses using conjunctions to form a multclause sentence.
 - ii Link all three clauses using one conjunction and one non-finite *-ing* verb to form a multclause sentence.
 - iii Link all three clauses using one conjunction and one relative pronoun to form a multclause sentence.
 - iv In how many of the sentences you have written can the clauses be swapped around without affecting the meaning of the sentence?
- 4 Look at the long multclause sentence you explored in Activity 1, Question 1:

Although it was quiet, I knew there was someone in there because I could hear the sound of breathing which was short and shallow as if someone was frightened.

Look again at the version you wrote by breaking this long multclause sentence down into five single clause sentences.

- i Re-write the single clause sentences as two or three sentences. You could link some in multclause sentences, and leave some as single clause sentences. Remember to check that your sentences are clear and make sense.
- ii Try re-writing your sentences again, linking or separating them in a different way, or in a different order. Check that your sentences make clear sense.
- iii Which version do you find more effective?



▲ Changing the order of clauses can create different imagery for a reader as it also changes the emphasis and the order in which information is given.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

This lesson will help you to:

- write sentences that express your ideas clearly.

SENTENCES FOR CLARITY

The main reason for writing anything is to express your ideas and convey them clearly to the reader. The first thing to consider when structuring sentences for clarity is whether the reader will be able to read and understand them easily.

ACTIVITY 1

SKILLS CRITICAL THINKING, INNOVATION

▼ MAKING IT CLEAR

Expressing yourself clearly is particularly important when you are giving the reader information. Look at the sentence below.

Pour a tablespoon of oil into a frying pan and place the frying pan on the stove, then take an egg and crack it open by hitting it sharply on the edge of a bowl or worktop, making sure to tip the contents into a mug or bowl which you can then use to place the egg into the frying pan once the oil is beginning to bubble and sizzle, and leave it there until the egg is cooked to your taste which might be when the yolk is soft and runny or firm and cooked through.

These instructions could be much more clearly expressed.

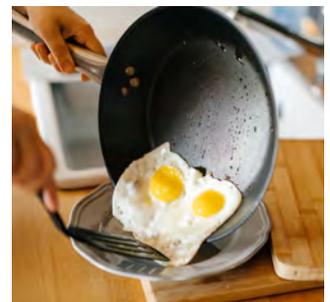
- 1 Rewrite the sentence as a series of single clause sentences.
- 2 Number the sentences so that they are in a logical sequence.
- 3 Now think about:
 - which sentences would be more clearly expressed if you linked them to form mult clause sentences
 - which sentences would be more clearly expressed if they remained as single clause sentences.
- 4 Re-write the information above, using your choice of mult clause and single clause sentences.
- 5 Ask a partner to read the sentences you have written. Are they more clearly expressed than the original version above?

KEY POINT

Mult clause sentences can be formed using:

- conjunctions
- non-finite verbs
- relative pronouns.

► Instructions need to be clear to be effective.



ACTIVITY 2

SKILLS INNOVATION

▼ EXPRESS YOURSELF CLEARLY

- 1 Write your own instructions and information about a task that you are skilled in. Your main aim is to explain to the reader how to complete that task.

It could be:

- a sporting skill
- a musical skill
- how to play and win a game that you enjoy
- a skill related to a hobby you enjoy.

You could:

- begin by noting all the steps and stages that the task involves
- write an explanation of each step using a single clause or short multiclausal sentence
- decide which of your sentences to link using conjunctions, non-finite verb forms or relative pronouns, and which sentences are more effective as shorter sentences.

- 2 Review the structure of your sentences. Re-write your instructions using different sentence structures trying to make the information you are expressing even clearer and easier to understand.
- 3 Look at the two versions you have written. Choose the version you think is most clearly expressed. Ask a partner to read that version. Does your partner find your sentences clear and easy to understand?

KEY POINT

When reviewing your sentence structure, look at each clause in each sentence you have written. Is it linked to the other clauses in the sentence in the most effective way? Would it be clearer as a single clause sentence?



▲ Write about something you enjoy.