

# **Mississippi SATP English II Writing Assessment Student Review Guide**

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# Preface

*The Mississippi SATP English II Writing Assessment Student Review Guide* is written to help students review and practice the writing skills needed to receive a passing score on the English II Writing Assessment essay. This writing guide is based on the Mississippi Writing Assessment Program for English II and the 2006 Mississippi Language Arts Framework - Revised both published by the Mississippi Department of Education.

## How To Use This Book

### Students:

The English II end-of-course test is required for graduation. You must pass a multiple-choice exam that tests vocabulary, reading, grammar, and writing, and you must pass a writing test. This book is a review for the English II Writing Assessment essay.

- ① Read each section of this book sequentially and do the exercises. Each section builds on the one before it. You will be given step-by-step instruction on how to construct essays so that you will receive a passing score. If you follow, practice, and become proficient in using the steps in this book, you will do better than just pass with a minimum score of two. You should score at least a three if not a four.
- ② Remember that writing a good essay is a process of planning, writing, proofreading, and re-writing. Make sure you go through the steps of proofreading your essays. In the proofreading sections of this book, you will be given opportunities to proofread other essays. If you cannot identify and correct the mistakes in these essays, review and practice the grammar and usage skills taught in that section.
- ③ When proofreading your essays, refer to the checklist on page 117. Make sure you meet the requirements for each of these items.
- ④ After writing, proofreading, and rewriting your essays, choose other prompts given in the Appendix A of this book. Practice the same steps with new prompts. Keep practicing until you can write essays that meet all the checklist requirements.

### Teachers:

This review guide is also intended to save you time in the classroom. It can be used for classroom instruction or for individual student review. This student guide gives specific step-by-step instruction on how to write essays that will pass the English II Writing Assessment.

- ① When teaching or tutoring individual students, use the strategy outlined above for students. Students can go through this book to learn how to write essays in a step-by-step manner. You can provide additional guidance and correction. The Student Essay Booklet that accompanies this guide gives space for students to practice each step of the writing, proofreading, and rewriting process. As the student practices each step, you should see improvement from one step to the next.
- ② For classroom study, we recommend you purchase a class set of guides for use in the classroom or assign guides to students for out-of-classroom work. Since these guides are step-by-step instruction, you can teach and give practice directly from the text. Have students use the Student Essay Booklet to keep up with their writing. You may want to take up and grade these booklets as students complete each step, and/or you can give a grade based on improvement as the students work through the writing steps.
- ③ To improve the success rate of students, we recommend you read “Teaching Writing Using the Write, Read, and Respond Method” given in Appendix B of the Teacher’s Edition. Incorporate these easy-to-use, time-proven strategies into your classroom to help students learn writing skills. Use this guide in conjunction with these teaching strategies for maximum benefit.
- ④ Appendix A at the end of this guide gives additional writing prompts. Assign additional prompts to students so they may gain additional practice writing essays.
- ⑤ **Please DO NOT photocopy materials from these guides or the Student Essay Booklet.** These guides are intended to be used as student workbooks, and individual pages should not be duplicated by any means without permission from the copyright holder. To purchase additional or specialized copies of sections in this book, please contact the publisher at 1-800-745-4706.

# Understanding the Prompt

## Section 1.1 Choosing a Prompt



Writing books usually deal with all types of writing and use different types of prompts or topics. However, the purpose of this book is to help you write an essay that will receive a passing score on the English II Writing Assessment. In order to pass the English II Writing Assessment, you must write an expository essay, a position paper, or a response to literature. By doing the exercises in this book, you will be much better prepared for success when you write your test essay.

Writing a good essay is a process that involves planning, writing, and rewriting. This book will take you through that process step-by-step so that you can gain the knowledge you need for planning, writing, editing, and finalizing the types of essays you may see on the English II Writing Assessment.

### Teaching Prompts

For teaching purposes, we will use the following three prompts to show you how to plan, to write, to edit, and to finalize each type of essay. Notice that one prompt is for an expository essay, one is for a position paper, and one is for a response to literature. These teaching prompts are different from the prompts you will use to write. These three prompts will be used to show you the entire essay-writing process, but you will be asked to apply the same steps to your own essays from the prompts on pages 8 and 9 that you will choose for your writing.

#### Expository Essay Teaching Prompt

Everyone loves to do the things that they do well, and this love usually applies to hobbies and sports. Think of your favorite hobby or sport and why it is an important part of your life. Write an expository essay to inform an interested adult about your favorite hobby or sport. Be sure to include reasons and/or examples that explain how this hobby or sport is important to your life. Support your ideas with specific details.

#### Position Paper Teaching Prompt

Many schools require all students to perform some type of community service, such as cleaning litter in parks or helping in hospitals. Think about whether or not this service requirement is a good program for student learning. Take a position. Write an essay for an interested adult to explain and provide support for your decision. Use reasons and/or examples with specific details to justify your position.

#### Response to Literature Teaching Prompt

Yogi Berra once said, “If you don’t know where you are going, you’ll end up someplace else.” Think about this quotation as it relates to setting goals or making future plans. Write an essay for an interested adult explaining your thoughts as they relate to this quotation. Be sure to support your thoughts with specific points and/or examples. You may use points and/or examples based on personal experiences, reading, or observations.



## Section 1.2, continued

### Understanding the Informative Writing Mode

#### Expository Essay

An **expository essay** gives an explanation on a specific topic. This type of essay gives facts, reasons, explanations, or examples with supporting details about the topic. For example, the writer of an expository essay may explain the qualities that make a good friend. Expository writing should clearly *explain* the topic. It should always include a main idea, logical reasons, sufficient supporting details, and a conclusion.

#### Position Paper

A **position paper** takes a position on an issue and gives reasons to support and defend that position. This type of essay will use facts, personal experiences, and/or other kinds of knowledge to support the writer's position. The writer of a position paper picks a side, either for or against an issue. For example, the essay may explain why a writer thinks cell phones should be banned in private businesses or why a high school diploma should not be required for getting a driver's license. A position paper will clearly state the writer's position and then give reasons to support that position. A position paper does NOT use persuasive language intended to persuade the reader to agree with the writer's opinion.

#### Response to Literature

On the Mississippi English II Writing Assessment, a response to literature will be a response to a quote. This type of essay should have a clear point regarding the quote and will support that point with logic or reasoning. The essay will support the writer's point by using personal examples or examples from other sources. These other sources may be from a school subject, like history, science, or literature, or they may be from some other source, like a television program or a newspaper. For example, consider Yogi Berra's quote "If you don't know where you are going, you'll end up someplace else." A writer may make a point that choosing a career before graduating high school is important. The writer may support that point with examples from history.

Look at the teaching prompts and consider the kinds of essays that would and would not be appropriate for each.

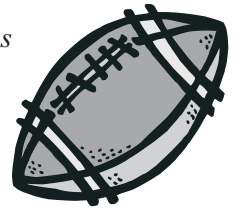
#### Expository Essay Teaching Prompt

Everyone loves to do the things that they do well, and this love usually applies to hobbies and sports. Think of your favorite hobby or sport and why it is an important part of your life. Write an expository essay to inform an interested adult about your favorite hobby or sport. Be sure to include reasons and/or examples that explain how this hobby or sport is important to your life. Support your ideas with specific details.



**Example 1:** Look at the introductory paragraph below for an expository essay written for the above prompt. Notice that it correctly uses an informative mode.

*During the fall and winter months, it is a ritual for many fathers and sons to gather around the television on Sunday afternoon to watch NFL football games. Or for many of us in high school, we gather with our friends on Friday nights to cheer on our own high school football team. Why are so many drawn to the sport of football? Football is the all-American sport that unites its fans and has the ability to bring family and friends closer together. For these reasons, it is my favorite sport.*



The writer of this paragraph has chosen football as his favorite sport. The paragraph is clearly informative because it gives the general reasons for this sport being the writer's favorite. In the paragraphs to follow, the writer will give specific examples to show how football "unites its fans and brings family and friends closer together."

# Writing a Paragraph

## Section 2.2 Writing a Topic Sentence



A **topic sentence** tells the subject of your paragraph and the purpose for it. It introduces what you will talk about in your paragraph. The topic sentence lets the reader know what to expect.

An effective topic sentence addresses the subject of the paragraph and leads the reader to the purpose of the paragraph. It gives the paragraph a direction. It is broad enough so that you can include details about it. It should not be so narrow that you have nothing else to say about the topic. Let's look at some examples.

### An Expository Paragraph

Let's say your teacher asked you to write a paragraph about your favorite car. You are instructed to explain why it is your favorite in the paragraph. The subject of the paragraph is your favorite car. The purpose of the paragraph will be to explain why it is your favorite. Your topic sentence tells the reader what you will explain.

Think back to what you learned in Section 1. This type of paragraph would be expository because it explains. Instead of writing one paragraph on this topic, you could possibly write an entire essay. But for now, just concentrate on writing one paragraph.

### Good Topic Sentences

**Example 1:** *My favorite car is the Toyota Corolla for several reasons.*

This topic sentence is simple, but it addresses the subject and conveys the writer's purpose. This topic sentence tells the reader that the writer's favorite car is the Toyota Corolla and that the writer has several reasons for it being her favorite. This topic sentence is broad enough to be explained in the sentences to follow. The reader knows that the rest of the paragraph will give the reasons for the Toyota Corolla being the writer's favorite car.

**Example 2:** *The greatest car on the market today is the Corvette convertible.*

This topic sentence isn't quite as simple as the first one. Even though the sentence doesn't say that the Corvette convertible is the writer's favorite car, the writer implies it by saying it is the greatest car on the market today. This topic sentence tells the reader that the paragraph is about the Corvette convertible and implies that it will explain why it is the greatest car on the market today. Again, this is a good topic sentence for the prompt given.

### Bad Topic Sentences

**Example 3:** *I am going to write about the Toyota Corolla.* **No purpose**

This sentence is not a good topic sentence. It doesn't specifically address the subject and purpose, which is to write about your favorite car and explain why. This sentence doesn't say anything about how the Toyota Corolla is the writer's favorite car. Rarely in life should you ever write a sentence like this one. Never start a paragraph by writing "I'm going to write about . . ." It is elementary, it gives no direction to the paragraph, and it gives the reader no sense of purpose for the paragraph.

# Planning The Essay

## Section 3.1 Introducing the Parts of an Essay



Now that you have practiced writing paragraphs, you should be ready to start your essays. When you write an essay, you have to write several paragraphs and use transitions to connect the paragraphs. Writing an essay takes a little more planning than writing a paragraph, but they are still similar in the way they are constructed. For example, both have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion.

Good Paragraph	Good Essay	
<p><b>Topic Sentence:</b> It is a sentence that introduces the paragraph and indicates what will be included in the paragraph. This sentence is the controlling idea of the paragraph.</p>	<p><b>Introductory Paragraph:</b> It is the first paragraph of an essay and introduces the topic of the essay.</p> <p><b>Thesis Sentence:</b> It is usually the concluding sentence in the introductory paragraph. It indicates what the entire essay will include. This sentence is the controlling idea for the essay.</p>	<p><b>Beginning</b></p>
<p><b>Body:</b> It includes several idea/reason sentences supported by example/detail sentences. Each sentence supports the topic sentence.</p>	<p><b>Body:</b> It includes one or more paragraphs that support the thesis sentence.</p>	<p><b>Middle</b></p>
<p><b>Conclusion Sentence:</b> It is a sentence that concludes the paragraph.</p>	<p><b>Conclusion Paragraph:</b> It is a paragraph that concludes the essay.</p>	<p><b>End</b></p>

As you can see, writing a well-organized essay is similar to writing a good paragraph. However, an essay is expanded into three or more paragraphs. On the English II Writing Assessment, you will be required to write a minimum of three paragraphs, but a four or five paragraph essay is more appropriate. These paragraphs should represent a clear beginning, middle, and end for your essay.

# Writing the Introduction

## Section 4.1 Writing an Introductory Paragraph for an Expository Essay



The essay that you write for the English II Writing Assessment will be three to five paragraphs long with the first paragraph being the introduction. Three paragraphs would be the minimum number of paragraphs in your essay, but ideally, you will write four or five paragraphs.

The first paragraph you write will be the introductory paragraph, and it will be structured a little differently from what you practiced in your blueprint paragraphs in Section 2. (Don't worry; you'll be using the blueprint to write the body paragraphs.) Unlike what you learned in Section 2, your introductory paragraph can be as short as three sentences. The first sentence, instead of being a true topic sentence, can be a general statement about the topic of your essay. The second sentence in your introductory paragraph will explain or give additional information about your essay and can be followed by additional sentences giving even more information. Your final sentence(s) will be your thesis statement.

Get started by writing an introductory paragraph for an expository essay. Take it one step at a time.

### Introductory Sentence

The first sentence for your introductory paragraph should be easy to write. It can be a general statement addressing the general topic of the given prompt. Or it can be an "attention grabber" that uses a shocking statement, a quote, a question, a joke, etc. If you can think of a creative attention grabber to begin your essay, use your idea. If not, using a general statement is also okay. When being creative, especially if you are just beginning to try this new skill, get feedback from your teacher or someone else who is a good writer.

Review the expository essay teaching prompt.

Everyone loves to do the things that they do well, and this love usually applies to hobbies and sports. Think of your favorite hobby or sport and why it is an important part of your life. Write an expository essay to inform an interested adult about your favorite hobby or sport. Be sure to include reasons and/or examples that explain how this hobby or sport is important to your life. Support your ideas with specific details.

For this prompt, an introductory sentence might be a general statement about sports or hobbies. Or it could be a general statement about the specific favorite sport or hobby chosen by the writer. The examples below give some acceptable introductory sentences for the expository essay prompt.

**Example 1:** *To many high school students, sports play an important part in their lives.*

This first example is very general about the topic of sports.

**Example 2:** *Weight training is a beneficial hobby for people of all ages.*

This sentence is a little more specific about one particular hobby, weight training.

## Section 5.2, continued

### Writing the Body Paragraphs for a Position Paper

If you choose to write a non-formulaic thesis statement that is more general, it may be more difficult for you to stay focused in your essay. Be careful to avoid the following pitfalls when writing body paragraphs:

#### Important "Don'ts" in Body Paragraphs

- ☒ Don't use circular reasoning (or "talk in circles").
- ☒ Don't repeat the same idea over and over.
- ☒ Don't simply list reasons without giving examples.
- ☒ Don't be vague. Be specific.

You've already seen some of these "don'ts" in Section 5.1. Do you remember the warning to use specific examples and details and to avoid being vague or general? The same applies to position papers.

Now consider an introductory paragraph with a very general thesis sentence. In the following examples, Example 2 and Example 3, notice how easy it is for the writer to stumble over the pitfalls given above.



#### **Example 2: Introductory Paragraph:**

*Imagine being in a dead-end job that you hate. Now imagine being forced to do the same work that you hate but not even getting paid for it. The situation is unthinkable, isn't it? No, it is actually a reality for high school students who are required to do community service. I disagree with this policy to force students to perform community service because it accomplishes nothing good for the students.*

#### **Body Paragraph:**

*Forcing students to do community service is a bad idea. It doesn't help the students to learn anything new. If students don't learn anything new, then it doesn't do them any good. Students should always learn new things or else they don't learn anything. Instead of doing something that doesn't teach them anything, they should do something that teaches them something new. If students are going to succeed in life, they need to learn new things in school.*

#### **Circular Reasoning:**

Circular reasoning is saying something like the following: "I like John because he is my favorite person." Circular reasoning doesn't give a reason at all. Can you pick out circular reasoning in Example 2? "*Students should always learn new things or else they don't learn anything*" and "*Instead of doing something that doesn't teach them anything, they should do something that teaches them something new*" are examples of circular reasoning.

#### **Repetition:**

The body paragraph given in Example 2 is a good example of repeating the same idea over and over again. The writer goes around and around saying the same thing: community service doesn't teach students anything new. The writer doesn't give any specific examples or details.

Be careful not to write this way. See Example 4 for how these ideas could be used, explained, and supported in a paragraph without going around in circles and without repeating the same idea over and over again.

# Writing the Body and the Conclusion

## Section 5.4 Writing the Conclusion Paragraph



Regardless of which type of essay you are writing, the conclusion paragraph serves the same purpose in each — it finishes the essay.

The conclusion will be the final paragraph for your essay. The conclusion ties together what you have already said in your essay. It should give the reader a sense of completion instead of your essay ending abruptly. It should also emphasize the purpose of your essay so that the reader is not left guessing. The following is a general list of things you should and should not include in your conclusion. You do not need to include all the “do’s” in your conclusion, but you should definitely avoid the “do not’s.”

### DO

- DO summarize your essay by restating your thesis and main points in a different way.
- DO show how the points in your expository essay fit together.
- DO emphasize your position in your position paper.
- DO restate your interpretation and main point(s) in your response to literature.
- DO give your opinions or comments about what you have just written.
- DO explain why the points in your essay are significant.
- DO make recommendations based on the main points in your essay.

### DO NOT

- DO NOT repeat your thesis or introductory paragraph word for word.
- DO NOT introduce new ideas that have not been supported by details in your essay.
- DO NOT write just one sentence or end with a general (vague) statement.
- DO NOT end your essay by saying “The End.”

Look at the example essays that have been written to this point. The following examples give good and bad conclusions. First, look at the expository essay.

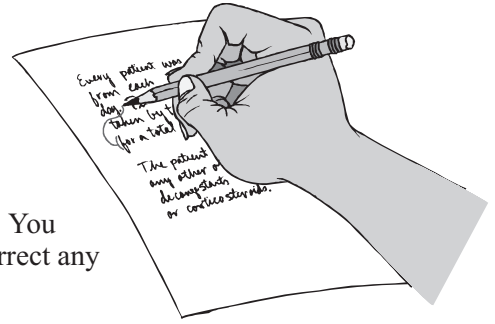


#### **Example 1: Introductory Paragraph:**

*To many high school students, sports play an important part in their lives. For some, sports offer an opportunity to be a part of a team and to be accepted by their peers. To others, sports teach sportsmanship, discipline, and cooperation. For me, playing baseball on our high school team has been an important part of my life. It helps me to keep in shape, it has taught me the importance of practice and hard work, and it makes me popular with the girls.*

# Introducing Proofreading

## Section 6.1 Using the Writer's Checklist



Congratulations! You should have now written the first drafts of your essays. You are not finished yet. The next step is proofreading your essays to find and correct any mistakes and to make your essays even better.

No matter how good a writer you are, you can always improve an essay by rereading, revising, and rewriting it. The more you write and the more you practice editing, the better you will be able to write your first draft. However, a first draft should never be your final draft. Not even great writers accept their first draft without revising it.

In the remaining sections of this book, you will review the skills that you need in order to proofread and correct your essays. Look at the checklist below. The checklist contains questions to help you write a passing essay.

### Writer's Checklist

#### Content/Organization

- Did I write about the topic selected?
- Did I write a thesis statement that clearly focuses on the topic?
- Did I use multiple paragraphs to create an introduction, body, and conclusion?
- Did I include relevant supporting details to develop my topic or position?
- Did I use purposeful transition within and between paragraphs?
- Did I organize my response in a manner that is appropriate for the topic?
- Did I address the appropriate audience and purpose in my response?

#### Sentence Structure

- Did I vary the structure and length of my sentences in a meaningful way?
- Did I use sentence variety to create an effective flow of ideas?

#### Language

- Did I consistently use language that is precise, powerful, and appropriate?
- Did I use language to enhance the development and clarity of my ideas?

#### Writing Conventions

- Did I correct any errors in spelling, usage, punctuation, and capitalization?
- Did I print or write clearly?

So far in this book, you have concentrated mostly on content and organization of your essays. The items checked off the list represent the things that you should have done in the rough draft of your own essays. In the rest of this book, you'll review skills so that you can check off the rest of them. As you can see, six of the boxes are checked. You have seven more to go. You still have some work to do!

# Using Complete Sentences and Correct Mechanics

## Section 7.2 Proofreading for Commonly Confused Words and Spelling



*During a cold spell in Feburary, Charles Dickens wrote, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." This quote rilly applies to our current economics problems. Wile I am not sure what could have been the best back than, I know the worst that can be now. These years should be the best of my life, but they are occurring during some of the worst years in our history.*

*What happened to the carefree years of childhood? For me, my princple worry is that their are no jobs in our neighborhood for teens, so I will be short of money for college. Sense times are bad, I can't by a car either. Instead of helping teenagers get into college or get a car to drive to work, our country is bailing out irresponsible bisness people. I cannot except this as a good use of money. They're bad decisions might effect me for the rest of my life.*

*History tries too tell us this has happened before and it'll come out allright. We learned in history that in 1837 our country had money problems like now. Abe Lincoln, as a young man, only wanted to live well, but he changed his plans because he sincerly wanted to help his young country. Lincoln had just gotten his law degree, so he was like me. The worst of times was happening in his best of times. Its good to recognise that we got out of such a mess before.*

*My plans change everyday. Maybe that is truly part of the best of times. I'm young enough to make changes to help my future. I still have the ability to make these worst of times my best of times.*

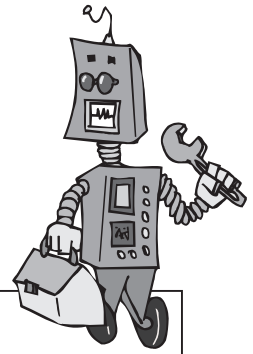
This is Ernest's writing with mistakes in spelling and commonly confused words. Can you pick out all the errors? Do you think you can revise this paragraph to correct the spelling and the commonly confused words? Count the mistakes that you find. Can you find all eighteen? If not, review commonly confused words and grade-level spelling words.

### Commonly Confused Words

accept	verb meaning <i>to receive</i>	<i>You <b>accept</b> an award.</i>
except	verb meaning <i>to leave out</i>	<i>I like all fruit <b>except</b> blackberries.</i>
affect	verb meaning <i>to influence</i>	<i>Interest rates <b>affect</b> the stock market.</i>
effect	most commonly used as a noun meaning <i>result</i>	<i>Interest rates have an <b>effect</b> on the stock market.</i>
buy	verb meaning <i>to purchase</i>	<i>He will <b>buy</b> you dinner.</i>
by	preposition	<i>It is sitting <b>by</b> the door.</i>
bye	noun, <i>to advance in a tournament without playing an opponent or to say farewell</i>	<i>Because we are ranked number one, our team has a <b>bye</b> in the state tournament. He said good-<b>bye</b>.</i>
cent	noun related to money	<i>It doesn't cost a <b>cent</b>.</i>
scent	noun meaning <i>smell</i> or <i>odor</i>	<i>The <b>scent</b> of lemons was strong.</i>
sent	verb	<i>We <b>sent</b> the card.</i>
cents	noun meaning <i>money</i>	<i>It costs fifty <b>cents</b>.</i>
sense	noun	<i>She has good <b>sense</b>.</i>
since	conjunction or prep.	<i><b>Since</b> he was late, he left. We had been talking <b>since</b> noon.</i>

# Understanding and Punctuating Clauses and Phrases

## Section 9.4 Using and Punctuating Direct and Indirect Quotes



Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote, “Foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of small minds”. Most people think, however, that being consistent is a positive thing. Emerson might have thought so, too, so he makes sure to say “foolish consistency” to make it different from common consistent work. When Emerson said, “foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of small minds.” he was sending a strong insult to people he felt were stuck on the wrong track. Emerson used these words to say that “reckless unchanging consistency is the mischievous demon of small minds to push people in new directions.” Emerson was consistent in his own search for new directions. Today, we have similar quotes. For example, I like the ad that says “Just do it”! My science teacher also says that “innovation or new ideas keep the world spinning,” and she gives the example of the Mars landings. As for me, there is a contest for new robot designs. To keep from being foolishly consistent, I would like to make a change in robot technology for that prize. I’ll just do it!

This is Zack’s paragraph that contains errors in capitalizing and punctuating direct quotes. Do you see the 8 errors? (Each quotation mark is counted separately, so beginning and end quote marks count as two marks.)

Since your English II Writing Assessment essays are written in the informative mode, you probably won’t have conversation. However, in your response to literature, you will be using a quote. You may also want to use quotes in your essays. Here is a review of how to properly punctuate quotes like the ones you might use in your essays.

### Speaker at the Beginning

When you tell someone’s exact words and use quotes, you need to punctuate the quote correctly using quotation marks, commas, and end marks in the right places.

When the speaker comes at the beginning, use a comma after who said the quote. If the quote is a declarative statement, put a period inside the last quotation mark. If it is a question or an exclamation, put a question mark or an exclamation point inside the last quotation mark. Always capitalize the first word of the quote when the quote is a complete sentence.

**Example 1:** Andy Warhol once said, “Everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes.”

Quotation marks around the direct quote

Comma after who said it

Capitalize the first word of the quote

Period inside the last quotation mark

**Example 2:** Richard Wagner once explained, “I write music with an exclamation point!”

**Example 3:** Abraham Lincoln once asked, “If I were two-faced, would I be wearing this one?”

Exclamation mark and question mark are inside the quotation mark.

# Writing Effective Sentences and Paragraphs

## Section 10.1 Choosing Effective Words



The writing conventions in your essay (the spelling, usage, punctuation, and capitalization) should now be corrected. Even though these items represent only one check mark in your writer's checklist, they are critically important. If you have followed the steps outlined in this book so far, you should have essays that would receive passing scores on the English II Writing Assessment. The remaining skills further polish your essays.

One of these final skills is using precise, powerful, and appropriate words. You've already seen in Section 1.4 that you should not use slang or language that is too informal. That type of language is not appropriate for an essay written to an adult.

To write an effective essay, you need to use descriptive, powerful, and precise words. Read the student paragraph below.

*Rules are being set by our school to help save energy. The things we must do now seem to be hard. Things we used to do that did not seem so bad now put us in trouble by the school. It's a very different way of looking at what we do. There are more things that can be used again than I would have thought about. We are being told to reuse a lot of school junk. We are being told to even bring stuff from home to use again or use in an interesting way. So now I and other students need to look again at what we use. I got a lot of paper stuff to reuse, and a friend got a lot of plastic to use in art class. One guy walks home but stays awhile to get pencils and pens and other stuff from the hall junk and gives them to teachers for classes. One guy wants to get stuff from the cafeteria to reuse. But, I don't know if that'll be good. Bringing stuff from home works as long as you have parents' ok. This is a big deal to get used to, but we know it is a good thing we are trying to do.*

This is Halley's writing. Halley's paragraph doesn't paint a very vivid picture because she uses vague descriptions, passive verbs, and overall boring language.

When writing your essays, choose your words carefully so that they are precise and vivid. Use action verbs when possible and be descriptive.

### Precise and Vivid Words

- Avoid vague, overused adjectives, such as *nice*, *good*, *bad*, *great*, and *interesting*. These words do not add much to a sentence.

**Example 1:** *It was a good story.*

All you know from this one sentence is that the writer had positive feelings toward the story, but you don't get anything else. A better word choice might say the story was *entertaining* or *suspenseful* or *realistic* or *funny*.