

PLATO Course Basic Writing Skills

Course Overview

The Basic Writing Skills Course was developed using modules from different Plato Courseware. In this course, you will study the basics of grammar and sentence construction. You will learn different techniques to improve your writing skills, including how to organize your ideas and structure your writing. Each unit in this course builds on the previous unit to impart basic grammar and writing skills.

Course Goals

This course will help you meet the following goals:

- Learn to identify subjects and use nouns and pronouns appropriately.
- Explore and identify different verb phrases and sentence types.
- Explore different strategies to match verbs with compound subjects.
- Learn how to combine sentences to make your writing interesting.
- Learn how to fix a mismatch between a modifier and the subject of a sentence.
- Recognize run-on sentences and ways to correct run-ons.
- Learn how to fix and correct sentence fragments.
- Identify different verbs, parts of verbs, and verb tenses.
- Explore confusing verbs and identify correct verb forms and their usage.
- Use different strategies to match verbs with their subjects and with indefinite pronouns.
- Explore how to use irregular verbs in the past tense and singular verbs with collective subjects.
- Explore singular and plural nouns, use of personal pronouns, and how to choose the verb that agrees in number with the subject of a sentence.
- Identify types of nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and adverbs.
- Analyze how nouns and pronouns agree in gender and number and ways to avoid using vague pronouns
- Understand how to show ownership in singular nouns, plural nouns, and personal pronouns.
- Understand when to use “who” and “that” and when to use “their” and “his” as pronouns.
- Understand how to use adjectives and adverbs in various degrees of comparison and how to identify and locate a misplaced modifier.
- Understand the basics of punctuation and capitalization.
- Understand different strategies to develop and organize your thoughts into ideas and how to support arguments with right evidence with examples to clarify ideas.
- Use compare/contrast and problem/solution models to structure your writing.

- Learn how to write a draft and how to write a strong conclusion that highlights interesting ideas.

General Skills

To participate in this course, you should be able to do the following:

- Complete basic operations with word processing software, such as Microsoft Word or Google Docs.
- Complete basic operations with presentation software, such as Microsoft PowerPoint or Google Docs presentation.
- Perform online research using various search engines and library databases.
- Communicate through email.

For a complete list of general skills that are required for participation in online courses, refer to the Prerequisites section of the Plato Student Orientation document, found at the beginning of this course.

Course Materials

- notebook
- pencils or ink pens
- computer with Internet connection and speakers or headphones
- Microsoft Word or equivalent
- Microsoft PowerPoint or equivalent

Course Pacing Guide

This course description and pacing guide is intended to help you keep on schedule with your work. Note that your course instructor may modify the schedule to meet the specific needs of your class

Unit 1: Sentence Basics

Summary

This unit focuses on the basics of sentence construction. You will review the concepts of sentence structure, sentence types, how to combine sentences, and how to correct some common grammar errors. You will review how to use nouns and pronouns and recognize different kinds of verbal phrases and sentences. This unit includes activities in which you will learn how to match verbs with compound subjects, use appropriate pronouns and verb forms, and use singular verbs with plural phrases. You will learn how to correct a mismatched modifier, how to combine sentences, and how to make the subject and the rest of a sentence fit logically. You will understand how to identify and correct sentence fragments. In the concluding part of the unit, you will learn how to recognize and avoid run-ons with commas, ways to split fused run-ons, and how to separate run-ons joined by transitions.

Day	Activity/Objective	Type
1 day: 1	Syllabus and Plato Student Orientation <i>Review the Plato Student Orientation and Course Syllabus at the beginning of this course.</i>	Course Orientation
1 day: 2	Identifying Subjects <i>Learn to identify the subject of a sentence including compound subjects.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 3	How Nouns are Used <i>Learn how to use nouns as subjects, direct objects, indirect objects, and predict nominatives.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 4	How Pronouns are Used <i>Learn how to use pronouns as subjects, direct objects, indirect objects, and predict nominatives.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 5	Verbal Phrases <i>Learn to recognize three kinds of verbal phrases: practical phrases, gerund phrases, and infinitive phrases.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 6	Sentence Types <i>Identify a sentence as exclamatory, declarative, imperative, or interrogative.</i>	Practice
1 day: 7	Matching Verbs with Compound Subjects <i>Study how to match subjects and verbs when there is more than one subject.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 8	Combining Sentences to Make Your Writing Interesting <i>Study how to combine sentences so that the writing flows and the relationships between ideas are clear.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 9	Using “Each” and “Every” with Singular Verbs <i>Study what verb forms to use with the words “each” and “every.”</i>	Lesson
1 day: 10	Choosing Pronoun Forms <i>Study how to choose between “I” and “me” and other confusing pronoun pairs.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 11	Using Singular Verbs with Some Plural Phrases <i>Study when words that look plural are really singular, as in titles.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 12	Fixing Modifier – Subject Mismatches <i>Study how to fix a mismatch between a modifier and the subject of a sentence.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 13	Avoiding Predicate – Subject Mismatches <i>Study how to make the subject and the rest of a sentence fit logically.</i>	Lesson

1 day: 14	Run – on Sentences <i>Learn what a run-on sentence is and how to correct it.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 15	Correcting Sentence Fragments – Verb Phrases <i>Correct sentence fragments.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 16	Using “So” Correctly in Sentences <i>Study how to use “so” correctly in sentences.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 17	Correcting Sentence Fragments – Subordinate Clauses <i>Study how to correct sentence fragments.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 18	Adding Missing Forms of “Be” and “Have” <i>Study how to add forms of “be” and “have” when they’re missing from sentences.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 19	Fixing Sentence Fragments – Prepositional Phrases <i>Study how to fix sentence fragments.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 20	Avoiding Run-ons with Commas <i>Study how to fix run-on sentences formed by joining two sentences with a comma.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 21	Splitting Fused Run-ons <i>Study how to separate sentences that have simply been jammed together and don’t form a single sentence.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 22	Separating Run-ons Joined by Transitions <i>Study how to fix run-on sentences linked by words like “nevertheless.”</i>	Lesson
1 day: 23	Posttest – Unit 1	Assessment

Unit 2: Verbs

Summary

This unit focuses on verbs, parts of verbs, and verb tenses. You will learn to choose the correct verb form in a sentence to ensure subject-verb agreement and verb-pronoun agreement. You will learn about usage of singular and plural nouns and personal pronouns with verbs. In the concluding part of the unit, you will learn to identify different types of verbs.

Day	Activity/Objective	Type
1 day: 24	Parts of Verbs <i>Study parts of verbs.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 25	Tenses of Regular Verbs <i>Practice reading sentences about the past and the future.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 26	Parts of Verbs <i>Study parts of verbs.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 27	Tenses of Irregular Verbs <i>Practice reading the past tense of irregular verbs.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 28	Verbs and Tenses <i>Study verb tenses and how to choose the correct tense.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 29	Confusing Verbs 2 <i>Study about three pairs of confusing verbs—lie/ lay, sit/set, rise/raise—and how to choose the correct verb form to use in a sentence.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 30	Matching Irregular Verbs with Subjects <i>Study how to match some special verbs with their subjects.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 31	Using Verbs that Are Irregular in the Past Tense <i>Study how to use verbs that have unusual past tense forms.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 32	Keeping Past Tense Verbs Consistent <i>Study how to use verbs in the past tense consistently.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 33	Using the Subjunctive Verb Form “Were” <i>Study when to use the special verb form “were” to express wishes and conditions contrary to fact.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 34	Irregular Verbs <i>Study the principal parts of irregular verbs and how to use them to form six verb tenses.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 35	Matching Verbs with Subjects <i>Study how to make verbs match their subjects.</i>	Lesson

1 day: 36	Matching Separated Verbs and Subjects <i>Study how verbs always match their subjects, even when there are words between them.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 37	Matching Verbs with Indefinite Pronouns <i>Study how to match verbs with words like “anybody,” “everybody,” “all,” “both,” “neither,” “several,” and “something.”</i>	Lesson
1 day: 38	Using Singular Verbs with Collective Subjects <i>Study words that represent a collection of things but are singular.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 39	Using Singular Verbs with Subjects that Look Plural <i>Study words that look plural but require a singular verb.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 40	Nouns and Verbs and Number <i>Study singular and plural nouns.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 41	Personal Pronouns <i>Study how to use personal pronouns.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 42	Subject and Verb Agreement <i>Practice how to choose the verb that agrees in number with the subject of a sentence.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 43	Recognizing Verbs <i>Learn to identify action verbs, being verbs, and compound verbs.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 44	Posttest – Unit 2	Assessment

Unit 3: Other Parts of Speech

Summary

This unit focuses on nouns. You will learn how to use different types of pronouns and how to make nouns and pronouns agree in sentences. You will learn to recognize adjectives and adverbs and use them to express different degrees of comparison. In the latter part of the unit, you will learn what a misplaced modifier is and how to identify it in a sentence.

Day	Activity/Objective	Type
1 day: 45	What is a Noun? <i>Study how to use nouns.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 46	Two Kinds of Nouns <i>Study how to use common and proper nouns.</i>	Lesson
1 day:	More Kinds of Nouns	Lesson

47	<i>Study how to use concrete, abstract, and collective nouns.</i>	
1 day: 48	Showing Ownership in Singular Nouns <i>Learn the usage of ant's ending [apostrophe + s] to show ownership.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 49	Nouns, Pronouns, and Gender <i>Study masculine, feminine, and neuter nouns and pronouns.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 50	Showing Ownership in Plural Nouns <i>Learn to add an apostrophe (') or 's to plural words to show ownership.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 51	Pronouns <i>Practice reading pronouns.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 52	Possessive Pronouns <i>Practice reading possessive pronouns.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 53	What is a Pronoun? <i>Study what pronouns are and how pronouns are used.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 54	Personal Pronouns with Ownership <i>Study pronouns that show ownership.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 55	Other Pronouns <i>Study different types of pronouns.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 56	Pronouns and Number <i>Study singular and plural pronouns.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 57	Making Nouns and Pronouns Agree in Sentences <i>Study how nouns and pronouns agree in gender and in number.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 58	The Pronoun : Replacement for a Noun <i>Identify pronouns and select the correct personal or possessive pronoun to replace a noun.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 59	Clarifying Vague Pronouns <i>Study how to avoid using vague pronouns.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 60	Showing Ownership with Possessives <i>Study words that show ownership but don't use an apostrophe.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 61	Choosing "Who" or "That" <i>Study when to use "who" and when to use "that."</i>	Lesson
1 day: 62	Using "Their" and "His" as Pronouns <i>Study when the words "their" and "his" don't quite fit a sentence.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 63	Pronoun and Antecedent Agreement <i>Learn to choose a pronoun that agrees with the noun to which it</i>	Lesson

	<i>refers.</i>	
1 day: 64	Recognizing Adjectives <i>Study how to recognize adjectives.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 65	More About Adjectives <i>Study how to use adjectives to compare things.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 66	Identifying Adverbs <i>Study adverbs.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 67	More About Adverbs <i>Study how to use adverbs to compare things.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 68	Modifiers of Meaning <i>Learn to identify adjectives and adverbs in a sentence.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 69	Correct use of Adjectives and Adverbs – Comparatives <i>Learn to use adjectives and adverbs correctly to express different degrees of comparison.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 70	Fixing Misplaced Modifiers <i>Study why it's important to put modifiers close to the words they describe.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 71	Misplaced Modifiers <i>Learn what a misplaced modifier is and how to identify it in a sentence.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 72	Posttest – Unit 3	Assessment

Unit 4: Punctuation

Summary

Unit 4 covers the basics of punctuation, including rules of capitalization. You will learn when and how to capitalize names of people, places, and events. You will learn how to use commas and punctuate quotations, and when to use semicolons, colons, dashes, hyphens, and quotation marks. In the latter part of the unit, you will learn how to express ownership using possessives and when to put quotation marks around quotations.

Day	Activity/Objective	Type
1 day: 73	The Basics of Punctuation <i>Study how to use the period, exclamation point, and question mark.</i>	Lesson
1 day:	Punctuation – End Marks	Lesson

74	<i>Learn how to use periods, question marks, and exclamation points as end punctuation for sentences.</i>	
1 day: 75	Capitalizing Titles of Peoples <i>Study when to capitalize titles of people.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 76	Capitalizing Names of Places and Events <i>Study how to capitalize names of places and events.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 77	Capitalizing Proper Nouns and Modifiers <i>Study when to capitalize words such as “street” and “Italian.”</i>	Lesson
1 day: 78	Using Capitals with Names <i>Study how to tell when a word such as “school” needs to be capitalized.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 79	Capitalizing Scientific and Computer Terms <i>Study when to capitalize scientific and computer terms.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 80	Capital Letters <i>Study how to use capital letters.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 81	Proper Nouns and Capitals <i>Study how to use capital letters with proper nouns.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 82	Titles and Capital Letters <i>Study how capital letters are used in titles.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 83	Capitalization <i>Learn how to use capital letters correctly.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 84	Commas 1 <i>Study how to use commas.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 85	Commas 2 <i>Learn about correct comma usage.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 86	Using Commas in Sentences with “Or,” “And,” or “But” <i>Study when to use a comma before the connecting words “and,” “but,” and “or.”</i>	Lesson
1 day: 87	Adding Commas to Indicate Nonessential Information <i>Study how commas can change the meaning of a sentence.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 88	Adding Commas After Introductory Phrases <i>Study when a comma is necessary after introductory phrases.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 89	Putting Commas and Periods Inside Quotation Marks <i>Study how to put commas and periods inside quotation marks.</i>	Lesson
1 day:	Using Commas in Dates and Places	Lesson

90	<i>Study when to use commas in dates, places, and addresses.</i>	
1 day: 91	Using Commas in Sentences with “Or,” “And,” or “But” <i>Study when to use a comma before the connecting words “and,” “but,” and “or.”</i>	Lesson
1 day: 92	Punctuating Quotations <i>Study when quotations in sentences don’t require commas.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 93	Punctuate It! <i>Identify hyphens, parentheses, and semicolons and how to use them correctly.</i>	Practice
1 day: 94	Colons and Semicolons <i>Study how to use the colon and semicolon.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 95	Semicolons, Colons, Dashes, Hyphens, and Quotation Marks <i>Learn how to punctuate sentences correctly using semicolons, colons, dashes, hyphens, and quotation marks.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 96	Showing Ownership with Possessives <i>Study words that show ownership but don’t use an apostrophe</i>	Lesson
1 day: 97	Putting Quotation Marks Around Quotations <i>Study how to put double quotation marks around what someone says.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 98	Quotation Marks <i>Study how to use quotation marks.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 99	Posttest – Unit 4	Assessment

Unit 5: The Paragraph

Summary

In this unit, you will learn how to punctuate sentences correctly, and techniques for developing and organizing your thoughts into paragraphs. You will identify the qualities of a good topic sentence. You will learn how to write a rough draft of an essay, support your arguments with appropriate evidence, and use compare/contrast and problem/solution models to structure your writing. You will learn to write compositions with an introduction, body, and conclusion and use examples to clarify your ideas. Finally, you will learn how to write a strong conclusion for an essay.

Day	Activity/Objective	Type
1 day: 100	Separating Ideas into Paragraph <i>Study how to organize your thoughts into paragraphs, how to find topics and separate them into different paragraphs, and how to create</i>	Lesson

	<i>a complete paragraph for each topic.</i>	
1 day: 101	Semicolons, Colons, Dashes, Hyphens, and Quotation Marks <i>Learn how to punctuate sentences correctly using semicolons, colons, dashes, hyphens, and quotation marks.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 102	Paragraph Development and Organization <i>Learn to identify paragraphs developed by example, sequence of events, comparison and contrast, and cause and effect.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 103	The Topic Sentence <i>Learn to identify the qualities of a good topic sentence; to identify the topic sentence in a paragraph; and to choose the correct topic sentence for a paragraph.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 104	From Ideas to Sentences <i>Learn how to write a rough draft of an essay.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 105	Supporting Your Arguments with the Right Evidence <i>Study how to determine if the evidence supporting your arguments in a persuasive paper is both relevant and complete.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 106	Using Compare/Contrast and Problem/Solution Models <i>Study how to use compare/contrast and problem/solution models to structure and organize your writing.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 107	Using Examples to Clarify Your Ideas <i>Study how to use examples to clarify ideas that are confusing to understand and how one can explain such ideas in different ways.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 108	First Draft <i>Learn how to write compositions with an introduction, body, and conclusion and support all statements and claims with anecdotes, descriptions, facts and statistics, and specific examples.</i>	Offline
1 day: 109	Writing Stronger Conclusions <i>Study how to write a strong conclusion by highlighting an interesting idea from your paper, using text from the body of your essay, and by pairing it with the introduction.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 110	Posttest – Unit 5	Assessment
1 day: 111	Course Review	
1 day: 112	End of Course Test	Assessment