

Let Me Help You

# Sell Your Homework

12-Week Course of Study:

*24 Ways to Write  
Articles*

*Lesson 2*

**PHRASE SENTENCES  
SHORT SENTENCES  
PUZZLES**

By Professor Dick Bohrer, M.Sc., M.A.

Dick Bohrer's Glory Press  
West Linn, Oregon

© copyright by Richard W. Bohrer, 1986, 2001, 2005  
All rights reserved. No part of this manual may be reproduced without written permission  
of the publisher at Glory Press Books, P. O. Box 624, West Linn, OR, 97068

## **OTHER BOOKS BY PROF. DICK BOHRER**

EASY ENGLISH (a grammar manual)

24 WAYS TO SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: OPINIONS  
(an opinion-writing manual)

24 WAYS TO SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: STORIES  
(a manual)

24 WAYS TO SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: FEATURES  
(a manual)

HEY, CHRISTIAN KIDS! LET'S WRITE SOME STORIES  
(a manual)

EDIT, YOURSELF, AND SELL  
(a manual—out of print)

BE AN EDITOR YOURSELF  
(a manual—out of print)

NO FRILLS EDITING SKILLS  
(a manual)

THE LETTERS OF JOHN NEWTON  
(a paraphrase)

BILL BORDEN  
(a biography)

LION OF GOD  
(a biography of Dr. John G. Mitchell)

J. EDGAR BEANPOLE AND FRIENDS (Series):

FOOTBALL DETECTIVE (a novel)

VOLLEYBALL SPY (a novel)

SOCCER SLEUTH (a novel)

NIGHT WATCHER (a novel)

BASKETBALL HAWKEYE (a novel)

SINK IT! SINK IT! BECKY P. (a novel)

STAGE SNOOP (a novel)

THEY CALLED HIM SHIFTA (a novel)

© copyright by Richard W. Bohrer, 1986, 2001, 2005

All rights reserved.

No part of this manual may be reproduced without written permission  
of the publisher at Glory Press Books, P. O. Box 624, West Linn, OR, 97068

© copyright by Richard W. Bohrer, 1986, 2001, 2005

All rights reserved. No part of this manual may be reproduced without written permission  
of the publisher at Glory Press Books, P. O. Box 624, West Linn, OR, 97068

24 Ways to  
**Sell Your Homework:**  
Articles

LESSON 1	Master Your Library
LESSON 2	<b>Phrase Sentences</b> <b>Short sentences</b> <b>Puzzles</b>
LESSON 3	Simple humor A-B-C Sheer nonsense The parody
LESSON 4	Novelties Question and answer How-To Diary Tales Retold
LESSON 5	Conversational Chronological Narrative Chronological reverse Slice of Life
LESSON 6	Frame & flashback Plant and pick-up Series Cycle
LESSON 7	Cumulative Repetitive statement Catalog Surprise ending
LESSON 8	Alternating statement/quote Alternating action/reflection
LESSON 9	Double barrel Triple barrel
LESSON 10	Inverted pyramid Repeated pyramid
LESSON 11	Problem and solution Sunk and saved
LESSON 12	Biography Autobiography

## PERMISSIONS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank the following for their permission to let him use their material in this book:

The Associated Press for articles on pages 18, 19, 25, 31, 39, 40, 46, 51, 58, 59, 70, 75, 78, 79, 91, 96, 97, 114, 120, 122, 132, 155, 158, 161, 184.

Art Buchwald for his article, page 54. Used by permission.

M. Anthony Carr for his article, page 76. Used by permission.

Howard L. Chase, *Anguish Languish* (New York: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1956), p. 43.

Gene Coghlan for his article, page 44, reprinted from Harper's Magazine. Used by permission of the author.

Rosalie de Rosset for her article, page 205, reprinted from Christianity Today, Feb. 19, 1982.

Copyright © 1982 by Christianity Today Inc. Used by permission.

Sue Duffy for her article, page 186, reprinted from Moody Monthly, September, 1982. Used by permission.

Joyce Fowler for her articles, pages 36, 45, 60, 98. Used by permission.

Ann Grau for her article, page 88. Used by permission.

Don Holm for his article, page 30, reprinted from "The Oregonian" newspaper. Used by permission.

Bob Hope for his article, page 162. Reprinted with permission from the February, 1978 Reader's Digest. Copyright c 1978 by the Reader's Digest Assn., Inc.

Edgar C. James for his article, page 135, reprinted from Moody Monthly, October, 1980. Used by permission of the author.

Joella Knight (Barone) for her articles, pages 20, 32, 71. Used with permission.

Steve Leer for his article, page 50. Used with permission.

"Manchester Enterprise" of Manchester, Ky., for the article on page 27. Used with permission.

New York Times News Service for the article on page 72. Copyright ©1985 by the New York Times Company. Printed with permission.

Craig Nimmo with Robert Griffin, page 206. Used by permission of the author.

"The Oregonian" newspaper for the article, page 140. Used by permission.

John Peters for the article, page 38. Used with permission.

John Prin for the article on page 143, reprinted from "Moody Monthly," December, 1980. Used with permission of the author.

State University of Kansas for articles, pages 17, 23. With permission

James Stewart-Gordon for the article on page 169. Reprinted with permission from the October, 1973 Reader's Digest. Copyright © 1973 by the Reader's Digest Assn., Inc.

Mary Roelofs Stott for the article, page 108, reprinted with permission from the June, 1979 Reader's Digest. Copyright © 1979 by the Reader's Digest Assn., Inc.

Noreen Todd for her article on page 139. Used by permission of Guideposts Magazine, Inc.

Scott Tolley for his article, page 64. Used with permission of the author and "The News and Daily Advance," Lynchburg, Va.

Denise Tully for articles, pages 37, 115, 120. Used by permission.

United Press International for the article on page 150. Used with permission

# PHRASE SENTENCES

**We call it a “selling mindset.” You write with a mind to sell.**

That means you study your world, its people, its places, its words, its songs, its culture and its wants.

That means you use correct grammar, correct spelling, correct punctuation and you proofread what you write.

That means you send editors clean copy with no corrections. You include a cover letter identifying yourself and what you’ve written. You include a self-addressed stamped envelope if you want your submission back. You may include only a self-addressed postcard with a check-off list on the back for the editors to mark their decision and sign.

You put the appropriate postage on the envelope.

**Then you mail it!!!!!!**

You’d be surprised how many people query the editor and get a go-ahead, do their research, write their article and then never mail it. One of the great disappointments of my tenure as editor of a national magazine was the number of promising articles we never received.

Now, let’s roll up our sleeves and get to work.

The English language is so flexible that even sentences of one word length make sense.

This is not to say that you will ever write an article using staccato formation.

But this device and those to follow should give you ideas. Too many texts straitjacket writers into using the inverted pyramid—the topic sentence approach to articles. There are scores of ways to write. And buckshot is one of them.

**It’s more a method** than a structure. It depends on simple words and phrases to convey meaning. We strip away the couching words, the supporting phrases and run only with essential meanings. We go for what happened and when, for where it happened and why. We also pick up—happened to whom and happened how.

A string of pronouns won’t do for buckshot. What meaning after all will a miscellany of words like—

**I!**

**You!**

**He!**

**She!**

**It!**

**We!**

**You!**

**They!**

have for any kind of thinking reader?

**Conjunctions** won’t do it. Even adjectives and adverbs pale with this method. We’ve got to have nouns and verbs to pull it off.

Robert Southey in his poem, “The Cataracts at Lodore,” showed the power of buckshot. He didn’t put each item in a separate sentence. It might

have been more powerful if he had. But his command of participles answering the question “how” shows up brilliantly.

**How does the water come down at Lodore?**

**Here it comes sparkling,  
And there it lies darkling;  
Here smoking and frothing,  
Its tumult and wrath in,  
It hastens along, conflicting, and strong,  
How striking and raging,  
As if a war raging,  
Its caverns and rocks among.  
Rising and leaping,  
Sinking and creeping,  
Swelling and flinging,  
Showering and springing,  
and whisking,  
Spouting and frisking,  
Twining and twisting,  
Around and around,  
Collecting, disjecting,  
With endless rebound. . . .**

He carries this on in a frenzy of stanzas—two to a line, then three to a line and four to a line. We’re exhausted by the time he’s finished with his 150 participles.

**Receding and speeding,  
And shocking and rocking,  
And darting and parting,  
And threading and spreading . . .  
And falling and crawling and sprawling,  
And driving and riving and striving,  
And sprinkling and twinkling and wrinkling,**

**And sounding and bounding and rounding . . .**

**Delaying and straying and playing and spraying,**

**Advancing and prancing and glancing and dancing,**

**Recoiling, turmoiling and toiling and boiling,**

**And thumping and flumping, and bumping and jumping . . .**

**All at once and all o’er,**

**With a mighty uproar—**

**And this way the water comes**

**Down at Lodore.**

Southey used participles because they are describing words. They’re adjectives. Present participles always end in “ing.” So do gerunds.

Distinguishing participles that end in “ing” from gerunds is a snap. The word “participle” has an “a” in it. That “a” stands for “adjective” so participles are verb words that do the work of an adjective.

The word “gerund” has no “a” in it so gerunds do not do the work of an adjective. “Gerund” has an “n” in it and that “n” stands for “noun.” A gerund is a verb word that does the work of a noun. As a noun, a gerund most often will serve a sentence as the subject or direct object or the object of a preposition

“Participle” does not have an “n” in it so it does not do the work of a noun. It’s easy to keep the difference between these two kinds of verbals clear in your mind by remembering these two keys.

Participles must modify a noun or pronoun. When they come as the first word of a sentence, they will modify

the subject. If they don't, you have a dangling participle. When they appear in the middle of a sentence, they will modify the noun they follow.

**Now, why the** long quotation from Southey? Just to prove that verbs and verbals are picture-carrying words. The more transitive verbs you include in your writing, the stronger your writing style will be. The more visual it will become. It will have vigor and pace.

Transitive verbs carry action from the subject to the direct object as in "He kicked the bucket."

Intransitive verbs are our equal signs. The subject is the same as the noun following the verb. There are three kinds of intransitive verbs. 1) BE family verbs—be, is, am, are, was, were, being, been; 2) sense verbs—look, smell, taste, feel, sound; and 3) what I call BRAGS verbs, taken from the first letter of each—become, remain, appear, grow, seem.

**The test** of intransitive verbs is the word GOOD. If GOOD makes sense when you say the verb, it is intransitive. "Our dinner smells good. It is good. It tastes good. It seems good. It was good. It became good. It remained good. It appeared good."

Readers love action because it makes your article move. In fact, a good way to measure the vigor of your own writing style is to count out 100 words and box them (from anywhere in an article you've written).

Then count up your verbs, helping verbs and verbals (participles, gerunds, infinitives—count the "to" in front of

the infinitive as part of the infinitive—the two are counted as one word) and divide the total into 100. That will give you your verb ratio.

If you have 20 and you divide 20 into 100, that tells you that you have one verb to every five words. Five is okay. Four is good. Three is sensational.

**In just** the same way, count the verbs of being. These are the weak sisters of the English language. They tell what merely is—the state of being.

Since they just tell what is, their heavy use slows the pace of prose and makes it plod.

Now, back to buckshot, like a dinner of dill pickles—enough is enough. Many writers use one or two one-word sentences together in an article.

Few, fortunately, go Southey's direction. But, occasionally, as an interesting device, buckshot will serve you as an effective change of pace.

A Kansas State University yearbook a dozen years ago featured the buckshot method in its unsigned write-up of a concert:

**SATURDAY NIGHT  
WITH 'CHICAGO':  
GOOD VIBES**

**Saturday night. Ahearn Field house. Throngs of people. Closed doors. No lights. Hum of conversation. Expectation. Excitement. Impatience.**

**Lights flare. Yells. Hope. Doors open. Pushing. Shoving. Frenzy. Indignation.**

**Crowd channeled through two doors. Then one. Emerge under seats. Scrambling. Hurrying. Confusion.**

**Everyone seated. Frisbee slices air. Laughter. Good vibes. Near misses.**

**Eight o'clock. Lights dim. Shadows to right of stage. Shadows on stage. Tension. Applause.**

**"Ladies and gentlemen. Kansas State University presents an evening with CHICAGO!"**

**Hysteria. Roars of approval. Whistles. First song. New. Surprise. Very good. Jazz elements.**

**More new songs. Surprisingly good. Full sound. Good equipment. Play all their hits.**

**Chicago leave stage.**

**Thunderous applause. Screams of "MORE!" Stomping of feet. Whistles. Hysteria. Joy. Glee. Happiness.**

**Fifteen minutes of desperate shouting and clapping. Chicago return. "25 or 6 to 4." Roaring excitement. Really together. Everybody on their feet. Dancing. Clapping.**

**Pounding feet to rhythm. Long solo by Kath. Genuine excitement. Chicago leaves for last time.**

**People return home. Happiness. Satisfaction. A memorable concert?**

**Yes.**

**Now, look back.** Not all the entries were single words.

Not all were verbs.

We had a good mix, a relaxed style, picture words and an interesting pattern or structure to catch our fancy.

Buckshot helps a reader relive an experience.

Try it out on the news story below. You may want to begin your version at the point four years ago when Mrs. Hutchinson bought her *fatsia japonica* or you might wish to begin with her frantic phone call or with the trip by truck.

Use a succession of very short sentences and one-word strokes. If you begin in the middle of the story or at the end, flash back to give the history of the problem once you've gotten your story going. Notice that in the sample above, few verbs appear. We have single nouns, prepositional phrases, adjectives.

## **Park Aides Grab Fatsia To Stop Home Takeover**

LONDON (AP) – Margarete Hutchinson, overwhelmed by her *fatsia*, has evicted it with the help of the park department. And no wonder.

Four years ago, she bought a small plant in a pot and put it in the living room of her home on the outskirts of Leeds.

Little did she know it was a *fatsia japonica*, a member of the *arralla elata* family which grows five feet a year on a pint of water a day.

Mrs. Hutchinson finally capitulated Monday. She called the park department and George Reed came out to look at the monstrous plant, now 17 feet long and threatening to take over the house.

Reed, Mrs. Hutchinson and her daughter Monica deployed themselves and gradually coaxed the vine out the window. With one on either end and the third in the middle, they got it onto a truck.

Off went the *fatsia*, its tail snapping and waving in traffic like a trapped scorpion. Its home now is Coronation House, the public green house where curators said it could grow as tall as it wants.

“It was a friend of the family, but it had to go,” Mrs. Hutchinson said.

“I’m happy it has been given a place of honor. It is like a monument. It would have been sinister if we had let it run around the bedrooms, but we shall miss it. It was part of the family.”

Next, your editor has called you in and handed you the following story about a building collapse in Bombay.

He wants a realistic story—one that readers will clip out and keep.

He wants the narration to be chronological, but he wants more than that.

He wants the reader to feel he is there.

You, being the bright person you are, walk up and down in your office pondering what you will do. Finally, you decide that you will use the buckshot method.

You read the story carefully, then you begin.

The story goes like this:

## Printing press vibrations may have caused collapse

**BOMBAY, India (AP) – A crowded slum tenement collapsed while the residents slept early Tuesday, killing at least 52 people and injuring 56, police reported.**

“People living on the upper floors were flung down half asleep on their mattresses. They reached the ground either dead or unconscious,” said a man who lives across the street and would not give his name.

A police spokesman said 18 children were among the dead. Hospitals said most of the injured were in serious condition.

The three-story building crumbled at 4 a.m. in the rain of India’s monsoon season, and firemen were still combing the rubble hours later for 25 people who were feared trapped beneath it.

Police said about 250 people lived in the building in a predominantly Moslem neighborhood of central Bombay, with families of 10 or more crowded into each of its 22 rooms. Most of the men were poor laborers.

City officials said the cause of the collapse had not been determined, but the tenement’s foundations may have been weakened by vibrations from a printing press and power loom on the ground floor.

“I could feel the ground trembling when I saw the building falling down,” said Ramesh Jadhav, who lives nearby. “My eyes filled with

dust and I heard people screaming for help.”

“I heard a loud crash,” said Farida Khan, a school teacher living across the street. “I got up and saw a cloud of rubble and heard loud screams.”

Neighborhood residents said the building was at least 80 years old and in need of repair. Bombay officials said, however, that city engineers inspected it last week and declared it safe for habitation.

Residents of a similar tenement two buildings away were ordered to move out of it recently because of the danger of collapse.

They refused, saying they had nowhere else to go.

Housing is scarce in this western port city of 9 million.

Hundreds of thousands of people live on the pavements and millions in squalid slums without sanitation.

Mayor Chhagan Bhujbal said the city would provide compensation of 100,000 rupees (\$8,330) to be shared by the families of those killed.

**You might** wish to emphasize the rain and show, by referring to it again and again, how incessant and oppressive it was.

Or you might wish to pick up another theme as Joella Knight, a Liberty University student of mine, did on this assignment:

## 56 Injured, 52 Dead

**BOMBAY—4 a.m. Tuesday. Slum collapses. Loud crash. Screams. Rubble. Dust.**

**56 injured. 52 dead.**

**Monsoon. Mattresses. Rubble. 18 dead children. Serious injuries. 25 missing.**

**Moslem neighborhood. Families of ten. Crowded. Poor. Three stories.**

**56 injured. 52 dead.**

**Printing press vibrations. Power loom vibrations. Ground floor. Weakened foundations.**

**80 years old. Run-down. “Safe,” say officials.**

**56 injured. 52 dead.**

**Scarce housing. 9 million people. Filth. Unsafe slums. Nowhere to go.**

**100,000 rupees. \$8,330. Families of deceased. Compensation.**

**56 injured. 52 dead.**

**Her recurring** refrain presses home the ultimate cost of such a tragedy. This is a good device to use when the news of the event has already covered every newspaper’s front page. It’s a way of revitalizing old news. The emphasis of repeated words gets a new message across to the reader and affords the writer an opportunity to stress what he feels is the most important aspect of the incident.

**This story**, too, could begin anywhere. You could start, perhaps, with the unending rumble of the loom and printing press or with the declaration by officials that the building is safe or,

as mentioned, with the rain.

Learn the fiction techniques of capitalizing on inherent drama, of building suspense, of delaying the climax to the last possible moment. The buckshot method makes the story unforgettable.

Now, it's not enough to know a new technique. Technique. Schmecknique. You have got to put it to use.

**Think through** your life. How could buckshot be useful to you in conveying to a reader an impression you have of something or a memory.

What about the time the family drove to Grandma's house on a winter day. She was in her kitchen rolling doughnuts in sugar. Hot, spicy doughnuts! The aroma filled the house and your mouth watered. She had made them for you and you could have all you wanted.

What did you think? How did you feel? What was the taste? How many did you eat?

**Could this** be told in buckshot?

Or you wanted to perform. You loved to have people watch you and then praise you when you finished. Mother had just brought you to Grandma's house, and you were going to spend two summer weeks with your grandparents all by yourself. You'd been looking forward to this for months.

Best of all, there's an amateur hour in a restaurant up the road. You sign up to sing, "One Night of Love," a song you had memorized having, at age ten, no idea of the implications of the words. The organizers keep you wait-

ing, and they want you back in two hours.

You go home for supper but you're late. Grampa tells Gramma to tell your mother to tell you that you can't stay. You were late to dinner. He's not going to have you there if you can't even come to meals on time.

You're destroyed.

Can you tell this in buckshot?

We all have stories deep inside. We want to get them out. These are stories your children need to know, stories your friends need to know, stories the world needs to know. Each one of us is so unique; why, no two of us are alike. There never has been and never will be again on this earth a duplicate of you.

As we work through these techniques, begin drawing out your memories. Begin practicing putting them in words—in buckshot, in phrases, in short sentences, in question and answer sequences, in diary form and in chronological narrative.

Do the exercises to prime your pump. Then start to work on stories of your own. All you need is one word at a time.

Let's put those words to good use.

Is there a market for buckshot?

Writers and editors of business publications and house organs are always on the lookout for clever articles that come to them with a different twist or technique. They like them as fillers because they don't want to print a half column of white space.

Try something about the cleaning crew that comes on at night or about a conversation between two secretaries

that are trying to talk about the boss or a handsome co-worker while putting on their lipstick.

Is there a more substantial, higher paying market for buckshot?

Probably not, unless you are telling a story for children. It never hurts to try a children's book editor if you have a fresh and appealing idea. Children's magazines would be easier to sell to. Most readers have advanced beyond buckshot, actually—except the little ones.

Use buckshot to get you started writing professionally.

Now we'll take a moment for a little review of punctuation. It's easy.

## COMMA

*The editor in me insists that I include some punctuation rules. Professional writers know how to use commas and semicolons. You must, too.*

The COMMA is used:

- \* To show omissions: **My children live in Oregon; my mother, California.**
- \* To separate city from state: **West Linn, Oregon**
- \* To separate degrees and titles that follow names: **John Jones, M.D.**
- \* To separate day of month from year: **January 1, 2025**
- \* To separate words that otherwise might be misread: **After eating, Grampa lies down for a nap.**
- \* To set off quotations in a sentence: **“Come unto Me,” Jesus said, “and I will give you rest.”** Com-

mas and periods go inside quotes—almost always. They don't when a highlighted last word or phrase or quote is part of its sentence. **He told me to “Come”.**

- \* To set off contrasting words or phrases: Christ, not Satan, gives light and life.
- \* To set off a name or term in direct address: **Janice, come home.**

The **SEMICOLON** is used:

- \* To separate items in a series when they are long or contain internal punctuation: **He is currently studying Greek, which is difficult; eschatology, which he enjoys; and journalism, which is his favorite subject.**
- \* To separate independent clauses when the second clause is introduced by such transitional phrases as: **on the other hand, in other words, at the same time.**
- \* To separate independent clauses when the second clause is introduced by an adverbial conjunction (**therefore, accordingly, consequently, however, moreover, indeed, further, hence**). Sometimes these occur internally in a sentence in a parenthetical position and then they are set off on both sides by commas: **Elsie, however, won the prize.**
- \* To separate independent clauses connected by coordinating conjunctions (and, but, or, nor, for) if one or more of the clauses contains a comma or commas: **William**

wanted to become a realtor; but he learned from Joel, who had been in business many years, that it wasn't easy.

- \* To separate closely related independent clauses not connected by a coordinating conjunction: **I can't eat citrus; it gives me a rash.**

Note: This is what happens when an editor has been burned by manuscripts from writers who don't know their grammar. As a result, he inserts grammar rules and tricks and practice at every opportunity. Forgive him. But know that it is good for you.

## ELLIPSES

With ellipses we move from *staccato* to *legato*.

Only here we put an ellipsis (. . .) between sentences rather than a period. The secret is to keep up a stream of consciousness kind of narrative, using short sentences and half-sentences.

**Here, again,** ellipsis is a method, not a structure. We adapt it to other structures and merely use this kind of sentence fragment and punctuation to tell our story.

Another article in that Kansas State University yearbook followed a student through the registration lines and let the ellipsis method show the passage of time as well as the unity inside the event. So, the structure is chronological; the method, this:

**Well, here I go again . . . one more semester . . . there's the line . . .**

stretching outside . . . wait, wait, wait, wait . . . boy, it's finally moving . . . one inch every thirty minutes . . . wait . . . wait . . . wait.

**There's the door . . . finally . . . my ID? You mean you have to see my ID? . . . hmmm . . . it's here somewhere . . . I think . . . there . . . ah, I got past the doors . . .**

**Now, let's see . . . I should be in line over there . . . I think . . . yes, I'm a Gre-Gol . . . boy, it's already 10:30 and I'm still in this stupid line . . . getting closer to the table . . . what? oh, yeah, my ID . . . here . . . fill out these cards? but there's holes punched all over them . . . how can I write my name in a bunch of punched holes . . . I sign here . . . sign here . . . sign here . . . only 20 more places to fill in my name . . . now, check for correct facts. . . .**

**Well, the name is right . . . the address is right . . . but, I am not a freshman . . . this is the fifth semester they have me classified as a freshman . . . they'll just have to get used to the idea that I'm a second semester sophomore now . . .**

**Questions, questions, questions, questions . . . member of minority? . . . Do I live in a basement? . . . live in a dorm? . . . yes, both . . . How many roommates . . . Hmmm, there are six mice . . . and 396 crickets . . . not bad considering some kids are living in tents . . .**

**Where go next? . . . I follow the signs . . . pink cards here . . . and blue cards here . . . purple sheets**

here . . . go to next table, please . . . which one is that? . . . go—ah, I thought I was finished . . . yuk . . . it sure is hot in here . . . and dusty . . . more lines . . .

Ahh . . . free at last . . . and in record time, too . . . two hours, forty-two minutes and ten seconds . . . Funny thing is, no matter how many times I do this, I never get used to it . . .

Registration . . . frustration . . . frugistration.

Some writers use this method to scour out of their mind everything they know about a subject prior to writing a major article on it. They may dictate into a recorder or write in longhand or type on their computer. They don't stop to edit and they don't care if they misspell words. They record everything they know about the topic—everything. They ask themselves questions and then answer, writing those answers in the ellipses method.

When they're done, they pick through the rubble to find the gems, the direction signs, the holes. They may find an outline already there. More than likely, they'll realize what they don't know and what direction they need to go to get the information they need.

But ellipsis has an advantage over buckshot in that it's more fluent. It's more presentable in article form because the reader doesn't have to insert as much material of his own as he makes connections between each item. But he gets the effect of buckshot.

We can capitalize on the impression we want the reader to get, and we don't have to worry about complete sentences when we use ellipses. And the three periods create a sense of movement.

They tell the reader there is more to come and to keep reading.

But you as the writer must be careful. Don't carry this on too long. The ellipsis method does create a dramatic effect, but too much of it is deadening.

It can express shock. It can (as in the sample given) condense a long period of time (two hours, forty-two minutes and ten seconds) into no more than a page in length.

It can convey reflection.

It can handle fast pace—games, accidents, warfare. It's marvelously adaptable.

It will handle lists, personal opinion pieces, poetic articles, conversation pieces, fact series, catalog, some aspects of alternating statement and quote, you-are-there and verse.

Use the exercises that follow to practice this method. It's a good one, especially for writers who are just beginning to learn the craft.

It's important to remember when you use the ellipsis method that you are going to tell the whole story. That doesn't mean you will use all the words you would have used if you were telling it in complete sentences. But it does mean your story will have a beginning, a middle and an end.

But, because you are doing feature writing, you don't have to begin at the

point of time used in your source article.

**You can begin** at the beginning and go through time. You can begin at the end and return to the beginning in a reverse chronology.

Or you can begin near a climax and flash back to pick up the beginning of the chronology.

See what you can do on this short piece:

## Traveling Spiders Infesting Detroit

**DETROIT (AP) – Poisonous black widow spiders have been riding the rails and highways from a plastics plant in Mexico to a Ford plant in Michigan where they pop out of parts on assembly lines and scare workers.**

**At least two dozen black widows have been found since June 25 in dashboard parts sent to a Ford Motor Co. plastics plant in Saline, Mich., United Auto Workers union officials said Tuesday.**

**“There has been no injury as a result of any of this, but it obviously is thoroughly disquieting,” Ford spokesman William Selover said.**

**“The sorting racks (holding the parts) apparently have hollow tubing and the suspicion is that these spiders were hitchhiking in the tubing,” he said.**

**Black widows are about the size of a grape and are characterized by a red hourglass shape on their bellies,**

**according to H. D. Cameron, arachnid curator at the University of Michigan’s Zoology Museum in Ann Arbor.**

**The spiders’ bites usually aren’t deadly, but symptoms include chills, fever, sweating, abdominal cramps, vomiting and pain.**

**“If you are bitten by a black widow, you will know it,” Cameron said.**

**Ford’s efforts to stop the unwanted immigrants have included ringing its 175-square-foot Carplastics Plant in Monterrey, Mexico, with a three-foot-wide strip of insecticide, fumigating racks in Monterrey and Saline, hand inspecting the dashboard parts and torching the racks to burn out the spiders.**

And this one:

## GIs Fall Victim To ‘Tea’ Racket

**HONG KONG (AP) – GIs who don’t know much more about marijuana than one of its nicknames have become victims of a racket police find tough to break. Con men approach unwary visiting soldiers in a secretive manner, offering “tea” at a special price—usually \$6-\$10.**

**Thinking he is getting marijuana, the victim ends up with genuine Chinese tea worth about 11 cents. Police have picked up suspects carrying 15 to 20 packages of tea, but**

**possession of tea isn't against the law.**

**Now, it's not** enough to know new methodology. You've learned in this chapter to work with phrases. You don't even have to be literate—though it helps.

What memory will you work with this time?

Perhaps your mother cooked a big family dinner for a special occasion—an anniversary or birthday, Christmas or Thanksgiving. Everyone was coming—cousins, aunts, uncles, special friends. The turkey was huge and the smells were terrific.

You hardly knew there were so many vegetables and salads, and there were lots of big, black olives—your favorite. And all during dinner you save those olives. You're going to make them last and last and last.

**And your** Aunt Patty, sitting next to you, says, "Oh, you don't like olives?" and she plucks them off your plate. Before you can utter a word, she puts the pits back where the olives had been.

Tell how you felt, tell what you did, tell what you said, tell the whole story.

This kind of narrative is enhanced by the disappointment at the end. You have contrast here in the joy of life all around you and an insignificant grievance that you magnify because all the rest of the olives are gone and you've had none.

Phrases can tell that kind of story. Your challenge will be to tell the things you saw and heard through nine-

year-old eyes. Phrases will be a kind of nine-year-old language, perhaps.

**Now, realize,** these stories from your heart don't flutter out into the open and arrange themselves neatly on paper. They take thought and deliberation. Some people compose their stories in their mind before they put a word on paper. Others put down and cross out and erase and rewrite. There is no right way to write—or wrong way. There's just your way. Whatever you do is right.

Remember that.

Remember also, you're to write your stories, not mine.

**Buy a binder** notebook and fill it with blank pages. Or buy a large bound book of blank pages and make it your book of memories. How your children and grandchildren will treasure it. Or, if you are now a child, think of the pleasure you'll bring your parents and grandparents when you show them you've written a book.

Buckshot and ellipsis are methods professional writers use. You use them, too.

## GRAMMAR

**Item:** A verb agrees with its subject in number. Don't be fooled by the noun that sits next to the verb. That noun may have been tackled by a preposition and taken out of play.

*The pace of those days was hectic.*

Although the noun in front of the verb is plural, it cannot make the verb plural. Why? Because it is not the sub-

ject. Ask **what?** was hectic. The answer is pace. Days has been tackled by the preposition of and cannot be the subject.

**Item:** Participles and gerunds and infinitives (verbals) are part verb and can have direct objects. The noun following them, that makes sense when you ask **whom?** or **what?** after you say the verbal word, is its direct object.

**Now, does anyone buy phrase sentences?**

There's always a market. Phrase sentences cut to the heart of the action with no waste of words. Many publications like to print short fillers and welcome cleverly written shorts.

A secret to bear in mind: Editors like seasonal material, especially fillers short enough to fill space when a column of type falls short. Remember, editors work six to seven months ahead. They are working on Christmas in May-June-July.

Each state has at least one magazine going and many local newspapers. Editors like homespun stories about towns and villages upstate and down, especially if they touch a nostalgic chord in the reader's heart.

Buckshot and ellipses create punchy, crisp stories. Use this method to sell your homework. If one editor refuses it, send it to another. If one editor buys it, wait till after publication and send it to another farther away. This time you sell "Second American rights" because you already sold the First. This tells the editor the piece has been printed before. You earn a little less, but at least

you earn.

**Remember** to keep records of what you send where. Keep a record of costs of paper, stamps, computer. These costs are tax deductible when once you mail your articles and try to sell.

Invest in "The Writer's Market" volume from Writer's Digest Books. You'll find a ton on markets of every description.

Next:

## SHORT SENTENCES.

### Selling writers write clearly.

A rule of knowledge says you show you've mastered your specialty when you can teach it so primaries can understand it.

Your being able to state in short sentences what you know is basic in learning how to write well.

It is essential at the beginning of a course on writing technique to stress basic writing. It is the foundation on which all writing stands.

It was good enough for McGuffey and it's good enough for us.

**Generations** have grown up reading short sentences in the funny papers, short enough for a beginner to read and compelling enough to keep us all interested.

Generations also grew up learning to read with the McGuffey readers that presented stories about Dick and Jane.

You've practiced writing words-only with the buckshot method. Then you practiced writing phrases with the ellipsis method. The next step is writing

in short sentences—McGuffey reader style.

And, here again, if not carried to an extreme, a string of short sentences can add excitement to a narrative. Or, alone, they can serve humor as no other device can.

A **stringer** (a volunteer writer who reports neighborhood news to a local newspaper—anyone can be one by volunteering) for the *Manchester Enterprise*, a newspaper in Manchester, Kentucky, years ago captured a great deal of attention for her rural community by writing up its happenings in simple sentences and sending them to the newspaper. The editors had the sense to print them as she wrote them:

Her articles won wide interest.

## Hima News

Printed as Written  
By Myrtle Shoupe

**Mr. Simon Hall is sick at his home and in need of food. Please help the people and God will bless you. The Bible says be good to a man when he is down and Mr. Hall is down.**

**Aunt Mollie Curry who has been so sick is doing better at her home by the help of the Lord. The good Lord is keeping Aunt Mollie living for some cause.**

**Mr. Daw Owens got married again Saturday. Hope him the best luck in the world but if they are like the rest of people get married, their love will change. It will be one day honey and next day pie and the next day get out of here.**

**My mother had a birthday the 18th day of this month and she was 73 years old. I am glad the good Lord let her live that long and hope he lets her live to be real old. My mother is my best friend. Everybody ought to love their mother best of anybody.**

**Short sentences** are clean, direct, to the point. Most of Myrtle's sentences consist of subject/verb/direct object combinations or subject/ verb/ prepositional phrase.

Joan Mills wrote a remarkable example of this style. It appeared in "The Berkshire Eagle" and was subsequently picked up by Reader's Digest and published in its September 1967 issue. Joan called it, "See Mother Run!"

She began it this way:

**See Mother. Mother is sleeping.**

**"Jump up, Mother," says Father.**

**"Jump up! Today is the first day of school!"**

We see Mother getting out of bed. Her eyes open reluctantly and, when she appears, her slippers are on the wrong feet. She gropes with difficulty for the bedroom door.

All of this is told in simple sentences in the style of Dick and Jane.

Mother calls the children and tells them it's the first day of school. They must get ready for the big yellow school bus. She offers them each a good breakfast and one after another they say, "**Euchh!**"

They tell her they prefer their own

kind of breakfast, which they describe. Mother says, “**Euchh!**”

Father appears, dressed for work. He has no money and neither does Mother. The children each give him a dollar and he goes off, grateful that he is not Mother.

She struggles to get the children ready—without much success. She finally reaches the end of her rope. **See Mother’s hair stand up.**

The yellow bus appears and the children go berserk. Once aboard, they ignore their mother. All the children on the bus are yelling and jumping up and down. Mother goes back in the house as the bus pulls away. The house is a mess, but she stops for a cup of coffee. She sits and says nothing, does nothing, thinks nothing.

The article ends:

**Mother just sits and smiles. Why is Mother smiling?**

**The article** draws obvious charm from the fact that it is a parody of the very familiar Dick-and-Jane story. It also appeals to readers because it tells a story we all know, a story we’ve all lived through. It has personal appeal because of its universality. It’s full of nouns and verbs, and it’s all about the way we live.

**Now, it’s not enough** to know a new technique.

Exercise one for this chapter is for you to write that same story, filling in all the details that were summarized. Borrow from your own upbringing, if you wish. But each sentence should be

a simple sentence in the structure already given.

On occasion, you may depart from that if there is no other way you can word a given sentence. But keep the story simple in language and simple in tone.

Time out for grammar. In a simple sentence, all of the subject does all of the verb. *Jack went up a hill. Jack and Jill went up a hill. Jack, Jill, Tom, Dick, Harry, ran, jumped, skipped, hopped up the hill.* All of these are simple sentences because every subject does every verb.

When you put two simple sentences into one, you have a compound sentence. If “and, but, or, nor, for” are your connecting words, you put a comma in front of the connector. If no connector, put a semicolon.

**But remember**, never separate two subjects (Jack and Jill) or two verbs (ran and jumped) or two direct objects (kicked the bucket and the mop) or two prepositional phrases (ran down the road and up the hill) with a comma. Actually, you don’t separate with a comma two of any kind of word performing the same function in the same sentence. Three, yes; two, no.

You create a complex sentence when you put an adjective clause and/or an adverb clause and/or a noun clause in your simple sentence.

You create a compound-complex sentence when you put one or more clauses in one or both sides of your compound sentence.

**If all this** grammar is over your

head, beyond or beneath your interest, you might wish to browse in your library or local bookstore for one of many textbooks or workbooks that would help you sharpen your skills.

Now, in your article, tell about your first day of school—if you can remember.

Or write about your first day in a new school or your last day in a school you moved away from.

You might begin when you woke up in the morning or when you got off the school bus. If you walked or rode your bike, begin as you leave for school.

**Tell who** you saw and what you said.

Be careful here.

My sixth grade teacher rented a room in the house next door. I would walk beside her to and from school and tell her jokes my friends had told me. Some of them (and I remember them to this day) were far more mature than I was. I could never understand why people laughed when I told them.

I saw nothing funny. But I loved to make people laugh. Think how much fun I could have, retelling how I shocked Miss Firth.

**Who did** you shock? Who were your special friends? What can YOU tell about your childhood by using short, short sentences

Remember, you are to tell a story with a beginning, a middle and an end. “Slice of life” is nice, but we like stories with a point.

Choose a memory that ends with an ice cream cone or one that ends with a spanking. Let us see what you were

really like. Think hard and try to recall things exactly as they were.

**What was** the ice box like, for instance. Did you call it an ice box? Or a fridgidaire? What did it smell like?

What kitchen memories do you have? You don’t have to write about a day at school when you do this exercise, but do choose something from your early days.

Choose anything you want, but keep those sentences short—as if you were McGuffey.

For your exercise two, use this story of grown-up girls about to graduate from beauty college. They go to a city park for a final fling—a water fight. The park covers an extinct volcano in the heart of the city. Portland, Oregon is the only city in the country with a volcano inside city limits.

Now, retell the following story in simple sentences and recapture the fun it offers as a gaggle of giddy girls breaks loose and celebrates graduation with a final foofaraw (Webster: A to-do over nothing).

## Girls Taunt Foes— ‘You’re All Wet!’

By DON HOLM

War (harmless) Correspondent

**SOMEWHERE EAST OF THE RIVER (Special) – The night hung hot and humid over the city. The afterglow from the setting sun flared over the tops of the West Hills in the distance like a blazing forest fire.**

Here on the high ground, on Hill 972 (otherwise known as Mt. Tabor), darkness already obscured the terrain. Only the tall, park-like fir trees stood out against the horizon.

In the No Man's Land between the extinct volcano crater and the Water bureau's reservoir, there was no movement – no sound except an occasional giggle from a parked auto.

Truly it was a night made for lovers, not for fighters.

#### Civil War Breaks Out

Suddenly sounds of battle exploded from a parking lot as enemy patrols made contact. With Rebel yells and Yankee taunts, the Civil War broke out again amid bursting balloon bombs and squirt guns charged with water. The action raged for the better part of an hour.

Casualties included water-soaked sweat shirts, muddied slippers, wringing-wet coiffures, runny noses, broken fingernails, torn blouses, smeared lipstick, fractured dignities, and other mishaps of less serious nature.

When the hostilities ceased, the combatants were identified as girl-type students of (censored) Beauty College. They weren't mad at each other. They just decided that warfare might be a good way to spend a hot night in the park to celebrate their impending graduation—and cool off at the same time.

#### Shades of the Wehrmacht

So they organized themselves into the North and the South and declared war – Civil war, a kind of

Civil War anyway, since it was brother against brother, er, sister against sister, er something. They scrounged balloons (for water bombs), water pistols and the more sophisticated water Bren guns, war surplus helmets (including some that saw service in the Wehrmacht), bandages and Mercurochrome.

It was the first time in the history of warfare that the combatants showed up for battle already bandaged before they were wounded.

It also proved another axiom: Never give a gal a water gun or she'll use it on you.

It was like Richmond all over again, but this time Grant was the victim (one of the casualties said she was a graduate of Grant High).

And, for the first time in the history of Mt. Tabor Park, it was instant girls—just add water.

It was, after all, a hot night in the city; and all that was needed was a splendid little war.

Is there a market for simple sentences? There's more interest among editors for this than for buckshot and ellipsis. But don't let your sentences sound too choppy. The secret? Vary sentence beginnings and use contractions. Sometimes begin with the subject. Sometimes begin with one or more prepositional phrases.

Clara Peller's famous line (did you ever see her on TV?), "Where's the beef?" lends itself to this kind of treatment. Retell her adventure given in the

news story that follows. Use short sentences. Begin with her discovery and take us to a climax. Bonus: You get points for each time you have her ask her famous question.

## Beef Lady Knows 'Where's the Beef'

**CHICAGO (AP) - Clara Peller, the "where's the beef" lady, met the media Friday and proved to be as feisty and outspoken in real life as in her ubiquitous television commercial for Wendy's hamburgers.**

**Mrs. Peller and her elderly cohorts in the \$11 million ad campaign, Elizabeth Shaw and Mildred Lane, worked Friday on a sequel to the Wendy's hamburger ad that has skyrocketed them to commercial stardom. The follow-up ad is to be aired next month.**

**Josef Sedelmaier, who makes the commercials, shot a portion of the new ad for the benefit of reporters who gathered to meet Mrs. Peller.**

**"Look disgusted," Mr. Sedelmaier told Mrs. Peller. "Look really disgusted."**

**She complied, scrunching up her wrinkled face, shaking her head and rolling her eyes. The media roared.**

**Friday's shoot was a sequel to a TV ad where Mrs. Peller and the other two actresses contemplate a tiny Brand X burger couched in a "big fluffy bun." As the other two marvel at the big bun, Mrs. Peller**

**rips out her signature line, "Where's the beef?"**

**During breaks, the 4-foot-11 Mrs. Peller exchanged one-liners with reporters.**

**How did she get into the business?**

**"I've got a nice personality."**

**Is she making a lot of money?**

**"I don't remember."**

**What does she think of her new career?**

**"I think it's a lot of fun."**

**One reporter asked her age.**

**"Sixty-four," she shot back. While her real age is a secret, a Sedelmaier spokeswoman said Mrs. Peller was in her 80s.**

**"Why do you have to know how old people are?" Mrs. Peller asked the reporter. "It's what they can do, not how old they are."**

**The question of age and Wendy's treatment of senior citizens has drawn criticism from the Michigan Commission on Services to the Aging, which voted to ask the Columbus, Ohio, company to withdraw the ad. A panel member said commissioners "felt the commercial is a discredit to senior citizens."**

**William Welter, executive vice president for Wendy's International Inc., disputed that claim.**

**"I don't think anything is further from the truth," he said, adding that he believes the commercial shows older people speaking up for themselves.**

**The three elderly stars of the commercial agreed.**

**“We’re enjoying life and making money,” said Mrs. Shaw.**

**Sedelmaier “discovered” Mrs. Peller about eight years ago when he needed a manicurist to serve as an extra in one of his commercials. An employee ran to a nearby beauty shop and found Mrs. Peller for the off-camera role.**

**“She looked up at me with that smile,” said Sedelmaier, reminiscing.**

**He said Mrs. Peller’s success was unprecedented among his commercial stars. There are Clara Peller fan clubs, look-alike and sound-alike contests, and Clara Peller T-shirts.**

**But not everyone knows her.**

**Returning from a recent visit to Mexico, she was detained at the border by immigration officials because of a minor paperwork snafu.**

**“Just because I didn’t fill out some card, they wouldn’t let me back in,” she said. “So I said, ‘You don’t know who you’re holding. You’re holding a star!’”**

Joella Knight wrote this assignment in the following fashion:

**See Clara. Clara is a nice, old lady. She is working in a beauty shop. Clara is smiling. See Clara smile.**

**“Hello, Clara,” says Josef.**

**“Hello, Josef,” says Clara. Josef and Clara are friends.**

**“Would you like to work at my office today?” says Josef.**

**“Oh, yes!” says Clara. “Will I be on TV?”**

**“Yes,” says Josef.**

**Clara likes to work with Josef. Clara does get to be on TV when she works with Josef.**

**One day, Josef asked Clara, “Would you like to be a star?”**

**“Oh, yes, Josef! I would like to be a star,” said Clara.**

**“If you want to be a star,” said Josef, “you must not smile. You must frown.”**

**Clara frowned. “But I like to smile.”**

**“Not if you want to be a funny star. You must frown,” said Josef. “I will give you a tiny little hamburger with a big fluffy bun and you must frown and say, ‘Where’s the beef?’”**

**Clara frowned and frowned. “Where’s the beef?” Clara said. Clara asked for the beef all day long. Everyone laughed. “Where’s the beef?”**

**Clara is a star.**

**Clara is smiling now.**

**See Clara smile.**

**See Clara smile all the way to the bank.**

Joella’s final line is a kind of punch line. It gives the article a point and finality and humor.

You can use this style to express whimsy, to poke fun, to heighten nostalgia and to write stories for beginning readers. Many picture books sell because the stories end just like this.

**You can add fun to any human interest story by retelling it in short kindergarten sentences. But, if you write about your family or friends, be sure**

you don't make them look foolish. Of course, you could always change their names in your story.

Study the technique of writing conversation and the use of quotation marks and what we call "tags" in the writing business. Sometimes in Joella's story she interrupts the conversation to add the "Josef said" that tells who is talking: **"If you want to be a star," said Josef, "you must not smile."**

Sometimes we know who is talking because the name of the person who is going to talk comes at the beginning of the sentence: **Clara frowned. "But I like to smile."**

Sometimes, it comes at the end of the sentence: **"Oh, yes, Josef! I would like to be a star," said Clara.**

When we want the conversation to look like it's happening now, we use present tense verbs in the tags: **"Oh, yes!" says Clara. "Will I be on TV?"**

**"Yes," says Josef.**

The tense of the verb changed when Joella mentioned a particular day in the past: **One day, Josef asked Clara, "Would you like to be a star?"**

Do use "said" and "asked." Don't use all the 200 other ways of writing "said." They call attention to themselves when all we want is to know who is talking and what is being said.

Now there is another dimension to the non-fiction short sentence article, and that is the true story children's book for beginning readers.

**A danger here** is that many writers "write down" to children, forgetting that you can tell a straightforward story

in simple terms.

Study your local newspaper for interesting feature stories. Retell them in simple sentences, softening any elements that might offend or frighten young ones.

A story that appeared in a local paper delivered to my home would have to be softened. Two salmon fishermen fishing in the ocean near Seaside, Oregon, leaped when a giant sea lion shot out of the water beside their boat. He sank down, bumped the boat several times and shot up again on the other side.

**The men** had caught three salmon, but the bull had something else in mind. A killer whale's fin knifed through the water 35 feet away.

When the sea lion grabbed the motor in his teeth and began pulling himself up, the fishermen had a choice.

Let the 1,000 pound beast come on board or shake him off by gunning the motor.

In your story for kids, you let Rufus come in. And here you leave non-fiction for a happier ending than happened in real life.

But by telling the story simply, you have brought real life to child readers.

**Sports events**, races, contests, fairs, barber shops, car lots, junk yards, service stations, restaurants, farewells—the list could go on and on—offer you stories you can retell in simple terms. Change the names of the participants, of course. But newspapers can be a fertile source for story ideas for you.

For home schooling moms, this creates a means of interesting students in

the daily newspaper. Have them read through all the sections looking for stories they can retell in short sentences. Note: The newspaper subscription cost will be tax deductible when the youngster begins mailing stories to publishers of books.

**Another dimension** of the short sentence technique involves writing fillers, short statements newspaper and magazine editors love to use to fill space at the bottom of a column.

Famed writing teacher and author Louise Boggess in her *How to Write Fillers and Short Features That Sell* (Barnes & Noble Books, a division of Harper & Row, Publishers) says that all you need to write fillers are eyes that see, ears that hear and fingers that quickly write down what you've seen and heard.

All of us have socialized with laughing people who tell funny stories on one another or on absent friends and relatives. Who of us stops and jots down brief notes and the punch line?

You hear a funny joke. Pull out the little pad you carry for times like this and write it down.

You are driving through a small town and see a clever statement on a marquee or on the side of a truck. Write it down.

**Your pastor** makes a statement that crystallizes a thought that has universal significance, write it down.

You are reading a library book and find a clever statement that stands out, banners waving. Write it down in your pad for fillers.

A friend has added a spice to a dish of zucchini that transforms it into a dessert, write it down. Add pepper flakes and scare off moles.

Everywhere we hear tips and jokes and stories of fun or heartbreak or achievement or bravery. Write them down.

Why?

**Simply told**, these are sellable.

Some filler writers use large 5 x 8 cards to write the finished filler on. On the back of the card they record where and when they sent it, when it was sold or when it was returned.

You can sell these again and again. You simply have to wait until the last buyer has published your piece. Have him send a proof of it when it appears.

Louise Boggess files her fillers. She says they can be grouped in categories to which I have added definitions and suggestions:

**Arts and crafts**—brief how-to's of things to create, of new tools or brushes, patterns, of profiles of artists and musicians.

**Clippings**—from periodicals that briefly tell stories from real life. As already mentioned, newspapers and church bulletins are fertile soil for mis-statements and interesting spelling errors.

**Column material**—columnists always need ideas and fresh material. Send in quotes and opinions relevant to their specialty.

**Daffy definitions**—the play on words that has a funny double meaning.

**Epigrams**—a cleverly worded saying or brief verse that packs a wallop.

**Figures of speech**—the word “simile” has an “s” and an “l” in its spelling. When you compare two things using “as” (which has an “s” in the word “as”) or “like” which has an “l” in the word (“like”) you’ve got a simile. “He ran like a wild bull.” That’s a simile. When you say, “He was a wild bull on offense,” you’ve got a metaphor. Look for clever figures of speech in your reading.

**Gags**—jokes are always in order. Reader’s Digest uses many, calling them, “Life in the United States” or “Life in the Military.” Listen to what people laugh at when you’re in conversation. The dictionary calls a gag a practical joke, a comic remark or quip.

**Games**—especially family games that people can play in their car.

**Jokes**—a joke is usually a chronological narrative, recreating a scene or conversation and usually ending in a punch line that provides the comedy.

**News breaks**—new discoveries from research, science, inventions that most people probably have not heard yet.

**Oddities**—unusual events, births, anything unexpected

**Personal experiences**—short short stories that are true

**Press errors**—funny misquotes from printed matter

**Profiles**—short descriptions of people and their lives

**Puzzles**—short problems which readers must think hard to solve.

**Quips**—bright sayings

**Recipes**—magazines of all sorts—hunting, fishing, golf, gourmet, fitness, women’s use recipes.

**Riddles**—find a nine-year-old and you’ll find an overflowing source for riddles.

**Signs**—the old Burma-Shave signs along the highway provided many laughs. Look for clever and funny signs everywhere.

**Tips**—like using mayonnaise to take gum out of hair are always helpful. People always want to know how to take bargain items and turn them into high society.

**Short cuts**—quick ways to do things that normally take a lot of time.

**Verse**—clever rhymes such as “Shake and shake the catsup bottle, None’ll come and then a lot’ll.”

# PUZZLES

I'd like to spend just a little time on one of these tips—the puzzle. So little is made of this challenge in most writing texts that it deserves attention here.

Readers of all ages are intrigued by puzzles. You will find a real source of revenue right here.

Think up a new angle, a new device, a new method of showing a reader how clever he is (or isn't) and you've got a bonanza.

We all know the crossword puzzle, built with a miscellany of words that traffic among one another and fill a multitude of boxes arranged in a square or a rectangle or an unusual shape to fit a theme (a chimney at Christmas, a bunny at Easter, a Roman candle on the Fourth of July).

There are puzzles where you match shapes to see if they are identical.

There are puzzles built on riddles.

Puzzles are used as a measure of intelligence.

Some puzzles string out a confusion of unrelated letters and the reader is asked to bring them into words as they zig and zag around the page.

Popular now are the logic puzzles where you match wits with members of Mensa who reportedly bask in the top two percent of intellects.

You can buy lateral mindtrap puzzles and super lateral thinking puzzles and false logic puzzles and fiendishly

frustrating brain-twisting puzzles.

Some contain story questions. Others sport drawings where you have to imagine which frontwards and backwards images are matching.

A “double-croctic” puzzle asks for a random word, the letters of which when scattered through a crossword puzzle will help spell out a quote from a famous writer. Often, the first letter of the series of random words will spell out the name of the writer.

The “grammar double-cross” of my invention builds on this concept. You have to know your grammar to do this.

Knowing that you might not, I've inserted through these 12 lessons keys and secrets and drills that make grammar easy.

You might wish to hold on to this lesson until later when you feel more comfortable handling parts of speech and functions.

But in this puzzle, random words fill a grammatical recipe, drawn from an essay about a writer (in this case, a poet).

The random words actually appear in the essay, meeting the description called for in the recipe.

The word, once found, will be written out in the blanks beside the recipe.

All words, once found, will be transferred into the crossword puzzle. Once there, they will spell out two or

three lines written by that poet.

The method used to write this kind of puzzle is to:

- 1) choose the writer and
- 2) choose the quote. Then,
- 3) write out the quote, counting the number of times each letter of the alphabet occurs. Then,
- 4) write your essay of some three or four paragraphs. Now,
- 5) check the words of your essay against the chart of letters. You will

want to find words that will use up all your letters.

6) analyze the grammatical use of each of your chosen words and write it beside the word.

7) make sure that no other word with the same number of letters in the essay fills the recipe.

It's easy.

But it took me 100 hours to write this one.

## **A GRAMMAR DOUBLE-CROSS**

By Dick Bohrer

**From the paragraphs below describing Bliss Carman, take the appropriate word and put it letter by letter in the numbered blanks. From there put each letter in the crossword puzzle squares that match. There is only one answer to each question. As you work, you might wish to parse each word as to its part of speech and function in the space allowed.**

**(A conscientious puzzler will wait until he has filled all the blanks before he will transfer the letters to the squares.)**

**A modest, self-depreciating young giant with a smooth, handsome face, a shock of blond hair, and an odd partiality for eccentric attire, Bliss Carman was the possessor of an unusual gift for lyric expression. His poems are characterized by re-**

**straint in structure yet firing spontaneity in thought. They seem to ponder momentarily the mystery of man and his world and then to sing out in delirious abandon to a pagan yearning for color and beauty.**

Disgruntled with law, school teaching, and civil engineering, the young Canadian went to Harvard University where he met bearded young Richard Hovey, who shared Carman's devotion to the hill and the road as well as his desire to celebrate nature in poetic form. The two col-

laborated on *Songs from Vagabondia*, a volume of light romantic verse.

Carman, whose Puritan lineage was also that of Ralph Waldo Emerson, was awarded the poet laureate's medal by the Canadian Parliament in 1928. His ballads, elegies, and nature-poems have received world-wide acclaim.

A. \_-- -- -- --  
47 6 28 2\_\_\_\_\_

A preposition introducing a phrase with three objects

B. \_-- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- -- --  
34 64 7 43 24 51 29 9 68

A predicate nominative in a sentence beginning with an appositive.

C. \_-- -- -- -- -- -- -- --  
3 49 27 53 8 61 15

The third word of a proper noun object of a preposition in an adjective clause.

D. \_-- -- -- -- -- -- -- --  
10 36 55 1 67 25 31

The object of an infinitive.

E. \_-- -- -- -- -- -- -- --  
60 17 4 45 58 32

An adjective in a phrase with an understood preposition "by."

F. \_-- -- -- --  
44 65 19

The subject of a sentence.

G. \_-- -- -- -- -- -- -- --  
35 30 22 40 12 66

One of three adjectives modifying the object of a preposition in a phrase that modifies an appositive.

H. \_-- -- -- -- --  
26 14 18 16

An infinitive.

SELL YOUR HOMEWORK: PHRASE SENTENCES

**I.** \_-- -- --  
39 59 41

**An adjective in a sentence containing 16 adjectives.**

**J.** \_-- -- -- --  
13 54 63 38

**The first object in a compound object of a preposition in a complex sentence.**

**K.** \_-- -- -- -- --  
37 5 57 50 21 33

**The second object in a compound object of a preposition in a sentence with two infinitives.**

**L.** \_-- -- -- -- -- -- -- --  
20 56 62 11 23 46 42 52 48

**The only infinitive in a complex sentence.**

Now fill in the squares below with the corresponding letters.

		1	2	3	4	5			6
7		8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16		17	18			19	20	21	22
23	24	25		26	27	28	29		
30	31			32	33	34	35	36	
	37	38	39	40	41			42	43
44	45	46							
47	48			49	50	51	52		53
54	55	56			57	58	59		60
61	62	63	64	65		66	67	68	

Professor's Note: I hope you are serious about coming along and studying with me. I have much to share and a ton of research material to glean for you. I have enough for 24 lessons, not just 12.

Do enjoy the study and the exercises and do adapt this material to that wealth of knowledge and experience you harbor in your mind and heart.

Send me word when you publish something you have learned from these "Sell Your Homework" lessons.

Professor Dick