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UNIT 1 Lesson A

Which of the following do you think is best—A, B, or C?

- A. We wanted to take a vacation. We didn't have much money. The Jersey coast was close to home. We went there.
- B. We wanted to take a vacation, and we didn't have much money, and the Jersey coast was close to home, so we went there.
- C. Because we wanted to take a vacation but didn't have much money, we went to the Jersey coast, which was close to home.

All three versions say the same thing in approximately the same number of words, yet most students prefer C. Why?

Most students reject the A version because the sentences are too short. The overall effect is immature, even babyish, for the sentences are the kind that young children write. Also, because the sentences are choppy and disconnected, the reader has to guess how the ideas are related.

The B version is really the A version in disguise. The only difference between the two is that B joins the sentences with *and* or *so*. But these joining words are weak, overworked, and often inexact. B may be less choppy than A, but it is more repetitious. It shows little, if any, improvement over the A version.

The C version is the kind of writing you should be doing. It is the kind of writing you *will* do as you work through this book. You will learn how to write such sentences by following signals, or clues. The first signal you will use is underlining.

When you see underlining in this book, it means “use only the underlined words from this sentence.” You should not use the other words in that sentence. Most of the time, you will put the underlined words in the main sentence, which is the one printed in boldfaced type. Here is an example:

The singer sang a hymn.
The hymn was old.

The singer sang an old hymn.

Underlining tells you to use only “old” from the second sentence. How can you tell where to put it? Notice that the second sentence says that the “hymn” was old. In this lesson, always put the underlined word *in front of* the word it is talking about. (What would your answer have been if the second sentence had read,

“The singer was old”?) Notice that when you put “old” between “a” and “hymn,” you have to change “a” to “an” because “old” starts with a vowel sound.

Your Turn

1. Can you *write* a definition?
The definition is simple.
-

2. Speech is a *right*.
Speech is free.
-

3. Our government helps people.
The people are hungry.
-

4. The butterfly escaped.
The butterfly was beautiful.
-

5. She chose the answer.
The answer was right.
-

6. The chief made a choice.
The choice was careful.
-

7. I'm writing a letter.
The letter is friendly.
-

8. Did you write the address?
The address is right.
-

9. The hero walked away.
The hero was lonely.
-

10. I will write a composition.
The composition will be humorous.
-

UNIT 1 Lesson B

In the first lesson, you saw how a single word may be placed in front of another word to tell more about that word. Sometimes we may put two or more words before another word. If the two words are the *same kind of word*, we put a comma between them:

The teacher gave us an explanation.

The explanation was clear.

The explanation was simple.

The teacher gave us a clear, simple explanation.

The second and third sentences show that both “clear” and “simple” tell about “explanation.” Therefore, you want to put them in front of “explanation.” A comma is then used between the two words because they are the same kind of word. A good test to tell if the words are the same kind of word is to try to reverse them. If you can do that, they are the same. (Notice here you could just as easily say “a simple, clear explanation.”)

Did you also notice that the word “an” in the main sentence was changed to “a” in the final sentence? We use *an* before a vowel sound—like the sound that begins *explanation*. But we use *a* before a consonant sound—like the sound that begins *clear*. Be on the lookout for this shift from *an* to *a* (or from *a* to *an*).

Now look at this model. How does it differ from the first?

He wore a shirt.

The shirt was clean.

The shirt was cotton.

He wore a clean cotton shirt.

There is no comma between “clean” and “cotton.” We do not use a comma because “clean” and “cotton” are not the same kind of word, though both tell us more about “shirt.” Notice that you cannot say, “He wore a cotton clean shirt.”

As you do the exercises below, think about whether you need a comma or not. Put one in if you need it.

Your Turn

- We have taken several photographs.**
The photographs are beautiful.
The photographs are color.

2. **It's a day.**
The day is cold.
The day is winter.
-

3. **A fight preceded the title bout.**
The fight was entertaining.
The fight was interesting.
-

4. **She has given instructions.**
The instructions were clear.
The instructions were careful.
-

5. **We bought a blanket.**
The blanket was coarse.
The blanket was wool.
-

6. **Their cat performs tricks.**
Their cat is cute.
Their cat is a Persian.
-

7. **Where have I seen that face?**
That face is handsome.
That face is familiar.
-

8. **They set their plates on the table.**
The plates are their best.
The plates are china.
-

9. **The party was a success.**
The party was clever.
The party was a surprise.
-

10. **I will write a letter.**
The letter will be friendly.
The letter will be loving.
-