

Spring 2015

The Collins Writing Exchange

Ideas, Tips, and Resources on Writing
from
[Collins Education Associates](#)

Working with English Learners

FAQs about English Learners and Collins Writing

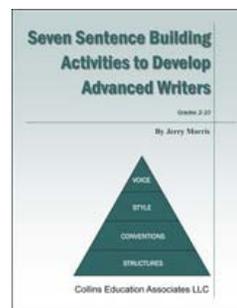
English learners (ELs) are the fastest growing demographic in the U.S. If you don't have ELs in your classroom now, there is a good chance you will in the near future. Collins Associate [Erick Herrmann](#), a fluent Spanish speaker with extensive experience working with English learners, strongly believes that Collins Writing is an excellent match for all ELs including beginning English learners. See Herrmann's [blog post](#) "Frequently Asked Questions: Does the Collins Writing ProgramSM Work with English Learners?"

Classroom Techniques That Work

Sentence Building Activities That Strengthen Writing Skills

What is the best way to improve writers' skills? "One sentence at a time," says Collins Associate Jerry Morris. As a long-time devotee of *The Elements of Style*, Morris translated the wisdom of William Strunk and E. B. White into a sequential, step-by-step approach to transform and improve the writing of his students.

In his practical and easy-to-use book, [Seven Sentence Building Activities to Develop Advanced Writers](#), he presents techniques that capture his three decades of experience teaching writing successfully. [Preview](#) sentence-building activity one from the book and try it with your students. You can also [view a video](#) of Morris teaching the activity to a high school class.



Featured Writing Assignment

Reflecting on a Year of Work and Development

Year-end reflection assignments are valuable learning experiences, because they require students to use a variety of essential skills. The writing assignment Presenting a Mini-Portfolio to Next Year's Teacher, taken from Collins Associate Gary Chadwell's book, [Twelve Writing Assignments Every Middle School Student Should Write](#), does exactly that for middle-school students. The project asks students to reflect on academic growth, cite examples of their academic work, elaborate on them with specific details, and present themselves as thoughtful professionals do.

Focus Sheet		Reflecting on My Learning	
Skills			
Things I am good at in this class:		What I am getting better at:	
_____		_____	
_____		_____	
_____		_____	
_____		_____	
_____		_____	
_____		_____	
Habits			
Work and study habits important in this class:		Self-Assessment:	
		How am I doing with this habit?	

Of course, year-end reflections are important for students of all ages. Choose the detailed Seven Element Assignment lesson plan, complete with graphic organizers and [FCAs](#) for your grade:

[Primary](#) [Upper Elementary](#) [Middle School](#) [High School](#)

Worth Noting

The Writing-Reading Connection



Most teachers recognize a common trait among their strongest writers: they typically are strong and voracious readers. But does the reading-writing connection work both ways? Does writing enhance reading skills?

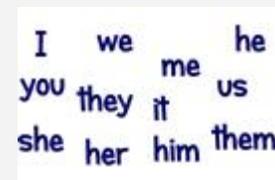
Yes, say researchers Steve Graham and Michael Hebert. Their meta-analysis of a variety of experiments and studies shows that "writing about material read improves students' comprehension of it."

Download their Carnegie Corp. [study](#), *Writing and Reading: Evidence for How Writing Can Improve Reading*, or read an [abstract](#) of their findings from a *Harvard Education Review* article.

Convention Wisdom

A Tip for a Common Pronoun Problem

Have you ever shuddered when you hear someone say, "Just between you and I . . ." or "He gave it to Sarah and I"? If so, a newly released book may be of interest. *Just Between You & Me: Confessions of a Comma Queen* by Mary Norris, a long-time editor at *The New Yorker*, offers an engaging look at decidedly dry topics. Her take on common writing problems like spelling, pronoun usage (the pronoun issue referred to in the book's title is addressed in Chapter 4), commas, dashes, hyphens, apostrophes, colons, and semicolons is both informative and amusing.



In the classroom, you don't have to be a "comma queen" or "comma king" to make good use of [Essential Conventions](#), the Collins Writing resources (*Check Mate™* folders for students, classroom posters, reproducible resources for teachers) for helping your students edit their writing more effectively. For example, the *Essential Conventions* Teacher Resource Guide contains Tip Sheets with hints and reminders to clarify tricky conventions for students. For ways to avoid pronoun misuses like the one alluded to in Mary Norris's book title, see the Tip Sheet for Avoiding Pronoun Problems for [upper elementary](#) grades, [middle school](#), and [high school](#).

Quick Links

Free, Ready-to-Use Resources

Do you know what the most common mistake in writing is? According to a 2006 study by Lunsford and Lunsford in which they identified the top 20 mistakes by college freshmen, it's a wrong or misused word.

Here's a quick lesson for tomorrow. Download and reproduce the sample pages from the *Essential Conventions Check Mate* quick reference student folder for your grade and review the Frequently Misused Words section with your students. Auto text, beware!

Primary

Primary

Essential Conventions Check Mate
A Handy Guide for Students

RULE 1. WRITING SENTENCES
Remember, a complete sentence has 5 parts.

Capital Letter The first word of a sentence has a capital letter.	The E arth is a planet. (capital letter)
Subject The subject tells what the sentence is about.	The sun is a yellow star. (the subject)
Predicate The predicate tells the action or what is going on in the sentence.	The Earth orbits the sun. (the predicate)
Complete Thought A sentence has to be a complete thought that makes sense.	Takes a year: (not a complete thought) Earth takes a year to orbit the sun. (a complete thought)
End Punctuation A sentence has a punctuation mark at the end.	Earth has one moon. (end mark) How many does Jupiter have? (end mark)

Upper Elementary

Upper Elementary

Essential Conventions Check Mate
A Quick Reference Guide for Students

RULE 1. COMPLETE SENTENCES
Every sentence requires the first word to be capitalized. Each sentence expresses a complete thought and has a subject that tells what the sentence is about. It also has a verb (also called a predicate) that tells what action takes place.

Subject Alexander Graham Bell The pupil in your eye	Verb (or Predicate) invented the telephone. gets larger in the dark.
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RULE 1.A PERIODS

Use a period at the end of every sentence that gives information (declarative sentence) or gives a command (imperative sentence).	Harriet Tubman led more than 300 slaves to freedom. Follow me. (The subject of the sentence, you, is understood but not stated.)
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Middle

Middle

Essential Conventions Check Mate
A Quick Reference Guide for Students

RULE 1. COMPLETE SENTENCES
Every sentence requires the first word to be capitalized and an ending punctuation mark. Each sentence expresses a complete thought and has a subject (a word or words that tell what the sentence is about) and a predicate (a word or words that tell or ask what the subject does).

Subject James Watt etc.	Verb (or Predicate) developed an early steam engine. used copper wire to make the circuit.
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RULE 1.A AVOID SENTENCE FRAGMENTS

Fragments are not complete sentences because they lack either a subject or a predicate.	Fragment: Includes the Supreme Court. Complete Sentence: <u>The Judicial Branch of the government includes the Supreme Court.</u> (Adding the subject makes this a complete sentence.) Fragment: Usually only a few weeks. Complete Sentence: <u>Mosquitoes usually live only a few weeks.</u> (Adding a noun for the subject and a verb as the predicate makes this a complete sentence.)
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High

High

Essential Conventions Check Mate
A Quick Reference Guide for Students

RULE 1. COMPLETE SENTENCES

RULE 1.A AVOID SENTENCE FRAGMENTS	Fragment: Published the first periodic table of chemical elements in 1869. Complete Sentence: <u>Russian chemist Dmitri Mendeleev published the first periodic table of chemical elements in 1869.</u> (Adding the subject makes this a complete sentence.) Fragment: The smallest particle of any element. Complete Sentence: <u>An atom is the smallest particle of any element.</u> (Adding a noun for the subject and a verb as the predicate makes this a complete sentence.)
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Upcoming Events

View Our Schedule, Plan a Session

We will hold numerous spring and summer public workshops and institutes across the country, from New England to Hawaii. [View the schedule](#) for upcoming events in your area.

New offerings are added regularly, so if you don't see something in your area, check back soon. It's not too late to host a [Collins Institute](#) in your district this summer. By opening it up to outside participation you may be able to underwrite some or all of the costs of the workshop for in-district staff.

Would you like to speak to a Collins Associate about offering one of our professional development sessions in your school or district? [Email](#) us or call us at 800-932-4477 to learn about options and pricing and to set up a FREE phone consultation with a Collins Associate. We offer highly



About Our Newsletter

Helpful Resources for Busy Educators

The feedback on our newsletter has been very encouraging. Thank you for your interest and support. Please forward *The Collins Writing Exchange* to your colleagues who might be interested.

For those of you who had this issue forwarded to you, [join our mailing](#) list and receive future issues directly. *The Exchange* is issued six times a year.

Missed a previous issue? Read it now.

[Late Winter 2015](#)

[Winter 2014-2015](#)

[Fall 2014](#)

[August-September 2014](#)

[Spring-Summer 2014](#)

Save Up To 40%

Did you know we offer multi-user and site licenses for the PDF versions of *Essential Conventions Teacher Resource Guides*? Depending on the number of teachers you purchase for, you can save up to 40% off the single-user price.

Want a price quote? Please send us an [email](#).

Preview & Order

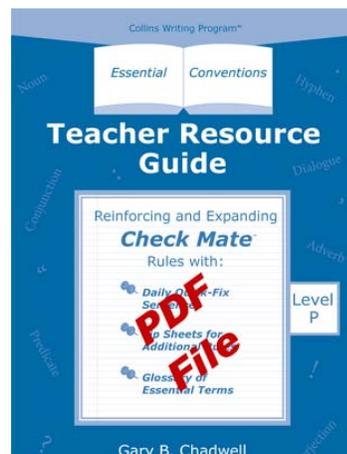
Grades 2 to 3, [Level P](#)

Grades 4 to 6, [Level A](#)

Grades 6 to 9, [Level B](#)

Multi-user and site licenses are available for *Essential Conventions Teacher Resource Guides*!

Help students become competent editors by using the PDF versions of *Essential Conventions Teacher Resource Guides (TRG)* in your classroom. Each TRG contains **Daily Quick-Fix Sentences, Tip Sheets, and a Glossary of Essential Terms for high-utility writing conventions.**



Contact



COLLINS EDUCATION ASSOCIATES

320 Main Street, PO Box 957

West Newbury, MA 01985

800-932-4477

info@collinsed.com

www.collinsed.com

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