

THE USES AND VARIETIES OF ENGLISH

Language is a system of sounds that have meaning to all people with the same cultural background. The purpose of language is communication, or transfer of meaning from one person to another. Spoken language uses sound patterns to accomplish this transfer; written language uses graphic symbols (written signs) to represent the spoken sounds.

Language is a tool. To use it effectively requires practice and training. Skill in the use of language is a necessity in our complicated culture, which relies upon the transfer of ideas in many fields of knowledge. Like any tool, language must be used responsibly. As a Christian you need to be aware of the impact of your words on others and choose your words accordingly.

Well-developed language skills will aid you in presenting a sincere and effective witness. People who understand the needs and frustrations of others and who can put them into words are the most effective teachers, counselors, ministers, and parents. Such people can react to the needs and frustrations of others without becoming angry or self-protective.

This LIFEPAC® will help you to build and strengthen relationships and to achieve goals through the responsible and effective use of language. The ability to distinguish standard (acceptable) English from nonstandard and to use standard English in all situations will insure that your language is understood and accepted by everyone with whom you come in contact. Your relationships with family and friends will improve if you can express your needs and desires clearly. Whether you are writing an essay or being interviewed for a job, the ability to express your ideas in standard English will increase your chance for success. This LIFEPAC will help you to build a command of standard English by teaching you the varieties of acceptable usage and the types of usage to avoid. You will also learn in detail about the purpose and use of a dictionary and the methods of research involved in compiling a standard English dictionary.

OBJECTIVES

Read these objectives. The objectives tell you what you will be able to do when you have successfully completed this LIFEPAC.

When you have finished this LIFEPAC, you should be able to:

1. Explain the difference between nonstandard and standard English.
2. Cite six kinds of ungrammatical speech and explain the kinds of errors made in each case.
3. Recognize jargon, dialect, and slang in language samples.
4. Write a paragraph using standard English.
5. Recognize examples of legal, medical, and business English.
6. Explain the different ways language is used in prose and poetry and to identify examples of these differences in a passage.
7. Be able to use a dictionary to find the correct pronunciation, spelling, meaning, and use of a word.
8. Explain how dictionaries are compiled.
9. Identify the contributions of Dr. Samuel Johnson, Noah Webster, and the Oxford English Dictionary to lexicography.
10. Explain the historical method of dictionary research.
11. List and explain the use of the parts of a standard English dictionary.
12. List and define a minimum of ten common dictionary abbreviations.
13. List and explain the purpose of at least five different kinds of dictionaries.

Survey the LIFEPAC. Ask yourself some questions about this study. Write your questions here.

STANDARD ENGLISH

Nonstandard English is either ungrammatical or understood only by a narrow segment of the population; but standard English is clear, concise, readily understandable, and acceptable to the educated community. Many students who have spent years studying grammar rules, spelling, punctuation, and composition still have only a vague idea of what constitutes standard English. The following guidelines may make recognition of standard English easier.

- Written standard English is always spelled or pronounced correctly.
- Standard English is clear, well organized, and to the point.
- Contractions, second person pronouns, abbreviations, and other language short cuts are used only when necessary to avoid inflated, elaborate language or when appropriate to the style and tone of an author or speaker.
- Subjects and verbs agree in number, as do pronouns and antecedents.
- Verb tenses are consistent.
- Modifying words or phrases are placed correctly.
- Sentences are constructed carefully to avoid sentence fragments, run-on sentences, and other errors. Sentences are punctuated properly. English idioms are used correctly. The language is creative, interesting, and easy to understand.

Standard English should not be stiff, awkward, or unintelligible. It should flow smoothly, be descriptive enough to keep the interest of a reader or listener and still conform to accepted language rules.



Label each statement as *standard, slang, jargon, dialect, or ungrammatical.*

- 1.37 _____ *I* caught a fish.
- 1.38 _____ What's your ten–twenty?
- 1.39 _____ Mother made sandwiches for her and me.
- 1.40 _____ The myocardial infarction resulted in the transposition of nerve impulses.
- 1.41 _____ The store didn't have no cheese.
- 1.42 _____ While talking on the telephone, the dog spilled his water dish.
- 1.43 _____ *Twister* is an awesome flick.
- 1.44 _____ The troops are headquartered in the training facility.
- 1.45 _____ The bream are biting down at the crick.
- 1.46 _____ For a week following the accident, we talked of nothing else.

Standard English is not easily defined because correct usage varies from situation to situation. In general, spoken standard English is less formal than its written counterpart. Contractions and colloquial expressions which are out of place in a formal report are appropriate in everyday conversation. Avoiding language that you know is difficult for your listener or reader to understand is one method you can use to insure that you speak standard English. Listening to language used correctly and reading good literature will also aid you in distinguishing standard from nonstandard usage.

PRONOUN REFERENCE

Most pronouns require clear, specific antecedents. The more precise the antecedent is, the more successful the sentence will be in achieving the effect the writer wants. Pronouns should be placed as close to the antecedent as possible. Ambiguous or fuzzy pronoun **reference** can be corrected either by replacing the pronoun with the antecedent or a synonym of the antecedent, or by rearranging the entire sentence.

Ambiguous reference. Most writers occasionally write sentences using pronouns with two or more possible antecedents. The solution to ambiguous reference is revision.

Example: Jean told Gretchen that she needed a new notebook.

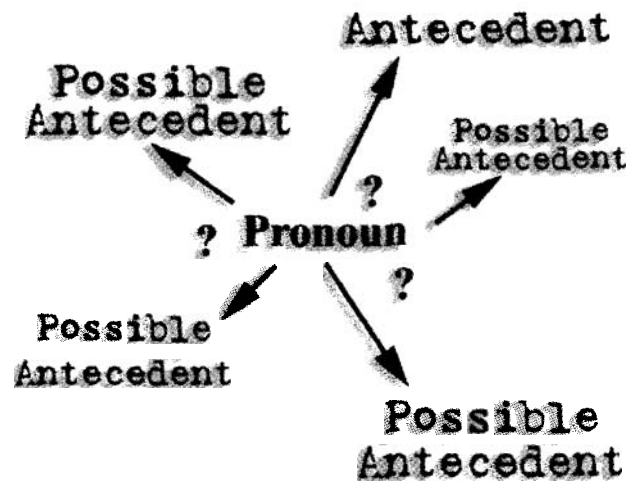
In this sentence it is not clear which girl needs the notebook. If Jean borrowed Gretchen's notebook and used the last pages, Gretchen needs the new notebook. Because the pronoun is closest to *Gretchen*, this meaning is the one that is actually expressed. However, several other interpretations are possible. If the girls are passing a store and Jean remembers that she used the last page in her own notebook that morning, then it is Jean who needs the notebook. If an obviously worn notebook belonging to one of the two girls is lying on the table, the owner of the notebook is the antecedent of the pronoun *she*. Because the pronoun *she* can refer to either girl, the reference is ambiguous. The problem can be corrected in several ways.

The pronoun can be placed nearer the antecedent: *While talking to Gretchen, Jean said that she needed a new notebook.*

The antecedent can be repeated: *Jean told Gretchen that Gretchen needed a new notebook.*

The sentence can be rewritten, using direct address: *Jean said to Gretchen "You need a new notebook."*

An intensive pronoun can be inserted after the ambiguous pronoun: *Jean told Gretchen that she herself needed a new notebook.*



→ Fill in the blanks.

- 2.1 Pronouns should be placed as close to the _____ as possible.
- 2.2 Ambiguous pronoun references can be corrected by replacing the pronoun with the antecedent or a a. _____, or by b. _____, the entire sentence.

→ Rewrite these sentences so that the pronoun reference is not ambiguous.

- 2.3 Roger told David that he had to work Monday. _____

- 2.4 The dishes were piled on the table that needed washing. _____

- 2.5 The clock on the shelf that was broken needed to be fixed. _____

LANGUAGE ARTS 1107: LIFE PAC TEST

Match these items (each answer, 2 points).

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. _____ Emily Webb | a. was Dr. Gibbs' son |
| 2. _____ George | b. hanged himself |
| 3. _____ Mrs. Gibbs | c. suggest universality |
| 4. _____ Simon Stimson | d. married George |
| 5. _____ a post-card album | e. birthday present for Emily |
| 6. _____ an unusual address | f. died before Emily did |
| 7. _____ Mr. Warren | g. the undertaker |
| 8. _____ Mr. Morgan | h. the town constable |
| | i. the druggist |

Complete these statements (each answer, 3 points).

9. Seven elements of drama include a. _____, b. _____, c. _____, d. _____, e. _____, f. _____, and g. _____
10. Three steps for reading a play include
- a. _____

- b. _____

_____, and
- c. _____

11. Thornton Wilder won three _____ for his work.

Explain or define these terms (each answer, 4 points).

12. flashback _____
13. realism _____

14. universality _____
15. structure _____
16. protagonist _____

17. Thornton Wilder _____
