



**FIRST LANGUAGE LESSONS
FOR THE WELL-TRAINED MIND**



LEVEL 3

by Jessie Wise and Sara Buffington



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Also by Jessie Wise and Sara Buffington

The Ordinary Parent's Guide to Teaching Reading

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Also by Jessie Wise

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with Susan Wise Bauer

The Well-Trained Mind: A Guide to Classical Education at Home

(W.W. Norton, Revised Edition, 2004)



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INTRODUCTION



HOW TO USE FIRST LANGUAGE LESSONS, LEVEL 3

The Four-Strand Approach

This book uses four different strands to teach grammar and punctuation rules, proper usage, and writing skills.

Strand 1: Memory Work

Memorizing Poetry

Poems store beautiful language in the student's mind. Memorizing poetry gives the student confidence that he can indeed retain material. This confidence extends to his memorization of material in history, science, and literature. Also, memorization can actually train the student's attention span. He is not just passively being exposed to information; he is actively engaged in a mental exercise. There is a good memorization technique in the first poetry lesson of this book.

Memorizing Rules and Definitions

The technique for memorizing rules and definitions is practiced in the scripted lessons. A summary of the rules, definitions, and lists to be memorized is on page 457.

A note for students who have not used First Language Lessons, Levels 1 and 2: Several of the definitions and memorized lists of parts of speech were taught in the first two levels of this series. All of this material is reviewed in this book. However, you may wish to do extra review of these rules and lists. You may find it helpful to purchase the audio companion to *Levels 1 and 2* (a CD containing both chanted and sung versions of definitions and lists to be memorized) from Peace Hill Press at www.peacehillpress.com.

Strand 2: Copywork and Dictation

At this level, copywork is still the primary tool to help the student store in his mind the look and feel of properly written language. Copywork engages both the visual and motor memory of the student. It gives the student correct models while he is still struggling with the basics of written conventions: spaces between words, capital letters, punctuation, and spelling. Supervise the student carefully and correct him when he **begins** to copy incorrectly.

When you **dictate** a sentence to the student, he must write it without looking at a written model. Dictation teaches the student to picture a sentence in his mind before putting it down on paper and also trains him to hold complete sentences in his memory as he writes. Dictation should be a precursor to any original writing, since it allows the young writer to practice mechanics without also struggling to produce original content. We will discuss a good technique for giving dictation in “Dictation Exercises,” later in this introduction.

Strand 3: Narration

Through copywork and dictation, a student learns to put words down on paper properly. Narration is simply the student retelling a passage that he has read or heard, putting it in his own words. Narration helps the student to listen with attention, to grasp the main point of a work, to think through a sequence of events, and to reproduce the events in his own words in proper, logical order.

Narration is also a precursor to original writing. There are no formal essays or creative writing assignments for the student to do in this book. In the primary grades, the student learns the proper structure of language through copywork and dictation. He learns basic oral composition through narration. In later grades, the student will use these skills in original writing.

Most narration beginners fall into one of two camps: they don’t know where to begin or they don’t know when to stop. If your student cannot think of anything to say, prompt him by repeating a couple of the comprehension questions, and have him answer each one in a complete sentence. If you have a very verbal student who goes on and on (and on!) when narrating, stop him and ask him to choose **only** two pieces of information and put those into sentences. For both types of students, narration is basic training in the skill of summarizing.

Strand 4: Grammar

This book teaches advanced grammar concepts to young students in a pleasant way. It is important to teach formal grammar in the early grades. Otherwise, the student may develop bad habits that he will have to unlearn later on. He will have to reorient his mind and ear to an entirely new way of constructing sentences.

This book introduces sentence diagramming. In the third grade, the student learns that a diagram is essentially a picture of a sentence. The diagram serves as a visual reinforcement of the function of each part of speech, particularly useful for visual learners.

Using the Lessons

Type Formatting in First Language Lessons

- Suggested wording for the instructor is in traditional print.
 - *Suggested answers for the student are in italics.*
 - **Answers to workbook exercises are in larger, darker print.**
-
- Notes to the instructor are in smaller, traditional print, between two lines.
-

Length of Lessons

This book is designed to be completed in one school year. If you do the lessons in the main part of the book but skip the end units, do about two lessons each week for the school year (36 weeks). If you decide to include the end units as well, plan on three lessons per week. See the sample schedules on page 460.

A student doing third- or fourth-grade-level work will probably need to spend thirty minutes on this subject three days per week. If the lesson time exceeds thirty minutes, stop and pick up with the remainder of the lesson the following day. If a student is struggling to understand or if he doesn't write easily, he may do some of the written exercises orally instead.

The Use of Inclusive Pronouns

A note from Jessie Wise: I studied advanced traditional grammar in the 1950s as part of my training in teaching certification. I learned that the pronouns “he” and “him” were generic pronouns, used to refer to both men and women. Although I understand why some users would prefer to see an alternate use of “he” and “she,” I find this style of writing awkward; my early training shapes my usage! So I have used “he” and “him” to refer to the student throughout. If you prefer, simply change these pronouns to “she” and “her.”

The Student's Workbook

All of the lesson numbers in the teacher's book match the lesson numbers in the student's workbook (ISBN 978-1-933339-08-5, Peace Hill Press, 2007). The student needs a pencil for each workbook lesson. The student should keep a bookmark in his workbook to easily find his place at the start of the lesson.

The workbook pages are perforated and three-hole punched so you can file them in a binder if you wish. If the student writes letters for the optional end-unit lessons, you may wish to photocopy them before you mail them so you can file the letters as well.

Dictation Exercises

As the student's general skills in writing and spelling improve, so will his ability to take dictation. At first, the student may struggle for a number of reasons. He may be transitioning from printing to cursive writing. He may have to stop and think about how to form a letter and lose his train of thought. He may ask you to repeat a phrase, or he may leave out a word. He may stop to correct a misspelled word that "doesn't look right." This is all very normal! Watch the student as he writes. Help him with proper spelling and punctuation as he goes. If he leaves out a word that you have dictated, let him insert it rather than making him recopy the entire sentence.

Follow this procedure when giving dictation:

1. After you read a sentence, ask the student to visualize the beginning capital letter and the end punctuation mark.
2. Repeat the sentence once more.
3. Have the student repeat what you just said.
4. Have him write what he has just said, if it is accurate. If it is not accurate, repeat steps 1 and 2.

If the student seems frustrated with dictation, have him copy the sentence first. Then dictate the same sentence for him to write from memory. If he is struggling, you may also decide to have the student write only one sentence.

We have excluded dictation exercises from lessons with extensive copywork or diagramming. And some lessons have only optional dictation sentences. Skip the optional dictation if the student is doing dictation in another subject that day.

Optional Follow-Ups

At the end of some lessons, there is an optional follow-up activity to reinforce the content of the lesson. Often these activities involve the participation of other family members. This makes learning grammar a shared family affair.

Optional End Units

The main part of this book consists of eighty-nine lessons in grammar and writing. If you wish, you may choose to complete any or all of the three optional sections at the end of the book: writing letters, dictionary skills, and oral usage. Suggested schedules for completing this book are on page 460. If you do the lessons on dictionary skills, the student will need a dictionary and thesaurus. We recommend *Merriam-Webster's Elementary Dictionary* (Merriam-Webster, 2000) and *Roget's Children's Thesaurus* (Scott-Foresman, 2000).

**New: Prepositional Phrases**

Read “A Time to Talk” (Lesson 46) three times to the student. Then ask the student to try to say the whole poem with you (or the tape recorder). The student should practice saying the whole poem to himself in a mirror.

Several of the words in the preposition list can also be adverbs. For example, “She lagged **behind**,” “The treasure lies **below**,” or “I went **inside**.” These same words function as prepositions when they are included in a prepositional phrase: “She lagged **behind the other runners**,” “The treasure lies **below this chamber**,” or “I went **inside the house**.” This lesson focuses on the prepositional use of these words. Do not discuss the adverb use of these words with the student at this time.

Instructor: You learned about prepositions in the last lesson. A preposition is a word that shows the relationship of a noun or pronoun to another word in the sentence. Let’s say that definition together three times.

Together (three times): A preposition is a word that shows the relationship of a noun or pronoun to another word in the sentence.

If the student knows the list of prepositions in **Exercise 1**, have him review it by saying it once. If he does not yet have the whole list memorized, focus on the second section today (*before* through *by*), and review the first section. The student may check off his accomplishments in the workbook.

Prepositions

Aboard, about, above, across.

After, against, along, among, around, at.

Before, behind, below, beneath.

Beside, between, beyond, by.

Down, during, except, for, from.

In, inside, into, like.

Near, of, off, on, over.

Past, since, through, throughout.

To, toward, under, underneath.

Until, up, upon.

With, within, without.

Instructor: Read the first sentence in **Exercise 2** to me.

Workbook: 1. The presents before her were wrapped beautifully.

Instructor: What is the preposition in the sentence?

Student: Before

Instructor: Circle *before*. The presents before whom? Before **her**. “Before her” is called a **prepositional phrase**. A prepositional phrase begins with a preposition and ends with a noun or pronoun. To find the prepositional phrase, ask *whom* or *what* after the preposition. Now read the second sentence to me.

Workbook: 2. The person behind me is last.

Instructor: What is the preposition in the sentence?

Student: Behind

Instructor: Circle *behind*. To find the prepositional phrase, ask *whom* or *what* after the preposition. Behind whom? Behind me. “Behind me” is the prepositional phrase. It begins with the preposition *behind* and ends with the pronoun *me*. Read the third sentence.

Workbook: 3. The magma below the surface is boiling hot.

Instructor: What is the preposition in the sentence?

Student: Below

Instructor: Circle *below*. To find the prepositional phrase, ask *whom* or *what* after the preposition. Below what? Below the surface. “Below the surface” is the prepositional phrase. It begins with the preposition *below* and ends with the noun *surface*. Now you try. Read the fourth sentence to me.

Workbook: 4. The fish beneath the water swim upstream.

Instructor: Circle *beneath*. To find the prepositional phrase, ask *whom* or *what* after the preposition. Beneath what? Answer me beginning with “Beneath ...”

Student: *Beneath the water*

Instructor: “Beneath the water” is a prepositional phrase. It begins with the preposition *beneath* and ends with the noun *water*.

Instructor: I will ask you to read each of the sentences, numbers 5 through 8, and circle the preposition in each sentence. Then I will ask you to underline the prepositional phrase.

Prompt the student to identify the prepositional phrase by asking him *whom* or *what* after the preposition, just as you did in the examples above.

Workbook: 5. I answered the phone beside the bed.

6. We hiked the mountain between the rivers.

7. The Pacific Ocean is the ocean beyond California.

8. Jacob will pick up those shoes by the door.

Dictation Exercise

After he has written the sentences, have him circle the prepositions.

Dictation: I lay beside the stream.

Put the bookmark between the pages.

Answer Key:

I lay beside the stream.

Put the bookmark between the pages.

Optional Follow-Up

Fold a piece of paper in half. Then fold it in half again. Then fold it in half one more time. When the paper is unfolded, you should have eight squares. Write a prepositional phrase across the top of each square. You may choose:

- under the tree
- aboard a ship
- against the fence
- on the road
- above the clouds
- below the sea
- beside a skyscraper
- near a dinosaur

Then the student will read the phrase and draw a picture of a stick person in each of the settings. For example, in the box labeled “under the tree,” the student draws a picture of a person standing under a tree.



New: Compound Verbs (with Diagramming)

Review: Prepositional Phrases

Read “A Slash of Blue” (Lesson 71) three times to the student. Then ask the student to try to say parts of the poem along with you (or the tape recorder).

Instructor: Let’s review the definition of a sentence. A sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete thought. All sentences begin with a capital letter and end with a punctuation mark.

Instructor: Now I will say the definition three more times. Say it with me.

Together (three times): A sentence is a group of words that expresses a complete thought. All sentences begin with a capital letter and end with a punctuation mark.

Instructor: Read the first sentence in **Exercise 1**.

Workbook: Emily sings.

Instructor: Every sentence has two parts: the subject and the verb. What is the verb in this sentence?

Student: *Sings*

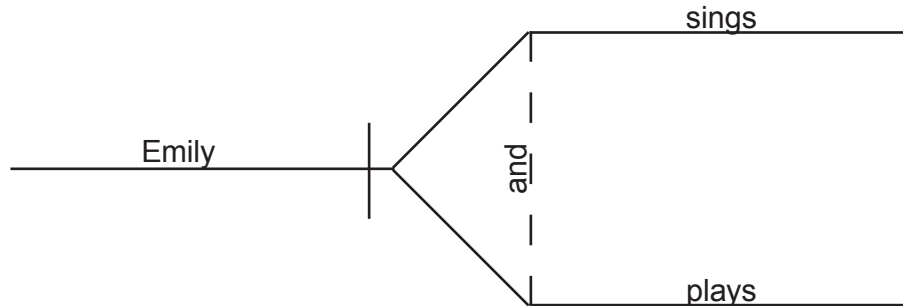
Instructor: *Sings* is the verb. Emily sings. But what if Emily were doing something else in addition to singing? What if she were singing **and** playing the piano at the same time? Read the next sentence.

Workbook: Emily sings and plays.

Instructor: In the sentence you just read, Emily does two things. What does Emily do?

Student: *Sings and plays*

Instructor: Emily sings and Emily plays. There are two action verbs in this sentence: *sings* and *plays*. They are joined by the conjunction *and*. Remember; a conjunction is a word that joins words or groups of words together. *Sings* and *plays* joined together are called a **compound verb**. Remember, the word *compound* means “made up of two or more parts.” Look at the diagram of the sentence “Emily sings and plays.”



Instructor: Notice that the verb line is divided into a fork. *Sings* is written on the top line of the fork because it comes first in the sentence. *Plays* is written on the bottom line of the fork because it comes after *sings* in the sentence. The two parts of the compound verb are joined by a vertical, dotted line. The conjunction *and* is printed on the dotted line because it joins the two words together.

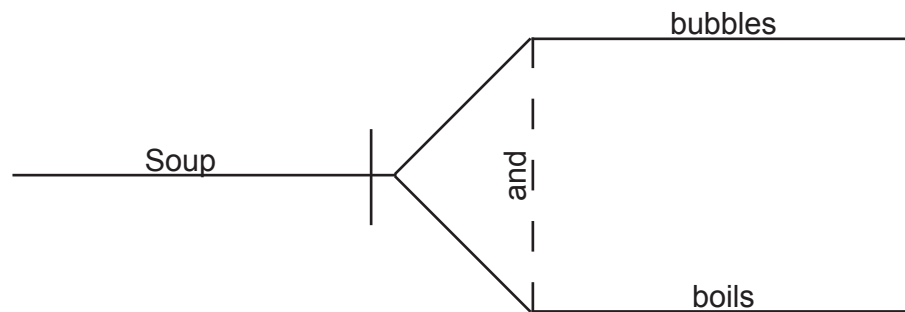
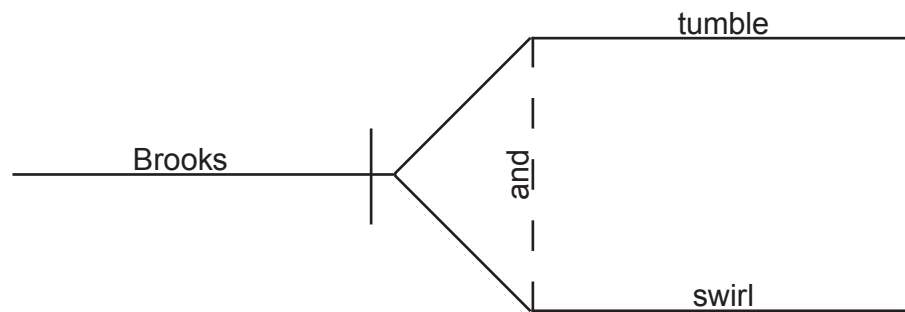
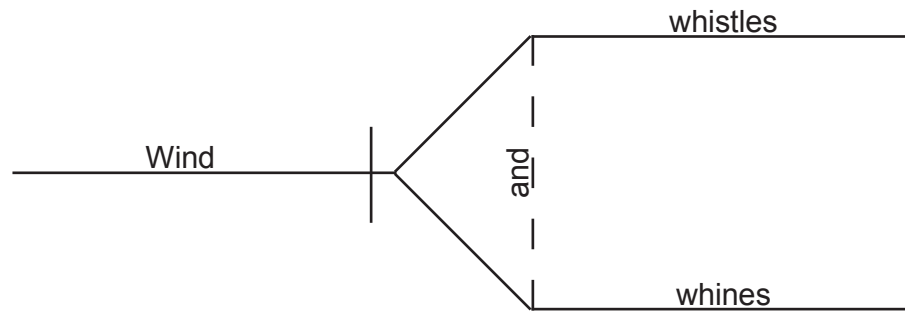
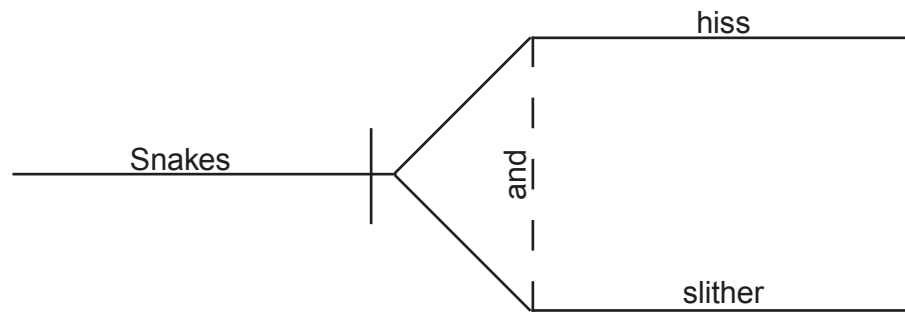
Instructor: In **Exercise 2** of your workbook I will help you diagram four sentences with compound verbs.

- Workbook:**
1. Snakes hiss and slither.
 2. Wind whistles and whines.
 3. Brooks tumble and swirl.
 4. Soup bubbles and boils.

Use the following dialogue to help the student fill in the diagram:

1. *What is the compound verb? There are two action verbs in this sentence. Write the first verb on the top of the forked verb line. Write the second verb on the bottom of the forked verb line.*
2. *Find the subject. Ask “who” or “what” before the verb. [Prompt the student with a specific question like “What hisses and slithers?” or “What whistles and whines?”] Write the subject to the left of the center line on your frame.*
3. *The two parts of the compound verb are joined by a conjunction (and, but, or). What is that conjunction? Write the conjunction on the vertical, dotted line, inside the triangle formed by the fork and the dotted line.*

Answer Key:



Instructor: Now let's review the definition of a preposition. A preposition is a word that shows the relationship of a noun or pronoun to another word in the sentence. Let's say that definition together three times.

Together (three times): A preposition is a word that shows the relationship of a noun or pronoun to another word in the sentence.

If the student knows the list of prepositions, have him review it by saying it once. If he needs more practice, say the list together three times.

Student:

Prepositions

Aboard, about, above, across.

After, against, along, among, around, at.

Before, behind, below, beneath.

Beside, between, beyond, by.

Down, during, except, for, from.

In, inside, into, like.

Near, of, off, on, over.

Past, since, through, throughout.

To, toward, under, underneath.

Until, up, upon.

With, within, without.

Instructor: Read the sentence in **Exercise 3** to me:

o.p.

Workbook: Here are the keys to the car.

Instructor: What is the preposition in the sentence?

Student: To

Instructor: Circle *to*. Now find the prepositional phrase. Ask *whom* or *what* after the preposition *to*. To what? Answer me beginning with the word “To ...”

Student: To the car

Instructor: “To the car” is the prepositional phrase. Underline it. A prepositional phrase begins with a preposition and ends with a noun or pronoun. That noun or pronoun is called the **object of the preposition**. In the prepositional phrase “to the car,” the object of the preposition is the noun *car*. Write “o.p” over the object of the preposition, *car*.

Instructor: In each sentence in **Exercise 4**, you will circle the preposition, write “o.p.” over the object of the preposition, and underline the prepositional phrase. You read the sentences, and I will ask you questions to help you.

o.p.

Workbook: 1. His kindness toward the baby was sweet.

Instructor: What is the preposition?

Student: Toward

Instructor: What is the object of the preposition?

Student: Baby

Instructor: What is the prepositional phrase?

Student: Toward the baby

o.p.

Workbook: 2. The closet under the stairs was tiny.

Instructor: What is the preposition?

Student: Under

Instructor: What is the object of the preposition?

Student: Stairs

Instructor: What is the prepositional phrase?

Student: Under the stairs

o.p.

Workbook: 3. There are many bugs underneath the rock.

Instructor: What is the preposition?

Student: Underneath

Instructor: What is the object of the preposition?

Student: Rock

Instructor: What is the prepositional phrase?

Student: Underneath the rock

o.p.

Workbook: 4. The kitten up the tree is scared.

Instructor: What is the preposition?

Student: Up

Instructor: What is the object of the preposition?

Student: Tree

Instructor: What is the prepositional phrase?

Student: Up the tree

Instructor: Some sentences look **really** long and complicated, but they are just padded with a lot of prepositional phrases. If you find and cross out all the prepositional phrases, you will see that a very simple sentence is left.

Have the student read the sentence in **Exercise 5**. Help him as needed to find and cross out all the prepositional phrases. After he has done so, he will find the sentence “A horse nibbles grass.”

Workbook: In the pasture on the old farm by the banks of the James River, a horse nibbles grass near the edge of the rickety fence with chipped white paint on it.

Answer Key:

~~In the pasture on the old farm by the banks of the James River,~~ **a horse nibbles grass** ~~near the edge of the rickety fence with chipped white paint on it.~~

Optional Follow-Up

Give the student a direction (for example, “Ron sings.”). Ron sings a song.

Then give the student another direction (“Ron sits.”). Ron goes to the sofa and sits down.

Then the student announces, “Now I am going to end this sentence with two verbs.”

Ron says, “Ron sings and sits.” He does both actions at the same time.

Here are some sample directions:

fall and roll

smile and wink

hop and bark

sigh and stretch

dance and giggle

crawl and roar