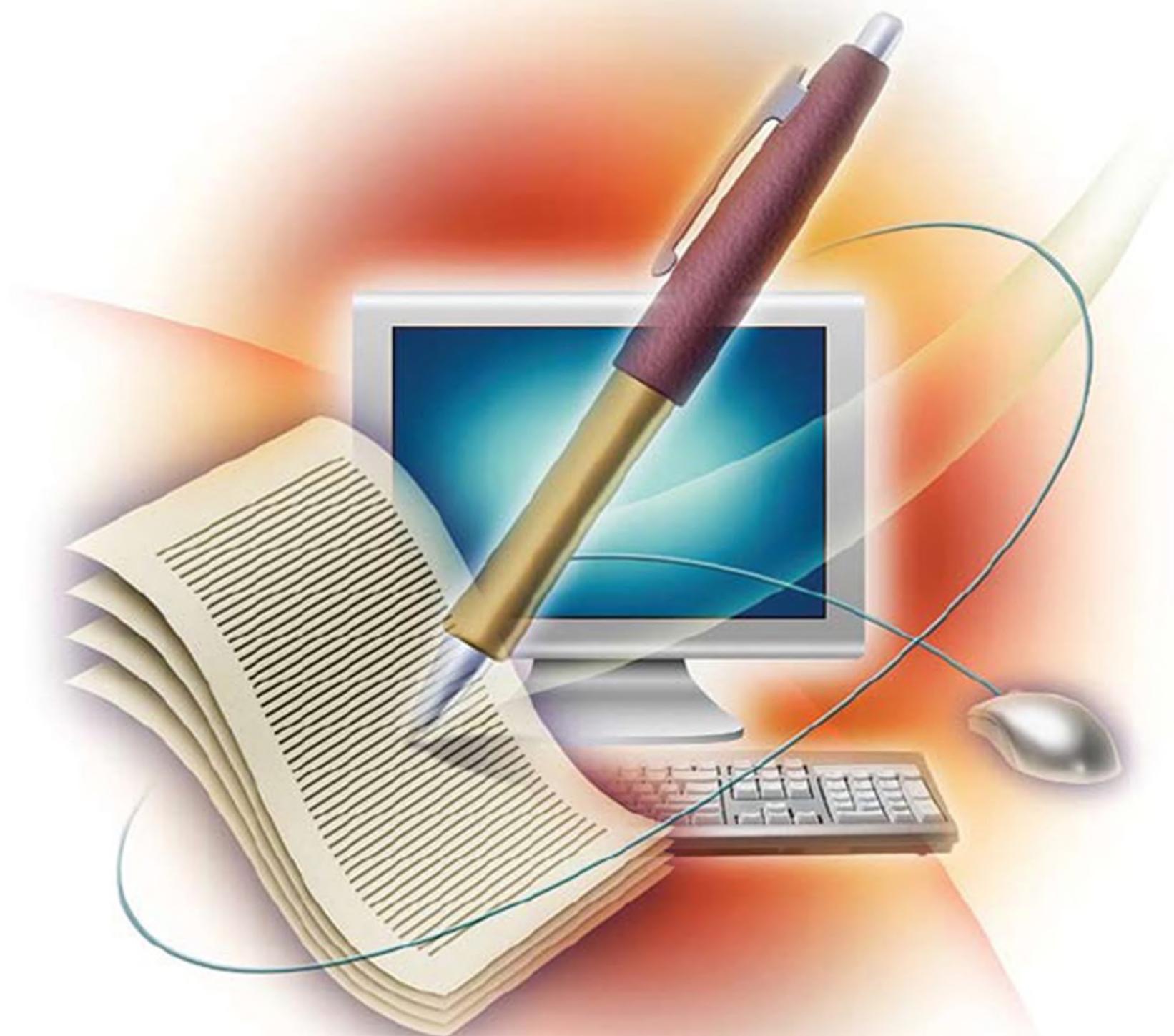


Sentence Skills with Readings

FOURTH EDITION



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The Importance of Regular Reading

Chances are that you are not as good a reader as you should be to do well in college. If so, it's not surprising. You live in a culture where people watch an average of *over seven hours of television every day!* All that passive viewing

does not allow much time for reading. Reading is a skill that must be actively practiced. The simple fact is that people who do not read very often are not likely to be strong readers.

Another reason for not reading much is that you may have a lot of responsibilities. You may be going to school and working at the same time, and you may have many family duties as well. Given a hectic schedule, you're not going to have much opportunity to read. When you have free time, you may be exhausted and find it easier to turn on the TV than to open a book.

A third reason for not reading is that our public school system may have soured you on it. One government study after another has said that our schools have not done a good job of turning people on to the rewards of reading. If you had to read a lot of uninteresting and irrelevant material in grade school and high school, you may have decided (mistakenly) that reading in general is not for you.

These reasons may help explain why you are not in the habit of regular reading. For people who are unpracticed readers, there is one overall key to becoming a better reader. That key, simple as it may sound, is to do a great deal of reading. The truth of the matter is that *reading is like any other skill. The more you practice, the better you get.*

Regular reading is a habit with many rewards. Research has shown that frequent reading improves vocabulary, spelling, reading speed, and comprehension, as well as grammar and writing style. All of these language and thinking skills develop in an almost painless way for the person who becomes a habitual reader.

The question to ask, then, is "What steps can I take to become a regular reader?" The first step is to develop the right attitude. Recognize that a person who can read well has more potential and more power than a person who cannot. Reading is a source of extraordinary power. Consider the experience of Ben Carson as told on pages 546–552 of this book. After he started reading two books a week, at his mother's insistence, his entire world changed. He moved from the bottom of his class to the head of his class, and he went on to become a world-famous surgeon. And Grant Berry, on pages 535–540, describes how a commitment to reading was the key to his hopes for the future. Increasingly in today's world, jobs involve processing information. More than ever, words are the tools of our trades. The better your command of words, the more success you are likely to have. And nothing else will give you a command of words like regular reading.

A second step toward becoming a regular reader is to subscribe to a daily newspaper and, every day, read the sections that interest you. Remember that it is not what you read that matters—for example, you should not feel obliged to read the editorial section if opinion columns are not your interest. Instead, what matters is *the very fact that you read.* Your favorite section may be the comics, or fashion, or sports, or movie reviews, or the front page. Feel perfectly free to read whatever you decide you want to read.

A third step is to subscribe to one or more magazines. On many college bulletin boards, you'll see displays offering a wide variety of magazines at discount rates for college students. You may want to consider a weekly news-magazine, such as *Newsweek* or *Time*, or a weekly general-interest magazine such as *People*. You will also be able to choose from a wide variety of monthly magazines, some of which will suit your interests. You may also want to look over the magazine section at any newsstand or bookstore. Most magazines contain postage-paid subscriber cards inside that you can send in to start a subscription. Finally, you may want to visit the magazine section of your library on a regular basis to just sit and read for an hour or so.

A fourth step to regular reading is to create a half hour of reading in your daily schedule. That time might be during your lunch hour, or late afternoon before dinner, or the half hour or so before you turn off your light at night. Find a time that is possible for you and make reading then a habit. The result will be both recreation and personal growth.

A fifth step is to read aloud to your children, which will benefit both them and you. Alternatively, have a family reading time when you and your children take turns reading. There are many books on the market that can be enjoyed by both parents and children. One outstanding choice is *Charlotte's Web*, by E. B. White—a classic story available in any bookstore or library. The children's librarian at your local library may be a good source for books. There are also many choices in the children's section at almost any paperback bookstore. An excellent mail-order source of books for children is the Chinaberry Book Service, 2780 Via Orange Way, Suite B, Spring Valley, California 91978. In its catalog, recommended books are grouped in five levels, from titles suitable for the very young to titles for young adults. Many of the books are pictured, and each book is helpfully described. To get a catalog, you can call a toll-free number: 1-800-776-2242.

The most important step on the road to becoming a regular reader is to read books on your own. Reading is most valuable and most enjoyable when you get drawn into the special world created by a book. You can travel in that world for hours or days, unmindful for a while of everyday concerns. In that timeless zone you will come to experience the joy of reading. You will also add depth to your life and make more sense out of the world. Too many people are addicted to smoking or drugs or television; you should try, instead, to get hooked on books.

The books to read are simply any books that interest you. They might be comic books, science fiction, adventure stories, romances, suspense or detective stories, horror novels, autobiographies, or any other type of book. To select your books, browse in a paperback bookstore, a library, a reading center, or any other place with a large number of books. Or read the short descriptions of the widely popular books in the list that follows. Find something you like and begin your reading journey. If you stick to it and become a regular reader, you may find that you have done nothing less than change your life.