

# English: Composition Skills



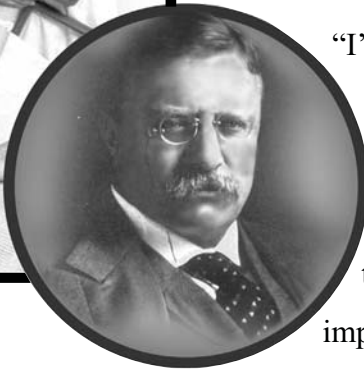
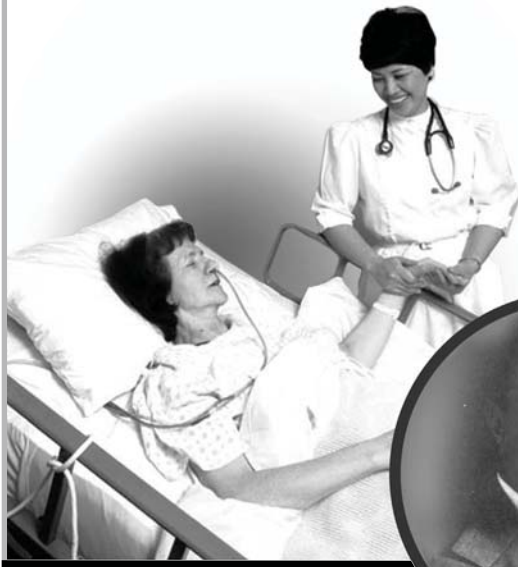
## Lesson 1

# Chapter 1

## Section 1

Lessons 1-5

### THE POWER OF WORDS



While in medical training, surgeons are encouraged to weigh the importance of each word spoken during an operation. As the *anesthetic* is given, a patient may be overcome with a sense of fear if she hears a nurse say, “I’m going to shoot her now.” Even a phrase such as “hook up the monitor” may be interpreted by a drugged patient as sounding like “shake up the monster.” Can you imagine the impact on a half-dazed patient if she hears a doctor say, “This is not my day!”

The same directions given by two different physicians could encourage or discourage a patient, simply by the physician’s *tone* of voice. One doctor’s voice might suggest a prescription will work, while another’s voice might convey *reservations*. Either would drastically affect the *morale* of a patient.

Theodore Roosevelt popularized an expression about the need for clear, *precise* communication. He called words with several possible meanings ‘*weasel words*’—by using them, a speaker might ‘*weasel*’ out of any commitment, claiming a different interpretation of the word. ■ (HB)

## VOCABULARY

**Anesthetic:** a drug that numbs patients before surgery

**Tone:** manner and emphasis of expression

**Reservations:** doubts, cautious thoughts

**Morale:** moral and mental courage to endure hardship

**Precise:** exact, clearly expressed

**Weasel words:** words used by an uncharactered person to back out of duty, responsibility or commitment

**Weasel:** a rodent often referred to when describing sly, sneaky behavior



## WORDS

Words are important and powerful! What a person says has impact and influence. On an average, men speak 12,000 words a day, and women speak 24,000 words a day. Many of those words are spoken without careful consideration of their impact. You may encounter harsh words throughout the day. Words that are careless and cruel hurt. However, tender words of love, concern and affection give hope, joy and a desire to succeed.

Some words may change a person’s life destiny. Words such as “I do” spoken during a wedding will commit a person to another in a lifetime of marriage. “You are hired” or “You are fired” can direct a person’s career. “Run, fire!” or “Help me!” can save someone’s life. “I’m sorry, please forgive me” can repair a broken relationship.

Words have changed the course of the world and America. “The Preamble” to the United States Constitution set the course for the United States to become the most powerful nation in the modern world; “No King but King Jesus!” was the battle cry of the American colonists that spurred them on to freedom from British tyranny during the Revolution; “The Gettysburg Address” helped repair the Union; the Presidential Oath of Office directs the United States’ most powerful officer; “The Ten Commandments” has been the foundation for law all over the world, from Asia to America, and influenced the men who designed the United States Constitution; the United States’ national motto, “In God We Trust,” tells the world on whom Americans depend; “Remember the Alamo!” motivated Texans to gain independence; “The Pledge of Allegiance” commits Americans to uphold justice and liberty for all; “I Have a Dream” revolutionized the purpose and lifestyle for many Americans of African descent; “If I perish, I perish” were the brave words spoken by Queen Esther of Persia who saved her people from destruction.

Using the right words when communicating with others is *vitally* important. Through listening to older people, children learn right and wrong words. By the age of two, an average *toddler’s* vocabulary includes hundreds of words and may even include sentences. Children entering kindergarten know thousands of words. As you grow, you continually hear new words and learn to use them. Words form in your mind, come out of your mouth in *syllables* and create sentences. Knowledge enters your mind by way of words, either spoken or written. Learning the correct words and rejecting the wrong words is important to communicating properly with others and becoming a master of your language.

## TONE

*Tone* of voice is the manner, pitch and quality of how a person says something. The same words or phrases may have several tones, conveying different meanings. By listening to *how* the speaker *inflects* his voice, a listener may detect different attitudes. The tone of voice may reflect that a person is content, kind, relaxed, gentle, *inquisitive*, factual, commanding, *exclamatory*, puzzled, sarcastic, teasing, bored, excited, angry, loving, sad, frightened, longing, caring, happy, hurt; embarrassed, confident; rude, kind; humble, prideful; defensive, helpful; honest, deceitful; envious, complimentary; sinister, compassionate; pouting, accepting; mysterious,

### VOCABULARY

***Vitally:*** very necessary  
***Toddler:*** a young child just learning to walk  
***Syllables:*** individual sounds of words  
***Inflect:*** to cause the voice to rise and fall when emphasizing certain words  
***Inquisitive:*** questioning, uncertain, wondering  
***Exclamatory:*** forcefully, with energy or strength

bragging; polite or sincere.

In the following examples, the parts of speech that should be inflected are bolded.

<u>Inquisitive</u>	Dad asked Mom, “Do you <b>think</b> I should go to the <b>doctor</b> , Honey?”
<u>Commanding</u>	“Go to the doctor <b>today</b> ,” she said.
<u>Factual</u>	Dad told us at breakfast, “Today I will go to the doctor.” ( <b>no inflection</b> )
<u>Exclamatory</u>	“ <b>Go to the doctor!</b> ” we said, surprised and shocked.
<u>Puzzling</u>	“Go to the doctor. . . Hmm. . . I <b>wonder</b> if I should.”
<u>Sarcastic/Teasing</u>	With a wink, Mom said, “ <b>Go to the doctor</b> , Honey; he <b>might</b> be able to find out what is <b>wrong</b> with you.”
<u>Boring</u>	Dad told Uncle Thomas, “Oh, brother, today I have to <b>go to the doctor.</b> ”
<u>Exciting</u>	My little brother yelled, “ <b>Yea! I like</b> to go to the <b>doctor!</b> ”
<u>Angry</u>	Later, I heard Dad say, “I <b>do not want</b> to go to the <b>doctor!</b> ”
<u>Loving</u>	Mom reassured Dad, “I’ll go to the doctor <b>with you</b> , Honey.”
<u>Sad</u>	At lunch I told my friends, “My <b>Dad</b> has to go to the <b>doctor.</b> ”
<u>Frightened</u>	“When we go to the <b>doctor</b> , <b>what if</b> we discover that Dad is really <b>ill?</b> ”
<u>Longing</u>	I thought to myself, “I <b>wish</b> Dad did not have to go to the <b>doctor.</b> ”
<u>Caring</u>	Mom told Dad, “When you <b>go</b> to the doctor, I’ll be <b>right</b> by your side.”
<u>Happy</u>	“ <b>He</b> believes I can become a <b>doctor</b> someday.”
<u>Hurt</u>	“ <b>He</b> said I would <b>never</b> be smart enough to become a <b>doctor.</b> ”
<u>Embarrassed</u>	“I could <b>never</b> become a doctor; I am not smart enough.”
<u>Confident</u>	“I will <b>do</b> my <b>best</b> to be a <b>good student</b> and become a <b>doctor</b> —that is one of my <b>goals</b> in life.”
<u>Rude</u>	“ <b>Don’t even think</b> you can become a doctor; <b>you are not smart enough.</b> ”
<u>Kind</u>	“I believe you can become a <b>doctor</b> ; you are <b>very</b> intelligent.”
<u>Prideful</u>	“ <b>Of course I</b> could become a <b>doctor</b> ; I am an <b>honor student.</b> ”
<u>Humble</u>	“With <b>your</b> help and <b>encouragement</b> , I <b>know</b> becoming a doctor is <b>possible</b> for me.”
<u>Defensive</u>	“ <b>What do you mean</b> I am <b>not able</b> to become a <b>doctor?</b> ”
<u>Helpful</u>	“I will <b>tutor you</b> to bring up your grades. Then, someday, you may become a <b>good</b> doctor.”

*Continue to the next page to read more inflections and tones of voice.*



<u>Deceitful</u>	“To become a <b>doctor</b> , you <b>might</b> have to <b>cheat</b> on your exams.”
<u>Honest</u>	“I will <b>not</b> cheat. I will become a doctor by <b>honest, hard work</b> .”
<u>Envious</u>	“ <b>He</b> thinks <b>he</b> is <b>smart</b> enough to become a <b>doctor</b> and to get <b>rich</b> .”
<u>Complimentary</u>	“He is <b>intelligent</b> enough to become a <b>successful</b> doctor.”
<u>Sinister</u>	“I will make life <b>so hard</b> on him, he will not be <b>able</b> to become a doctor.”
<u>Compassionate</u>	“His <b>life</b> has not been <b>easy</b> ; I <b>will help</b> him become a <b>good doctor</b> .”
<u>Pouting</u>	“ <b>Life</b> is <b>hard</b> and I am <b>poor</b> ; I <b>cannot</b> become a doctor.”
<u>Accepting</u>	“ <b>Although</b> my life is <b>difficult</b> and I am <b>poor</b> , I will study <b>hard</b> to become a <b>good doctor</b> .”
<u>Mysterious</u>	“An <b>unknown person</b> donated <b>\$1,000</b> toward my medical school scholarship.”
<u>Bragging</u>	“Someone gave <b>me</b> \$1,000 because <b>they</b> knew I was <b>smart</b> enough to become a <b>doctor</b> .”
<u>Encouraging</u>	“Although you are <b>struggling</b> with your grades <b>now</b> , <b>you</b> will do <b>better</b> .”
<u>Sincere</u>	“I <b>believe</b> that if you <b>really try</b> , you will become a <b>very good doctor</b> .”

As you have just learned, the attitude of the speaker comes through in his tone of voice. Your father or grandmother may have said to you, “Do not use that tone of voice with me!” He or she may have detected a negative tone in your voice. Remember, your choice of words and tone of voice can affect how your meaning is conveyed to your listeners. Be careful! Your words and tone have impact!

Congratulations! Now that you know about the power of words, practice your knowledge in the Activities.

# LIFE PRINCIPLE

“Ninety percent of the friction of daily life is caused by the wrong tone of voice.”



—HB