

# PLATO Course Advanced Writing Skills

## Course Overview

The Advanced Writing Skills Course was developed using modules from different Plato Courseware. In this course, you will focus on grammar, language conventions, and how to improve your essay writing skills. You will learn how to structure paragraphs in a meaningful way so the audience can read and understand the information you present quickly and clearly. You will learn how to structure a thesis, revise your draft, and other techniques for writing a good research paper.

## Course Goals

This course will help you meet the following goals:

- Learn how to correctly use some commonly confused words and tell the difference between similar sounding words by understanding their meanings.
- Learn how to structure sentences properly and how to combine sentences to make your writing interesting.
- Learn when to use commas with linking words such as *because* and with appositives.
- Learn how to use linking words with parallel structures and use appropriate linking words to join clauses.
- Identify and use parallelism and parallel structures for emphasis and clarity in your writing, without overusing them.
- Use comparative, superlative, and possessive adjectives to modify gerunds, and learn ways to identify nominalized, adjectival, and adverbial clauses.
- Learn how to revise and edit descriptive compositions and use a variety of primary and secondary sources by distinguishing between the nature and value of each source.
- Learn to use varied sentence structures to create emphasis, drama, or sophistication, without overdoing it.
- Understand how free writing can help you find ideas to explore in a paper.
- Learn to narrow your topic with interesting facts, include the right information for your audience, and identify and address different perspectives fairly in an essay.
- Understand the goals of a writing assignment to figure out what you are asked to do, and learn how to direct a peer review.
- Determine what your audience knows so you can provide the appropriate level of background knowledge, and learn how to identify elements of voice in personal narratives, creative writing, and factual essays.
- Learn how to write assignments that do not specify an audience.

- Learn how to take notes to develop ideas, how to prepare a strategy, and other processes for writing a research paper.
- Learn how to identify the topic sentence in a paragraph, write a paragraph with a good topic sentence, and write a rough draft of an essay with a strong introduction and conclusion.
- Use published writing as a model to develop your writing with a well-chosen viewpoint.
- Learn to revise a draft and review your work, identify problem areas, and rewrite personal narratives to improve understanding and engage the reader's interest.
- Identify and correct awkward sentence structures and use a checklist to proofread your writing.
- Learn how to organize comparison-and-contrast essays and how to write coherent, multiparagraph compositions with variety in sentence structure and transition sentences to link paragraphs.
- Understand how to choose and state your thesis and follow up on leads to extend your research.
- Learn how to plan and draft test essays to answer questions, and how to write well-organized formal, informal, and persuasive essays.
- Learn how to write informational compositions and how to use recognized literature as models.
- Understand how to take control of your sources, avoid plagiarism, analyze strategies that writers use to compose a research paper, and organize ideas for a research report with a thesis statement, well-constructed paragraphs, and effective transition sentences.

## General Skills

To participate in this course, you should be able to do the following:

- Complete basic operations with word processing software, such as Microsoft Word or Google Docs.
- Complete basic operations with presentation software, such as Microsoft PowerPoint or Google Docs presentation.
- Perform online research using various search engines and library databases.
- Communicate through email.

*For a complete list of general skills that are required for participation in online courses, refer to the Prerequisites section of the Plato Student Orientation document, found at the beginning of this course.*

## Course Materials

- notebook
- pencils or ink pens
- computer with Internet connection and speakers or headphones
- Microsoft Word or equivalent
- Microsoft PowerPoint or equivalent

## Course Pacing Guide

This course description and pacing guide is intended to help you stay on schedule with your work. Note that your course instructor may modify the schedule to meet the specific needs of your class

### Unit 1: Grammar Review

#### Summary

In this unit, you will learn how to correctly use some commonly confused words that sound similar. You will review sentence structure and how to combine sentences to make your writing interesting. You will learn to use commas with linking words, use appropriate linking words to join clauses, and use linking words with parallel structures. You will learn to use comparative, superlative, and possessive adjectives to modify gerunds, and to identify nominalized, adjectival, and adverbial clauses. Finally, you will learn to revise and edit descriptive compositions, use commas with appositives, and use parallel as well as varied sentence structures for emphasis and clarity.

Day	Activity/Objective	Type
1 day: 1	<b>Syllabus and Plato Student Orientation</b> <i>Review the Plato Student Orientation and Course Syllabus at the beginning of this course.</i>	Course Orientation
1 day: 2	<b>Choosing “It’s/Its,” “Accept/Except,” and “Than/Then”</b> <i>Study the difference between words that sound alike in pairs, such as “it’s/its,” “accept/except,” and “than/then.”</i>	Lesson
1 day: 3	<b>Choosing “Affect/Effect,” “You’re/Your,” and “Loose/Lose”</b> <i>Study how to tell similar sounding words apart.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 4	<b>Choosing “Whose/Who’s,” “Lay/Lie,” and “Sit/Set”</b> <i>Study the difference between similar-sounding word pairs such as these: “whose/who’s,” “lay/lie,” and “sit/set.”</i>	Lesson
1 day: 5	<b>Choosing “Amount/Number,” “Capital/Capitol,” and “Imply/Infer”</b> <i>Study how to distinguish between the words in these pairs: “amount/number,” “capital/capitol,” and “infer/imply.”</i>	Lesson
1 day: 6	<b>Confusing Words</b> <i>Learn how to correctly use commonly confused words such as “principal/principle,” “affect/effect,” “accept/except,” and “lose/loose.”</i>	Lesson
1 day: 7	<b>Sentence Structure</b> <i>Study how to understand the form and function of words, phrases, and clauses, including interrelated clauses in complex sentences, and how to use them effectively.</i>	Offline
1 day:	<b>Combining Sentences to Make Your Writing Interesting</b>	

8	<i>Study how to combine sentences so that your writing flows well and relationships between ideas are clear.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 9	<b>Using Commas with Linking Words such as “Because”</b> <i>Study when to use commas with linking words such as “because.”</i>	Lesson
1 day: 10	<b>Choosing the Best Linking Word to Join Clauses</b> <i>Study how to use the best linking word to join two thoughts in a sentence.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 11	<b>Parallelism</b> <i>Identify and use parallelism, including similar grammatical forms, to present items in a series and items juxtaposed for emphasis.</i>	Offline
1 day: 12	<b>Grammatical Elements</b> <i>Use comparative, superlative, and possessive adjectives to modify gerunds, and learn to identify nominalized, adjectival, and adverbial clauses.</i>	Practice
1 day: 13	<b>Using Linking Words with Parallel Structures</b> <i>Study how to match the parts of sentences that use pairs of linking words.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 14	<b>Writing and Revising Informational Compositions</b> <i>Revise and edit descriptive compositions to improve voice, content, organization, word choice, and sentence fluency; use subordination, coordination, apposition and other devices to clarify relationships between ideas; use a variety of primary and secondary sources and learn how to distinguish between the nature and value of each source.</i>	Offline
1 day: 15	<b>Using Commas with Appositives</b> <i>Study when to use commas to set off words or phrases that identify other nearby words or phrases.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 16	<b>Emphasizing Ideas Using Parallel Structures</b> <i>Study how to use parallel structures for emphasis and clarity in writing without overusing them.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 17	<b>Varying Your Sentence Structures</b> <i>Study how to create emphasis, drama, clarity, and sophistication by choosing varied sentence structures, without overdoing it.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 18	<b>Posttest – Unit 1</b>	Assessment

## Unit 2: Paragraphs: Prewriting

### Summary

This unit focuses on how to meet the goals of a writing assignment. You will learn how to plan a sequence of ideas and extend the sequence with new ideas using your creativity. You will learn how to narrow down your topic by using an interesting fact(s) and include relevant information for your audience. You will learn to identify biases and address different viewpoints in an essay fairly. You will learn how to use feedback from a peer review to improve your writing. You will learn how to analyze your audience so you can provide the appropriate level of background knowledge about the topic. You will learn to identify elements of voice in personal narratives, creative writings, and factual essays. You will learn to write for assignments that don't specify audience. You will learn how to take notes from different sources in order to develop ideas to use in your writing, devise a research plan, and choose a focused research topic. Finally, you will learn how to direct a peer review, use prewriting strategies, and develop a draft working on your own or in a group.

Day	Activity/Objective	Type
1 day: 19	<b>Freewriting</b> <i>Study how freewriting can help you find ideas or interesting topics to explore in a paper or assignment.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 20	<b>Understanding the Goals of the Assignment</b> <i>Study how to meet the goals of a writing assignment for a specific audience as well as for an unspecified audience.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 21	<b>Planning a Sequence of Ideas</b> <i>Study how to arrange and plan ideas for a paper into categories in order to structure it well, and how to work with others in a group to organize ideas for an essay.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 22	<b>Extending Your Idea Inventory</b> <i>Study how to come up with new creative ideas by exploring the perspectives of other people in a knowledge inventory.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 23	<b>Monitoring Your Thesis</b> <i>Study how to structure your thesis to make sure your essay stays on topic, and rewrite your thesis if it has shifted to a new topic</i>	Lesson
1 day: 24	<b>Narrowing Your Topic with Interesting Facts</b> <i>Study how to narrow your topic by using an interesting fact(s).</i>	Lesson
1 day: 25	<b>Thinking about Audience</b> <i>Study how to present relevant information for your audience in your paper.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 26	<b>Addressing Different Perspectives</b> <i>Study how to identify your biases and address different perspectives</i>	Lesson

	<i>fairly in an essay.</i>	
1 day: 27	<b>Moving Beyond the Goals of the Assignment</b> <i>Study how to use feedback from a peer review and how going beyond the goals of an assignment can help you improve your writing.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 28	<b>Determining What Your Audience Knows</b> <i>Study how to analyze or survey your audience to figure out what they already know so you can provide the appropriate level of background knowledge about the topic.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 29	<b>Highlighting Your Individual Voice</b> <i>Study how to identify elements of voice in personal narratives, creative writing, and factual essays.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 30	<b>Understanding Writing Assignments</b> <i>Study how to figure out what a writing assignment is asking you to do and to make sure that you address all parts of a writing assignment.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 31	<b>Writing for Assignments that Do Not Specify an Audience</b> <i>Study how to write an assignment to support an argument, understand the purpose of the assignment, and develop a plan to match the purpose; study how to write for assignments that do not specify an audience.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 32	<b>Taking Notes</b> <i>Study how taking notes can help you develop ideas to use in your writing and better understand your research sources; and how to write effective comments and questions that can lead to ideas for a paper.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 33	<b>Devising a Research Plan</b> <i>Study how to find a strategy to devise a research paper or plan and how to find a focused research topic.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 34	<b>Directing a Peer Review</b> <i>Study how to write questions about your creative writing for your reviewers in order to receive appropriate feedback.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 35	<b>The Writing Process</b> <i>Study how to use prewriting strategies to generate ideas and develop voice and plan; develop drafts on your own or working with others in a group; collaborate with others to organize or reorganize content and to refine your writing style to suit the occasion, audience, and purpose.</i>	Offline
1 day:	<b>Posttest – Unit 2</b>	Assessment

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## Unit 3: Paragraphs : Drafting

### Summary

This unit focuses on drafting effective paragraphs. You will learn to write a rough draft with a strong introduction and conclusion. You will learn how to improve paragraph structure by identifying and eliminating wordiness, words with unclear meanings, and improper use of voice. In the latter part of the unit, you will learn to choose your viewpoint and develop your writing by drawing from the authors you read or by using published writing as a source of topic ideas.

Day	Activity/Objective	Type
1 day: 37	<b>The Topic Sentence</b> <i>Learn to identify the qualities of a good topic sentence, identify the topic sentence in a paragraph, and choose the correct topic sentence for a paragraph.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 38	<b>Selecting Your Topic</b> <i>Study how to select a topic of appropriate breadth for a particular situation.</i>	Offline
1 day: 39	<b>From Ideas to Sentences</b> <i>Learn how to write a rough draft of an essay.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 40	<b>Improving Structure in Paragraphs</b> <i>Learn to identify and eliminate wordiness, words with unclear meanings, and improper use of voice.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 41	<b>Using Published Writing as a Model</b> <i>Study how to develop your writing by drawing from the authors you read, using a model for writing a strong introduction, and using published writing as a source of topic ideas.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 42	<b>Writing Strong Introductions</b> <i>Study how to write an introduction that interests readers and helps them to focus on your paper, using techniques such as starting with a quotation or with a startling or interesting fact.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 43	<b>Choosing Your Point of View</b> <i>Study strategies for checking and finding shifts in viewpoint in your writing in order to decide when and how to change it and how to maintain a consistent third-person point of view.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 44	<b>Writing Stronger Introductions</b> <i>Study how to write a strong introduction using elements such as pictures and dialogues, and how to order your thoughts so readers</i>	Lesson



	<i>can connect with the topic.</i>	
1 day: 45	<b>Writing Stronger Conclusions</b> <i>Study how to write a strong conclusion by highlighting an interesting idea from your paper, using information from the body of the essay or by connecting it to the introduction.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 46	<b>Posttest – Unit 3</b>	Assessment

## Unit 4: Paragraphs: Revising

### Summary

In this unit, you will learn how to revise paragraphs to improve voice, content, organization, word choice, and sentence fluency. You will learn to identify problem areas and rewrite personal narratives to enhance the reader’s understanding; identify and correct awkward sentence structures; use a checklist to proofread your writing; and use capitalization and punctuation rules correctly to produce legible work.

Day	Activity/Objective	Type
1 day: 47	<b>Revising Your Draft</b> <i>Learn to revise compositions to improve voice, content, organization, word choice, and sentence fluency.</i>	Offline
1 day: 48	<b>Reviewing Your Own Work</b> <i>Study how to review and revise your own writing by identifying problem areas, and rewrite to improve clarity and engage the reader’s interest, especially in personal narratives.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 49	<b>Awkward Sentence Structure</b> <i>Study what causes awkward sentence structure and how to correct it.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 50	<b>Editing for Spelling and Punctuation</b> <i>Study how to produce legible work with correct use of the conventions for capitalization, abbreviations, italics, hyphens and ellipses, contractions, silent letters, plurals, double consonants, internal and ending punctuations (commas), dates, letters, and locations.</i>	Offline
1 day: 51	<b>Using a Checklist to Proofread Your Work</b> <i>Study how to personalize your proofreading checklist.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 52	<b>Proofreading for College</b> <i>Study how to use a checklist to proofread your writing.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 53	<b>Posttest – Unit 4</b>	Assessment



## Unit 5: Essays

### Summary

In this unit, you will explore how to plan, organize, and write an essay. You will learn to write formal, informal, and persuasive essays and avoid plagiarism. You will learn how to choose and state your thesis in a manner that conveys the depth of your topic, and extend your research by using your first sources to identify experts and recent publications on the topic. You will learn to plan and draft test essays using recognized works of literature as models. You will learn to write informational compositions and make the best use of spoken sources of information such as debates and interviews. In the concluding part of the unit, you will learn to analyze some strategies that writers use to compose a research paper and to organize ideas for a research report with a thesis statement.

Day	Activity/Objective	Type
1 day: 54	<b>Working with the Topic</b> <i>Learn how to plan and organize an essay.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 55	<b>Determining Your Thesis</b> <i>Study how to come up with a thesis and add details to it for a paper that is too general.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 56	<b>Stating Your Thesis</b> <i>Study how to write a thesis statement that conveys the depth of your topic by describing cause-and-effect relationships and outlining alternative viewpoints on the topic.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 57	<b>Following Up on Leads</b> <i>Study how to extend your research by using your first sources to identify experts and recent publications on the topic.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 58	<b>Writing for Tests</b> <i>Study how to plan and draft a test essay in order to comprehensively answer the question.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 59	<b>Comparison and Contrast Essays</b> <i>Study how to organize ideas for writing comparison-and-contrast essays, and how to write coherent multiparagraph compositions with variety in sentence structure and transition sentences to link paragraphs.</i>	Offline
1 day: 60	<b>How to Write an Essay</b> <i>Study how to write well-organized persuasive, literary, and personal essays that have a clear focus and a logical development, with effective use of detail and variety in sentence structure.</i>	Offline
1 day: 61	<b>What's a Formal Essay?</b> <i>Study writing as a process and consider your attitudes and feelings about writing.</i>	Lesson

1 day: 62	<b>What's an Informal Essay</b> <i>Study how to identify and write an informal essay.</i>	Offline
1 day: 63	<b>Literature as Model</b> <i>Learn to compose essays using recognized works of literature as models.</i>	Offline
1 day: 64	<b>Persuasive Essays</b> <i>Learn to state a clear position or perspective in support of a proposition or proposal, and anticipate and address readers' concerns and counterarguments</i>	Offline
1 day: 65	<b>Writing Informational Compositions</b> <i>Learn to write compositions with focus, related ideas, and supporting details.</i>	Offline
1 day: 66	<b>Owning Your Essay</b> <i>Study how to take control of your sources by avoiding plagiarism, and ways to interpret source material to decide how to use it in a paper.</i>	Lesson
1 day 67	<b>Documenting Information from Spoken Sources</b> <i>Study how to make the best use of spoken sources of information such as debates and interviews by preparing a careful list of research questions and taking appropriate notes to find and develop ideas for a research paper.</i>	Lesson
1 day: 68	<b>The Research Paper Process</b> <i>Study how to analyze strategies that writers use to compose a research paper; develop the central idea or focus of a piece of writing; organize ideas in writing to ensure coherence and logical progression and cite evidence to support the ideas; relate a sequence of events and communicate the significance of the events to the audience.</i>	Offline
1 day: 69	<b>The Research Paper</b> <i>Study how to organize ideas for a research report with a thesis statement, well-constructed paragraphs, and transition sentences; reflect on appropriate manuscript requirements including the title page presentation, pagination, spacing and margins, and integration of source and support material; use appropriate conventions for documentation in the text, notes, and bibliographies by adhering to a style manual.</i>	Offline
1 day: 70	<b>Posttest – Unit 5</b>	Assessment
1 day: 71	<b>Course Review</b>	
1 day:	<b>End-of-Course Test</b>	Assessment

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