

## Syllabus

# PLATO Course CASAS Competencies Adult Secondary Writing Skills

## Course Overview

The CASAS Competencies Adult Secondary Writing Skills is developed by aligning Plato Courseware with the strands and topics that are assessed in the CASAS integrated assessment and curriculum management system. Each unit in this course aligns to one or more strands within the CASAS Content Standards. This course focuses on grammar and writing skills. You will learn the use of prepositional phrases, articles, adjectives, and adverbs. You will discover the different kinds of clauses and distinguish between dependent and independent clauses. You will develop counter arguments, prepare multiple peer review passes, and replace vague language with precise phrasing. You will also avoid common word-choice errors and determine which word is correct. In this course, you will find a variety of lessons and activities that will help improve the essential skills.

## Course Goals

By the end of this course, you will:

- Explore prepositional phrases and the use of articles.
- Identify adjectives and adverbs in a sentence and recognize verbal phrases.
- Learn three pairs of confusing verbs such as “lie/lay,” “sit/set,” and “rise/raise,” and choose the correct verb form to use them in a sentence.
- Choose the verbs that agree in number with the subject of a sentence, and a pronoun that agrees with the noun to which it refers.
- Select the correct form of a pronoun based on its function in the sentence.
- Use adjectives and adverbs properly in various degrees of comparison.
- Practice possessive pronouns and adjectives, and study word signs to find phrases and clauses in sentences.
- Discover different kinds of clauses and sentence fragments.
- Study matching parts of sentences that follow pairs of linking words.
- Use commas to set off words or phrases and study when quotations in sentences don’t require commas.
- Choose the words “whose/who’s,” “lay/lie,” and “sit/set,” and use the right linking word to join two thoughts in a sentence.

- Capitalize scientific and computer terms and understand the use of hyphens with *-ly* modifiers.
- Choose the correct word between “borrow/lend,” “bring/take,” and “all ready/already.”
- Identify the qualities of a good topic sentence, choose the correct topic sentence for a paragraph, and identify the sentences in a paragraph that develop the topic sentence.
- Explore transitional devices in paragraphs and learn to arrange a series of sentences in a logical order.
- Ascertain and eliminate wordiness, unclear meaning, and improper voice in paragraphs to select improved structure.
- Learn to develop and organize a paragraph.
- Develop counterarguments to write a persuasive essay and learn the strategies to increase the peer review feedback.
- Replace vague language with precise phrasing, and correct vague descriptions, imprecise verbs, and the overuse of the verb “to be.”
- Use parallel structures to emphasize ideas and direct a peer review by writing and generating questions for the reviewer.
- Avoid plagiarism, interpret source material, and take control of the sources.
- Use a checklist in order to proofread, and identify and rewrite inflated language.
- Extend your research by using one source to find other sources.
- Monitor your thesis and use spoken sources of information to prepare for a research paper.
- Write strong anecdotes, reason out arguments that have no direct evidence, and narrow down the topic with interesting facts.
- Plan and draft test essays to answer questions.
- Write a letter of application in response to an advertisement and respond to items on an application.
- Practice phrases and clauses and avoid the use of inappropriate language such as slang, jargon, colloquialisms, and trite expressions.
- Evade common word-choice errors and use figurative language correctly.
- Improve your writing style by eliminating wordiness, avoiding passive voice, and maintaining a consistent style.
- Identify and locate a misplaced modifier, and determine correct and incorrect parallel structure in a sentence.
- Learn what causes awkward sentence structures and make corrections.
- Use singular verbs with subjects that look plural and avoid subject-predicate mismatches.
- Use the verb form “were” to express wishes and conditions contrary to fact.
- Identify the correct usage of “amount” or “number,” “capital” or “capitol,” “infer” or “imply.”
- Review your work and support arguments with additional evidence.
- Illustrate ideas with visual aids and use analogies to illustrate ideas.
- Write strong introductions and conclusions.
- Create emphasis and sophistication by choosing varied sentence structures.
- Write business forms, notes, short memos, and business letters.
- Understand the first step of writing directions and organize actions into steps.
- Write meeting documents and reports.

## 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.*

## Credit Value

CASAS Competencies Adult Secondary Writing Skills is a 0.5-credit course.

## Course Materials

- Notebook
- Graphing calculator, recommend TI-83 or equivalent
- Computer with Internet connection and speakers or headphones
- Microsoft Word or equivalent
- Microsoft Excel or equivalent

## Unit 1: Grammar and Mechanics

### Summary

In this unit, you will learn to recognize a prepositional phrase and use articles. Apart from identifying adjectives and adverbs in a sentence, you will learn to recognize three kinds of verbal phrases such as participle, gerund, and infinitive phrases. You will also learn about three pairs of confusing verbs such as lie/lay, sit/set, and rise/raise, and choose the correct verb form to use them in a sentence. Moving ahead, you will learn to choose the verbs that agree in number with the subject of a sentence, and choose a pronoun that agrees with the noun to which it refers. You will learn to use adjectives and adverbs accurately in various degrees of comparison, and study word signs to find phrases and clauses in a sentence. You will use possessive pronouns and adjectives in

sentences and use word signs to find independent and dependent clauses. Further, you will learn the difference between a sentence fragment and a complete sentence, and distinguish between independent and dependent clauses in sentences. You will study matching parts of sentences that follow pairs of linking words. You will use commas to set off words or phrases that identify other words or phrases nearby and determine when quotations in sentences don't require commas. You will study the difference between the word pairs "whose/who's," "lay/lie," and "sit/set." You will learn to use the right kind of linking words to join two thoughts in a sentence. In the latter part of this unit, you will correct sentence fragments and capitalize scientific and computer terms. You will then study the use of hyphens with *-ly* modifiers. Lastly, you will learn to use "borrow/lend," "bring/take," and "all ready/already" appropriately.

## Unit 2: Writing Applications

### Summary

At the start of this unit, you will identify the qualities of a good topic sentence and choose the correct topic sentence for a paragraph. You will be able to identify which sentences in a paragraph develop the topic sentence and which sentences within a paragraph don't relate to the topic sentence. You will arrange a series of related sentences in their logical order and identify sentences that are arranged illogically. Further, you will study sentences that do not connect logically, identify methods to connect those sentences, and choose a word that best relates one sentence to another. You will improve the structure of a paragraph by eliminating wordiness, unclear meaning, and improper use of voice in paragraphs. You will also identify paragraphs developed by example, sequence of events, comparison and contrast, and cause and effect.

Under the Writing Strategies section, you will identify and analyze potential counterarguments to your thesis, develop counterarguments to write a persuasive essay, and generate counterarguments with the help of a friend. You will study strategies to increase the quality of your peer review feedback and conduct peer reviews in multiple passes. You will also make comments that provide specific suggestions for improvement while doing a peer review. Then, to write precisely, you will replace vague language with precise phrasing, correct vague descriptions and imprecise verbs, and correct overuse of the verb "to be." You will use parallel structures to foster emphasis and clarity in your writing without overusing them. Additionally, you will come up with new ideas by exploring the perspectives of others and expand a knowledge inventory to explore outside perspectives on your topic. You will then write questions to help your peer reviewer give good feedback, generate questions for people who review your essay, and write questions for your reviewers about your creative writing. Further, you will avoid plagiarism, interpret source material and decide how to

use it. Through the activities in this unit, you will extend your research by using one source to find other sources and use your first source to identify experts and recent publications. You will identify and replace inflated language, rewrite and simplify inflated language, and monitor your thesis to ensure that your essay is relevant to the topic. Then, you will check each paragraph against the thesis statement, rewrite your thesis if your essay has shifted to a new topic, and use spoken sources of information to prepare for a research paper. You will make the best use of spoken sources of information by preparing a careful list of research questions and taking appropriate notes, as well as use spoken sources such as debates and interviews to find and develop ideas for a research paper. Additionally, you will write strong anecdotes, explore how an effective anecdote can strengthen the introduction and conclusion of a paper, and use an anecdote in the body of an essay to clarify a difficult concept or support an argument. You will reason out arguments that have no direct evidence, generate indirect evidence for a position and its key arguments, and uncover reasoning to support arguments that you believe are true but are difficult to explain. Further, you will use an interesting fact to help you narrow down your paper topic by focusing on an interesting fact or a group of facts. You will carefully plan and draft test essays to answer questions, carefully read a test question to organize your essay, and take your test essay through the revision process.

Moving ahead, you will write a letter of application in response to an advertisement and learn to respond correctly to items on an application. You will practice what you know about phrases and clauses, and avoid the use of inappropriate language such as slang, jargon, colloquialisms, and trite expressions. You will also avoid common word choice errors and determine the correct word in a given sentence. You will use figurative language correctly and improve your writing style by eliminating wordiness, avoiding passive voice, and maintaining a consistent style. You will then identify and locate a misplaced modifier and also identify correct and incorrect parallel structure in a sentence. You will explore what causes awkward sentence structures and make corrections. Further, you will study words that look plural but require a singular verb and use the special verb form “were” to express wishes and conditions contrary to fact. You will fit the subject to the rest of a sentence logically and distinguish the words in these pairs: “amount” or “number,” “capital” or “capitol,” and “infer” or “imply.”

You will then review your own writing, identify problem areas, and rewrite to improve readers’ understanding and interest. You will review and revise your own writing, especially personal narratives or stories about your own life. After that, you will explore techniques for writing strong introductions and conclusions. You will identify and support arguments that readers may dispute and that rely on expert opinions. Further, you will use visual aids to summarize data, to illustrate complicated concepts, and to reinforce important information in your paper. You will use visual aids to replace supporting details and create original and effective analogies to clarify your writing so that the audience will understand it better. For greater emphasis, sophistication, drama, and

clarity in your writing, you will vary sentence structures without overdoing it. You will study how to choose a checklist to proofread your work and personalize your proofreading checklist.

In the latter part of this unit, you will transfer information from documents to business formats, complete each section of a form in order, and write short comments on business forms. You will begin a memo with a clear purpose statement and write clear action requests in your memo with clear details. Further, you will study the first step for writing directions, organize actions into steps, and show the steps in a set of directions so that your reader can follow them. You will be clear and tactful in a business letter, learn how to describe actions in a business letter, and handle letters with more than one topic. In the latter part of this unit, you will write a complete agenda, take notes at a meeting, and write minutes for the meeting. Lastly, you will write focus statements for your report, organize your ideas into sections and paragraphs, and write paragraphs from an outline and include transitional phrases.