

Syllabus

PLATO Course CASAS Competencies Basic Writing Skills

Course Overview

The CASAS Competencies Basic 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 nouns, pronouns, and verbs, and use punctuation marks correctly. You will also learn to use different strategies for writing. In this course, you will find a variety of lessons and activities to improve your knowledge of these concepts.

Course Goals

By the end of this course, you will be able to do the following:

- Identify nouns, pronouns, verbs, and their different types.
- Identify singular and plural nouns and make nouns plural by adding “s” and “es.”
- Use capital letters with pronouns and titles.
- Identify adjectives and adverbs and form possessives.
- Identify sentences from other groups of words, study sentences that ask, tell, and order, and use negative words correctly in a sentence.
- Use nouns as subjects, direct objects, indirect objects, and predict nominatives.
- Make nouns and pronouns agree in gender and number.
- Identify pronouns and select the correct personal or possessive pronoun to replace a noun.
- Use the six verb tenses and the subjunctive mood, learn the principal parts of irregular verbs, and use them to form six verb tenses.
- Identify the subjects of a sentence and understand how subjects as well as collective nouns work together with verbs in sentences.
- Find and correct sentence fragments and run-on sentences, and form plurals and possessives.
- Match verbs with their subjects, add forms of “be” and “have” when they’re missing from sentences, and put commas and periods inside quotation marks.
- Correct double negatives, choose “good” or “well” and “bad” or “badly” in sentences, and use an ’s ending (apostrophe + s) to show ownership.
- Use words such as “I,” “we,” “he,” “she,” “it,” “you,” and “they,” to clarify what or who these pronouns refer to.

- Use *-ly* modifiers and quotation marks with titles of short works such as poems, songs, and short stories.
- Understand the usage of “who” and “that,” and the use of verbs that have unusual past tense forms.
- Write contractions such as “could’ve” and keep pronouns consistent.
- Use “each” and “every” with singular verbs and study what verb form to use with phrases involving “or” and “nor.”
- Study the difference between the words in these pairs—“it’s/its,” “accept/except,” and “than/then.”
- Figure out your writing assignment in order to do what it specifies, and think about your audience when you write.
- Choose pronouns or other substitute words in your writing, organize your thoughts into paragraphs, and proofread your writing using a checklist.
- Find problems in your writing by reading it aloud, and use freewriting to identify and explore interesting topics for a paper or assignment.
- Determine your thesis, give credit to your sources, and write paragraph summaries as a part of a peer review.
- Ask good research questions, write essays in formal style, study synonyms and antonyms, and recognize and use homophones.
- Check your paraphrase against the source, combine sentences to make the relationship between the ideas clear, and write effective transitions.
- Meet the goals of the assignment when the audience is stated or otherwise, and use citations to give credit.
- Arrange ideas for a paper into categories to structure it, try out a strategy for devising a research plan, and make sure your information sources are reliable.
- Write thesis statements to cover the main idea, study strategies for effectively integrating quotations into your writing, and use examples to clarify your ideas.
- Determine if the parts of a letter are written correctly and write an address and a return address properly on an envelope.

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.
- Understand the basics of spreadsheet software, such as Microsoft Excel or Google Spreadsheets. Having prior computing experience is not necessary.
- Perform online research using various search engines and library databases.
- Communicate through email and participate in discussion boards.

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

Course Structure

Unit 1: Grammar

Summary

Unit 1 will introduce you to nouns and their two kinds—common and proper nouns. Then, you will learn about a verb and its two types—main and helping. You will identify sentences from other groups of words, identify singular and plural nouns, and make nouns plural by adding “s” and “es.” You will use capital letters with pronouns and in titles. Additionally, in this unit, you will learn parts of verbs, verb tenses, and choose the correct tense. You will use personal pronouns and identify different types of pronouns. You will identify adjectives, adverbs, and form possessives. Further, you will identify sentences that ask, tell, and order, and use negative words correctly in a sentence. You will also identify nouns and their types: proper, common, concrete, abstract, and collective, and use nouns as subjects, direct objects, indirect objects, and predict nominatives. This unit also teaches masculine, feminine, and neuter nouns and pronouns, and explains how nouns and pronouns agree in gender and number. You will identify pronouns and select a correct personal or possessive pronoun to replace a noun. Apart from this, you will recognize verbs by identifying action verbs, being verbs, and compound verbs. You will also use the six verb tenses and the subjunctive mood, learn the principal parts of irregular verbs, and use them to form six verb tenses. This unit will help you identify the subjects of a sentence, including compound subjects, and understand how subjects as well as collective nouns work together with verbs in sentences. You will then find and correct sentence fragments and run-on sentences. Toward the end of this unit, you will learn about the rules for forming and spelling plurals and possessives.

Unit 2: Grammar and Mechanics, Part 1

Summary

In Unit 2, you will match verbs with their subjects, add forms of “be” and “have” when they’re missing from sentences, and put commas and periods inside quotation marks. Apart from this, you will also learn how verbs always match their subjects, even when there are words between them. You will then match subjects and verbs when there is more than one subject, and correct the double negatives in sentences. In this unit, you will choose “good” or “well” and “bad” or “badly” in sentences, and use an ’s ending (apostrophe + s) to show ownership. This unit includes activities where you will use words such as “I,” “we,” “he,” “she,” “it,” “you,” and “they,” so that it’s clear about what or who they refer to. In the latter part of this unit, you will use the *-ly* form of a modifier, and use quotation marks with titles of short works, such as poems, songs, and short stories.

Unit 3: Grammar and Mechanics, Part 2

Summary

In Unit 3, you will understand the usage of “who” and “that,” and use verbs that have unusual past tense forms. You will also learn to write words such as “should’ve” correctly and understand the importance of fixing modifiers close to the words they describe. Then, you will fix sentence fragments and use ’s to show shared or separate ownership. This unit also has lessons where you will use consistent pronouns in a piece of writing and understand what verb forms to use with the words “each” and “every” and with phrases involving “or” and “nor.” Further, you will choose between “I” and “me” and other confusing pronoun pairs. Lastly, you will also study the difference between the words in these pairs—“it’s/its,” “accept/except,” and “than/then.”

Unit 4: Writing Strategies

Summary

Unit 4 begins with the basics of punctuation. You will figure out what a writing assignment wants you to do in order to ensure that you address all its parts. You will consider the purpose of your paper and include the right information when you write for a particular audience. This unit will also help you to choose pronouns or other good substitute words in your writing. Here, you will organize your thoughts into paragraphs and proofread your writing using a checklist. You will write conclusions that summarize your main ideas, expand your research papers with more information, and find as well as fix repeated sentence length in your writing. Apart from this, you will match your peer reviews to the stages of writing and write helpful peer review comments for early drafts. You will identify problems in your writing by reading aloud and use free writing to help you get ideas to explore in a paper. Further, in the next level, you will figure out the purpose of a writing assignment and develop a plan to fit that purpose. You will determine your thesis, add details to make it effective, and figure out whether a fact is common or needs to be given credit. You will also write summaries and questions in peer reviews that show writers when they’re wandering in their papers, and take down notes that can lead to ideas for a paper. You will then find clichés in your writing and

replace them with straightforward language. This unit also provides knowledge on how to create an outline with topics, subtopics, and details, and change its order to best support your main idea.

In this unit, you will learn to ask good research questions, write essays in a formal style, study synonyms and antonyms, and recognize and use homophones. It also has lessons on spelling rules, where you will also learn the correct spellings of commonly misspelled words. You will punctuate sentences correctly by using periods, question marks, semicolons, colons, dashes, hyphens, and exclamation points as end punctuation for sentences. You will use published writing as a source of topic ideas and explore advanced techniques for searching the Internet. You will apply techniques for writing strong introductions that start with a quotation and begin with a startling or interesting fact in order to draw the reader's attention. Additionally, you will explain ideas and information from source material using your own words, combine sentences to make the relationship between the ideas clear, and use effective transitional words and phrases to strengthen an essay. You will find shifts in point of view in your writing, and you will maintain a consistent third-person point of view.

In the next level, you will meet the goals of the assignment when the audience is stated or otherwise, and use citations to give credit to other people for the use of their ideas, direct quotations, and statistics or paraphrased ideas. You will balance research with original ideas, determine if the evidence behind your arguments is both relevant and complete, and identify your biases and address different perspectives fairly in persuasive writing. You will use strong modifiers to make your writing interesting, and apply compare/contrast and problem/solution models to structure your writing. This unit also includes activities where you will study ways to arrange ideas for a paper into categories to see how to structure it, try out a strategy for devising a research plan, and make sure your information sources are reliable. You will write thesis statements that cover the main idea entirely and show that you have thought through your topic. You will also study strategies for effectively integrating quotations into your writing and use examples to clarify your ideas. You will analyze your audience to figure out what they already know and identify elements of voice in personal narratives, creative writing, and factual essays. Toward the end of this unit, you will determine if the parts of a letter are written correctly, and write an address and a return address properly on an envelope.