

COLLEGE GUILD
PO Box 6448, Brunswick ME 04011

CREATIVE LANGUAGE

Unit 1 of 6

Language

Welcome to College Guild's Creative Language course. As the title suggests, this course is all about your imagination, so there are no right or wrong answers. Feel free to ask your readers any questions concerning the course or CG.

Guidelines for all College Guild courses:

1. **Answer all the questions that are in bold print, using black or blue ink or dark pencil if possible.** After we receive and review your completed Unit, we will send you feedback from your reader along with your original work and the next Unit. You don't need to return the questions – it saves us both postage.
2. There is no **specific deadline** to complete any Unit, but we would get concerned if we hadn't heard back from you after two months.
3. Remember how often the mail service loses things. **If you don't hear back from us after a month, please write to make sure we received your Unit** and sent out the next one.

Let us know if you need a dictionary, free to students who complete the first unit.

LANGUAGE

Language is the dress of thought. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

Writing is much more than using correct spelling and grammar. Unique vocabulary and ideas, imagination and humor are what makes others want to read your work. In other words, dress up your thoughts with creative language, just as Samuel Johnson, a famous English writer said! (Although they are not the focus of this course, you will find some basic spelling and grammar guidelines at the end of this unit.)

The building blocks of language are words, so we'll start with them.

1) Write down 5 words that start with each of the following letters, (total of 30):

C - M- A- S- I- R-

2) Pick the longest word you chose. Make as many words as you can from the letters of that word.

- 3) Pick two of the words you chose and write a sentence containing both.
 4) Pick three other words and write a sentence containing all three without putting the words next to each other.

5) Write a story using six other words. It doesn't have to be long, but it should have at least 2 characters, and a plot to make us want to keep reading in order to find out how it ends.

6) Write a sentence only six words long – each word should start with the letter C, M, A, S, I or R.
Example: "Cars slide in mud and rain"

METAPHORS are a wonderful way to "dress up" language. They are comparisons that reveal a connection between two dissimilar things. On the surface, those things might have nothing in common. For example, do war and a black cat have anything in common? How about a beach and a record? They are totally different things, but (according to two CG students) alike in one way: "*War is a black cat; we are always trying to avoid it.*" "*A sandy beach is an old record, familiar and full of memories.*" Other examples are:

The moon is a skater, gliding across the ice at night.
A dog is a pair of socks, keeping my feet warm at night.

7) Make up metaphors for the following:

Swimming is....

A tree is....

A hot shower is....

A toothache is....

Fighting is.....

Being alone is....

A dinosaur is....

A drone is.....

Metaphors are NOT definitions or descriptions. For example, *A dinosaur is a creature from the past* is a definition. *A hot shower is wet and warm and gets me clean* is a description. Check back that your metaphors are not definitions or descriptions.

If you insert the words "like" or "as", the comparison is called a **SIMILE**. For example:

The child was quiet as a mouse.

An old barn is like a journey to the 1800's.

Visiting my family is like a trip to the zoo.

Teaching my son to drive is as nerve-wracking as competing in the Olympics!

8) Make up similes for the following and use them in sentences:

hungry

cold

bowl of oatmeal

wild horse

dieting

writing metaphors

Going back to an earlier metaphor, the student could have written: *War is like a black cat.....*" However, that extra word between war and cat seems to weaken the connection a little. Stating that war is a black cat is more of a declaration.

9) Why would a simile be a weaker comparison than a metaphor?

10) Pick three of the words you chose for #1.

- a- write a definition of the word
- b- write a description of the word
- c- create a metaphor for the word.

Example: acorn / a seed from an oak tree / a small brown nut with a cap / a miracle of a large possibility in a small package

John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946) wrote that *Words ought to be a little wild for they are the assault of thoughts on the unthinking*. Metaphors are one way to make words “wilder”. Sometimes just substituting one word for another is all it takes.

A SYNONYM for a word is another word with the same meaning. An ANTONYM is a word with the exact opposite meaning. This next assignment is about finding words out of the ordinary to make your prose and poetry stand out. (*Example: One antonym for small is “big”, but “mountainous” is more colorful.*)

11) Write synonyms for the following eight words.

wonder
power

wander
alone

bully
relax

worried
hungry

12) Write a story. Pick ten words in the story and think of synonyms for them. Write the synonyms above the original words.

One student’s reaction to this assignment was that he liked the substitutes better because they “make the picture in my mind brighter. I had to reach deeper inside of me.” Another had the opposite response. He felt the original wording was more honest, less forced.

13) Which version do you like best and why?

14) Write antonyms for the following eight words.

hope
friendly

silly
long

cherish
car

attention
study

15) Imagine you are writing this course. Create an assignment about antonyms for your students.

A particular group of words that can trip up a writer is HOMONYMS, words that sound exactly the same but are spelled differently and have different meanings. The ones in the following sentences are frequently misused. **These are important ones to learn!**

*The TWO teenagers drove TO the mall and ate hamburgers TOO.
THERE are lots of THEIR friends around when THEY'RE having a party.
YOU'RE not paying attention to YOUR teacher!*

Examples of Homonyms

by – bye – buy	so – sew – sow	oh – owe
to – too – two	no – know	one – won
hear – here	dear – deer	doe – dough
choose – chews	site – cite – sight	die – dye
pare – pair – pear	toe – tow	tax – tacks
throne – thrown	vein – vane – vain	weak – week
sighs – size	paws – pause	rain – rein – reign

16) Think of another set of homonyms, and write a sentence containing both.

The following poem (by an unknown author) is a clever way to play with homonyms.

Whether the Weather
 Whether the weather be fine,
 Or whether the weather be not,
 Whether the weather be cold
 Or whether the weather be hot,
 We'll weather the weather
 Whatever the weather,
 Whether we like it or not!

Other words are spelled the same, but can have entirely different meanings, such as bear or slug. They are called HOMOGRAPHS.

*I couldn't bear to watch the injured bear.
 He had just taken a slug of beer when the bouncer slugged him.*

Examples of Homographs

bass (fish/instrument)	row (line/argue)
sewer (person who sews/waste pipe)	lead (go in front/metal)
putting (golf stroke/placing)	bow (bend/weapon)
job (occupation/Biblical figure)	tear (liquid from eye/rip)
invalid (not valid/chronically sick)	wind (air/turn around)

17) Think of another word that has two entirely different meanings, and use the word twice in a single sentence, using both meanings.

18) Write a metaphor for language.

SPELLING & GRAMMAR

Below are a few spelling hints. Some basic rules of grammar follow. If these pages are lost and you would like another copy, just let us know.

spelling quiz for frequently misused words (contributed by a CG student)

Match the words (#1-12) with the definitions (a-l). (Answers below.)

1-accept	2-except	3-affect	4-effect	5-assent	6-accent	
7- eminent	8-imminent	9-embarrass	10-embrace	11-its	12-it's	
a-looming	b-hug	c-acclaimed	d-receive	e-stress	f-belonging to	
g-impact	h-excluding	i-it is	j-aftermath	k-humiliate	l-agreement	

[Answers: 1d, 2h, 3j, 4g, 5l, 6e, 7c, 8a, 9k, 10b, 11-f, 12i]

common prefixes and suffixes

A prefix is a syllable or group of syllables attached to the beginning of a word to give it a new meaning. Here are some common examples.

Prefix	Meaning	Example	Prefix	Meaning	Example
ante-	before, in frnt of	anteroom	mono-	one	monosyllable
anti-	against, opposite of	antisocial	non-	not	nonviolent
bi-	two	bicycle	over-	beyond	overrate
co-	jointly	cosign	post-	after	postdate
con-	with, together	condominium	pre-	before	prepay
de-	remove, opposite of	deactivate	pro-	in favor of	prochoice
dis-	not, opposite of	displace	re-	again	reread
ex-	previous, former	ex-wife	semi-	half	semicircle
extra-	beyond, outside of	extrasensory	sub-	under, less	submarine
fore-	previous, before	forewarn	super-	big, great	supermarket
in-	not	insignificant	trans-	across	transcontinental
inter-	among, together	international	tri-	three	triangle
intra-	in the middle	intrastate	un-	not, opposite	unkind
mid-	in the middle	midsummer	under-	too little	underpaid
mis-	wrongly, badly	mismatch	uni-	one	unicycle

A **suffix** is added at the end of a word to form another word of different meaning or function. Many are added to nouns to mean “state, quality or condition of being”, such as –ance, –ence, –hood, –ment, –ness, –ship (compliance, conference, childhood, enjoyment, kindness, citizenship).

The suffixes –er, –or, and –ster mean “one who or that which” (banker, sculptor, youngster).

Suffixes are often added to adjectives to denote “relating to, consisting of, like”, such as –ar, –ary, –ate, –en, –ish, –ous (spectacular, customary, collegiate, citizen, feverish, dangerous).

Thanks to College Guild student Erik P. for compiling this information on prefixes and suffixes.

the “i before e” rule

Usually words with the letters “i” and “e” together are spelled so that the “i” goes first:

field, believe, grief

However, if they follow the letter “c”, the opposite is true:

receive, deceive, perceive

There is one more exception! If the word is pronounced like the letter A (as in hay or say), then “e” comes before “i”.

neighbor, sleigh, weigh

So the rule reads like this: *i before e except after c except when the word sounds like “-ay”*

There are still a few words that are exceptions to the exceptions (caffeine, seize). The English language is a hard one to master – so many exceptions to the rules!

BASIC GRAMMAR RULES

4 parts of speech: verbs, nouns, adverbs and adjectives

A sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with a period. The part of speech that every sentence needs is a verb, the word for an action. Yes, it’s possible to use only one word and have a sentence as long as it’s a verb, for example: *Go!* The other part of speech that makes up almost every sentence is a noun, the subject of the sentence, who or what it’s about.

An example of a complete sentence is, *The fish thinks*. The fish (a noun) is the subject of the sentence and it thinks (a verb). *Stars bright* is not a sentence because the subject (stars) is a noun, but there’s no verb – *bright* isn’t an action, it merely describes the noun.

Two other parts of speech besides verbs and nouns include adjectives (that describe a noun) and adverbs (that describe a verb).

The fox is quick. (Quick refers to the fox, a noun, so “quick” is an adjective.)

The fox ran quickly. (Quickly refers to ran, a verb, so “quickly” is an adverb.)

It’s incorrect to say “the fox is quickly”, or “the fox ran quick”.

apostrophes

If you can always remember to correctly distinguish between “its” and “it’s”, you’ll be doing better than most college graduates. Here is a simple rule to memorize: It’s always means “it is.” “Its” means belonging to.

Examples: The dog chewed on its bone. It’s too damn hot!

The way to check is to stop and read the sentence to yourself, substituting “it is” to see which one fits. You would say to yourself, “The dog chewed on it is bone. It is too damn hot!” This is also true of the verbs didn’t (did not), he’s (he is), weren’t (were not), we’re (we are), etc.

THE OTHER USE OF APOSTROPHES: In the examples above, we were talking about the common verbs (is, was, did, can, etc.) However, when used after a noun (for example *rabbit's carrot*), it means that the carrot belongs to the rabbit. It's a possessive like prisoner's cell, teacher's student, etc. What gets tricky is when you have more than one rabbit; then the apostrophe goes after the "s": three rabbits' carrot; two prisoners' cell; eight teachers' students. *Example: All the players' footballs were falling apart because the coach's assistant forgot to order new ones.*

singular and plural

With one object, there is no "s" at the end; with more than one, there is. Examples:
1 table, 8 tables 1 chicken, 142 chickens 1 doughnut, 54 doughnuts

For actions (verbs) it's the opposite. If one person or object is doing something, the action has an "s" at the end; if there are 2 or more subjects, the verb doesn't. Examples:

The table falls. The tables fall. One chicken clucks. 142 chickens cluck.

Putting an "s" at the end of a word to indicate there are more than one may be a "rule", but in the English language there are MANY exceptions, such as these:

<u>singular</u>	<u>plural</u>	<u>singular</u>	<u>plural</u>
man	men	child	children
box	boxes	sheep	sheep
wolf	wolves	appendix	appendices

common verbs

"Is" is used for a singular noun, "are" for more than one -- they are used for actions that take place in present time.

The lion is found in the jungles of Africa.

Grandmothers are supposed to be good cooks.

For an action that takes place in the past, "was" refers to the singular and "were" to the plural. Examples:

John was a great basketball player.

The new Toyotas were sold out when we went shopping.

Here are two other commonly used verbs with different words for singular vs. plural nouns:

	<u>Present</u>	<u>Past</u>		<u>Present</u>	<u>Past</u>
Singular:	He does.	He did.		He has.	He had.
	I do.	I did.	I have.	I had.	
Plural:	They do.	They did.		They have.	They had.
	We do.	We did.		We have.	We had.

Add "n't" to all these verbs and you have the negatives: doesn't (does not), didn't, hasn't, hadn't, haven't (have not) and don't (do not).

It's common to hear, "He don't." or "She have." They are not correct. However, there is an exception to the rule. You is followed by "are" instead of "is" whether it refers to one person or more than one. The same is true for "you do" and "you have".

consistency in verb tenses and pronouns

Avoid changing from past to present or future in the same sentence or story. For example:

I look (present) out the window and saw (past) a UPS truck.

Yesterday the wolf ran (past) and howls (present) at the moon.

The prince will (future) take over the throne and rules (present).

Correct sentences would be:

I look out the window and see a truck. I looked out the window and saw a truck.

Yesterday the wolf ran and howled at the moon. The wolf runs and howls at the moon.

Next year, the prince will take over the throne. Last year the prince took over the throne.

The need for consistency also applies to nouns and "pronouns" (he, she, they, etc.) which take the place of a noun. The English language makes this particularly difficult because we so frequently have to say "he or she" (or the shortened form "s/he") to be grammatically correct. For example:

A writer (singular) is always happy when his or her book is read.

It's less awkward to say, "when their books are read", but you would have to go back and make everything plural – *Writers are always happy when their books are read.*

Here are examples of mixing up singular and plural in the same sentence.

On Sundays, men frequently watch football on his television set.

A person should be careful when they take a walk before a thunder storm.

Corrections: *A man watches football on his TV set.*

People should be careful when they walk in thunderstorms.

Note: The Pen America Center (588 Broadway-Ste. 303, New York NY 10012) offers a free handbook for writers in prison.

Remember: First names only & please let us know if your address changes