

8.6 Writing clear sentences

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 12 marks

Objective

Build the skills to write sentences that are clear **under pressure** —in a timed essay.

You must be able to:

- start a sentence with the subject when time is short
- avoid the constructions that most often go wrong under pressure
- repair a sentence quickly without rewriting the paragraph
- keep clarity while writing at speed

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a task used later.

■ Subject first

Under time pressure, the safest sentence begins with its subject and reaches its verb quickly. Elaborate openings are where timed writing collapses.

■ Constructions that fail under pressure

Long introductory clauses; multiple embedded qualifications; a pronoun three sentences from its noun. Each is manageable with time to check, and each fails without it.

■ Fast repair

If a sentence has gone wrong, do not rewrite the paragraph. Break it at the nearest full stop and start a new sentence with the subject. Two plain sentences beat one broken one.

2 Practice

2.1 State the safest sentence shape under time pressure.

[2]

2.2 Name two constructions that fail under pressure. [2]

2.3 A sentence has run out of control mid-paragraph.

(a) State the fastest repair. [1]

(b) State why rewriting the paragraph is the wrong move. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 In a timed essay, an elaborate opening clause is risky because [1]

- **A** it is too formal
- **B** the sentence often collapses before the verb
- **C** it is ungrammatical
- **D** it wastes ink

3.2 Two plain sentences instead of one broken one is [1]

- **A** a stylistic failure
- **B** the correct fast repair
- **C** a comma splice
- **D** a concession

3.3 Rewrite as two clear sentences: "Given that the evidence, which comes from several sources including the department's own figures that were published last year, points in one direction, it seems that the policy should change." [4]

4 Go further

- work through the **8.6 Writing clear sentences** lesson on the **Learn** page;
- read the **Audience, Tone, and Sentence Craft** section of the AP English Language handout on the **Know** page.

Solutions

2.1 begin with the subject and reach the verb quickly.

2.2 any two of: long introductory clauses; multiple embedded qualifications; a pronoun far from its noun.

2.3 (a) end the sentence at the nearest full stop and start a new one with the subject.
(b) it costs time the essay does not have, for no gain in clarity.

3.1 B. the sentence loses its shape before the verb arrives.

3.2 B. clarity beats one elaborate sentence.

3.3 two grammatical sentences; each begins with its subject; meaning preserved.