

8th Grade Summer ELA Packet

Grammar, Vocabulary & Sentence Construction

Name: _____ Date: _____

Welcome, 8th Grader!

This packet is designed to sharpen the grammar, vocabulary, and writing skills you will need for high school ELA. By the time you finish this packet, you will have practiced the kinds of close reading, precise writing, and analytical thinking that your future English teachers will expect. Take this seriously — the work you do this summer matters.

How to use this packet:

Complete two to three sections per week throughout the summer.
Push yourself to write in complete, varied sentences at all times.
Look for connections between what you read and what you write.

SECTION 1: GRAMMAR — ACTIVE VS. PASSIVE VOICE

Lesson: Active and Passive Voice

In **active voice**, the subject performs the action. Active voice is direct, clear, and energetic.

In **passive voice**, the subject receives the action. Passive voice can feel weak or evasive, though it is sometimes used deliberately.

| Voice | Example |

|-----|-----|

| Active | *The coach trained the team every morning.* |

| Passive | *The team was trained by the coach every morning.* |

| Active | *The student wrote a powerful essay.* |

| Passive | *A powerful essay was written by the student.* |

Tip: Look for *was/were + past participle* as a sign of passive voice (*was written, were chosen, was decided*).

Exercise 1A: Identify the Voice

Directions: Write A (active) or P (passive) on the line.

1. The speech was delivered by the youngest finalist in the competition. _____
2. Dr. Carter led the community meeting last Saturday evening. _____
3. The mural was painted by a group of high school students over the summer. _____
4. The principal announced the new schedule at the assembly. _____
5. Mistakes were made, and no one seemed willing to take responsibility. _____
6. She presented her research findings to the entire district. _____
7. The award was accepted on behalf of the school by the team captain. _____
8. The city council approved the plan for the new recreation center. _____

Exercise 1B: Convert to Active Voice

Directions: Rewrite each passive voice sentence in active voice. You may need to identify or invent a logical subject.

1. The poem was recited beautifully by Imani at the assembly.

2. The winning essay was selected by the panel of judges after careful review.

3. The experiment was conducted by the science team over three weeks.

4. A generous donation was made to the library by a local organization.

Exercise 1C: Choose Your Voice

Directions: Write two sentences on the topic of *leadership*: one in active voice and one in passive voice. Then explain which is more effective and why.

Active: _____

Passive: _____

Which is more effective and why? _____

SECTION 2: GRAMMAR — VERBALS (GERUNDS, PARTICIPLES & INFINITIVES)

Lesson: Three Types of Verbals

Verbals are verb forms used as other parts of speech. They look like verbs but function differently.

| Verbal | Form | Function | Example |

|-----|-----|-----|-----|

| **Gerund** | verb + *-ing* | noun | *Running* every day builds endurance. |

| **Participle** | verb + *-ing* or *-ed* | adjective | The *exhausted* player sat on the bench. |

| **Infinitive** | *to* + verb | noun, adjective, or adverb | She wanted *to lead* the project. |

Exercise 2A: Identify the Verbal

Directions: Underline the verbal in each sentence. Then write G (gerund), P (participle), or I (infinitive) and what role it plays in the sentence.

1. Swimming in the ocean is one of her favorite summer activities.

Type: _____ Role: _____

2. The determined athlete refused to give up despite the setbacks.

Type: _____ Role: _____

3. Frustrated by the delay, the passengers began to complain loudly.

Type: _____ Role: _____

4. To write clearly and precisely is a skill that takes years to develop.

Type: _____ Role: _____

5. She spent the afternoon studying for her placement exam.

Type: _____ Role: _____

Exercise 2B: Write Your Own

Directions: Write an original sentence for each type of verbal. Label each one.

1. Gerund: _____

2. Participial phrase: _____

3. Infinitive phrase: _____

SECTION 3: VOCABULARY — GREEK AND LATIN ROOTS

Lesson: Word Roots Unlock Meaning

Many English words are built from Greek and Latin roots. Learning these roots helps you decode the meaning of unfamiliar words.

| Root | Meaning | Examples |

|-----|-----|-----|

| *bene-* | good, well | beneficial, benevolent |

| *mal-* | bad, evil | malicious, malfunction |

| *port-* | carry | portable, transport |

| *scrib-/script-* | write | describe, manuscript |

| *vid-/vis-* | see | visible, evidence |

| *dict-* | say, speak | predict, contradict |

| *cred-* | believe | credible, incredible |

| *rupt-* | break | interrupt, erupt |

| *terr-* | land, earth | territory, terrain |

| *voc-/voke-* | call, voice | advocate, invoke |

Exercise 3A: Root Meanings

Directions: Using the root chart above, write a definition for each word. Then use two of the words in an original sentence.

1. manuscript: _____
2. malevolent: _____
3. contradict: _____
4. advocate: _____
5. erupt: _____
6. terrain: _____
7. transport: _____
8. incredible: _____

Original Sentences:

1. _____

2. _____

Exercise 3B: Contextual Vocabulary

Directions: Use what you know about Greek and Latin roots — plus context clues — to define each bolded word.

1. The senator's **credibility** was damaged after the scandal; few people believed anything she said.

credibility: _____

2. The interruption broke the speaker's concentration just as she was making her strongest point.

interruption: _____

3. The scientist's findings were based on visible evidence that anyone could observe.

visible: _____

4. The malfunction in the power grid left thousands of homes without electricity for two days.

malfunction: _____

SECTION 4: SENTENCE CONSTRUCTION — SUBORDINATION & COORDINATION

Lesson: Controlling Ideas with Subordination and Coordination

Coordination joins two equally important ideas using coordinating conjunctions (FANBOYS).

> *She was tired, yet she pushed through and finished the assignment.*

Subordination shows that one idea is less important than another — it emphasizes the main idea by making the secondary idea dependent.

> *Although she was tired, she pushed through and finished the assignment.*

The **choice** between coordination and subordination changes emphasis and meaning.

Exercise 4A: Subordination or Coordination?

Directions: Combine each pair of sentences using the method indicated. Write the full sentence on the line.

1. He studied all night. He was still nervous about the test. [Subordination — use "even though"]

2. She wanted to be a doctor. She spent the summer volunteering at the clinic. [Coordination — use "so"]

3. The community organized a protest. City leaders finally agreed to meet. [Subordination — use "after"]

4. The new coach was strict. The team respected her deeply. [Coordination — use "but"]

Exercise 4B: Emphasis Through Structure

Directions: The following pairs of sentences are grammatically correct, but they emphasize different ideas. Read them carefully and answer the question below each pair.

Pair 1:

- A. *Although the film won several awards, it was criticized for its lack of historical accuracy.*
- B. *Although it was criticized for its lack of historical accuracy, the film won several awards.*

Which sentence (A or B) emphasizes the criticism? Which emphasizes the awards? Explain.

Pair 2:

A. *He trained for years, but he never made the Olympic team.*

B. *Even though he never made the Olympic team, he trained with discipline and purpose for years.*

How does the shift in structure change what you notice about the person described?

SECTION 5: ADVANCED PUNCTUATION

Lesson: Semicolons, Colons & Em Dashes

Semicolons (;) connect two closely related independent clauses.

> *The audition went well; she felt confident walking out.*

Colons (:) introduce a list, explanation, or elaboration after an independent clause.

> *She needed one thing before the performance: silence.*

Em dashes (—) set off a dramatic pause, interruption, or added emphasis.

> *The answer — after months of searching — was simpler than she expected.*

Exercise 5A: Add the Correct Punctuation

Directions: Add the correct punctuation mark (semicolon, colon, or em dash) and explain your choice.

1. She had only one goal to make the varsity team as a freshman.

Mark used: _____ Why: _____

2. The performance was flawless the audience gave a standing ovation before it was even over.

Mark used: _____ Why: _____

3. He practiced every day and I mean every single day for the regional competition.

Mark used: _____ Why: _____

4. The coach listed the qualities she valued in a player dedication, coachability, and heart.

Mark used: _____ Why: _____

Exercise 5B: Write Your Own

Directions: Write an original sentence for each punctuation mark. Your sentences should be about school, community, or a personal experience.

1. Semicolon: _____

2. Colon: _____

3. Em dash: _____

SECTION 6: LITERARY PASSAGE & ANALYSIS

Passage: "The Weight of Words"

Directions: Read the following passage carefully. Pay attention to the author's craft — word choice, sentence structure, and tone. Answer the questions that follow.

> Naomi had written the letter four times. Each version started the same way and ended differently, as if she were testing how much of the truth she could actually stand to say.

>

> The first letter was **conciliatory** — full of apologies and careful language designed to soften the damage. The second was harder, more direct, the kind of thing you write when you are tired of being the one who smooths things over. The third she never finished. She got as far as *Dear Marcus*, and then sat with the blank page for twenty minutes before folding the paper in half.

>

> The fourth letter was only three sentences long. When she read it back to herself, she understood for the first time that brevity is not weakness. Some truths, she realized, do not need to be **elaborated** upon — they simply need to be said.

>

> She sealed the envelope and left it on the kitchen table. Whatever happened next was no longer hers to control.

Exercise 6A: Vocabulary in Context

Directions: Define each word as it is used in the passage.

1. **conciliatory** (paragraph 2): _____

2. **brevity** (paragraph 3): _____

3. **elaborated** (paragraph 3): _____

Exercise 6B: Author's Craft Analysis

Directions: Answer each question in two to three complete sentences. Support each answer with specific evidence from the text.

1. How does the author's description of each letter reveal Naomi's emotional development throughout the passage? Trace the shift from the first letter to the fourth.

2. The author writes that "brevity is not weakness." What does this line mean in context, and why is it a significant moment for the character?

3. What does the final sentence — "Whatever happened next was no longer hers to control" — suggest about Naomi's state of mind at the end of the passage? What theme does this support?

SECTION 7: ARGUMENT WRITING — CLAIM & EVIDENCE

Lesson: Building an Argument

A strong argument in ELA has these essential parts:

1. **Claim:** Your position or main argument.
2. **Evidence:** Facts, quotes, examples that support your claim.
3. **Reasoning:** Your explanation of how the evidence supports your claim.
4. **Counterargument:** Acknowledging the other side and responding to it.
5. **Conclusion:** Restating your claim and the significance of your argument.

Avoid: phrases like "I think," "I believe," and "In my opinion" in formal argumentative writing. Instead, let your evidence do the talking.

Exercise 7A: Evaluate the Argument

Directions: Read the following paragraph. Identify the claim, evidence, and reasoning. Then explain what is missing or weak.

> Social media is harmful to teenagers because it makes them feel bad about themselves. Many teens use social media every day and feel worse after. Studies show that teenagers are more anxious than they used to be. Therefore, social media should be limited for teens.

Claim: _____

Evidence: _____

Reasoning: _____

What is weak or missing? _____

Exercise 7B: Write Your Own Argument Paragraph

Directions: Choose **one** of the following claims and write a well-developed argument paragraph (8–10 sentences). Include a claim, at least two pieces of evidence or reasoning, and address one counterargument.

Option A: *Summer reading programs should be required for all middle school students.*

Option B: *Students learn more effectively when they have a voice in how their classroom is run.*

Exercise 8A: Revise for Strength

Directions: Revise each weak sentence to make it stronger, clearer, and more precise. You may change words, restructure the sentence, or both.

1. The book was really good and I liked it a lot because it had a lot of interesting stuff in it.

Revised: _____

2. She is a very nice person who is always nice to everyone and helps people out.

Revised: _____

3. The speech was kind of interesting but some parts were a little boring and hard to follow.

Revised: _____

4. He went to the place where the thing was and then got what he needed.

Revised: _____

Exercise 8B: Final Writing Challenge

Directions: This is your capstone writing task for the summer packet. Write **three well-developed paragraphs** (minimum 15 sentences total) in response to the following prompt.

Prompt: *Think about a person — someone you know personally, someone historical, or even a fictional character — who demonstrated real courage. Describe who this person is, what they did, and why their courage matters. Use specific details, varied sentence structures, and precise vocabulary. Avoid vague language.*

Paragraph 1 — Introduction (introduce the person and your central idea):

Paragraph 2 — Development (describe the courageous act in detail):

Paragraph 3 — Reflection (why does this courage matter? What does it teach us?):

ANSWER KEY — 8th Grade Summer ELA Packet

(For Parent/Guardian Use)

Exercise 1A: 1. P 2. A 3. P 4. A 5. P 6. A 7. P 8. A

Exercise 1B Sample Answers:

1. Imani recited the poem beautifully at the assembly.
2. The panel of judges selected the winning essay after careful review.
3. The science team conducted the experiment over three weeks.
4. A local organization made a generous donation to the library.

Exercise 2A:

1. Swimming — G — subject of the sentence
2. to give up — I — direct object (what she refused)
3. Frustrated — P — modifies passengers
4. To write — I — subject of the sentence
5. studying — G — object of preposition "spent... afternoon"

Exercise 3A Sample Definitions:

1. a document written by hand
2. wishing evil on others
3. to say the opposite of what someone has said
4. a person who speaks in support of a cause
5. to burst out suddenly
6. the physical features of land
7. to carry from one place to another
8. not believable; amazing

Exercise 3B:

1. believability; trustworthiness
2. a break in the flow or continuity of something
3. able to be seen; clear
4. a failure to work or operate correctly

Exercise 4A Sample Answers:

1. Even though he studied all night, he was still nervous about the test.
2. She wanted to be a doctor, so she spent the summer volunteering at the clinic.
3. After the community organized a protest, city leaders finally agreed to meet.
4. The new coach was strict, but the team respected her deeply.

Exercise 4B: Answers will vary. Accept responses that correctly identify how clause placement shifts emphasis and clearly explain the effect.

Exercise 5A:

1. Colon — introduces a specific explanation after a complete clause
2. Semicolon — connects two closely related independent clauses
3. Em dashes — set off a dramatic interruption or emphasis
4. Colon — introduces a list

Exercise 6A:

1. intended to reduce conflict; designed to make peace
2. the quality of being brief; using few words
3. explained in greater detail; expanded upon

Exercise 6B: Answers will vary. Accept well-supported analytical responses with specific textual evidence and developed reasoning.

Exercise 7A:

Claim: Social media is harmful to teenagers.

Evidence: Many teens use it daily and feel worse; teenagers are more anxious.

Reasoning: Vague connection implied but not clearly explained.

What is weak: No specific studies cited, no counterargument addressed, reasoning not fully developed.

Exercise 8A: Answers will vary. Accept revised sentences that are specific, use strong verbs, and eliminate vague filler words. Sample for #1: *The novel's complex characters and thought-provoking themes made it one of the most compelling books I've read this year.*

Aligned with Pennsylvania Core Standards for ELA — Grade 8

Developed for Summer Academic Enrichment