

FOREWORD

Welcome to *Grammar for the Well-Trained Mind*!

This innovative grammar program will take you from basic definitions (“A noun is the name of a person, place, thing, or idea”) all the way through detailed analysis of complex sentence structure. Once you complete it, you’ll have all the skills needed for the study of advanced rhetoric—persuasive speech and sophisticated writing.

WHAT MAKES UP THE FULL PROGRAM

Each year of study in *Grammar for the Well-Trained Mind* requires three books.

The nonconsumable *Core Instructor Text* is used for each year of study. It contains scripted dialogue for the instructor, all rules and examples, and teaching notes that thoroughly explain ambiguities and difficulties.

There are four *Student Workbooks* with accompanying *Keys*. Each consumable workbook provides a full course of exercises and assignments. Each corresponding key gives complete, thoroughly explained answers. Your goal is to complete all four *Workbooks* before the student finishes high school. (See *How the Program Works*, below.)

Two optional reference books are also available. All rules and definitions, with accompanying examples, have been assembled into a handy reference book, *The Grammar Guidebook*. This handbook will serve the student for all four years of study—and will continue to be useful as the student moves through advanced high school writing, into college composition, and beyond. In addition, all diagramming rules covered in the course are summarized in *The Diagramming Dictionary: A Complete Reference Tool for Young Writers, Aspiring Rhetoricians, and Anyone Else Who Needs to Understand How to Diagram English Sentences*.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

Language learning has three elements.

First: You have to understand and memorize *rules*. We call this “prescriptive learning”—grasping the explicit principles that govern the English language and committing them to memory. *Grammar for the Well-Trained Mind* presents, explains, and drills all of the essential rules of the English language. Each year, the student reviews and repeats these rules.

Second: You need *examples* of every rule and principle (“descriptive learning”). Without examples, rules remain abstract. When you memorize the rule “Subjunctive verbs express situations that are unreal, wished for, or uncertain,” you also need to memorize the example “I would not say such things if I were you!” Each year, the student reviews and repeats the same examples to illustrate each rule.

Third: You need *practice*. Although the four workbooks repeat the same rules and examples, each contains a completely new set of exercises and writing assignments, along with a *Key* providing complete answers.

The combination of *repetition* (the same rules and examples each year) and *innovation* (brand-new practice materials in every workbook) will lead you to complete mastery of the English language.

HOW TO USE GRAMMAR FOR THE WELL-TRAINED MIND

When you first use the program, begin with the *Core Instructor Text* and any one of the *Workbooks* with its accompanying *Key* (*Purple, Red, Blue, or Yellow*). Keep *The Grammar Guidebook* and *The Diagramming Dictionary* on hand for reference.

During this first year, you won't necessarily grasp every principle thoroughly. Simply go through the dialogue with your instructor, complete the exercises, check the answers, and discuss any mistakes.

You may need more than one year to complete your first *Workbook*; the exercises increase in complexity and difficulty from Week 20 on. That's absolutely fine. Feel free to take as much time as necessary to finish this workbook.

When your first *Workbook* is completed, you and your instructor will go back to the beginning of the *Core Instructor Text* and start over, this time using a *Workbook/Key* combination of a different color. You'll go over the same dialogue, the same rules, and the same examples—with an entirely fresh set of exercises. This combination of repeated information along with new and challenging exercises will truly begin to build your competence in the English language.

Follow this same procedure for the third and fourth years of study, using workbooks of the remaining two colors, along with their matching keys.

Regular reviews are built into the program. Every three weeks, take some extra time to do the exercises reviewing what was covered in the three weeks before. After Week 27, the reviews double in scope: twelve exercises review the material all the way back to the beginning of the course. These reviews, beginning with Review 9, become one week's work each. During review weeks, try to do three exercises per day, and then go back and review the rules and principles of any exercise in which you miss two or more sentences/examples.

WHICH WORKBOOK?

Because each workbook makes use of the same rules and examples, you may use any one of the four workbooks during your first year in the program. It is highly recommended, however, that you then go back and finish the earlier workbooks as well. The program is designed to take *at least* four years, no matter where you begin.

IMPORTANT PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING

As you study, keep the following in mind.

- Language is a rich, complicated tapestry. It is occasionally logical, and sometimes irrational. Mastering its complexities takes time and patience. Don't expect to master—or even completely understand—every principle the first time through. Repetition and practice will eventually bring clarity. Be diligent—don't abandon the curriculum because of frustration! But accept occasional confusion as a natural part of learning. If you don't understand subjunctives the first time through, for example, accept it, move on, and then repeat the following year. Eventually, the concepts will come into focus.
- Always ask for help if you need it. This isn't a test. It's a learning process.
- From Week 19 (halfway through the course) on, you are encouraged to read sentences out loud. Reading out loud is an important part of evaluating your own writing. Follow the directions—don't ignore them and read silently.
- Take as long as you need to finish each lesson. As noted above, it's perfectly acceptable to take more than one year to finish a workbook (particularly the first time through). The earlier lessons are shorter and simpler; they increase in both complexity and length as the book goes on. But especially in the later lessons, don't worry if you need to divide a lesson over two days, or take more than one week to complete a week's worth of lessons. In subsequent years, you'll go much more quickly through the earlier lessons, giving you time to stop and concentrate on areas of challenge later on.

ABOUT DIAGRAMMING

Grammar for the Well-Trained Mind uses diagramming exercises throughout.

Diagramming is a learning process. Think of the diagrams as experimental projects, not tests. Attempt the diagram, look at the answer, and then try to figure out why any differences exist. Expect these assignments—particularly in the second half of the book—to be challenging. Ask for help when you need it. Always diagram with a pencil (or on a whiteboard or blackboard), and expect to erase and redo constantly.

Also remember that diagramming is not an exact science! If you can explain clearly why you've made a particular choice, the diagram might be correct even if the key differs. To quote a 1914 grammar text: "Many constructions are peculiar, idiomatic, and do not lend themselves readily to any arrangement of lines" (Alma Blount and Clark S. Northup, *An English Grammar for Use in High and Normal Schools and in Colleges*).



Different Ways to Use *Grammar for the Well-Trained Mind*:

You don't have to do one workbook per year!

Each *Grammar for the Well-Trained Mind* workbook takes students all the way through English grammar, from basic definitions through the most complex grammatical concepts. Most students will *not* finish one workbook per year! And even though the books are divided into “weeks” (four lessons per week), many students will need more than one week to finish off those four lessons—particularly as the material gets harder.

Remember this: **The point is mastery.**

There are several different ways to reach mastery. Younger students (fifth and sixth grade, as well as some seventh and eighth graders) may need to achieve mastery by repeating easier material several times before moving on to more difficult concepts. So, rather than trying to complete a workbook before moving on to the next, you might want to complete the first half of a workbook over the course of one year, and then go back and do the first half of another workbook the next year, before moving on to the more difficult material in the second half of each workbook!

The material in each workbook falls into three categories:

Basic Grammar	Lessons 1-40
Intermediate Grammar	Lessons 41-81
Advanced Grammar	Lessons 81 through the final Review 11

Fifth or sixth graders may just need to repeat Lessons 1-40 several times before they have the mental maturity to move on to Lessons 41-81. Older students may move through the first forty lessons quickly, and then slow down significantly in Lessons 41-80; Lessons 81 through the final Review might need to wait for the next year!

Just go at the pace of your student, and take mental maturity into account. And feel free to repeat concepts, using different workbooks until your students is confident.

Here's one possible path forward with a student who needs a little more time and repetition to master the concepts:

	First Semester	Second Semester
Year 1	Lessons 1-40 in the Red Workbook	Lessons 1-40 in the Purple Workbook
Year 2	<p>Lessons 1-40 in the Blue Workbook</p> <p>(If your student has mastered these lessons, you can move through this quickly)</p> <p>Lesson 41-Review 5 in the Red Workbook</p>	<p>Lesson 41-Lesson 80 in the Purple Workbook</p> <p>(You may need to go slower here, depending on your student. You can even go back through Lessons 1-40 in the Red Workbook if your student is not ready for abstract grammar concepts.</p> <p>If you do slow down, adjust the following years so you cover the material thoroughly with your student.)</p>
Year 3	Lessons 41-80 in the Blue Workbook	<p>Lesson 61-80 in the Red Workbook, if needed</p> <p>Start in Lesson 81 of the Purple Workbook; move at a comfortable pace until the semester is over.</p>
Year 4	Start in Lesson 81 in the Blue Workbook; move at a comfortable pace until the semester is over	Start in Lesson 81 in the Red Workbook; move at a comfortable pace until the semester is over
Year 5 and beyond	<p>Complete the Blue Workbook</p> <p>Complete the Red Workbook</p>	<p>Complete the Purple Workbook</p> <p>Start the Yellow Workbook (arriving Fall 2021); review earlier grammar concepts and then continue the later lessons at your student's own pace.</p>