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## DIALOGUE Project C-BE English Drill and Practice

A Package by Susan Wittig  
The University of Texas at Austin

*Project C-BE, funded jointly by the National Science Foundation and the University of Texas at Austin, was established in 1971 to study the use of computer-based instruction in undergraduate teaching. Among the two-and-a-half dozen courses developed during the four-year life of the project was an interactive short course in basic sentence-writing skills called DIALOGUE, designed by Susan Wittig to supplement instruction in an experimental version of the first-semester writing course required of all students at the University of Texas. This course, like thousands across the country, aimed to help students become better writers; unlike most other courses, however, it successfully implemented the computer as a teaching tool, relieving the instructor of the heavy burden of classroom presentation, drill supervision, and testing, in this critical skill area. After several semesters of in-class testing and thorough educational and technical review, the package is now available from CONDUIT.*

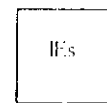
The *Dialogue* computer-assisted tutorials are designed to supplement and support classroom work in sentence syntax, and to provide a quick review of basic syntactical problems. These tutorials may also be used independently by students working outside of a course framework to increase their understanding of syntax and to help them improve their compositional skills.

The theoretical approach to the teaching of syntax that has been adopted in the design of the modules was based upon the transformation-generative sentence-combining work of Kellogg Hunt and Roy O'Donnell. In order to minimize terminological confusion, however, this presentation to the students is made in terms of the more traditional grammar with which they are more likely familiar. These modules are written for non-remedial students and for students without severe

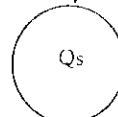
dialect problems; they do not, for instance, teach verb tense patterns or pronoun-antecedent agreement. They stress the sentence patterns of written English, because many students are relatively unfamiliar with those patterns, although they may be orally competent.

The materials are divided into seven modules, each of which may be presented in any sequence or independently. The author recommends, however, that module one be presented first in order to familiarize the student with the basic vocabulary.

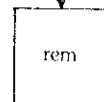
Each of the modules is constructed according to a similar pattern: each contains a series of sections, which include instructional exercises (IEs) and test questions selected randomly from a large pool of test questions (Qs). Each section can be schematically represented like this:



IEs (2-10 instructional exercises)



Qs (2-8 test questions selected from a pool of 4-20 items)



rem (1-5 remedial items, offered automatically to students who need extra work. Not available in all sections.)

Each module consists of 4 to 9 sections arranged one after another, sequentially. The student may sign off after any section or at the end of the complete module; the student may enter the program at any module, any section. The modules require about 45 minutes each to complete, for the average student; slower students will require extra time. The topics covered in each module are:

- Module I. Basic Sentence Patterns
- Module II. Nouns, Verbal Nouns, Nominal Style, Sentence Maturity
- Module III. Specification with Adjectives
- Module IV. Specification with Adverbs
- Module V. Coordination
- Module VI. Appositives
- Module VII. Adjective Clauses

The programs are designed to tolerate almost any misspelling, as long as the word is "readable." Often, first and last letters alone are enough to cue the computer; occasionally, clusters of letters in the middle of the word are required to distinguish the word from other words in the sentence. Every effort has been made to discount the importance of typing errors in the student's answer. Following is a sample interaction with Module III, Specification with Adjectives.

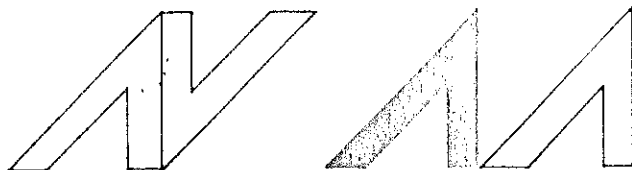
Please type your usual name: ? **Pete**

We've been working with single adjectives and prepositional adjective phrases, but those aren't the only ways that nouns can be specified. Verbals and verbal phrases can also be used as adjectives.

If you feel that you need a quick review of verb forms before you go on to study verbal adjectives, type help, and we'll look over a few examples of verbs.

If not, type OK and you can continue immediately with this part of the lesson.

? **Help**



This review will be very short—its function is to remind you of some information you already have. If you need a more thorough review of verb fundamentals, ask your teacher for help.  
Ready? **Yes**

As you know, verbs serve as a major component of the sentence pattern.

He returned from his trip.

Verbs show the time in which an action has taken place—present, past, future.

Present He returns from his trip today.

Past He returned from his trip yesterday.

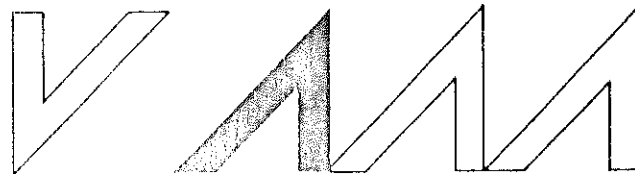
Future He will return from his trip tomorrow.

Identify the verb in this sentence.

Molly and her two sisters went to the party together.

? **Went**

OK, Pete.



Now identify the tense of the verb (past, present, future) in this sentence.

The architect will design the house for us.

? **Present**

No, this verb shows future time.

Ready? **Yes**

Verbs have other functions in sentences, however. They may also be used as

- 1) Nouns
- 2) Adjectives.

Because of their versatility, these verbal forms are very useful to writers. Look at the various functions a verbal serves.

In this sentence, runs is the main verb.

He runs every day.  
Verb

However, we can easily change this verb to a noun by adding -ing, and using it in a different function.

Running is his favorite sport.

What role does this verbal play in the sentence now? Is it a subject, an object, an adverb, an adjective?

? **Subject**

OK, Pete.

Running is his favorite sport.  
Subject

Now look at this one.

The doctor was worried about his running.

Prep Object

In this sentence, the verbal running is the object of the preposition about. What about this one?

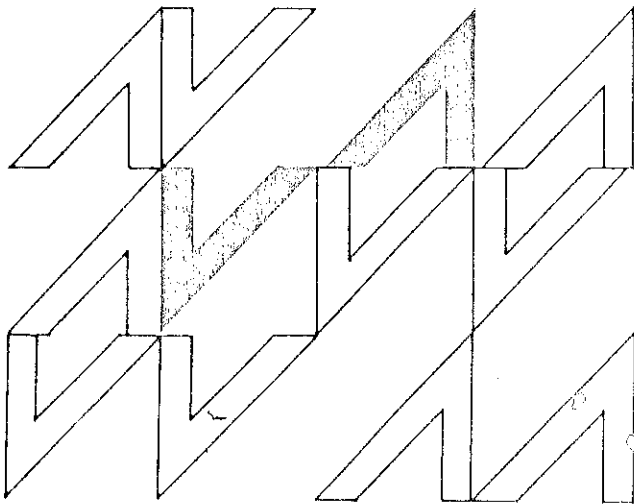
Subject? Object? Adjective? Adverb?

He had to stop running.

? **Object**

That's fine. It's the object of stop.

Like any other instructional materials, the computer-taught modules are most useful when the instructor is able to integrate the learning activity into the rest of the activities of the course. This coordination may be carried out in several ways: through worksheets that the student completes at the end of each module (included in the instructor's manual); through classroom review and discussion; through comments on papers; or through reading and writing assignments specific to what the student has learned at the terminal. Each of



these alternatives is described in detail in the instructor's manual, including study problems for modules three, four and six.

Dr. Wittig strongly recommends that any instructor or department wishing to implement this package contact her for further advice on integrating the package into the existing curriculum. According to her experience in transporting the materials to other departments, she believes that "For transport to be even moderately successful, . . . the (most) important requirement is the establishment of what might be called a *climate of acceptance*. This climate may be described as a willingness on the part of the faculty - or a substantial group of faculty members - to accept this new and expensive educational medium, to learn to use it to its fullest effectiveness, and to build courses around it that share at least some features of the philosophical and pedagogical base on which the programs are built. Without this climate of acceptance, transport is technologically possible, but educationally undesirable; at best, simply effective; at worst, disruptive to the delicate political balance with departments or colleges . . . The transport of computer-based instruction is not an easy task: there are technical, educational, and political problems - but they can be resolved."

The package from CONDUIT (#HUM143) includes one copy of the instructor's manual (20 pages), and the software (41 interactive BASIC programs and 41 input files, one per program, grouped into 7 modules). The programs are written in Level 1 BASIC with the use of CHAINing, reading a sequential input file of text, and LINPUT (or the ability to input a line of text where a blank or comma is not considered a line delimiter). Most programs are about 500 lines in length, the biggest being 1,000 lines (array usage is small). Most of the text files are about 400 lines long, the largest being 800 lines. The programs require an ASCII system. Turn to page 55 to order the package.

