

English for Adults

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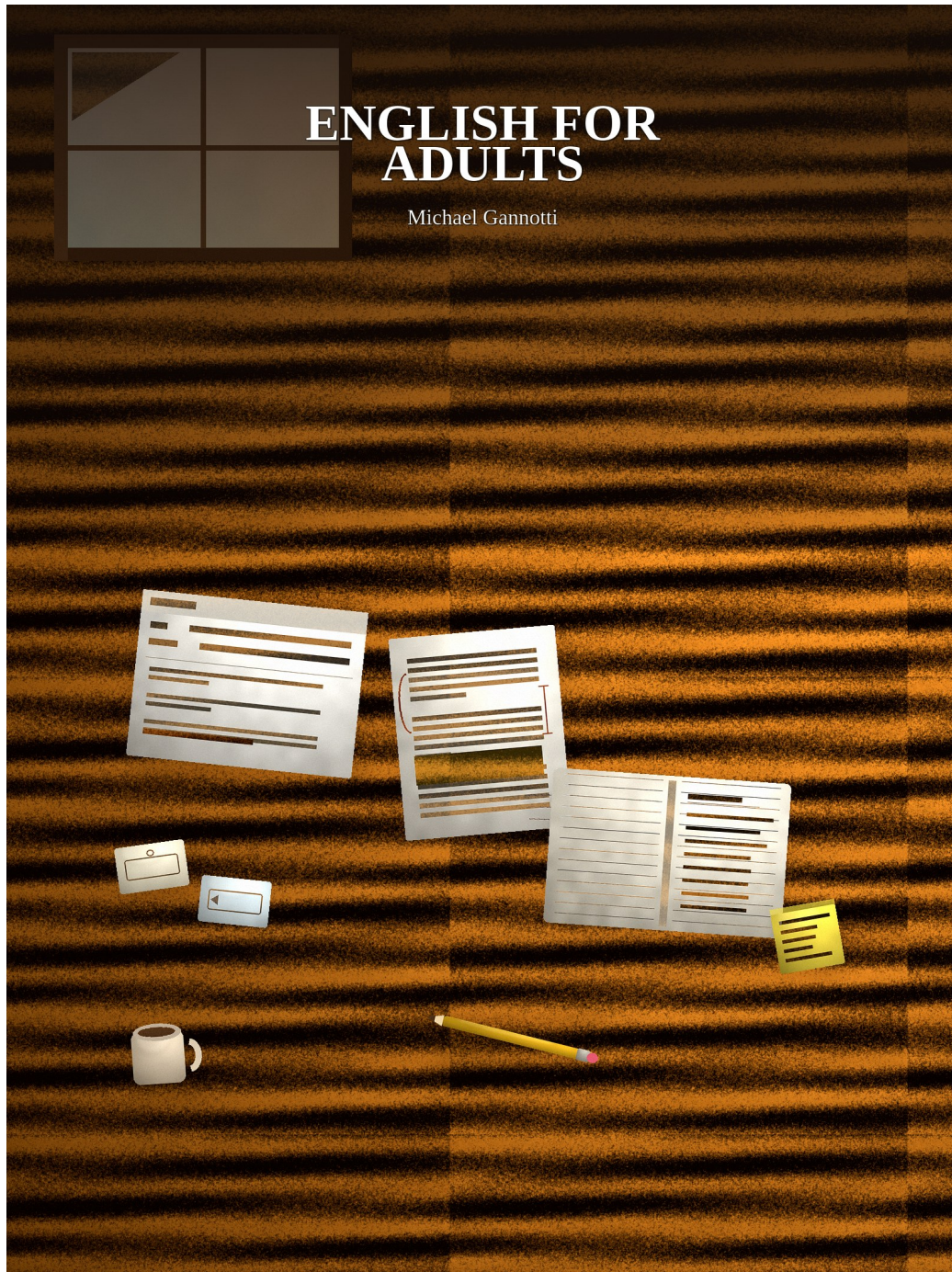


Figure 1: Cover

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This illustrated edition is the teaching-manual of 6 September 2026. Endnotes run in one series. Chapter-opening images are original still-lives, not portraits of persons or children. Documents still constrain the facts.

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Welcome

This book exists because usable literacy is ordinary adult work — a multisyllabic word that yields to its parts, a paragraph whose job you can name, a claim with evidence and a warrant that links them, an email that leads with the ask, two lines that defend a reading, a second source opened, a revision that changes meaning before it tidies commas. There is you, the text in front of you, and today's idea. You already have a life. The hour is the work.

I wrote this for a capable, busy, willing adult. You may be on a train, at a desk, on a shift, in a clinic, a warehouse, or at a kitchen counter before work. Many adults feel rusty when they sit down to literacy moves they last practiced in school. That feeling is common. It is not a verdict, and it is not proof of a reading gene.¹ This book will make you fluent enough in today's idea to hear first-letter guessing as reading, highlight-and-hope as comprehension, a claim without a warrant, a quote-mine as research, a buried ask, polish-before-meaning, and a finished-looking chatbot rewrite offered as your only draft — and to ask yourself one good question before you grab the answer or the rewrite.

You do not need to be a novelist. You do need to hear a claim without a warrant, and a rewrite that skipped your draft. Ordinary stakes live on the go and in deeper sits: a workplace email (structure, not workplace politics), a procedure note, a product claim against a spec card, a sports box-score claim, a museum placard, a science or history feature, a short story or essay scene, a library article, a short civic memo.² Work decks and news features motivate. They do not replace the warrant that links, the paraphrase that holds, or the source that was opened.

¹Anxiety loads working memory; “not a words person” language is real. Not a clinical protocol in this book. Access date for URLs in these notes: 6 September 2026.

²Safe literacy objects only. Composite examples are illustrations, not reported workplaces. No live controversy as the week's identity.

The cover says *English for Adults*. The work is this commute, this desk, this weekend sit. A job, a degree, and years of experience are not a bicycle you now ride on every dense page.³ You already read and write in pockets of life and work. That is not the same as having rebuilt meaning and fluency across the skill strips this book teaches. Adulthood is not a literacy birthday.

A large adult skills survey places U.S. literacy mean at 258 — down from 271 in 2017 — with about 28% of U.S. adults at Level 1 or below (was 19%) and about 44% at Level 3 or above (was 48%).⁴ That survey is context for why a refresher exists. It is not a grade for you. The email, the paragraph, or the second source on the table tomorrow is the work.

What a good refresh hour looks like

You sit down already knowing today's idea. An object is on the table — a morphology sticky, an annotated paragraph, a greeked email draft, a mentor claim–evidence–warrant scrap, a library article with two source tags, a before/after revision strip. You retrieve a little. Then you talk yourself through a mentor paragraph or a claim/evidence/warrant autopsy. Then you try a parallel item unaided. Then you ask one good self-question and wait before the key. Then you leave a short sticky or dated line you could almost show a colleague. *The Refresh Hour* will teach this in full — micro-session, desk sit, weekend deep sit, talk-to-yourself shape, on-the-go and deeper try-its, and the AI rules once for adults. Later chapters will not reinvent it.

³Willingham, “Critical Thinking” (*American Educator*, 2007): thinking is not a bicycle skill. A job and a diploma are domains — not all literacy surfaces.

⁴NCES/IES, *Highlights from PIAAC 2023* (ages 16–65): U.S. literacy mean **258** ($\approx$ international **260**), down from **271** (2017); Level 1 or below **28%** (was **19%**); Level 3+ **44%** (was **48%**). Survey, not a trial of this book. Not teen NAEP. NCES **3.4%** / $\sim$ 1.765M is homeschool prevalence — not an adult literacy measure.



Figure 2: A refresh-hour setup

Adults can rebuild usable literacy with meaning. Place by skill strip, not by birth-day and not by diploma year.⁵ Vocabulary, comprehension strategies, Model–Practice–Reflect writing, and revision belong together.⁶ A person who can skim a news feature on the train is reading. They have not finished the dual job of hearing a wrong turn and trying a parallel item before a tool finishes the attempt. We practice on surfaces you already meet.

If you used *English for Little Thinkers*, *English for Young Minds*, *English for Emerging Adults*, or *English for Homeschooling* at a kitchen table, one pointer each, then this desk and this commute. Those books keep a parent in the room and

⁵Place by skill strip, not diploma year. Employed and more-than-HS adults both show non-trivial low-end literacy shares in PIAAC Highlights. No diploma required to open this book.

⁶Kamil et al. (IES, 2008): vocabulary and comprehension strategies **strong** (school labelled, portable). Graham et al. (IES, 2016): Model–Practice–Reflect **strong**, grades 6–12 labelled — portable to self-study; TEAL FS1: adult RCT base is thin — extrapolate honestly.

a student section on the page. This book does not. You are the learner. The seven headings still work. This is not a reprint of those lesson banks.

Critical Thinking for Adults is a different book. One pointer: that book teaches moves for deciding what to believe or do. This book teaches usable literacy — audience, clarity, claim–evidence–warrant as craft, revision, open-the-source reading and writing. Shared house voice. Different pond. One pointer, then English.

Math Refresher for Adults shares the house — seven headings, context bands, talk-to-yourself boxes, an adult-held refresh-hour AI pattern. The objects differ. One pointer, then English. Do not expect this book to paste a math hour and swap “percent” for “thesis.”

What you will actually get

Each teaching chapter does seven jobs, always in the same order. You will learn why this week’s idea is worth the struggle, and understand it yourself. You will get a session you can run this week: named try-its across **commute/lunch**, **desk-or-shift**, and **weekend deep sit**, and a talk-to-yourself box. Tools stay optional. “Done enough” places by skill, not age or diploma year.

The seven teaching chapters follow the skill strips: academic vocabulary and morphology; reading complex text; rhetoric as claim, evidence, warrant; workplace and civic writing; literary and informational reading; research edges with open-the-source citation; grammar, style, and revision in service of meaning. Keeping track and resources come last.

Today you can put a morphology sticky, an email draft, or a short feature on the table, name the parts or the paragraph’s job or the ask, try a parallel item, and leave one exit sticky.

What this book will not do

This book will not hand you 180 days of worksheets. Coverage is a map. Depth is the hour.

It will not treat “I’m not a words person” as destiny, Grammarly or ChatGPT alone as surrender, or AP Language as the only honest adult path. It will not use teen test

percentages as if they measured working adults. It will not mash a homeschool-prevalence figure as adult literacy.⁷ It will not invent English for Adults I, English Refresher I, or a certificate of fluency. The promise is a path through ordinary literacy life — not a fake diploma.

It is not a reprint of the school-age English manuals named above, not a sequel to *Critical Thinking for Adults*, and not a sequel to *Math Refresher for Adults*. It is not a sales pitch or a guaranteed score.

It is not medical advice, lending advice, legal advice, or an investment pitch dressed as literacy. It does not rehearse live fights as content. Politics, religion, identity fights, war, and medical culture-war stay off this table.

The promise

If you only remember one sentence, remember this: a path through ordinary literacy life is the promise. A fake certificate is not.

Age is not placement. Diploma year is not a window that closed.

Three things have to hold. You understand today's idea well enough to hear a wrong turn — including from yourself. You retrieve, talk through a mentor paragraph or claim/evidence/warrant autopsy, and try a parallel item before any tool finishes the attempt. Any helper — including an AI tool — stays a supplement you host and constrain, not a partner for the first attempt, not a write-my-essay or write-my-email-as-only-draft loop, not a photo-to-key, not a secret friend, and not a paste of proprietary workplace data into a public chat.

You can do this. You do not have to know next week's idea today. You have to know this week's idea well enough to sit still while you struggle, then ask one good self-question. Start here. Read *How to Use This Book This Week*, then the five things, then *The Refresh Hour*. Open the chapter that matches the skill in front of you. You will know more after one chapter than you know this morning. You will have something to try on the commute and in a deeper sit. We can do this.

⁷Homeschool prevalence (NCES 3.4%) is not adult literacy. Teen NAEP is not a working-adult census. Optional CLEP College Composition / Analyzing & Interpreting Literature (\$97 each plus fees) is a bridge when credit is the goal — not the spine.

How to Use This Book This Week

Start at the skill in front of you, not on page one because a catalog, a diploma year, a birthday, or a well-meant colleague said so.

This book is a handbook you open to this week’s skill strip, not a novel you read cover to cover. The teaching chapters run vocabulary and morphology; complex text; rhetoric; workplace and civic writing; literary and informational reading; research edges; grammar, style, and revision. Keeping track and resources come last. Context bands — **commute/lunch**, **desk-or-shift**, and **weekend deep sit** — live *inside* each teaching chapter. They tell you the grain of the same idea, not where *you* sit by age.

This book does not replace a community-college transcript if you need credit, or a working local method that already holds. If something is working, keep it. Use this book to rebuild meaning and fluency and to run the hour. The title is still the skill you are rebuilding — not English for Adults I, and not a fake certificate.⁸

Pick the chapter by skill, not by birthday

Open the chapter you think is right. Skip to **What “done enough” looks like** at the end of the *previous* chapter, or to **If it isn’t clicking** in the one you opened. If you can already do those checks unaided, you are too early in that chapter. If the checks from two chapters back are still failing, drop back.

If multisyllabic workplace words still stall — *authorization*, *reconciliation*, *procurement* — you are still in the vocabulary and morphology gate, whatever your

⁸Stranger-readable work products: dated practice note; revised email or short writing sample; skill-strip log; optional CLEP score report. Never English for Adults I, English Refresher I, or “Certified English for Adults.” Access date: 6 September 2026.

diploma.⁹ If you cannot yet name a paragraph's job, you are not ready to skip to research-edge synthesis. If a claim still arrives without a warrant, stay in rhetoric. Literary and composition edges are optional for ready adults — not a moral summit, not required for every reader.

If you can already do those checks unaided, skip ahead. A publisher's chapter label is a scope, not a licence, and not a birthday.

How you use a teaching chapter

Each teaching chapter has the same seven headings, always in this order, so you always know where the explanation, the session, the named try-its, the talk-to-yourself box, and the tools box live.

Why this matters tells you what this idea unlocks. **Understand it yourself** gives one everyday picture, one precise picture, and three to five wrong answers you should be able to hear — including from yourself.

How to try it this week assumes the session shape from *The Refresh Hour*. It will not rebuild the hour. It will give you this week's named try-its — at least one on the go and one in a deeper sit — and a talk-to-yourself box with an exact opening question.

Practice that actually builds it names the try-its with time, materials, safety, and the move. Emails, features, and library pages *are* the practice. They do not replace the structure. **Tools, including AI** is optional and short. The rules live once in *The Refresh Hour*. **What “done enough” looks like** is how you leave: unaided work on the skill strip, not a perfect Tuesday and not a chatbot diploma.

You do not have to read the whole chapter tonight. You do have to read *this week's* idea before you put the object on the table.

The five-minute warm-up

Five minutes. Phone face down — or at least not on a rewrite tool. Object in reach.

⁹NCES/IES PIAAC 2023: U.S. literacy mean **258**; Level 1 or below **28%** (was **19%**); Level 3+ **44%** (was **48%**). Survey context, not a grade for the reader. Not teen NAEP. NCES **3.4%** is homeschool prevalence — not adult literacy.

1. Read today's idea until you can say it in one sentence.
2. Look at one object yourself. Ask, out loud, what parts you see, what the paragraph's job is, or who must act. Stay off any tool until you have looked.
3. Glance at the "wrong answers you should be able to hear." Name the one you would have given last year.
4. Write one sentence you will actually ask yourself. Not a speech. Example: "What parts do I see?" Or: "What's the claim — and what's the warrant?" Or: "Who is this for, and what's my one clear ask?"
5. Close the book to the try-it. You are ready.

If you are learning the idea *while* you are stuck mid-draft, you will grab the rewrite too soon. Prepare first. Then sit still.

On the go and in deeper sits

Every teaching chapter names try-its across commute/lunch, desk-or-shift, and weekend deep sit — a morphology sticky, an email claim skim, a packaging claim vs spec, a one-sentence warrant, a three-pass close-read, a Model–Practice–Reflect draft, a one-target revision, a two-source open-the-source. The talk-to-yourself box travels. The live fight does not. If a real workplace thread is too hot today, pick a labelled composite email, a packaging card, or a library feature.

English for Little Thinkers, English for Young Minds, English for Emerging Adults, and English for Homeschooling stay at their tables. This book does not reprint those lesson banks. Pictures show objects. Notes live at the back.

Safety is ordinary. No public quiz. No undercover workplace audit. No medical, legal, or lending advice. No proprietary paste into public tools. A workplace try-it uses a labelled composite or a stripped isomorphic prompt on YOUR practice sheet.

When to skip ahead

Skip ahead when this chapter's "done enough" checklist is already true *unaided*. Slow down when the same first-letter guess or buried ask repeats after a clear look at the page, or when a finished-looking chatbot paragraph still stands in for your attempt. **If it isn't clicking** will give you three likely causes and a next move.

A stranger-readable record is a dated practice note and a revised email or short writing sample — inside a skill-strip log or a college course name a stranger already understands (College Composition, Analyzing and Interpreting Literature). Never English for Adults I. Never English Refresher I. Never a chatbot certificate of fluency.¹⁰ Optional CLEP is a bridge when credit is the goal — not the spine, and not mandatory.

You hold the account. A chatbot is never the only partner during the first attempt. Try unaided first. The full allow-and-ban list lives in *The Refresh Hour*.

For this week: pick the chapter by skill. Do the five-minute warm-up. Run the hour as *The Refresh Hour* describes it. Space across days — a few micros beat one massed Sunday dump.¹¹ Stop peeking sooner.

¹⁰CLEP College Composition / Analyzing & Interpreting Literature listed at **\$97** each plus fees — optional and institution-set; sitting an exam is not finishing this book.

¹¹Dunlosky and colleagues: practice testing and distributed practice rate high utility relative to rereading. Murray et al. (2025) spacing $g \approx 0.28$ is maths-labelled — hedge only; not an English adult RCT. Prefer retrieve-and-space over highlight-and-hope.

If You Only Remember Five Things

Keep this page. The chapters will add wording, objects, and this week's questions. They will not replace these.

1. Vocabulary and morphology are still teachable. Usable literacy is meaning plus fluency on words, texts, claims, drafts, sources, and revisions you actually meet — not a talent you either have or lack, and not a birthday that closed.¹² Rust is ordinary. Anxiety is real. “I’m not a words person” is a stop-rule you do not have to obey. Adults can still break a multisyllabic workplace word into parts and use it in *this* sentence. A forty-five-year-old with morphology fluency can learn claim–evidence–warrant craft. A twenty-eight-year-old without foundations cannot skip to research-edge synthesis because a podcast said so. Place by skill strip and life demand. Start now.

2. Complex text needs a purpose. Volume and close reading belong together. Most days: worthy literary or informational text with one purpose question. Some days: a short three-pass close-read. Hear first-letter guessing and highlight-and-hope — then ask what the paragraph’s job is.¹³ Three-cueing is not the reading programme. Accelerated Reader points are not proof of comprehension. You talk to yourself. You ask one good self-question and wait before the key. Then you try a parallel item.

3. Rhetoric is claim, evidence, warrant. A contestable claim sits on the page. Evidence sits on the page. The warrant is the link that makes the evidence count as support.¹⁴ Ordinary stakes only — product claim vs spec, sports box-score claim,

¹²Place by skill, not “too old.” Anxiety loads working memory — not a clinical protocol here. Access date: 6 September 2026.

¹³Kamil et al. (IES, 2008): comprehension strategies **strong** (school labelled, portable). Stahl think-time (1994): ~three seconds, classroom-origin — not an adult literacy RCT.

¹⁴Claim–evidence–warrant as ordinary craft; audience/purpose/counter when ready. Full AI

short civic memo — not a culture-war course. Hear a claim without a warrant, then ask a better question. Correct a wrong reason without crushing the attempt — applied to yourself.

4. Workplace writing is Model–Practice–Reflect, not a worksheet dump. See a mentor paragraph or email. Practice a parallel item. Reflect on one move.¹⁵ Lead with the ask. Name who must act. A fluent chatbot paragraph — or a fluent Grammarly rewrite — is not a check during the attempt. Draft, check against the page, revise. Struggle before rescue: try unaided first. Ask, wait, hint, then look. You hold the account. A chatbot is never the only partner.

5. A path, not a fake certificate — and not teen NAEP. Practice on your inbox, procedure, feature, library article — commute/lunch, desk-or-shift, weekend deep sit. Ordinary stakes only. No live controversy. Teen test percentages do not measure working adults.¹⁶ A path through ordinary literacy life is the promise. A fake diploma is not. There is no English for Adults I. Optional CLEP is a bridge when credit is the goal — not the spine. There is no window that closed when you turned twenty-five.

You ask, wait, and try before the tool. You hold the account. Five things. Then sit down and try.

rules live in *The Refresh Hour*.

¹⁵Graham et al. (IES, 2016): Model–Practice–Reflect **strong**, grades 6–12 labelled — portable to self-study.

¹⁶Adult assessment is PIAAC, not teen NAEP. Never English for Adults I, English Refresher I, or a chatbot fluency certificate. COPPA’s under-13 line does not apply — not a companion licence.

The Refresh Hour

The hour has a shape. Learn it once. Later chapters will give you today’s idea. They will not rebuild this hour. When a chapter says “run the session,” it means this.

You do not need a school bell. You need the idea on the table, a try that could come out otherwise, you doing the retrieving and the trying, a record you could almost show a colleague, talk-to-yourself about meaning, just-in-time naming when the text needs a word, and stop. Three shapes carry the week: a **micro-session** on the commute or at lunch (~15–20 minutes), a **desk sit** (~25–40 minutes), and a **weekend deep sit** when needed (~45–75 minutes). Space them across days when you can. Cramming one Sunday feels productive. Spacing feels harder and usually wins more for retention.¹⁷ Three to five micros plus one desk sit in a week, with an occasional deep sit, is the honest ambition — not under-running of a proven adult commute RCT, because there isn’t one at this grain.

Sit down having already done the five-minute warm-up from *How to Use This Book This Week*. The object changes. The shape does not.

1. Micro-session (~15–20 min, commute/lunch)

One idea. Brief feedback. No high-stakes countdown timer as default rigor. Interruptible without shame. If the session becomes scrolling, it is not a session — set

¹⁷Dunlosky and colleagues’ technique ratings: practice testing and distributed practice rate high utility relative to rereading. Lindsay A. Murray and colleagues, mathematics spacing meta-analysis (2025): spacing versus massing overall $g \approx 0.28$ (27 studies) — **maths-labelled hedge only**; not an English adult RCT. Useful study, not a promise that every adult will see the same result. Access date for URLs in these notes: 6 September 2026. Session minutes in this chapter are pedagogical design, not a national adult-literacy-minutes table.

a fifteen-minute clock, one object, stop.

Retrieve (2–3 min). Close the book. Write or say what yesterday’s idea was. One morphology part, one paragraph job, one warrant link. Prefer retrieve over reread.¹⁸

Mentor autopsy (5–7 min). Look at a worked twin — a mentor claim–evidence–warrant, a morphology sticky with parts boxed, a purpose-first email with the ask named. Cover the next line. Ask: What was given? What is the paragraph’s job? Where could someone go wrong? Name the structure before you praise the polish.

Parallel try unaided (5–7 min). Same structure, new text. Hands off the key. Hands off the rewrite tool. If you stall: ask yourself one question, wait, hint, then look — not the reverse.

Exit sticky (1 min). One line dated: the idea, one check, one wrong twin you now hear. Put the phone away.

2. Desk sit (~25–40 min)

Warm-up retrieval mixed with last week’s strip. Then volume or close reading with a purpose question for eight to twelve minutes before polish. Short model or incomplete mentor paragraph (about five minutes); fade a step so you finish it — Model–Practice–Reflect grain, school-labelled, portable here.¹⁹ Two tries plus one mixed interloper (ten to twelve minutes) so you practice *when* to use the move, not only *how*. One good self-question, wait, written reason or one clear ask (about three minutes). Exit ticket: unaided, book closed — a sticky or a short writing crumb.

Start from an artifact when you can: a greeked email already in your bag, a packaging claim beside a spec, a sports box-score sticky, a library feature paragraph, a

¹⁸Prefer retrieve-and-space over highlight-and-hope. Kamil et al., *Improving Adolescent Literacy* (IES practice guide, 2008): vocabulary and comprehension strategies **strong** (school labelled, portable).

¹⁹Steve Graham and colleagues, *Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively* (What Works Clearinghouse practice guide, 2016): Recommendation 1 Model–Practice–Reflect **strong**; Recommendation 2 integrate writing ↔ reading **moderate**; Recommendation 3 formative assessment **minimal**. Grades 6–12 origin. Portable grain for self-study; TEAL FS1: adult RCT base is thin — extrapolate honestly. Not an adult refresher RCT.

museum placard photo. Name the purpose. Name who must act. Check meaning before you trust the rewrite.

3. Weekend deep sit (~45–75 min, when needed)

Open with a diagnostic wrong — the first-letter guess, the highlight-and-hope twin, the claim without warrant, the buried ask, the paraphrase that copied syntax, the polish-before-meaning rewrite. Longer close-read or Model–Practice–Reflect cycle. When research edges are the strip, open a second source. One-target revision before/after. Run the chapter’s “done enough” checklist. Schedule next week’s three micro cues on a calendar — not vibes.

A deep sit that becomes “finish chapter 7 of a PDF” is a textbook dump wearing a weekend hat. One structure deeply beats seven skimmed.

The talk-to-yourself shape, once

Later chapters fill the exact opening. The shape lives here.

Opening question. Authentic. About today’s strip. No recitation answer already written on your page. Use one: What parts do I see — and what does each part do in *this* sentence? What is this paragraph’s job — claim, evidence, example, counter, or scene turn? What’s the claim — and what’s the warrant that links this evidence to it? Who is this for, what must they do next, and what’s my one clear ask? Which two lines would I star if I had to defend a reading? Did I leave this page and open a second source — and can I paraphrase without copying the syntax? What is my one revision target — and did meaning change, or did I only tidy commas?

Three to five follow-ups. Pick; you do not need all five every Tuesday. Meaning: What do you mean, *warrant*? Representation: What does the page, label, or email show before I invent? Alternative: Is there another fair reading or ask? Check: Does this paraphrase still mean what the source meant? Revise or diagnose: You may change your mind — where could someone go wrong?

How to wait alone. After you ask yourself, cover the answer. A slow three is a convention, not a sacrament — Stahl’s think-time is classroom-origin; Rowe’s wait-time is elementary science class; neither is an adult literacy RCT.²⁰ After

²⁰Robert J. Stahl, “Using ‘Think-Time’ and ‘Wait-Time’ Skillfully in the Classroom,” ERIC

you stop mid-reason, wait again before peeking. If the silence is hard, look at the paragraph, the email, the label, or the second source — not at the phone's rewrite. Rescue at one second is still rescue. Abandonment for forty minutes of scrolling is not a micro-session.

What a stuck silence usually means. The question was vague; wait-time after the question was zero; you are searching for a word; you are guessing what a textbook would want; the question was a recitation item in disguise; you offered a first-letter guess where a morphology move was asked for; you think “words person” means leave; you think a finished-looking chatbot paragraph is already a check; anxiety is eating working memory — shorten the session, win one claim or one morphology item, come back tomorrow.²¹ Your job is to pose, wait, and point back at the object — not to fill the silence with the right answer from a rewrite tool.

Do not stack five questions. Do not perform Socrates. Do not switch to a live controversy. Do not write-my-email mid-attempt. Do not photo-to-key mid-attempt.

The on-the-go try-it shape, once

Time. Fifteen to twenty minutes, then stop.

Materials. A phone note, a greeked email draft, a packaging label, a sports box score, a short feature paragraph, a morphology sticky.

Safety. Curious, not courtroom. No proprietary paste into public tools. No public humiliation of yourself or a colleague. No live controversy. Composite illustrations labelled. Noticing is not a sting.

The move. Name the parts, the paragraph's job, the claim and warrant, or the one clear ask. Draft first. Then check. Then revise one target.

Types you will meet, not a lesson bank: morphology sticky plus workplace sentence; subject-line craft; email claim skim; packaging claim vs spec; one-sentence warrant; vocabulary sticky from today's article.

Digest ED370885 (1994): about three seconds as a convention. Mary Budd Rowe, “Wait-Time and Rewards as Instructional Variables,” NARST paper, ERIC ED061103 (1972): elementary science class. Neither is an adult literacy randomized trial. Translation here: pause before lookup.

²¹Anxiety loads working memory; socially acceptable “not a words person.” Short sessions and early wins — not a clinical protocol in this book.

The deeper try-it shape, once

Desk or weekend. Same safety. More room for a mentor fade, a wrong twin, and a written reason.

Types you will meet: three-pass close-read; Model–Practice–Reflect multi-paragraph; one-target revision before/after; two-source open-the-source; audience-swap rewrite; literary scene with a defensible reading.

These are not the hour: a gotcha audit of a workplace; a live-controversy field trip; a 180-day worksheet dump; a photo-to-key loop called “practice”; a write-my-email paste called “draft.”

The AI rules, once

Later chapters will point here. You talk to the page and to the check. A chatbot is never the only partner during the first attempt. An agent is not the English partner for the first attempt. The unaided try is still yours. You hold the account. COPPA’s under-13 line does not apply to an adult reader. That is not a literacy birthday and not a licence for unsupervised chat or a secret friend.²²

After you have tried, you **may**:

- Explain this idea *to yourself* from a **named** lesson (title, page, chapter object, today’s micro-goal).
- Ask for **extra isomorphic practice**, with answers on **YOUR** page (practice sheet plus key).
- Use a labelled **SCRIPT** only **after you tried** — a short spoken or written sequence for *you* to say, not a paragraph to copy as your essay or email.
- Ask for **revision questions** after a draft you already wrote — questions and named moves, **not** a rewrite as the only draft.
- Ask for a **hint** after an attempt. A hint is not the finished paragraph.
- Ask a tool to **diagnose work you already did** (crop to paper or note — no face).
- Use a labelled dictionary, Purdue OWL, OpenStax, annotation, or grammar-check tool **after** the try to check or explore.

²²Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act, 15 U.S.C. §§ 6501 *et seq.*; 16 C.F.R. Part 312. Bright line: children under 13. An adult reader is not under 13. That is an account fact, not a companion licence.

You **may not**:

- Paste tonight’s worksheet or a live employer thread and ask the tool to complete it.
- Ask the tool to **write your essay** or **write your workplace email as the only draft**, or “fix this to professional” as a skip of your attempt.
- **Photo-to-key** — camera solvers filling a comprehension packet or essay rubric. The loop is the ban.
- Park an **unsupervised chatbot** as your only partner during the attempt.
- Treat “I am an adult / I hold the account / COPPA is off” as a permission slip or companion licence.
- Ask the tool to **write your analysis, warrant, or email** as yours.
- **Invent facts** or invent research citations.
- Paste **proprietary employer data** into a public consumer tool. Strip proprietary rows to invented isomorphic text on YOUR practice sheet, or use an enterprise tool your employer allows. Open *your* acceptable-use page. This book will not invent a federal workplace chatbot statute for you.
- Hand yourself an **agent** (Hermes Agent, Grok Bot, or any cloud-computer worker) as an English partner for the first attempt.
- Print a **certificate of fluency** from a chatbot.
- **Detector-grade** your own unaided write-up or a colleague’s email. Detectors have mislabelled a large share of human writing as machine-written in published tests; a detector score is not a grade for your practice note.²³
- Trust a model bibliography without opening the sources. Language models invent citations.²⁴

One mechanism sentence, labelled OFF-AGE for literacy, then teach. In a high-school math field experiment (grades 9–11, nearly 1,000 students, Turkey), an unguarded chatbot made practice look better (+48%) and left students worse on the closed exam (–17%); a guarded tutor that withheld the answer made practice look much better and left unaided performance about the same as no AI.²⁵ **That**

²³Weixin Liang and colleagues, “GPT Detectors Are Biased against Non-Native English Writers,” *Patterns* 4, no. 7 (2023): average false-positive rate on human TOEFL essays **61.22%** in that study.

²⁴William H. Walters and Esther Isabelle Wilder, “Fabrication and Errors in the Bibliographic Citations Generated by ChatGPT,” *Scientific Reports* 13 (2023): **55%** of GPT-3.5 citations and **18%** of GPT-4 citations were fabricated in that study. If you asked a tool for a paper, open the paper.

²⁵Hamsa Bastani, Osbert Bastani, Alp Sungu, Haosen Ge, Özge Kabakçı, and Rei Mariman,

is school math — not an adult literacy RCT. (*Math Refresher for Adults* may call the same paper ON-AGE-adjacent for math — do not mash that label into this English book.) The lunch-break rule it supports: the model may prepare you and the next prompt; it may not do your reading, writing, research, or workplace email during the attempt as the only draft. Close the window for the unaided try.

Names, in ordinary language. Hermes 4 is a chat model. Hermes Agent is a different runtime — a computer that can keep going. Grok is a chat assistant. Grok Bot is a cloud-computer agent. A public-school partnership is a third Grok. Game artist makes pictures. None of these is an English refresher class. A chatbot answers in a window. An agent has tools and can keep going. Neither is a partner for the first attempt. There is no Grok Bot education SKU on pages this book opened.

Not a secret friend. A tool that talks in the first person is still a tool. It does not get a private channel, a promise to keep secrets from a manager or a colleague, or a seat in the chair during the first attempt.

You can practice this entire book with no AI. Many readers will.

A life of the habit

Growing fluency is more miles on the same road, not a new faculty and not a literacy birthday. Revisit the same strip next Tuesday. Mix last week's item into this week's warm-up. Space across days. Stop when the exit sticky is honest. Placement is by skill strip, not diploma year. A fake certificate is not. Optional CLEP is a bridge when credit is the goal — sitting an exam is not finishing this book.²⁶ There is no window that closed when you were hired or when you turned

"Generative AI without Guardrails Can Harm Learning: Evidence from High School Mathematics," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. Field experiment, nearly 1,000 Turkish high-school math students (grades 9–11): unguarded chatbot raised assisted practice about **48%** relative to control, then cut unaided exam performance about **17%**; guarded tutor raised practice sharply and left unaided performance about the same as control. **OFF-AGE for literacy — not an adult literacy RCT.** Math Refresher's ON-AGE-adjacent label does not travel here. Mechanism: crutch. Close the window for the attempt.

²⁶College Board CLEP: College Composition and Analyzing & Interpreting Literature listed at **\$97.00** each plus administration or remote-proctor fees (opened 6 September 2026). Credit-granting scores are institution-set. Optional. Never English for Adults I. Never English Refresher I. Never a chatbot certificate of fluency. Hermes 4 is not Hermes Agent. Grok is not Grok Bot and is not a public-school Grok-as-tutor partnership. There is no Grok Bot education SKU. Agents are not chatbots. Game artist makes pictures. Open *your* employer's acceptable-use page when

thirty. The honest pitch is *often enough that the question is familiar*.

Anxiety is common on adult education pathways and can disrupt working memory. It is not proof of low ability. This book uses short sessions, early morphology and claim wins, spaced practice, and refuses timed humiliation as default rigor. That is posture, not a therapy manual. If a session is eating you, shorten it, win one item, return tomorrow.

A Tuesday, said plainly

Here is an illustration, not a reported workplace. Someone opens a greeked email on the train, names the one clear ask, waits before peeking at a mentor twin, tries a parallel subject line unaided, and leaves a dated sticky: *ask first; warrant missing on the claim about Friday's delay*. Later chapters will say: run the session as in *The Refresh Hour*.

Chapter 1 — Academic vocabulary and morphology



Figure 3: A still-life: morphology sticky with word parts boxed; workplace sentence under it; dated notebook. No people. No logos. No readable UI.

Why this matters

You already meet hard words every week. *Authorization* on a form. *Reconciliation* in a status note. *Procurement* in a procedure. *Contraindication* on a labelled household leaflet you already own. *Intermittent* in a maintenance log. The trouble is not that adults “cannot do words.” The trouble is that dense text stalls when a multisyllabic word will not yield — and stalled words make every later strip harder.

This chapter is the gate. Reading complex text, claim–evidence–warrant craft, workplace email, and research edges all lean on the same quiet skill: knowing what a load-bearing word is doing in *this* sentence, and being able to break it into parts when the whole thing clouds. If *reauthorization* still feels like a wall of letters rather than *re-* + *author* + *-ize* + *-ation* doing a job, skipping ahead does not save time. It only moves the fog.

Many adults want better email and denser reading while workplace and civic words still stall silent reading. That is not a character flaw. Explicit vocabulary instruction is named as a strong practice in a major adolescent-literacy guide for a reason — the move ports to adult self-study when you drop the classroom furniture and keep the named strategy.²⁷ Large adult skills surveys show that denser workplace and civic text asks for unfamiliar vocabulary and rhetorical structure; you do not need those survey numbers as a grade.²⁸ You need them as a sober reminder that this strip is load-bearing.

You do not need a K–2 phonics reprint. You need adult objects: a procedure word, a benefits leaflet term, a museum placard adjective, a sports feature verb, a science-feature noun. Affixes and bound roots still matter. Near-synonym swaps still matter — *claim*, *assert*, *suggest* are not the same tone. First-letter guessing is not reading. A weekly vocabulary list floating free of any paragraph is weaker than a text-anchored cycle on words you will meet again.

²⁷Michael L. Kamil and colleagues, *Improving Adolescent Literacy: Effective Classroom and Intervention Practices* (NCEE 2008-4027): Recommendation 1, explicit vocabulary instruction — **strong** evidence. School guide; portable as a move for adult self-study, not an adult commute RCT. Access date for URLs in these notes: 6 September 2026.

²⁸NCES/IES, *Highlights from PIAAC 2023* (ages 16–65): U.S. literacy mean **258**; Level 1 or below **28%**; Level 3+ **44%**. Dense workplace/civic text with unfamiliar vocabulary sits in the Level-2→3 spine. Survey context, not a grade for the reader and not a trial of this book. Not teen NAEP.

Place yourself by skill, not by diploma year. Having sat high-school English once is not a morphology test. Feeling rusty is ordinary. Anxiety around “simple” word parts is real and common; it loads working memory; it is not proof of a words gene; and this book is not a clinical protocol. Short sessions and early wins belong here on purpose. Untimed morphology on *this* sentence beats a countdown timer dressed up as rigor.

What this chapter unlocks is usable access. When you can see parts, name what each part does in the sentence, and catch a first-letter guess in your own head, complex paragraphs stop being fog with highlights, and email stops being tone theater. That is worth the struggle for ordinary adult life — a form this afternoon, a memo Monday, a library feature this weekend.

Rust is not failure. Refresh means rebuild usable meaning and fluency. Start where the word stalls. The rest of the book will still be there when load-bearing words yield.

One more reason this strip earns a full chapter: returners often arrive list-only (“I memorized twenty words, then forgot”) or context-only (“I guessed from the first letter and hoped”). Meaning, part structure, and use in a sentence belong together. In a paperback, morphological problem-solving means: What parts do I see? What does each part do here? What near-synonym would change the tone? A discreet decoding-repair lane exists when multisyllabic word reading is the bottleneck — labelled as skill repair, not as “you are in middle school.” This chapter refuses choosing sides between “just look it up” and “never look it up.” Look up after a try. Use the parts first.

Understand it yourself

Everyday picture. Think of a sticky note stuck under a workplace sentence. The hard word is boxed into parts: *un-* / *predict* / *-able*. Under the sticky you write one plain sentence that keeps the meaning: “You cannot tell ahead of time.” That is morphology for adults — not a childhood worksheet, not a Latin-class costume. Parts are tools for *this* sentence.

Hold a mental picture of three stickies for one family: *authorize*, *authorization*, *reauthorization*. Same root neighborhood. Different jobs. If those three feel like three unrelated spelling bees from three different years, the sentence has left the room. Bring it back.

Precise picture. A load-bearing word is a word the paragraph needs — if you blur it, the claim or the procedure blurs. Academic and workplace vocabulary often packs meaning into prefixes (before), roots (core sense), and suffixes (job in the sentence: noun, adjective, verb-ish ending). *Reconciliation* is not only “a long word on a finance screen.” *Re-* can mark again or back; *concile*-neighborhood words carry “bring together”; *-ation* marks a noun for a process or result. You do not need a complete etymology lecture. You need enough part sense to unlock *this* use.

Bound roots are roots that rarely stand alone in modern English (*-dict-* in *predict*, *contradict*; *-spect-* in *inspect*, *respect*). Affixes are the attachable bits (*pre-*, *un-*, *-able*, *-tion*). Morphological problem-solving is asking what each visible part contributes before you surrender to first-letter guessing or a rewrite tool.

Near-synonyms are not twins. *Suggest* is softer than *assert*. *Require* is stronger than *recommend*. Tone lives in the verb. Packaging claims and workplace email both punish synonym laziness.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear (including from yourself).

1. **“I know it starts with a-, so I’ll guess *approve*.”** First-letter guessing dressed as reading. The page may say *authorize*. The move: cover the guess; mark parts; read through the syllables; check against the sentence’s job.
2. **“Long words are for specialists; I’m not a words person.”** Personality slogan standing in for a skill strip. Adults rebuild morphology with meaning. Rust is ordinary. “Not a words person” is not destiny here.
3. **“I’ll highlight twenty words and make a quizlet.”** List without sentence use. Lists can help after a text-anchored try. They do not replace “what does this part do *here*?”
4. **“Context will tell me; I don’t need parts.”** Context helps *after* you have a candidate. Context-alone as the programme is a cousin of three-cueing — refused as the reading method in this book.²⁹ Surrounding words support; they do not excuse skipping the word’s structure.
5. **“I graduated, so skip vocabulary.”** Diploma year is not a morphology test.

²⁹This book refuses three-cueing (picture/context/first-letter guessing as the reading programme). Surrounding words support after a candidate; they do not replace print and morphology.

If *procurement* still stalls under a little pressure, you are still in the gate — skill strip first.

Five-minute warm-up before you try. Pick one multisyllabic word from a real surface this week (email, procedure, feature, placard). Write it. Draw slash marks between likely parts. Say one job for each part in plain language. Use the whole word in one sentence you could actually send or say. Cover any dictionary until after the sentence. That is the warm-up: parts, job, use. If anxiety spikes, stop after the warm-up and count it as a win. Come back for the try later the same day or tomorrow.

What “fluent” is not. A fast dictionary pop-up is not a check. Parts, sentence job, then confirm. A fluent chatbot definition paragraph is not your work during the attempt. Speed without part sense is theater. Part sense without any use in a sentence will stall you on a noisy commute. Build both, in short doses, on words you actually meet.

Common adult scars, named gently. Some of you were timed until panic. Some of you were told to “sound it out” until meaning left. Some of you were praised for guessing from pictures in early grades and never rebuilt multisyllabic strategy. None of that is a life sentence. This week’s repair is small: parts first, sentence second, tool third. If a scar flares, shorten the session and keep the early win. You are allowed to be an adult who rebuilds a foundation without apology.

More morphology without losing meaning. Practice saying the chain in both directions. Start from *predict* and walk to *prediction*, *unpredictable*, *predictability*. Start from *inspect* and walk to *inspection*, *inspector*, *retrospective* when the text offers it. If a family feels hard, keep three members on one sticky before you chase a twenty-word list.

Tone without theater. Swap one near-synonym in a draft sentence and say what changed. “I *suggest* we move the meeting” is not “I *insist* we move the meeting.” Packaging and email both need that ear. The swap is practice, not a personality makeover.

Estimation as adult manners for words. Before a tool, ask: Do I see a prefix I trust? A suffix that marks the job? A root I’ve seen this month? Estimation is not anti-precision. It is the sense check that catches a first-letter guess before it becomes a wrong procedure step or a wrong tone in a meeting.

A second everyday picture. Imagine a generic product box on a kitchen counter.

The front says a strong claim word. The back lists ingredients or specs in smaller type. Your morphology job is not to sue the brand. Your job is to unlock the claim word's force — *optimized, advanced, clinically* — and ask whether the fine print earns that force. Ordinary stakes. No culture-war. The same ear later serves a workplace email that overclaims.

More on discreet code repair. Alphabetics and fluency show up in adult basic education component lists for a reason: rust can land on any component.³⁰ If you can map parts but still stumble aloud or silently on the syllables, scoop and read through *after* the part map, not instead of it. Keep the lane short. Six words. Private. Then return to sentence meaning. This book will not reprint a primary phonics bank. It will not pretend every adult needs that lane.

Mentor sentence bank (steal structure, invent your content). “Before I order the part, I need *authorization* from the lead.” “The *reconciliation* shows three mismatched lines.” “Please flag any *intermittent* alarm on the second shift.” After you steal the frame, replace the workplace with your isomorphic version. Structure travels. Proprietary details stay offline.

How to try it this week

Use the refresh-hour shapes you already have: a micro-session on the commute or at lunch, a desk-or-shift sit when you have a quiet surface, and a weekend deep sit when you need a longer rebuild. This week's strip is load-bearing words and morphological problem-solving. Do not turn Sunday into a textbook dump wearing a weekend hat. Three to five micros plus one desk sit, with an optional deep sit, is the honest ambition — not under-implementation of a proven adult-commute RCT, because there is none at that grain.

Session shape (all bands). Warm-up retrieval: cover notes; retrieve yesterday's word and its parts; say the sentence job. Short model: one solved twin that boxes *reauthorization* and labels each part's job. Your attempt: a parallel word from today's surface. One good self-question (the locked opening below). Mixed practice only after a few blocked wins — same move, different jackets. Exit sticky: *I can unlock ____ / I almost / I cannot yet — next cue is ____.*

³⁰Susan McShane / John Kruidenier tradition in ABE reading components (alphabetics, fluency, vocabulary, comprehension): rust can land on any strip — place by need, not by shame. Adult-ed component map, not a commute RCT.

Fade help on purpose. First item: you may peek at a dictionary after your part map. Second item: parts and a sentence before any tool. Third item: unaided, then check. When to stop looking up: when your part map and the sentence use agree twice in a row on words you used to stall.

Commute / lunch (about 15–20 minutes). Materials: phone note or scrap paper; one multisyllabic workplace or civic word from a message, label, or feature paragraph. Safety: no public quiz that humiliates you or a colleague; no photographing someone else’s screen as a sting; do not paste proprietary employer text into a public consumer tool — invent an isomorphic sentence if the real thread is sensitive. The move: break one word into parts; use it in one sentence you could send. Say the locked opening once. Wait. Exit sticky before you scroll. If the session becomes scrolling, it stopped being a session — set a 15-minute boundary and one object.

Desk or shift (about 25–40 minutes). Materials: one dense paragraph from a procedure, benefits leaflet, museum placard printout, or science/history feature; sticky notes; pen. Safety: ordinary; blur proprietary names; composite illustrations are fine if labelled. The move: gloss five load-bearing words before or during a careful read; reuse two in a sticky summary sentence. Include one interloper only after two clean unlocks: a near-synonym tone swap slipped into the same sit so you choose the move.

Weekend deep sit (about 45–75 minutes when needed). Materials: one dense multi-paragraph memo or feature; morphology family map for one root; a short list for discreet decoding repair if multisyllabic reading still stalls; one intentional wrong twin (first-letter guess, labelled wrong); calendar for next week’s three micro cues. The move: map a family; unlock five load-bearing words in context; diagnose the wrong twin out loud or on paper (“I guessed from *a-* — the page said *authorize*”). Schedule Mon/Tue/Fri micro cues — spacing across days beats one heroic dump. Practice testing and distributed practice rate as high-utility learning techniques in a broad review; that is useful design, not a promise that every adult will see the same result.³¹

Exact wording you can say to yourself. “What parts do I see — and what does

³¹John Dunlosky and colleagues, “Improving Students’ Learning With Effective Learning Techniques,” *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 14, no. 1 (2013): practice testing and distributed practice rated **high utility** — technique ratings across mixed materials/ages, not an adult-English programme evaluation. Useful study, not a promise that every adult will see the same result.

each part do in *this* sentence?” Then wait. Cover the answer. A slow three is a convention, not a sacrament (classroom think-time research is the neighbor; this is an adult pause-before-lookup, not a literacy RCT).³² Look at the word and the sentence, not at a photo-solver or a rewrite.

First try-it this week (on the go). Break one multisyllabic workplace word into parts and use it in a sentence you could send. That is enough for a micro-session. On a deeper sit later: gloss five load-bearing words from one dense paragraph and reuse two in a sticky.

A sample micro, narrated once (composite). You open a note on the train. Retrieval: “What parts were in yesterday’s *unpredictable*?” *un-* + *predict* + *-able*. Solved twin glance: yesterday you boxed *reconciliation* and wrote “bringing accounts back together.” Parallel try: today’s email has *authorization*. Parts: *author-* neighborhood + *-ize* + *-ation*. Sentence: “I need authorization before I order the part.” Exit sticky: *I can unlock authorization; next cue is procurement*. Close the note. That is a refresh hour micro — not a chapter binge.

Worked pictures you can steal (then put away)

Solved twin A — *reauthorization*. Parts you can mark: *re-* (again) + *author-* (permit / give authority) + *-ize* (make into a verb process) + *-ation* (noun for the process/result). Sentence job: names the act of granting permission again. Plain paraphrase: “permission granted again.” Wrong twin nearby: guessing *react* from the first letters.

Solved twin B — *tone swap*. “The report *suggests* a delay” vs “The report *asserts* a delay.” Same topic. Different force. Mark which one your draft actually earned.

Practice that actually builds it

Blocked practice first: several morphology unlocks in a row, then several tone swaps. Mixed practice later: a part map, a synonym swap, a glossary sticky, a

³²Robert J. Stahl, “Using Think-Time and Wait-Time Skillfully in the Classroom,” ERIC Digest ED370885 (1994) — about three seconds as a convention; Mary Budd Rowe wait-time (1972) was science class. Classroom-origin neighbor for an adult pause-before-lookup — not an adult literacy RCT.

discreet decoding item — so you have to choose the move. Emails, procedures, features, and placards *are* the practice surfaces. They do not replace the part map.

Knowledge first, then fluency on the same objects. Hearing a wrong reason — including your own — then asking a better question, then naming a better reason, is the work. Latin-root instruction has shown useful effects in secondary and English-learner samples; port the mechanism, label the sample, and do not invent an adult RCT for your train car.³³

Talk-to-yourself box

Opening (locked): “What parts do I see — and what does each part do in *this* sentence?”

Follow-ups: 1. If I swap a near-synonym, how does the tone move? 2. Where else have I seen this root or affix this week? 3. Which surrounding words help — without first-letter guessing? 4. Does my paraphrase still mean what the sentence meant? 5. Where could someone go wrong with this word?

How to wait alone. After you ask, cover the answer. Count a slow three. If you stop mid-reason, wait again before peeking. Look at the word, the sentence, the label, or the procedure line — not at a camera solver or a chatbot rewrite. Rescue at one second is still rescue. Abandonment for forty minutes of scrolling is not a micro-session.

What a stuck silence usually means. The question was vague; wait-time one was zero; you are hunting for a flashcard definition instead of a part job; you are guessing what a textbook would want; you offered a first-letter guess where a morphology move was asked; you think “words person” means leave; you think a finished-looking chatbot paragraph is already a check; anxiety is eating working memory — shorten the session, win one morphology item, come back tomorrow. Your job is to pose, wait, and point back at the object — not to fill the silence with a rewrite tool’s answer.

³³Amy C. Crosson and colleagues’ Latin-roots instructional work (secondary / English-learner labelled samples): mechanism of morphological problem-solving with roots/affixes. Port the mechanism; label the sample; do not invent an adult Crosson RCT for the train.

Named try-its

Try-it A — One workplace word, parts + sentence (commute / lunch)

Time: 8–12 minutes.

Materials: phone note; one word from a message, form, or feature (*authorization, procurement, intermittent, compliance* — pick what you actually saw).

Safety: private; no proprietary paste into public tools; isomorphic swap if needed.

The move: Slash the parts. Write one job per part in plain words. Use the whole word in one sentence you could send. Say the locked opening once and wait.

Try-it B — Synonym-swap tone check (commute / lunch)

Time: 5–10 minutes.

Materials: one draft sentence from a note you already wrote (greeked names).

Safety: ordinary; no live controversy.

The move: Replace the main verb with a near-synonym (*suggest / recommend / require / insist*). Say how the tone moved. Keep the meaning honest — do not upgrade force your evidence does not earn.

Try-it C — Three-word sticky from today's article (commute / lunch)

Time: 10–15 minutes.

Materials: one short feature paragraph or placard text; three stickies.

Safety: ordinary stakes; museum/science/history/sports feature — not a culture-war topic.

The move: Star three load-bearing words. For each: parts, one-line meaning in *this* text, one reuse in a gist sentence.

Try-it D — Morphology family map (desk or shift)

Time: 20–30 minutes.

Materials: one root neighborhood (*spect, dict, port, ject*, or a workplace family like *author-*); paper.

Safety: ordinary.

The move: Map at least four related words. For two of them, write a sentence that fits a real surface this week. Circle the affix that changed the job (noun vs adjective vs verb).

Try-it E — Five-word glossary before a dense paragraph (desk or shift)

Time: 25–40 minutes.

Materials: one multi-paragraph procedure, memo, or feature; glossary sticky.

Safety: blur employer names; do not paste live threads into public chat.

The move: Before or during the read, gloss five load-bearing words with parts +

plain meaning. After reading, reuse two in a two-sentence analytical gist. Check that the gist does not invent what the page did not say.

Try-it F — Discreet decoding repair list (desk or weekend, only if needed)

Time: 15–20 minutes.

Materials: six to eight multisyllabic words that stall your silent reading; pencil for syllable scoops.

Safety: private; this is skill repair, not a humiliation drill; no public quiz.

The move: Scoop syllables; read through; then ask the morphology question. Label this lane as optional continuity when word reading is the bottleneck — not as “adults are middle schoolers.” If words unlock with parts alone, skip this try-it without guilt.

Try-it G — Packaging or leaflet claim word (desk or lunch)

Time: 10 minutes.

Materials: a product claim vs ingredients/spec card (generic box; no brand chrome to copy).

Safety: ordinary consumer reading; not medical, legal, or lending advice.

The move: Unlock one claim word (*clinically, formulated, optimized* — whatever appears). Ask what evidence on the package actually supports the force of that word.

Try-it H — Family map + wrong twin (weekend deep sit)

Time: 45–60 minutes.

Materials: dense paragraph; family map; one labelled first-letter-guess wrong twin; calendar.

Safety: label the wrong twin clearly so you do not encode it as correct when tired.

The move: Gloss five words; map one family; diagnose the wrong twin in writing; schedule three micro cues for next week. Optional: reuse two glossary words in a short status sentence.

Incorrect example to diagnose (blocked, then name the error).

Someone sees *authorization* and says, “It starts with *a-*, so it’s about approving something casually — I’ll treat it like *OK*.”

What went wrong: first-letter / vague-associate guessing instead of parts-in-sentence.

Repair: mark *author-* + verb/noun endings; paraphrase as permission formally granted; check the sentence’s actual requirement.

Say the repair out loud. Silence in the face of your own wrong reason is not kindness.

Second incorrect twin (for the deep sit).

Someone makes a twenty-word quizlet from a memo and never uses a word in a sentence.

What went wrong: list theater without text-anchored use.

Repair: keep five words; parts + sentence + gist reuse. Volume of flashcards is not fluency.

Mixed pair (after a few blocked wins). One morphology unlock + one tone swap + one glossary sticky in the same sit. The point is choosing the move, not racing. Near transfer is the honest hope: the same part sense on a procedure *and* a feature *and* an email in the same week. Far transfer to an unseen domain without knowledge is not promised — vary jackets, keep structure.

How to keep a tiny record. After a micro, one dated line is enough: date; word; parts; one sentence; exit sticky words. After a desk sit, keep the five-word glossary and the gist. After a deep sit, keep the wrong twin with the repair sentence. A colleague who missed your session should almost be able to follow the note. That is the work product — not a fake certificate, not a percentile, not “English for Adults I.”

Spacing the week (seed, not a 180-day plan). Mon micro: one workplace word parts + sentence. Tue micro: synonym tone swap. Wed desk: five-word glossary + gist. Thu off or light retrieval of Monday’s sticky. Fri micro: first-letter wrong twin. Optional Sun deep sit: family map + labelled wrong twin + calendar cues for next week. If you miss Tuesday, do not punish yourself with a double dump; resume from the last sticky. Consistency of cueing beats perfection of minutes.

Maintenance after done-enough. When this strip clears, do not ghost it. Two micros a week of retrieval plus one interloper keeps morphology warm while you open complex-text reading. Rebuild weeks return when a diagnostic wrong reappears — first-letter relapse, list-without-sentence, diploma-year skip urge.

If it isn’t clicking

Diagnostic 1 — You keep peeking in under a second.

Likely meaning: wait-time one was zero; anxiety is loading working memory.

Next move: cover the answer; shrink to one word; untimed; win one morphology item; stop. Point back to the refresh hour: short sessions beat marathon “prove you’re tough” sits. Come back tomorrow. Optional light calm-down before the

next try is fine; this book does not promise a cure for anxiety and does not turn into therapy.

Diagnostic 2 — Definitions feel memorized and vanish.

Likely meaning: you are collecting glosses without part jobs or sentence use.

Next move: for three days, every word gets slash marks and one sentence before any dictionary confirm. Say “parts, then use” before any list. If a tool finishes the attempt for you, you practiced tool use, not morphology.

Diagnostic 3 — You want to skip because you “already had” English.

Likely meaning: diploma year is standing in for a skill check.

Next move: give yourself a three-item diagnostic — two multisyllabic unlocks in sentences, one tone swap under light pressure you choose (not a humiliation timer). If any item fails, stay. Foundations still gate dense reading; that is a placement fact, not a scolding. A forty-five-year-old with morphology fluency can learn claim–evidence–warrant craft; a twenty-eight-year-old without foundations cannot skip to research-edge synthesis because a podcast said so. Place by skill strip.

Extra signals and next moves. If you only succeed when the word sits on a vocabulary worksheet, change the jacket — use a procedure line or a placard. If multisyllabic reading itself stalls after morphology tries, add Try-it F discreetly. If a marathon sit leaves you worse, you overdosed — return to the micro shape.

When to slow down. If first-letter errors return after a good day, return to blocked part maps. If anxiety spikes, cut the session in half and keep the early win.

When to go ahead. When you unlock common workplace/academic multisyllabic words with parts, use them in sentences, catch one first-letter wrong twin, and can say how a near-synonym moves tone, you are ready to lean into volume + close reading with a live purpose question.

When to ask a human. A colleague who is good at explaining, a tutor, or a class can help when self-talk loops. Bring a concrete wrong twin, not “I’m bad at words.” Correct the reason without crushing the attempt — applied to yourself. “Never correct yourself” is not this book’s rule.

Tools, including AI

Keep tools short and late. Point back to the refresh-hour AI box for the full allows and bans. Do not turn this chapter into an AI policy paper.

A labelled dictionary or glossary may check a meaning *after* your part map and sentence try. A paper sticky with slash marks beats a flashy vocab app during the attempt. Purdue OWL and OpenStax pages can explore usage after you tried; they replace thinking when they finish the attempt for you.

After you have tried: you may ask a chatbot to explain *this idea* to yourself from a named lesson (title, page, today’s micro-goal). You may ask for isomorphic practice with answers kept on *your* page. You may ask for a labelled SCRIPT — a short sequence for *you* to say, not a paragraph to copy as your essay or email. You may ask for a hint after an attempt — a hint is not the finished definition paragraph. You may ask it to diagnose work you already did (crop to the paper — no face).

You may not photo-to-key during the attempt. You may not paste a worksheet or a live employer thread and ask for completion. You may not ask the tool to write your email or essay as the only draft. You may not treat a finished-looking definition dump as your work. You hold the account; unaided first. COPPA’s under-13 line does not apply to you — that is not a companion licence and not a secret-friend permission. Do not paste proprietary employer data into a public consumer tool; use invented isomorphic wording. Do not hand yourself an agent as a first-attempt English partner. Do not print a fluency certificate from a chat. Do not detector-grade your own unaided note.

One mechanism sentence, labelled OFF-AGE for literacy, then teach: in a high-school math field experiment (grades 9–11), an unguarded chatbot made practice look better and left students worse on the test with the window closed.³⁴ That is school math — not an adult literacy RCT. The lunch-break rule it supports: the model may prepare you and the next prompt; it may not do your reading or writing during the attempt as the only draft.

What “done enough” looks like

Use this skill-strip checklist before you move on. Placement is by skill, not birthday and not diploma year. A chatbot certificate of fluency is receipt theater — this book never invents one, and never invents “English for Adults I” as a credit title.

³⁴Hamsa Bastani and colleagues, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 122, no. 26 (2025): e2422633122. High-school math field experiment (grades 9–11, Turkey); unguarded chatbot raised assisted practice and cut unaided exam performance relative to control. **OFF-AGE for literacy — not an adult literacy RCT.** Mechanism: crutch. The model may prepare you; it may not do your attempt.

- ☐ I can break common multisyllabic workplace/academic words into parts and say what each part does in *this* sentence.
- ☐ I can use two unlocked words in sentences I could actually send or say.
- ☐ I can catch a first-letter guess in a wrong twin and say what went wrong.
- ☐ I can swap one near-synonym and name the tone change honestly.
- ☐ I can gloss five load-bearing words from one dense paragraph and reuse two in a gist without inventing.
- ☐ I know when a discreet decoding-repair list is needed — and when it is not.
- ☐ My exit sticky this week names one cue for next Tuesday — not a fake diploma.

If multisyllabic words still stall under a little pressure, stay here. The next chapter needs live word access before “paragraph job” and paraphrase will stick. Revisit morphology next week in three micros even after you open Chapter 2 — maintenance is part of the habit. Life-of-the-habit tips live in the refresh hour, in this checklist, and in keeping track — not in a tenth teaching chapter.

Optional later paths (community-college courses, placement tools, credit exams) are bridges when you need them. They are not required to open or finish this gate. Sitting a credit exam is not the same as finishing this book’s skill strip.

You do not need to be a novelist. You do need to hear “it starts with *a-* so I’ll guess” as a wrong twin, mark the parts, and use the word in a sentence. On the commute, unlock one workplace word. At the desk, gloss five and reuse two. This weekend, if you need the rebuild, map a family and label one wrong twin. That is done enough for the gate.

A closing walk-through for this week

Here is one coherent week you can adapt. It is not a curriculum contract. It is a shape.

Monday, commute. Warm-up: retrieve one root from last week if you have it. Try-it A on *authorization* or a word you actually saw. Exit sticky names Tuesday’s cue.

Tuesday, lunch. Locked opening on a second word. Synonym-swap tone check on one draft sentence. Peek only after parts. Sticky: *tone moved from suggest* → *require*.

Wednesday, desk. Five-word glossary on a dense paragraph. Two-sentence gist. Interloper: first-letter wrong twin diagnosed in one line.

Friday, commute. Retrieve Monday's parts without looking. Unlock one new word. Sticky names the weekend cue if you need a deep sit.

Sunday, optional deep sit. Family map. Five contextual unlocks. One labelled wrong twin. Calendar three micros for next week. Done-enough checklist if you are ready; if not, stay another rebuild week without shame.

If the week slips, keep the object small. One word unlocked with a wait is better than a PDF glossary highlighted in a fog. You are rebuilding a gate, not performing toughness.

When load-bearing words feel usable — not perfect, usable — open Chapter 2 with the same respect for foundations. Complex text will ask for a paragraph's job. The job is clearer when the words yield. You will be ready to name it.

Keep the tone kind when you correct yourself. You are not on trial. You are tuning an instrument you still need.

If you teach teenagers at home as well, remember this chapter still addresses *you* as the learner refreshing your own English. Other books in the house serve parent-and-teen tables and younger ages. One pointer is enough; then return to your sticky.

Chapter 2 — Reading complex text



Figure 4: A still-life: annotated paragraph with claim star and evidence underline; sticky reading “job = ____.” No people. No logos. No readable UI.

Why this matters

You already read every day. A procedure. A feature on your phone. A museum placard. A benefits leaflet. A short essay someone forwarded. A multi-page memo with headings that somehow still fog. The trouble is not that adults “cannot comprehend.” The trouble is that volume without a purpose question becomes scroll, and close reading without a product becomes highlight-and-hope.

This chapter is the twin of access and analysis. Chapter 1 unlocked load-bearing words. This chapter asks what a paragraph is *doing* — claim, evidence, example, counter, or scene turn — and trains volume reading with a purpose alongside short three-pass close reads. If you can finish a page and still cannot say the paragraph’s job in one sentence, skipping to rhetoric worksheets does not save time. It only moves the fog.

Many adults want better argument craft and better workplace writing while dense paragraphs still dissolve into yellow marker. That is not a character flaw. Direct, explicit comprehension strategies — summarize, question, paraphrase, main idea — are named as strong practice in a major adolescent-literacy guide; the move ports when you keep the named strategy and drop the classroom furniture.³⁵ School continuity for older struggling readers also appears in a later grades 4–9 reading-interventions guide — still school-labelled when named.³⁶ Rereading and highlighting alone rate as low-utility techniques next to practice that makes you retrieve and use ideas.³⁷ Large adult skills surveys ask for longer texts, distraction management, multi-page navigation, and evaluate/reflect work; you do not need those numbers as a grade.³⁸ You need them as a sober reminder that this strip is load-bearing.

You do not need Accelerated Reader points as proof you understood. You do not

³⁵Kamil et al., *Improving Adolescent Literacy* (NCEE 2008-4027): Recommendation 2, comprehension strategies — **strong**. School guide; portable moves, not an adult commute RCT. Access date: 6 September 2026.

³⁶Vaughn et al., *Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4–9* (IES practice guide, 2022): **school** continuity — labelled school, not an adult commute RCT. Port the honesty that readers beyond early grades still need explicit support when complex text stalls.

³⁷Dunlosky et al. (2013): practice testing and distributed practice **high utility**; rereading/highlighting **low utility** — technique ratings, not an adult-English programme evaluation. Useful study, not a promise that every adult will see the same result.

³⁸NCES/IES PIAAC 2023 Highlights: U.S. literacy mean **258**; Level 1 or below **28%**; Level 3+ **44%**. Level-2→3 work includes longer texts and evaluate/reflect demands. Survey context, not a grade. Not teen NAEP.

need three-cueing (picture, context, first letter) as a reading programme.³⁹ You need adult objects: a science or history feature, a short story or essay scene, a procedure section, a civic memo on an ordinary safe topic, a sports feature paragraph. Most days: worthy text with one purpose question and a short product. Some days: a three-pass close-read — gist, then claim/evidence/structure, then a warrant or missing-evidence question.

Place yourself by skill, not by diploma year. Having “always liked reading” is not a paragraph-job test. Feeling rusty on dense text is ordinary. Anxiety around long paragraphs is real; short sessions and early wins belong here. Untimed purpose-first reading beats a countdown timer dressed up as rigor.

What this chapter unlocks is usable comprehension you can show. When you can name a paragraph’s job, paraphrase without copying syntax, and star two lines that would defend a reading, rhetoric and workplace writing stop floating. That is worth the struggle for ordinary adult life — a memo this afternoon, a feature Monday, a short essay scene this weekend.

Complex text is not a moral test. It is a practical one. A procedure you misread costs time. A feature you only highlighted leaves you empty in a meeting. A scene you rushed past leaves you unable to say what turned. Adults rebuild this with named strategies and short products — the same way they rebuild other rusty skills. You are not late to literacy because you are busy. You are busy, and this book respects that with micro, desk, and deep shapes instead of a 180-day dump.

Rust is not failure. Refresh means rebuild usable meaning and fluency. Start where the paragraph’s job is soft. The rest of the book will still be there when complex text yields a product.

Understand it yourself

Everyday picture. Think of a sticky on a printed paragraph: *job = claim*. Under it, one sentence: “This paragraph claims the new schedule reduces handoff errors.” Two underlines mark the evidence lines. That is adult close reading — not anthology finish, not quiz-point theater.

Hold a mental picture of volume and close reading as twin tools on one workbench. Volume builds knowledge and stamina with a purpose question. Close reading

³⁹Three-cueing refused as the reading programme in this book’s architecture.

slows a short stretch to name structure and test understanding. SSR-alone (just read, no strategy, no product) is not enough. Highlight-everything is not a strategy.

Precise picture. A paragraph's job is its function in the larger text. A **claim** advances a contestable statement. **Evidence** supplies support on the page. An **example** illustrates. A **counter** names an objection or limit. A **scene turn** in literary text shifts motive, time, or stance. Not every paragraph is a claim; mislabelling an example as a claim is a common adult error.

A **three-pass close-read** is a short, deliberate sequence: 1. **Gist** — What is this mostly about, in one plain sentence? 2. **Claim / evidence / structure** — What is it doing? Where is support? How is it built? 3. **Warrant or missing-evidence question** — Why would that evidence matter — or what is missing?

Paraphrase restates meaning in fresh syntax. If your “paraphrase” keeps the author's sentence skeleton and swaps three nouns, you copied. Copying syntax is not understanding.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear (including from yourself).

1. **“I highlighted the whole page, so I read it.”** Highlight-and-hope. Color is not comprehension. The move: one purpose question; one job label; one paraphrase sentence.
2. **“I got the quiz points / I finished the article.”** Finish theater. AR-style points are not comprehension instruction; a major adolescent report found no discernible fluency or comprehension effects for that vendor programme in the rated domains.⁴⁰ Finishing a scroll is not a gist.
3. **“The first letter and the picture tell me the word.”** Three-cueing residue. Print and morphology first; context supports after a candidate.
4. **“If I reread three times, I will understand.”** Rereading can help *after* a purpose question and a try at gist. Reread-as-only-habit is low utility compared with retrieval and use.⁴¹

⁴⁰WWC Adolescent Literacy report on Accelerated Reader (August 2010): **no discernible** effects in rated fluency/comprehension domains for adolescent learners — **school/vendor** labelled. AR points are not comprehension instruction.

⁴¹Dunlosky et al. (2013): practice testing and distributed practice **high utility**; rereading/highlighting **low utility** — technique ratings, not an adult-English programme evaluation. Useful study, not a promise that every adult will see the same result.

5. **“I was always a reader, so skip strategies.”** Identity standing in for a skill check. If you cannot name a paragraph’s job under a little pressure, you are still in this strip.

From Chapter 1 into Chapter 2. If a load-bearing word still stalls, unlock it with morphology before you argue about the paragraph’s job. Foggy words make foggy gists. A two-minute Chapter 1 micro before a Chapter 2 desk sit is not going backwards; it is keeping the gate honest.

Five-minute warm-up before you try. Take one dense paragraph. Cover any summary. Ask: What is this paragraph’s job — claim, evidence, example, counter, or scene turn? Write one label. Write one gist sentence without looking back. Then peek and adjust. That is the warm-up: job, gist, check. If anxiety spikes, stop after the warm-up and count it as a win.

What “fluent” is not. A fast summary from a chatbot is not a check. Job label, paraphrase, then confirm against the page. A fluent rewrite of the article is not your work during the attempt. Speed without a product is theater. A product without any volume practice will leave stamina soft. Build both.

Common adult scars, named gently. Some of you were graded on packets until reading meant hunt-the-answer. Some of you were told “just read more” until strategy never arrived. Some of you were praised for finishing books and never asked for a defensible gist. None of that is a life sentence. This week’s repair is small: purpose first, job label second, paraphrase third, tool later.

Volume without fog. Set a 10–15 minute volume sit with one purpose question written before you start (“How does this feature explain the schedule change?”). At the end, write a two-sentence analytical gist — not a book-report plot list. Knowledge builds from content-rich reading; the purpose question keeps the sit from becoming scroll.

Close reading without anthology guilt. You do not need to finish a novel to practice a three-pass. One page or one short essay section is enough. Literary scene and informational feature are both on-mission. Sequence by your next real task, not by a school habit that literature must always come first.

Jobs in the wild — five quick pictures. - **Claim:** “The night checklist cut missed handoffs.” Contestable; needs support. - **Evidence:** “Unit A logged twelve misses in March and four in April.” Support on the page. - **Example:** “On Tuesday, one missed handoff delayed a delivery by two hours.” Illustration, not the whole

argument. - **Counter:** “Critics note the checklist adds three minutes per shift.” Fair pushback or limit. - **Scene turn (literary):** A character says “I’m fine,” then the next lines show the hands shaking. The turn is the job.

Adults often mash claim and example. Practice saying: “That’s an instance, not the claim.” The mash is ordinary. Naming it is the repair.

Multi-page and noncontinuous text. Workplace and civic reading is rarely one tidy paragraph. Tables, headings, sidebars, and screens compete. A purpose question still comes first: What am I here to find or evaluate? Section stickies beat a single foggy “I read it.” Complexity can mean longer sentences, denser vocabulary, and noncontinuous layout — not “more controversy.”

Paraphrase drills that stay honest. Take a sentence. Cover it. Speak a version that a colleague could check against the page. Uncover. If three or more content words sit in the same order as the original, rewrite again. Fresh syntax is the standard, not fancy vocabulary. Plain language paraphrase is not dumbing down; it is proof of meaning.

Gist versus summary theater. A gist is short and analytical: what the stretch claims or shows, plus the hinge. Summary theater lists everything. For volume sits, two sentences beat two pages of retell. For close reads, the third pass asks a sharper question than “what happened.”

Why volume still matters. Close reading alone can make you precise on one page and brittle everywhere else. Purpose-first volume builds knowledge and stamina. Twin the tools across the week: most days volume-with-product; some days three-pass. Neither SSR-alone nor packet-alone.

Knowledge first on surfaces you meet. A rhetoric try next week needs paragraphs you can see. A workplace email try needs a real ask. This chapter’s surfaces — feature, memo, scene, placard — are not decorations. They are the objects. Tips are teachable moves, not slogans.

A note on Lexile and level apps. A number on an app is not your programme. Useful as a rough filter sometimes; useless as a substitute for job labels and paraphrase. Place by skill strip: can you name the job and gist without a tool finishing it?

How to try it this week

Use the refresh-hour shapes: micro on commute/lunch, desk-or-shift sit, weekend deep sit when needed. This week's strip is paragraph job, paraphrase, and the volume + close-reading twin. Three to five micros plus one desk sit, optional deep sit — honest ambition, not under-implementation of a nonexistent adult-commute RCT.

Session shape (all bands). Warm-up retrieval: cover notes; retrieve yesterday's paragraph job and gist. Short model: one mentor paragraph with job labelled and two evidence underlines. Your attempt: a parallel paragraph. One good self-question (locked opening). Mixed practice after blocked wins. Exit sticky: *I can name the job of ____ / I almost / I cannot yet — next cue is ____.*

Fade help. First item: mentor mark-up visible. Second: mentor faded to first sentence only. Third: unaided, then check. Stop looking up when your job label and paraphrase survive a peek twice.

Commute / lunch (about 15–20 minutes). Materials: one dense paragraph on phone or paper (feature, procedure section, sports write-up, museum placard text). Safety: ordinary stakes; no live controversy; no proprietary paste into public tools. The move: label the paragraph's job in one word or short phrase; write one sentence "This paragraph claims/shows/turns ____." Say the locked opening. Wait. Exit sticky before scrolling.

Desk or shift (about 25–40 minutes). Materials: a short essay section, feature, or multi-section memo; pen for stars and underlines. Safety: blur employer names; composite OK if labelled. The move: purpose question first; 10–15 minutes volume or a three-pass on two to three paragraphs; two-sentence analytical gist; one interloper (a paragraph that is example, not claim) after two clean job labels.

Weekend deep sit (about 45–75 minutes when needed). Materials: a short essay or feature (3–6 pages or a long article section); mentor mark-up; parallel passage; labelled highlight-and-hope wrong twin; calendar. The move: three-pass the opening stretch; volume the middle with section gists; diagnose the wrong twin; schedule three micro cues. Spacing across days beats one Sunday dump.⁴²

Exact wording you can say to yourself. "What is this paragraph's job — claim,

⁴²Dunlosky et al. (2013): practice testing and distributed practice **high utility**; rereading/highlighting **low utility** — technique ratings, not an adult-English programme evaluation. Useful study, not a promise that every adult will see the same result.

evidence, example, counter, or scene turn?” Then wait. Cover the answer. Slow three. Look at the paragraph, not at a rewrite tool.

First try-it this week (on the go). Name one paragraph’s job in one sentence. Deeper sit later: three-pass a short essay or feature stretch; write a defensible gist + two stars.

A sample micro, narrated once (composite). Train note open. Retrieval: yesterday’s job was *example*. Mentor glance: a marked paragraph starred *claim* with two underlines. Parallel try: today’s sports feature paragraph — job = *claim* about a pitching change; evidence = two lines of box-score context in the prose. Exit sticky: *I can label claim vs example; next cue is counter*. Close note.

Worked pictures you can steal (then put away)

Solved twin — informational. Paragraph argues that a checklist cut handoff mistakes. Job = claim. Evidence = before/after counts on the page. Gist: “The writer claims the checklist reduced handoff mistakes and cites unit counts.”

Solved twin — literary scene turn. A character laughs, then the next lines show the laugh was cover. Job = scene turn. Stars go on the two lines that reveal the shift.

Fading the mentor on purpose. Day one: full mentor mark-up beside you. Day two: mentor’s first sentence and job label only. Day three: blank parallel. If you stall, step back one fade level — that is strategy, not failure. Graham-style modelling grain for reading looks like: watch a marked twin, try a parallel, reflect with a three-line checklist (*job labelled? paraphrase fresh? two stars?*).⁴³

Interruptible micros without shame. Commute noise is real. If the train announcement eats your working memory, keep the sticky with the unfinished job label and finish at lunch. An interrupted micro that still produced a job label counts. A “finished” scroll with no product does not.

Mixed interloper examples. After two clean claim labels, drop in a paragraph that is only example. After two clean informational gists, drop in a short literary scene turn. The point is choosing the label, not racing pages.

⁴³Modelling grain here borrows the spirit of explicit strategy teaching (Kamil Rec 2) and the Model–Practice–Reflect habit pattern named in Graham et al. 2016 for writing — applied lightly to reading mark-up. School-labelled ancestors; adult self-study translation.

Mentor checklist you can reuse (three lines). After any close-read crumb, ask: 1. Did I label the paragraph’s job with one of the five names — or did I say “main idea” and stop? 2. Is my paraphrase fresh syntax, or a noun-swap copy? 3. Did I star two lines I could actually point to if a colleague asked “where does it say that?”

That checklist is reflect grain, not bureaucracy. Keep it on a sticky in the notebook. Skip lines you already own; fight the line you dodge.

On digital navigation without drama. Multi-page PDFs, intranet pages, and long features ask you to ignore distraction. A purpose question is a filter. Tabs are not evil; tab-hopping without a sticky is how volume becomes fog. One practical rule for desk sits: one main text, one note file, no social feed in another window during the try.

Talking to yourself is not weird — it is the discussion move translated. Extended discussion of meaning shows up as a moderate recommendation in the adolescent guide.⁴⁴ Alone, you become both speakers: you ask, you wait, you answer in a sentence you could check. That is the talk-to-yourself architecture of this book. You are not performing Socrates. You are not stacking five questions to sound smart. One locked opening, then follow-ups only as needed.

When a paragraph does more than one job. Sometimes a stretch claims *and* offers an example. Name the primary job first, then note the secondary. “Primary: claim; secondary: example in sentence three.” Precision beats forcing a single label when the text is doing two things.

Sports, museums, and how-to as serious practice. A box-score narrative paragraph can hold a claim that needs more evidence. A placard can compress a claim into two sentences. A how-to can hide a claim about “best method” inside steps. Ordinary jackets train the same muscles as “serious” essays without turning the week into a culture-war syllabus.

Anxiety and long paragraphs. If a wall of text spikes panic, shrink the window: one paragraph, one job, one gist, stop. Early wins are design, not softness. Return later the same day if you want. This book is not a therapy manual; it is a session-shape manual that refuses humiliation timers as default rigor.

⁴⁴Kamil et al., *Improving Adolescent Literacy* (NCEE 2008-4027): Recommendation 2, comprehension strategies — **strong**. School guide; portable moves, not an adult commute RCT. Access date: 6 September 2026.

Practice that actually builds it

Blocked first: several job labels in a row, then several paraphrases. Mixed later: job label, paraphrase, three-pass, volume gist — choose the move. Features, memos, and scenes *are* the practice. They do not replace the structure.

Talk-to-yourself box

Opening (locked): “What is this paragraph’s job — claim, evidence, example, counter, or scene turn?”

Follow-ups: 1. Can I paraphrase the main idea without copying syntax? 2. What question would a careful reader ask next? 3. Which two lines would I star if I had to defend a reading? 4. What does the page show before I invent? 5. Where could highlight-and-hope go wrong?

How to wait alone. Cover the answer. Slow three. If you stop mid-reason, wait again. Look at the paragraph — not the phone’s rewrite. Rescue at one second is still rescue. Scrolling for forty minutes is not a micro-session.

What a stuck silence usually means. Vague question; zero wait; hunting for a teacherly phrase; guessing what a packet wants; highlighting instead of labelling; treating a chatbot summary as a check; anxiety — shorten, win one job label, return tomorrow.

Named try-its

Try-it A — One paragraph, one job sentence (commute / lunch)

Time: 8–12 minutes.

Materials: one dense paragraph.

Safety: ordinary; no live controversy.

The move: Label job. Write “This paragraph ____.” Peek and adjust. Exit sticky.

Try-it B — Three-pass on a short feature paragraph (commute / lunch)

Time: 12–18 minutes.

Materials: one meaty paragraph; note.

Safety: ordinary.

The move: Pass 1 gist. Pass 2 claim/evidence/structure marks. Pass 3 one warrant or missing-evidence question. No more than one paragraph if time is tight.

Try-it C — Purpose question before a commute article (commute / lunch)

Time: 15–20 minutes.

Materials: one article you were going to skim anyway.

Safety: skip live controversy topics; choose science/history/how-to/sports feature.

The move: Write purpose question first. Read. End with two-sentence analytical gist. If you cannot gist, you scrolled — restart with a shorter stretch tomorrow.

Try-it D — Volume + analytical gist (desk or shift)

Time: 25–35 minutes.

Materials: 4–8 pages or a long feature section; timer optional only as a soft boundary, not a humiliation clock.

Safety: ordinary.

The move: Purpose question. Read. Two-sentence gist + two starred lines. Optional section sticky every few pages on multi-page text.

Try-it E — Mentor mark-up then parallel passage (desk or shift)

Time: 25–40 minutes.

Materials: mentor paragraph already marked (or mark one carefully); a parallel unmarked paragraph.

Safety: composites labelled.

The move: Study mentor. Fade. Mark parallel unaided. Compare. Name one error type if you mismatched jobs.

Try-it F — Multi-page memo section summaries (desk or weekend)

Time: 30–45 minutes.

Materials: multi-section memo or report (greeked).

Safety: no proprietary paste into public tools.

The move: One sentence summary per section. Final sticky: what the whole document asks the reader to believe or do.

Try-it G — Paraphrase without copying syntax (desk or lunch)

Time: 10–15 minutes.

Materials: two sentences from a feature.

Safety: ordinary.

The move: Paraphrase each. Check: did I keep the skeleton? If yes, rewrite again with a fresh opening word and structure.

Try-it H — Three-pass + wrong twin (weekend deep sit)

Time: 45–70 minutes.

Materials: short essay or feature; labelled highlight-and-hope twin; calendar.

Safety: label wrong twin clearly.

The move: Full three-pass on opening; volume middle with gists; diagnose “I highlighted everything so I understood”; schedule micros.

Incorrect example to diagnose.

Someone highlights 80% of a page and says, “I’m ready to argue.”

What went wrong: highlight-and-hope; no job label; no paraphrase.

Repair: erase mental ownership; pick one paragraph; label job; write gist; star two lines.

Second incorrect twin.

Paraphrase: “The author says that the implementation of the schedule modification reduced the incidence of handoff errors” when the source said exactly that with two nouns swapped.

What went wrong: syntax copy.

Repair: start with a fresh frame — “According to the page, fewer handoffs went wrong after the new schedule.”

One more incorrect twin for the week. Someone opens a long feature, asks a chatbot “summarize this,” pastes the summary into a notebook, and calls it practice. What went wrong: the tool did the attempt. Repair: close the chat; choose one section; write your own gist; *then* compare if you want a check. Comparison after a try can teach. Substitution during the try cannot.

Mixed pair. Job label + paraphrase + one purpose-first volume crumb in the same sit. Near transfer across feature, memo, and scene jackets.

How to keep a tiny record. Date; text type; job label; gist; two stars; exit sticky. Colleague-readable notes beat fake certificates.

Spacing the week. Mon micro: job label. Tue micro: three-pass one paragraph. Wed desk: volume + gist. Thu light retrieval. Fri micro: paraphrase check. Optional Sun deep sit: essay three-pass + wrong twin + calendar.

Maintenance. After done-enough, two micros a week keep job-labelling warm while Chapter 3 opens rhetoric.

Try-it I — Claim vs example sort (commute / lunch)

Time: 8–10 minutes.

Materials: three short paragraphs or three sentences from one feature.

Safety: ordinary.

The move: Sort into claim / evidence / example. One sentence justifying each sort.
Wrong twin: calling a vivid example the claim.

Try-it J — Section sticky walk on a multi-page PDF (desk)

Time: 20–30 minutes.

Materials: multi-page how-to or history feature; stickies.

Safety: ordinary; no proprietary paste.

The move: One sticky per section: job + five-word gist. End with “what the whole piece wants me to believe or do.”

Try-it K — Missing-evidence question only (lunch)

Time: 5–8 minutes.

Materials: one claim paragraph.

Safety: ordinary.

The move: Skip full three-pass. Write only: “What evidence is missing that a careful reader would want?” That third-pass muscle matters for Chapter 3.

More on incorrect twins.

Someone says: “I used context and the first letter; the word must be *approve*.” Neighbor Chapter 1 error leaking into comprehension. Repair: unlock the word, then return to paragraph job.

Someone says: “The app says this is my level, so I’m done practicing strategies.” Repair: skill strip over app number.

Record that travels. Keep a week log with five lines max per sit: date; jacket (feature/memo/scene); job; gist crumb; stars. In keeping track later, this becomes part of your skill-strip log — still not a fake diploma.

If it isn’t clicking

Diagnostic 1 — You keep peeking or pasting into a summarizer in under a second.

Likely meaning: zero wait; tool crutch.

Next move: cover; one paragraph only; unaided job + gist; stop. Point back to the refresh-hour AI box. Come back tomorrow.

Diagnostic 2 — Everything feels like a “main idea” mush.

Likely meaning: job labels never got specific.

Next move: force the five-way choice (claim/evidence/example/counter/scene)

turn) for three days. Mislabel on purpose once and correct it — feel the difference between example and claim.

Diagnostic 3 — You finish pages and remember nothing usable.

Likely meaning: volume without purpose or product.

Next move: purpose question before every sit; two-sentence gist mandatory; shorten length until the gist is honest.

Extra signals. If literary scenes feel “not real reading,” still label scene turns — Chapter 5 will twin literary and informational more fully. If memos feel too workplace-specific, use a library feature. If anxiety spikes, cut session length.

When to slow down. If paraphrase keeps copying syntax, stay on Try-it G blocked. If first-letter word guessing returns, dip back to Chapter 1.

When to go ahead. When you can label paragraph jobs, paraphrase without copying, complete a short three-pass with two stars, and produce a volume gist from a purpose question, you are ready for claim–evidence–warrant craft on ordinary stakes.

When to ask a human. Bring a concrete paragraph and your gist, not “I’m a bad reader.” Tutor, colleague, or class — correct the reason without crushing the attempt.

Diagnostic 4 — Literary text feels illegitimate for “adult English.”

Likely meaning: school split between “real reading” and “work reading.”

Next move: one scene-turn label this week. Pleasure and structure both count. Chapter 5 will twin literary and informational more fully; you are allowed to practice scene turns now.

Diagnostic 5 — You only succeed on short packets that look like school.

Likely meaning: jacket rigidity.

Next move: same moves on a museum placard or sports feature. Structure travels; worksheet chrome does not.

Tools, including AI

Keep tools short and late. Point back to the refresh-hour AI box.

Annotation on paper or a simple note beats a gamified reading app during the attempt. Library access and OpenStax/readers supply text; they do not replace

your gist. A dictionary checks a word after Chapter 1 moves.

After you tried: explain the idea to yourself from this lesson; ask for isomorphic paragraphs with YOUR key; ask for a labelled SCRIPT of self-questions; ask revision questions after *your* gist (not a rewrite-as-only-draft); ask a hint; diagnose work you already marked.

You may not paste the article and ask for the summary as your product during the attempt. You may not photo-to-key a comprehension packet. You may not treat a chatbot paraphrase as yours. No proprietary paste. No fluency certificate. No detector-grading yourself.

Paper before chrome. A printed paragraph with pencil stars beats a beautiful app that quizzes you on trivia. If you use a reading app, strip it down to text + your note. Gamified streaks are not comprehension.

Human tools count. A librarian’s help finding a second short feature, a colleague’s five-minute “what’s the claim here?” chat, a community-college reading workshop — all legitimate. Tools include people. They still do not replace your unaided try.

One OFF-AGE-for-literacy mechanism sentence: unguarded chatbot practice in a high-school math field experiment raised assisted scores and hurt unaided later performance.⁴⁵ Not an adult literacy RCT. The model may prepare the next prompt; it may not do your reading during the attempt.

What “done enough” looks like

Placement by skill, not diploma year. No “English for Adults I.” No fake certificate.

- ☐ I can label a paragraph’s job (claim, evidence, example, counter, or scene turn) and say why.
- ☐ I can paraphrase a main idea without copying the author’s syntax.
- ☐ I can run a short three-pass close-read and write a defensible gist with two starred lines.
- ☐ I can read a short volume sit with a purpose question and produce a two-sentence analytical gist.

⁴⁵Bastani et al., *PNAS* (2025): HS math field experiment; unguarded chatbot crutch pattern. **OFF-AGE for literacy — not an adult literacy RCT.**

- ☐ I can catch highlight-and-hope in a wrong twin and name the repair.
- ☐ I refuse AR points / finish theater as proof of comprehension for myself.
- ☐ My exit sticky names next Tuesday's cue.

If paragraph jobs still mush under pressure, stay here. Chapter 3 needs a live sense of what paragraphs do before warrants will stick. Maintain with micros after you open the next chapter.

You do not need to be a literature professor. You do need to hear “I highlighted it” as a wrong twin, name the job, and paraphrase. On the commute, label one paragraph. At the desk, volume with a gist. This weekend, three-pass a short essay stretch. That is done enough.

Optional bridge, not a requirement. Some adults later sit Analyzing and Interpreting Literature style exams for credit; others never need that path. Done-enough for *this* chapter is job + paraphrase + three-pass + volume gist — not anthology finish and not AP-as-only-path.

Maintenance micros after you move on. Two job-label micros a week while Chapter 3 runs. One paraphrase interloper. If highlight-and-hope returns, a rebuild week is cheaper than pretending.

A longer worked weekend (composite illustration)

Label this as a composite, not a reported workplace case. You sit on Sunday with a six-page science feature about how a city library redesigned its holds shelf. Ordinary stakes. No live controversy.

Purpose question (written first): “How does the article explain whether the redesign helped patrons find holds faster?”

Volume pass (20 minutes). You read with a pencil. Every two pages you write a five-word section sticky: *problem: long search times; change: zone signs + cart rule; result: fewer staff rescues*. You do not highlight whole paragraphs. You do not open a chatbot.

Three-pass on the results section (15 minutes).

Pass 1 gist: “The writers say wait-to-pickup dropped after the redesign.”

Pass 2: job = claim; evidence = before/after average wait times on the page; structure = problem → change → numbers. Stars on the two sentences that hold the

numbers.

Pass 3: “What would a careful reader still want — peak-hour data, or a note about staffing?” You write the missing-evidence question even if you cannot answer it.

Paraphrase check (5 minutes). You rewrite the claim sentence with fresh syntax. First try still echoes the author’s skeleton; second try opens with “According to the counts on the page...” and survives.

Wrong twin (5 minutes). You invent (and label wrong) the thought: “I finished six pages, so I’m done.” Repair sentence: “Finish is not gist; I needed job + stars + a question.”

Exit and calendar (5 minutes). Sticky: *I can three-pass a results section; next micro is claim vs example sort.* You place Mon/Wed/Fri cues on a calendar. That is a deep sit with a product a colleague could almost follow — not a fake certificate, not anthology finish.

What you did not do. You did not treat the library topic as a political identity fight. You did not paste the PDF into a public summarizer during the attempt. You did not confuse a vivid patron anecdote (example) with the main claim. You did not call AR-style points. You struggled before rescue.

Carry that shape into smaller jackets all week. The deep sit teaches the moves; the micros keep them warm.

A closing walk-through for this week

Monday, commute. Try-it A on a feature paragraph. Sticky names Tuesday.

Tuesday, lunch. Try-it B three-pass. Sticky: *missing-evidence question written.*

Wednesday, desk. Try-it D volume + gist. Interloper: example mislabelled as claim — repair.

Friday, commute. Paraphrase check (Try-it G). Retrieve Monday’s job without looking.

Sunday, optional deep sit. Try-it H. Calendar next week’s micros. Done-enough if ready.

If the week slips, keep one paragraph honest. One job label with a wait beats a novel finished in a fog.

When complex text yields a product you could show a colleague, open Chapter 3. Rhetoric will ask for a warrant. The warrant is clearer when you already know what the paragraph was doing.

Closing encouragement for this strip. Dense text will keep showing up at work and in civic life whether or not you feel “like a reader.” The promise of this chapter is narrower and kinder: you can leave a paragraph with a job label, a fresh paraphrase, and two lines you could defend. That is usable literacy. It is enough to open rhetoric next. It is not a personality transplant and not a percentile.

If you teach other people sometimes, remember this chapter still addresses *you*. Other house books serve different ages and parent tables. One pointer is enough; then return to your annotated paragraph.

Keep the tone kind when you correct yourself. You are tuning an instrument you still need.

Chapter 3 — Rhetoric: claim, evidence, warrant



Figure 5: A still-life: claim / evidence / warrant cards; packaging claim vs spec composite. No people. No logos. No readable UI.

Why this matters

You already meet arguments every week. A workplace email that pushes a timeline. A product box that promises more than the fine print earns. A sports feature that claims a pitching change “won the game” from a thin box score. A museum placard that asserts a cause. A short civic memo that recommends a schedule change. The trouble is not that adults “cannot argue.” The trouble is that claims float without warrants — and floating claims make meetings longer and decisions fuzzier.

This chapter teaches rhetoric as craft on ordinary stakes. A **claim** is a contestable statement, not a topic label. **Evidence** lives on the page (or in the agreed record), not only in your head. A **warrant** is the link: why *this* evidence supports *that* claim. Audience, purpose, and a fair counter come when you are ready — not as a culture-war course, and not as “AP Language or nothing.”

Many adults want better workplace writing while their emails still assert without linking. That is not a character flaw.⁴⁶ Teaching writing strategies with a Model–Practice–Reflect cycle is named as strong practice in a secondary writing guide (grades 6–12 labelled); integrating writing with reading is moderate; the adult-education research base is thin, so we extrapolate honestly rather than invent commute RCTs.⁴⁷ ⁴⁸ Study of models and specific product goals show up as useful companions in a related meta summary.⁴⁹ You do not need those numbers as a grade. You need the moves.

You do not need ethos/pathos/logos as a lecture bank. Light analysis tools are enough. You do not need live controversy as the week’s identity. Packaging vs spec, email, sports box-score claims, placards, and science/history features are on-mission. Tips are teachable moves, not slogans.

⁴⁶NCES/IES PIAAC 2023 Highlights: U.S. literacy mean **258**; Level 1 or below **28%**; Level 3+ **44%**. Evaluate/reflect and rhetorical structures sit in the Level-2→3 spine. Survey context, not a grade. Not teen NAEP. NCES **3.4%** is homeschool prevalence — not adult literacy.

⁴⁷Steve Graham and colleagues, *Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively* (NCEE 2017-4002): Rec 1 Model–Practice–Reflect — **strong**; Rec 2 integrate writing and reading — **moderate**; Rec 3 formative assessment — **minimal**. Grades **6–12** labelled; portable to self-study. Access date: 6 September 2026.

⁴⁸TEAL Center Fact Sheet No. 1 (2010): adult-education writing research base thin; extrapolate from adolescent metas — honesty card, not invented adult RCTs.

⁴⁹Graham & Perin, *Writing Next* (2007): study of models **0.25**; specific product goals **0.70** (grades 4–12 companion meta). Useful study, not a promise that every adult will see the same result.

Place yourself by skill, not by diploma year. Having once taken a literature class is not a warrant test. Feeling rusty on argued writing is ordinary. Anxiety around “sounding smart” is real; short sessions and early wins belong here. Untimed claim–evidence–warrant craft beats a countdown timer dressed as rigor.

What this chapter unlocks is usable argument you can check. When you can box a claim, point to evidence, and write the warrant that links them, workplace and civic writing stop being tone theater. Reading complex text (Chapter 2) feeds this strip: you already practiced naming paragraph jobs. Now you build and test the link.

Complex adult life will keep handing you thin claims dressed as certainty. Your job is not to become cynical. Your job is to slow one claim long enough to test the link. That habit protects you as a reader and disciplines you as a writer. It is ordinary power: the power to say “show me why that follows” — including to yourself.

Rust is not failure. Refresh means rebuild usable meaning and fluency. Start where the warrant is missing. The rest of the book will still be there when ordinary-stakes arguments hold.

Rhetoric here is not a sequel to *Critical Thinking for Adults*. That book owns reasons, testimony, and deciding what to believe or do. This chapter owns literacy craft: claim on the page, evidence on the page, warrant as the written link, audience clarity. One pointer is enough; then teach English.

Understand it yourself

Everyday picture. Three cards on a table. Card one: CLAIM — “The night checklist cut missed handoffs.” Card two: EVIDENCE — “March: 12 misses. April: 4 misses.” Card three: WARRANT — “If misses fell right after the checklist and nothing else major changed in the log, the checklist is a plausible cause worth keeping.” That third card is the one adults most often skip. Skipping it is why arguments feel like opinion collisions.

Precise picture. A **claim** can be disagreed with by a reasonable reader who shares the same facts. “Handoffs” is a topic label, not a claim. “The checklist cut missed handoffs” is a claim. **Evidence** is support a reader can inspect: counts, quotations from a named source, steps in a procedure, lines in a box score, ingredients on a

label. **Warrant** is the rule or reason that makes the evidence relevant to the claim. Warrants can be causal, definitional, comparative, or authority-based — said in plain language, not in jargon cosplay.

Audience and purpose. Who must act or believe something next? What would count against your claim for *them*? A fair **counter** is not surrender; it is adult manners. You do not need a full classical rhetoric survey to write: “A fair pushback is that April also had lower volume — so we should check misses per hundred handoffs.”

Wrong answers you should be able to hear (including from yourself).

1. **“My claim is ‘about safety.’”** Topic label, not claim. Repair: write a sentence someone could disagree with.
2. **“Evidence is whatever I feel is true.”** Feeling may motivate; it is not on-the-page evidence. Repair: point to a line, number, or labelled source.
3. **“The numbers speak for themselves.”** Numbers rarely speak. Warrant speaks. Repair: write why the numbers matter for *this* claim.
4. **“I’ll quote the best sentence and win.”** Quote-mine. Repair: fair context; warrant; watch for missing counters.
5. **“Rhetoric means spin.”** Craft confusion. Repair: rhetoric here means making the link visible so a colleague can follow — plain language, not manipulation theater.

Five-minute warm-up. Take one short paragraph (email, packaging, feature). Box the claim. Underline evidence. Write one warrant sentence. Cover. Wait. Peek and adjust. If anxiety spikes, stop after the warm-up.

What fluent is not. A polished chatbot argument is not your work during the attempt. A confident tone without a warrant is theater. Speed without a link is still a floating claim.

Common scars. Some of you were graded on five-paragraph formulas until warrants disappeared. Some of you were told “support your opinion” without being shown *how evidence links*. Some of you learned debate as combat. This week’s repair is small: claim sentence, evidence on the page, warrant link, optional fair counter.

Product claim vs spec — a standing picture. Front of a generic box: strong claim

word. Back: ingredients or specs. Your job: Does the evidence earn the claim's force? Write the warrant you would need — or name what is missing. Ordinary consumer literacy.⁵⁰ Not medical, legal, or lending advice.

Sports box-score claim. “The bullpen won the game.” Evidence might be innings and runs. Warrant must say why those lines justify “won” rather than “helped.” If the box score cannot carry the verb, soften the claim.

Email claim skim. “We should move the delivery to Thursday.” Evidence: two client messages and a dock schedule line. Warrant: Thursday is the only slot that hits both constraints. If the warrant needs a fact not in the thread, say so — do not invent.

Why warrants feel unnatural at first. School often rewarded topic sentences and “facts” without demanding the because-link. Workplaces often reward speed. Your brain fills warrants silently — and silent warrants cannot be checked by a colleague. Writing the warrant feels slow the first week. That slowness is the point. Once the link is visible, revision gets cheaper: you can soften a claim, add a rate, or keep a fair counter without rewriting the whole mood.

Claim quality ladder (plain).

1. Topic: “Night checklist.”
 2. Vague praise: “The night checklist is good.”
 3. Contestable claim: “We should keep the night checklist.”
 4. Claim with scope: “We should keep the night checklist on the second shift for the next 30 days while we track misses per hundred handoffs.”
- Climb the ladder when you can. Scope is adult manners. Overclaiming is how packaging and email both lose trust.

Evidence quality ladder (plain).

1. “Everyone knows.”
2. “I feel like misses dropped.”
3. “March had 12 misses; April had 4.”
4. “Misses per hundred handoffs fell from 6.0 to 2.1 after the checklist, with volume noted.”

Move toward inspectable evidence. When you only have level 2, say so and soften the claim. Honesty is part of rhetoric craft in this book.

⁵⁰Ordinary stakes only (product claim vs spec; sports box-score; workplace memo). No live controversy as curriculum. Optional CLEP is a credit bridge (\$97 exams), not this chapter's spine.

Warrant recipes you can steal (then reword).

- Causal: “If Y changed right after X, and rivals are absent from the log, X is a plausible cause.”
- Comparative: “If A beats B on the same metric under similar conditions, prefer A for now.”
- Definitional: “If ‘ready’ means inspected and tagged, then untagged items are not ready.”
- Authority-with-limit: “If the procedure page says Z, follow Z unless a dated update supersedes it.”

Recipes are scaffolds, not magic. Rewrite in your voice. Never paste a recipe that does not fit the evidence.

Audience is not a personality quiz. Audience means: what does this reader need to do next, and what objections will they raise? A shift lead cares about staffing drag. Finance cares about overtime. Patrons care about wait time. Same claim; different evidence emphasis; same honesty rule.

Counters without theater. A fair counter is the best objection a reasonable skeptic could offer. Straw counters (“someone might hate checklists”) waste time. Steal this stem: “A fair pushback is , *so I checked / will check* .” Keep the counter in the draft when it teaches the reader your limit.

More wrong twins to rehearse aloud.

- “I’m just telling my truth” offered as a workplace recommendation without evidence. Repair: recommendations need inspectable support.
- “The article said it, so it’s a warrant.” Repair: a source line is often evidence; you still write why it supports your claim.
- “If I use big words, it’s rhetorical.” Repair: plain warrants beat jargon cosplay.
- “Counter means I delete my claim.” Repair: counters refine scope; they do not require surrender.

Connection to morphology and complex text. If a claim verb is overloaded (*prove, guarantee, dominate*), unlock the word (Chapter 1) and check whether evidence earns it (this chapter). If you cannot find the claim paragraph because jobs are mushy, return to Chapter 2 for a job-label micro. Skill strips stack; they do not shame you for revisiting.

Model–Practice–Reflect on a rhetoric crumb. Model: read a mentor with C/E/W starred and say what each star marks. Practice: parallel prompt, unaided. Reflect: three lines — contestable claim? evidence on page? warrant explicit?

That is Graham Rec 1 grain translated to self-study.⁵¹ Not a Writers' Workshop franchise. Not an AP pacing guide.

Understand it deeper: warrants that sound smart but fail.

- Restatement warrant: "The checklist works because it is effective." Circular. Repair: name the mechanism or the metric link.
- Popularity warrant: "Everyone uses it." Popularity is not always relevant evidence for *your* claim.
- Sole-cause overreach: "Misses fell, therefore only the checklist caused it." Fair warrant admits rivals and still recommends a provisional keep. Hearing these in your own draft is advanced adult craft. Correct them without crushing the attempt.

Practice bank of safe prompts (invent details; keep stakes ordinary).

1. Recommend keeping or dropping a shared labelling color on shelves.
2. Argue whether a museum audio guide should stay optional.
3. Claim whether a pitching change was early, using only given lines.
4. Recommend a 15-minute earlier Saturday opening for a library branch (composite counts).
5. Argue that a procedure step should move earlier in a checklist.

For each: claim, two evidence sentences, warrant, fair counter sticky. Rotate across two weeks. No live controversy. No proprietary paste.

Reflect scripts (label SCRIPT — say them; do not paste as an essay).

- "My claim is . *A skeptic would say* . My evidence is . *My warrant is* ."
 - "If I had to soften one verb, I would change ___ to ___ because ___."
 - "The fairest counter I can think of is , *and here is how I narrowed scope:* ."
- Use after your draft, not instead of it.

If you are multilingual or dialect-rich. Rhetoric craft here is about links, not about erasing your voice. Plain warrants can live in the English your workplace already uses. This book does not police accent or heritage language. It asks for a checkable because-link on the page.

⁵¹Steve Graham and colleagues, *Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively* (NCEE 2017-4002): Rec 1 Model–Practice–Reflect — **strong**; Rec 2 integrate writing and reading — **moderate**; Rec 3 formative assessment — **minimal**. Grades 6–12 labelled; portable to self-study. Access date: 6 September 2026.

How to try it this week

Micro, desk-or-shift, and weekend deep sit. This week's strip is claim–evidence–warrant on ordinary stakes. Three to five micros plus one desk sit, optional deep sit.

Session shape. Retrieve yesterday's claim and warrant. Short model: mentor paragraph with C/E/W starred. Your parallel try. Locked self-question. Mixed practice after blocked wins. Exit sticky: *I can warrant ____ / I almost / I cannot yet — next cue ____.*

Fade help. First: full mentor stars. Second: claim and evidence starred, warrant blank. Third: unaided. Stop looking up when your warrant survives a colleague-style “why does that follow?” twice.

Commute / lunch (15–20). Materials: packaging blurb, sports paragraph, greeked email crumb, or placard text. Safety: no live controversy; no proprietary paste into public tools; composites OK. Move: box claim; write one warrant. Say the locked opening. Wait. Exit sticky.

Desk or shift (25–40). Materials: short multi-paragraph argue/explain on ordinary stakes; mentor scrap; pen. Safety: blur names. Move: draft claim + two evidence sentences + warrant; optional audience rename; one interloper (quote-mine) after two clean warrants.

Weekend deep sit (45–75). Materials: longer ordinary-stakes argument; fair-counter sticky; audience-swap rewrite; labelled wrong twin (claim without warrant); calendar. Move: full C/E/W draft; fair counter; diagnose wrong twin; schedule micros. Specific product goals help — “three-sentence argument with warrant starred” beats “write something persuasive.”⁵²

Exact wording. “What's the claim — and what's the warrant that links this evidence to it?” Wait. Cover. Slow three. Look at the page, not a rewrite tool.

First try-it. On the go: box a claim and write one warrant on packaging or email. Deeper: draft a short ordinary-stakes argument with claim, two evidence sentences, and a warrant.

⁵²Graham & Perin, *Writing Next* (2007): study of models **0.25**; specific product goals **0.70** (grades 4–12 companion meta). Useful study, not a promise that every adult will see the same result.

Sample micro (composite). Retrieval: yesterday’s warrant named “per-hundred rate.” Mentor glance: starred C/E/W on a checklist paragraph. Parallel: packaging claim “longer lasting” vs spec hours. Warrant attempt: “If lab hours on the back are under normal use, ‘longer’ needs a comparison baseline — missing here.” Sticky: *I can spot missing baseline; next cue email warrant.*

Worked pictures you can steal (then put away)

Mentor A — workplace. Claim: “We should keep the night checklist.” Evidence: misses fell from 12 to 4; log shows no other major process change. Warrant: “A drop that large, timed with the checklist and without a competing change in the log, is reason enough to keep the checklist while we gather per-hundred rates.” Fair counter: “April volume was lower — check rates.”

Mentor B — packaging. Claim on front: “Faster absorption.” Evidence on back: one small study summary with thin detail. Warrant needed: study design + comparison. Honest sticky: “Claim outruns evidence — soften or ask for the study.”

Mentor C — sports. Claim: “The starter was pulled too early.” Evidence: pitch count and inning score. Warrant: “At that pitch count with a clean inning, standard usage in this series kept starters longer — so the pull needs another reason.” If the article never supplies the series pattern, the warrant is incomplete.

A pocket lecture you can give yourself (two minutes, then stop). Rhetoric in this book is the craft of making a checkable link between what you assert and what you can show. Classical surveys can wait. Culture-war syllabi can wait. Your pocket lecture ends with one try: write a warrant. If you catch yourself speechifying past two minutes, you are avoiding the try.

Transfer across ordinary jackets — explicit map.

- Email → claim often hides in the ask; evidence hides in constraints; warrant is why the ask fits the constraints.
- Packaging → claim on front; evidence on back; warrant is the missing baseline or study design.
- Sports → claim in the verb; evidence in the lines; warrant is usage norms or comparative performance.
- Placard → claim in the assertion; evidence in dates/objects; warrant is causal or attributional link.
- Status note → claim about state of work; evidence in counts/blockers; warrant is

why the state implies the next action.
Same machine. Different chrome.

Building a tiny mentor library. Save three mentor paragraphs this month: one workplace, one informational feature, one packaging-style. Star C/E/W once carefully. Reuse them as models. Do not hoard fifty. Three good mentors beat a folder of unmarked PDFs.

When evidence conflicts on one page. Sometimes a paragraph offers a claim and a limit together. Star both. Your warrant should absorb the limit (“useful for weekdays; weekends untested”). Erasing the limit to “win” is quote-mine’s cousin.

Spoken rhetoric vs written. You may rehearse a warrant aloud on a commute. Still write it once. Writing makes the silent fill-in visible. Talk-to-yourself supports writing; it does not replace the sticky.

Peer check without humiliation. If a trusted colleague has five minutes, ask only: “Does my warrant follow?” Do not ask them to rewrite your email as their draft. Do not stage a public quiz. Noticing is not a sting.

From warrant to Chapter 4 ask. A clear ask is often a claim about what should happen next, backed by constraints (evidence) and a because-link (warrant). Chapter 4 will stress audience, purpose-first subject lines, and Model–Practice–Reflect on workplace forms. You are already halfway there when the link is explicit.

Practice that actually builds it

Blocked: several claim boxes, then several warrants. Mixed: claim skim, packaging vs spec, box-score, email warrant, fair counter — choose the move. Surfaces *are* the practice; they do not replace the link.

Talk-to-yourself box

Opening (locked): “What’s the claim — and what’s the warrant that links this evidence to it?”

Follow-ups: 1. What evidence is on the page — not in my head? 2. Who is the audience — what would count against this? 3. Is a fair counter missing? 4. What do you mean, *warrant*, in one plain sentence? 5. Where could a quote-mine hide?

How to wait alone. Cover. Slow three. Wait again if you stop mid-reason. Look at claim and evidence cards — not a chatbot rewrite. Rescue at one second is still rescue. Scrolling is not a micro-session.

Stuck silence usually means. Vague question; zero wait; hunting for fancy rhetoric words; guessing what a textbook wants; offering a topic label as a claim; treating a finished-looking AI argument as a check; anxiety — shorten, win one warrant, return tomorrow.

Named try-its

Try-it A — Email claim skim (commute / lunch)

Time: 8–12 min. *Materials:* greeked email paragraph. *Safety:* isomorphic if sensitive. *Move:* Box claim. List evidence lines. Write warrant. Soften claim if evidence thin.

Try-it B — Packaging claim vs spec (commute / lunch)

Time: 10–15. *Materials:* generic box / ingredients card. *Safety:* not medical/legal/lending advice. *Move:* Claim force vs back-of-box support. Write missing warrant or “claim outruns evidence.”

Try-it C — Sports box-score claim (commute / lunch)

Time: 8–12. *Materials:* sports paragraph + box score lines. *Safety:* ordinary. *Move:* Does evidence earn the verb (*won, dominated, choked*)? Rewrite claim to fit evidence.

Try-it D — One-sentence warrant only (commute / lunch)

Time: 5–8. *Materials:* claim + evidence already boxed. *Move:* Write only the warrant. Then ask: would a skeptical colleague accept the link?

Try-it E — Multi-paragraph ordinary-stakes argue (desk)

Time: 25–40. *Materials:* prompt you invent on safe stakes (schedule, checklist, library hours, equipment care — not live controversy). *Move:* Claim; two evidence sentences; warrant; optional counter sticky. Star C/E/W.

Try-it F — Audience rename rewrite (desk)

Time: 20–30. *Materials:* yesterday’s draft. *Move:* Rewrite for a different audience (shift lead vs finance; patron vs staff). What evidence and warrant change?

Try-it G — Fair-counter sticky (desk or weekend)

Time: 10–15. *Materials:* your claim. *Move:* Write the strongest fair counter in

one sticky. Adjust claim or add evidence; do not erase the counter in bad faith.

Try-it H — Full C/E/W + wrong twin (weekend deep sit)

Time: 45–70. *Materials:* longer draft; quote-mine wrong twin labelled; calendar. *Move:* Draft; star; fair counter; diagnose “numbers speak for themselves”; schedule micros.

Incorrect example. Claim: “This product is clinically proven.” Evidence: a vague badge. Warrant: none. Repair: “Badge is not a study; soften claim or open a source later (Chapter 6).”

Second incorrect twin. Quote-mine: lifting half a sentence that supports you while the next sentence limits it. Repair: restore context; adjust claim.

Mixed pair. Packaging skim + one-sentence warrant + audience rename crumb. Near transfer across jackets.

Tiny record. Date; jacket; claim sentence; warrant sentence; counter crumb; exit sticky. Colleague-readable. Never “English for Adults I.”

Spacing seed. Mon: email skim. Tue: packaging. Wed desk: multi-paragraph C/E/W. Thu light retrieval. Fri: box-score claim. Optional Sun: deep sit + wrong twin + calendar.

Maintenance. After done-enough, two warrant micros weekly while Chapter 4 runs workplace writing.

Try-it L — Soften the verb (commute)

Time: 5–10. *Materials:* one overclaim sentence. *Move:* Replace *proves* / *guarantees* / *destroys* with a verb evidence can earn (*suggests, supports, improved*). Say what changed.

Try-it M — Evidence inventory (desk)

Time: 15. *Materials:* your draft. *Move:* List each evidence item. Mark on-page / in-head / missing. Rewrite until in-head items become on-page or disappear.

Try-it N — Placard warrant (museum or photo of placard at home)

Time: 10–15. *Safety:* ordinary; no live controversy topics. *Move:* Box placard claim. What evidence does it give? What warrant would a careful visitor want?

Try-it O — Two warrants, choose the fairer (weekend)

Time: 20. *Materials:* one claim + one evidence set. *Move:* Write two different warrants. Pick the fairer; say why the other overreaches.

Extended incorrect autopsy.

Draft: “Our team is the best because we care more.”

Claim: “best” — vague and contestable without metric.

Evidence: “we care more” — not inspectable.

Warrant: none.

Repair path: pick a metric (on-time rate, error rate); cite two weeks of counts; warrant that the metric matches what “best” meant in this memo; fair counter about sample size. The repair teaches more than a lecture on fallacies.

If it isn’t clicking**Diagnostic 1 — Peeking or asking a tool to “make it persuasive” in under a second.**

Zero wait; rewrite crutch. Cover; one claim only; unaided warrant; stop. Point back to refresh-hour AI box.

Diagnostic 2 — Everything you write is a topic (“about staffing”).

Claim skill soft. Force a disagreeable sentence for three days. “We should keep X because Y” is a shape; fill it with your content.

Diagnostic 3 — Evidence lists without links.

Warrant avoidance. Ban “speaks for itself” for a week. Every evidence bullet needs a because-clause.

Diagnostic 4 — Fair counters feel like losing.

Combat scar. Practice one counter sticky that you *keep* in the draft as a limit. Strength includes limits.

Diagnostic 5 — Only school essay jackets work.

Change jackets to packaging and email. Structure travels.

When to slow down. If quote-mines return, stay on blocked evidence+context. If Chapter 2 job labels mush, dip back.

When to go ahead. When you can write claim, point to evidence, write warrant, and name one fair counter on ordinary stakes, you are ready for workplace/civic writing that leads with a clear ask.

When to ask a human. Bring a starred draft, not “I’m bad at arguing.” Correct the reason without crushing the attempt.

Desk sit narrated (composite, longer). You have 35 minutes after a shift. Warm-up retrieval: yesterday’s packaging warrant (“missing baseline”). Mentor: checklist paragraph with stars. Practice prompt: recommend whether to keep a new cart-routing rule in a warehouse labelled composite. You draft: claim to keep the rule for 30 days; evidence from three days of walk-time notes you already logged on paper; warrant that shorter walks with no rise in mis-picks supports keeping the rule while you gather a fuller week; fair counter that three days is thin — so the recommendation is provisional. Reflect checklist: yes / yes / yes, and you starred the word *provisional*. Exit sticky names Friday’s micro: soften verbs on an email. You never pasted the employer’s real routing map into a public tool; isomorphic numbers only. That is adult rhetoric practice.

Weekend deep sit narrated (composite). Skill-strip diagnostic wrong: you find an old note where you wrote “the numbers speak for themselves.” You label it wrong. Then you draft a 400-word ordinary-stakes recommendation about library Saturday hours using public-style composite counts. You integrate one short reading crumb: a paragraph from a how-to feature on queue management (Chapter 2 skills). You open no second research source yet — that is Chapter 6 — but you refuse to invent a citation. You revise once for warrant clarity, not for comma shine (Chapter 7 will own polish). You schedule Mon/Tue/Fri micros. Done-enough checklist if ready.

Anxiety note specific to arguing. Some adults freeze because argument once meant family fight or online combat. This book’s ordinary-stakes rule is partly for you. Practice on checklists, packaging, sports usage, and library hours until the C/E/W machine feels like labelling, not warfare. If a topic spikes heat, change the jacket. Skill first. Identity fights stay out.

What this chapter refuses. Live controversy as curriculum. AP-as-only-path. Quote-patchwork as research. Chatbot-as-only-draft. Five-paragraph worship as workplace object. “I’m not a words person” as destiny. Teen NAEP as your measure. Fake certificates.

Life-of-the-habit crumb. After you clear this strip, keep a weekly warrant micro forever while you use English at work — two claims linked is maintenance, not a tenth teaching chapter. Record lives in your skill-strip log later.

One more diagnostic. You write beautiful warrants for fictional school prompts and freeze on real email. Likely meaning: jacket fear, not skill absence. Next move: copy your best school-style warrant *structure* onto a greeked work prompt

with isomorphic facts. Structure travels; fear shrinks with reps. If proprietary risk spikes, stay on packaging and sports until the machine feels boring — boring means learned.

Integration sticky for Chapters 1–3. Word parts unlocked → paragraph job named → claim/evidence/warrant linked. If any layer fails, repair that layer before blaming “writing talent.” Talent slogans hide missing moves.

Tools, including AI

Short and late. Point back to the refresh-hour AI box.

Paper C/E/W cards beat a “persuasive writing” generator during the attempt. Purdue OWL can explain claim/support pages after you tried. OpenStax/readers supply mentor paragraphs.

After you tried: explain the idea to yourself from this lesson; isomorphic practice with YOUR key; labelled SCRIPT of self-questions; revision questions after *your* draft (not rewrite-as-only-draft); hint; diagnose work you marked.

You may not ask the tool to write the argument as your only draft.⁵³ You may not paste a live employer thread for a finished email. You may not photo-to-key. No proprietary paste. No fluency certificate. No detector-grading yourself.

Tools footnote in human language. Grammar-check tools may flag tone after you draft; they do not invent your warrant. Dictionaries unlock words; they do not link evidence. A second pair of human eyes beats an unsupervised chatbot partner during the first attempt. Hold the account. Unaided first. Struggle before rescue.

OFF-AGE for literacy: unguarded chatbot practice in a high-school math field experiment raised assisted scores and hurt unaided later performance.⁵⁴ Not an adult literacy RCT. The model may prepare the next prompt; it may not do your warrant during the attempt.

Remember the locked opening when tired. Tired brains skip warrants. Put the question on a phone note widget or paper card: “What’s the claim — and what’s

⁵³Bastani et al., *PNAS* (2025) mechanism caution remains **OFF-AGE for literacy**. Liang et al. (2023): detector false-positive rate **61.22%** on human TOEFL essays in that study — do not detector-grade your unaided warrant as honesty.

⁵⁴Bastani et al., *PNAS* (2025): HS math field experiment; unguarded chatbot crutch. **OFF-AGE for literacy — not an adult literacy RCT.**

the warrant that links this evidence to it?” Ask it once before you send. That single pause is a micro-session’s worth of rhetoric even on days you cannot do a full try-it.

What “done enough” looks like

Skill strip, not diploma year. No fake certificate. No “English for Adults I.”

- ☐ I can write a claim someone could contest (not a topic label).
- ☐ I can point to evidence on the page or agreed record.
- ☐ I can write a warrant that links evidence to claim in plain language.
- ☐ I can name one fair counter or limit.
- ☐ I can catch “numbers speak for themselves” and quote-mine wrong twins.
- ☐ I can run C/E/W on packaging, email, or sports/feature jackets.
- ☐ My exit sticky names next Tuesday’s cue.

Place by skill strip when you self-check: if you still offer topic labels under light pressure, stay. If warrants hold on packaging *and* email jackets, go ahead to Chapter 4 even if a famous essay anthology remains unfinished. Anthology finish is not done-enough.

If warrants still vanish under pressure, stay here. Chapter 4 needs a live link before “one clear ask” emails will hold. Maintain with micros after you move on.

Optional credit paths exist later; they are not required for this strip. AP is not the only honest path.

You do not need to be a debater. You do need to hear a claim without a warrant, and a rewrite that skipped your draft. On the commute, box a claim and write a warrant. At the desk, draft C/E/W with a counter sticky. This weekend, if needed, deep-sit and label a wrong twin. That is done enough.

A closing walk-through for this week

Monday, commute. Try-it A email skim. Sticky → Tuesday packaging.

Tuesday, lunch. Try-it B. Sticky: *claim outruns evidence*.

Wednesday, desk. Try-it E multi-paragraph. Interloper: quote-mine repair.

Friday, commute. Try-it C or D. Retrieve Monday’s warrant without looking.

Sunday, optional deep sit. Try-it H. Calendar micros. Done-enough if ready.

If the week slips, keep one warrant honest. One linked claim beats a long essay fog.

A second full worked desk sit (composite). You write a short recommendation: claim that Saturday intake should open one hour earlier in winter. Evidence: three weeks of line counts; two patron comments already in a labelled composite survey scrap; staffing availability note. Warrant: earlier hour matches the counted peak and can be staffed with current roster. Fair counter: bus schedule may not match — check before posting. You star C/E/W. You do not paste proprietary roster data into a public chat; you use isomorphic numbers on your practice sheet. You reflect with three lines: claim contestable? evidence on page? warrant explicit? That is Model–Practice–Reflect grain on ordinary civic-adjacent workplace stakes — still not a culture war.

From reading into rhetoric. Chapter 2 taught paragraph jobs. When you read this week, occasionally ask the locked Chapter 3 question on someone else’s paragraph. Reading and writing rhetoric reinforce each other; a moderate recommendation in the secondary writing guide supports integrating writing and reading features.⁵⁵

Encouragement. Ordinary stakes are enough. You are not behind because you are practicing on packaging and email instead of a famous speech. The link is the skill. Keep the tone kind when you correct yourself. You are tuning an instrument you still need.

Another week shape if Mondays are impossible. Tue micro packaging. Wed micro email. Thu desk C/E/W. Sat short fair-counter sticky. Sun optional deep sit. The calendar serves the strip; the strip does not serve a perfect calendar. Missed days resume from the last sticky — no double-dump punishment.

Done-enough is permission to move, not a personality medal. You will still write floating claims under stress. Maintenance micros catch them. Rebuild weeks are normal. Adulthood is not a literacy birthday.

If you also teach teenagers at home, this chapter still addresses *you*. Other books serve parent tables. One pointer; then return to your three cards.

⁵⁵Steve Graham and colleagues, *Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively* (NCEE 2017-4002): Rec 1 Model–Practice–Reflect — **strong**; Rec 2 integrate writing and reading — **moderate**; Rec 3 formative assessment — **minimal**. Grades 6–12 labelled; portable to self-study. Access date: 6 September 2026.

Closing walk-through, alternate voice. Imagine you only have lunch breaks this week. Day 1: packaging vs spec, ten minutes, warrant sticky. Day 2: soften three verbs in a draft note. Day 3: one email claim skim. Day 4: fair-counter sticky on yesterday's claim. Day 5: retrieve all four stickies and rewrite one warrant cleaner. That week still counts. Dose honesty: there is no adult commute RCT that certifies this exact pattern; named sessions are the ambition.⁵⁶

Illustration cue for your notebook (still-life, not selfie). Draw or paste three cards — Claim / Evidence / Warrant — under a greeked email line. No portraits. No brand logos. The picture reminds you what to star; it does not replace the warrant.

Final encouragement. You do not need to win debates online. You need to leave a colleague a link they can follow. Box the claim. Point to evidence. Write the warrant. Keep a fair counter when it teaches. That is done enough to open workplace and civic writing with a clear ask.

⁵⁶TEAL Center Fact Sheet No. 1 (2010): adult-education writing research base thin; extrapolate from adolescent metas — honesty card, not invented adult RCTs.

Chapter 4 — Workplace and civic writing



Figure 6: A still-life: greeked email with purpose-first subject; mentor paragraph scrap with moves named. No people. No logos. No readable UI.

Why this matters

You already write to make things happen. A status note. A shift handoff. A recommendation email. A short civic memo about hours, a checklist, or a library schedule. An incident note that must be clear at 6 a.m. The trouble is not that adults “cannot write.” The trouble is that asks get buried, subject lines wander, and polished tone arrives before meaning — so readers skim past the action.

This chapter is about emails that get answered, notes that get skimmed usefully, and short arguments that survive a meeting. **Purpose-first subject lines. One clear ask. Short paragraphs. Plain language. Model–Practice–Reflect** on mentor workplace texts. Civic short memos on safe ordinary topics. Not Business English I as a transcript brand. Not a Writers’ Workshop franchise. Not Grammarly generative “write on your behalf” as brush-up during the attempt.

Many adults want “better professional writing” while their messages still hide the ask in paragraph four. That is not a character flaw. Explicitly teaching writing strategies with Model–Practice–Reflect is named **strong** in a secondary writing practice guide (grades 6–12 labelled); integrating writing and reading is **moderate**; using writing assessment to inform feedback is **minimal** — ancestor of the exit sticky, not a national battery.⁵⁷ Adult-education guidance is honest that the adult RCT base is thin; we extrapolate rather than invent.⁵⁸ Strategy instruction shows large effects in a related meta companion; traditional grammar-as-parts-of-speech focus trends negative for writing quality — which is why grammar lives later, in revision service.⁵⁹ A descriptive school snapshot once found that only about **19%** of sampled assignments were extended writing of a paragraph or more — motive to *do* purposeful composing as an adult, not a commute RCT.⁶⁰ Plain-language guidance for public communication stresses audience, active voice, and organization — not “dumbing down.”⁶¹

⁵⁷Graham et al., *Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively* (NCEE 2017-4002): Rec 1 **strong**; Rec 2 **moderate**; Rec 3 **minimal**; grades **6–12** labelled. Access date: 6 September 2026.

⁵⁸TEAL Center Fact Sheet No. 1 (2010): thin adult RCT base — extrapolate honestly.

⁵⁹Graham & Perin, *Writing Next* (2007): strategy instruction **0.82**; traditional grammar focus **negative** (small significant) for writing quality; specific product goals **0.70**. Useful study, not a promise that every adult or workplace will see the same result.

⁶⁰Applebee & Langer (2011), *English Journal*: about **19%** of sampled assignments were extended writing (HS **17.6%**) — descriptive motive, not a commute RCT.

⁶¹Digital.gov plain language principles (audience, active voice, organize): public-communication guidance — not “dumbing down.”

You do not need a CRM product. You do not need guaranteed promotion writing. You need adult objects: status notes, incident notes, recommendation emails, short civic memos, audience-swap rewrites, plain-language passes (*utilize* → *use*). Chapter 3 gave you claim–evidence–warrant. This chapter puts those links inside messages that lead with who must act and what the ask is.

Place yourself by skill, not by diploma year. Having written “lots of email” is not an ask test. Feeling rusty on workplace prose is ordinary. Anxiety around sounding unprofessional is real; short sessions and early wins belong here. Untimed clarity beats a countdown timer dressed as rigor.

What this chapter unlocks is usable action writing. When you can name the audience, state what they must do next, and lead with one clear ask, rhetoric stops floating and meetings shorten. That is worth the struggle for ordinary adult life — a send this afternoon, a status Monday, a civic memo this weekend.

Rust is not failure. Refresh means rebuild usable meaning and fluency. Start where the ask is buried. The rest of the book will still be there when messages land.

Complex workplaces will keep rewarding speed. Your job is not to write slowly forever. Your job is to rebuild a default: audience → next action → ask → support. Once that default is fluent, speed returns with fewer buried asks. Adulthood is not a writing birthday. A job title is not arrival at clarity.

Understand it yourself

Everyday picture. An inbox card. Subject: “Decision needed: move Thursday dock to 2 p.m.” First line: “Please approve the Thursday 2 p.m. dock move by noon today.” Then two constraints. Then a courtesy close. That is purpose-first writing. Compare a subject like “Quick question” and an ask hiding after a biography of the problem. Same facts. Different land rate.

Precise picture. **Audience** is who must do or decide. **Next action** is the verb they need (*approve, reply with X, schedule, confirm*). **One clear ask** is the single primary request — secondary asks get a labelled list, not a fog. **Purpose-first subject lines** name the action or decision, not the vibe. **Plain language** is short words and active voice when they serve the reader — *use* beats *utilize*; *help* beats *facilitate* when the meaning is help. **Model–Practice–Reflect:** study a mentor note’s moves; write a parallel; reflect with a three-line checklist.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear (including from yourself).

1. **“They’ll figure out the ask.”** Buried-ask hope. Repair: ask in the first sentence; repeat in the close if needed.
2. **“Subject lines don’t matter.”** Skim reality denial. Repair: put the decision or need in the subject.
3. **“Longer sounds more professional.”** Length cosplay. Repair: short paragraphs; meaning first.
4. **“I’ll have the tool write it professional.”** Skip-the-attempt. Repair: draft unaided; tool later for questions, not as only draft.
5. **“Civic writing is politics.”** Scope confusion. Repair: ordinary civic memos (hours, checklists, library schedules) teach the same clarity moves without live controversy.

Five-minute warm-up. Rewrite one bad subject line you actually sent (greeked). Write the ask as sentence one. Cover. Wait. Peek. If anxiety spikes, stop after the warm-up.

What fluent is not. A fluent chatbot email is not your work during the attempt. A polite fog without an ask is not professionalism. Speed without audience clarity is theater.

Common scars. Some of you were told to sound formal until meaning left. Some of you were punished for brevity. Some of you only wrote five-paragraph school essays and never practiced actionable notes. This week’s repair is small: audience, next action, ask first, support second, reflect with three lines.

Plain language is respect. It is not talking down. Public-communication guidance says know the audience, use active voice, organize for busy readers.⁶² Your shift lead at 5:55 a.m. is a busy reader. So is a library patron reading a hours-change memo.

Status / incident / recommendation — three forms.

- **Status:** what is true now; blockers; next action needed.
 - **Incident:** what happened; impact; immediate action; follow-up.
 - **Recommendation:** claim + evidence + warrant (Chapter 3) + clear ask for approval.
- Steal the form; invent isomorphic content. Structure travels. Proprietary threads

⁶²Digital.gov plain language principles (audience, active voice, organize): public-communication guidance — not “dumbing down.”

stay offline / unpasted into public tools.

Mentor moves to name aloud. Purpose subject. Ask first. Bullets for constraints. One warrant sentence. Soften verbs you cannot earn. Courtesy without fog. Those moves are stealable. Voice remains yours.

Why buried asks happen to capable adults. Speed. Politeness habits. Fear of sounding demanding. School essays that rewarded throat-clearing. Tools that polish fog until it looks expensive. None of those make you unprofessional. They make the ask late. The repair is mechanical: write the ask on a sticky first, then build the message under it. Politeness can live in the close. Fear can be managed with mentors. Fog can be cut after meaning exists.

Subject line patterns that work (steal, then adapt).

- Decision needed: ...
- Approval needed by [time]: ...
- Status: ... - blocker: ...
- Incident note: ... - action required: ...
- Proposal: ... (trial / 30 days)

Avoid: Quick question, Circling back, FYI, Touching base, Important with no noun. Those subjects force the reader to open blind.

Ask sentence stems.

- Please approve X by Y.
 - I need Z from you by Y so that ...
 - Can you confirm A or B by Y?
 - Please reply with the gate code / date / owner by Y.
- One primary ask. If you truly need three, number them and bold the deadline that matters most — on your practice sheet, formatting is a clarity move, not decoration.

Reflect checklist (keep forever).

1. Who is this for — named role, not “everyone”?
2. Is the ask in sentence one (or the first bullet under a required greeting)?
3. What must they do next — verb + time?

If any line fails, revise before you send. That is Rec 3’s spirit (feedback informing the next attempt) without a national exam.⁶³

Tone without mythology. Clear is not cruel. Softeners belong *after* the ask if

⁶³Graham et al., *Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively* (NCEE 2017-4002): Rec 1 **strong**; Rec 2 **moderate**; Rec 3 **minimal**; grades 6–12 labelled. Access date: 6 September 2026.

the relationship needs them: “Please approve the Thursday dock move by noon. Happy to adjust if the warehouse constraint changed.” Softener-first messages often never reach the ask. Sharpness without evidence is also a miss — bring Chapter 3’s warrant when you recommend.

Civic writing, demystified. A short memo to a branch lead about Saturday hours is civic literacy. So is a volunteer shift note for a museum. So is a neighborhood newsletter blurb about a checklist for a community pantry shelf (ordinary logistics — not a culture-war topic). The moves match workplace email: audience, ask, evidence, warrant, plain language. You are not signing up for a political identity by practicing memos.

Reading ↔ writing integration. Before you draft a recommendation, read one mentor recommendation and name its moves (Graham Rec 2 grain).⁶⁴ Before you write a status, skim yesterday’s status from a colleague (greeked) and notice where the ask lived. Writing improves when reading supplies models. Models without practice become posters. Practice without models reinvents fog.

Understand deeper: paragraphs in email. Workplace paragraphs should often be two to four sentences. If a paragraph holds three asks, split. If it holds a story and an ask, put the ask first and the story in bullets. White space is a literacy tool for busy readers. You are not writing a novel chapter; you are writing a usable note.

CC and audience discipline (literacy angle, not politics). Every added reader changes audience. If the ask is for one person, say so in sentence one. If others are informed only, your first line can say “For approval from A; CC for visibility.” Ambiguous audience produces ambiguous replies. Practice on greeked threads.

Mobile skim test. Before you send a practice message, shrink the window or glance on a phone note. Does the ask appear without scrolling? If not, shorten. Real life is mobile even when your desk is not.

From recommendation to meeting. Sometimes the “ask” is approval in a meeting. Your email can still lead: “Please come ready to approve or delay the 30-day checklist keep; evidence attached in five lines.” Writing prepares speech. Speech does not replace the written ask when a record helps.

Handoff notes as civic/workplace cousins. End-of-shift handoffs fail when they

⁶⁴Graham et al., *Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively* (NCEE 2017-4002): Rec 1 **strong**; Rec 2 **moderate**; Rec 3 **minimal**; grades 6–12 labelled. Access date: 6 September 2026.

narrate everything and ask nothing. Stem: “Need from day shift: X by Y. Done: ... Blocked: ... Risks: ...” Ordinary stakes. High value.

Practice bank of safe prompts.

1. Ask for approval to reorder a standard part (isomorphic).
 2. Status on a delayed shipment with one blocker ask.
 3. Incident composite: spill on aisle three — closed; need wet-floor signs restocked.
 4. Recommend keeping a shared calendar color code 30 days.
 5. Civic: propose four-week trial of earlier Saturday hours.
 6. Audience-swap #5 for patrons.
 7. Plain-language rewrite of a foggy benefits blurb (public leaflet style).
- Rotate. No live controversy. No proprietary paste.

How to try it this week

Micro, desk-or-shift, weekend deep sit. Strip: purpose-first subjects, clear asks, Model–Practice–Reflect on workplace/civic notes. Three to five micros + one desk sit, optional deep sit. No 180-day dump. No adult commute RCT at this grain — named sessions are the ambition.

Session shape. Retrieve yesterday’s ask sentence. Mentor autopsy: name three moves. Parallel try unaided. Locked self-question. Mixed practice after blocked wins. Exit sticky: *I can lead with ask on ____ / I almost / I cannot yet — next cue ____.*

Fade help. First: mentor beside you. Second: mentor subject + first line only. Third: unaided. Stop looking up when your ask survives a “what do you need from me?” test twice.

Commute / lunch (15–20). Materials: three bad subject lines (yours or composites); one buried-ask email greeked. Safety: no proprietary paste into public tools; no public humiliation quizzes; isomorphic facts if sensitive. Move: rewrite subjects; put ask first. Say locked opening. Wait. Exit sticky.

Desk or shift (25–40). Materials: mentor status/incident/recommendation; your parallel prompt; three-line reflect checklist. Safety: blur names; composites labelled. Move: full Model–Practice–Reflect cycle; optional plain-language pass; one interloper (buried ask) after two clean leads.

Weekend deep sit (45–75). Materials: longer recommendation or civic memo; audience-swap rewrite; labelled wrong twin (tool-as-only-draft or buried ask); calendar. Move: MPR cycle; audience swap; diagnose wrong twin; schedule micros. Specific product goals help (“one-page recommendation with ask in sentence one”).⁶⁵

Exact wording. “Who is this for, what must they do next, and what’s my one clear ask?” Wait. Cover. Slow three. Look at the draft, not a rewrite tool.

First try-it. On the go: rewrite one subject line and lead with the ask. Deeper: Model–Practice–Reflect a short recommendation or status email; reflect with three-line checklist.

Sample micro (composite). Retrieval: yesterday’s subject “Decision needed: cart rule 30-day keep.” Mentor glance: ask-first recommendation. Parallel: rewrite “Circling back” into “Approval needed: Saturday 9 a.m. opening trial.” Ask sentence first. Sticky: *subject carries decision; next cue incident note.*

Worked pictures you can steal (then put away)

Mentor — recommendation email (greeked).

Subject: Decision needed: keep night checklist 30 days

First line: Please approve keeping the night checklist for 30 days while we track misses per hundred handoffs.

Then: two evidence bullets; one warrant sentence; fair limit; thanks; name.

Moves: purpose subject; ask first; evidence; warrant; scope.

Mentor — status note.

Subject: Status: dock delay – need gate code by 3 p.m.

First line: I need the gate code by 3 p.m. to release the delayed pallet.

Then: what is done; what is blocked; what happens if no reply.

Mentor — short civic memo.

Subject: Proposal: trial earlier Saturday library opening

Audience: branch lead. Ask: approve a four-week trial. Evidence: line counts.

⁶⁵Graham & Perin, *Writing Next* (2007): strategy instruction **0.82**; traditional grammar focus **negative** (small significant) for writing quality; specific product goals **0.70**. Useful study, not a promise that every adult or workplace will see the same result.

Warrant: peak matches earlier hour. Counter: bus schedule check. Ordinary stakes. No live controversy.

Buried-ask autopsy (labelled wrong). Subject: “Thoughts?” Body: long story; ask in sentence fourteen. Repair: subject names decision; ask moves to sentence one; story becomes two bullets.

More on Model–Practice–Reflect without franchise furniture. Model means a mentor you can see and moves you can name — not a celebrity author essay. Practice means a parallel prompt with the same structure and new content — not copying sentences. Reflect means three check lines and a surgical revise — not a journal about your feelings unless that helps you, which is optional. Graham’s recommendation is school-labelled and strong for strategy teaching; your translation is self-study on ordinary stakes.⁶⁶ TEAL’s honesty stays: adult RCTs are thin; we extrapolate.⁶⁷

When not to write email. If the ask needs a two-minute spoken clarify and writing would escalate fog, speak — then send a three-line confirm with the ask. Literacy includes choosing the channel. This chapter still trains the written confirm.

Signature blocks and chrome. Keep them. They are not the skill. Do not let a beautiful signature replace an ask. Do not let letterhead cosplay substitute for warrant.

Measuring “landed.” Done-enough is not “they replied cheerfully.” Done-enough is: a stranger reading your draft can answer who/do-what/ask. Whether a workplace replies is politics and luck as much as literacy. Judge the artifact you control.

Practice that actually builds it

Blocked: several subject rewrites, then several ask-first leads. Mixed: subject + ask + plain-language pass + audience swap — choose the move. Emails and memos *are* the practice; they do not replace the structure.

⁶⁶Graham et al., *Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively* (NCEE 2017-4002): Rec 1 **strong**; Rec 2 **moderate**; Rec 3 **minimal**; grades **6–12** labelled. Access date: 6 September 2026.

⁶⁷TEAL Center Fact Sheet No. 1 (2010): thin adult RCT base — extrapolate honestly.

Talk-to-yourself box

Opening (locked): “Who is this for, what must they do next, and what’s my one clear ask?”

Follow-ups: 1. What did the mentor paragraph *do* that I can steal as structure? 2. Is the ask in the first sentence? 3. After I draft, what does my three-line reflect checklist say I missed? 4. Where could tone go wrong — too soft, too sharp, too vague? 5. If I swap audience, what changes in evidence and ask?

How to wait alone. Cover. Slow three. Wait again if mid-reason. Look at audience/ask sticky — not a “make this professional” rewrite. Rescue at one second is still rescue. Scrolling is not a micro-session.

Stuck silence usually means. Vague question; zero wait; hunting for fancy tone; guessing what a textbook wants; burying the ask from habit; treating a chatbot email as already your draft; anxiety — shorten, win one subject line, return tomorrow.

Named try-its

Try-it A — Three bad subject lines (commute / lunch)

Time: 8–12. *Materials:* three subjects. *Safety:* greeked. *Move:* Rewrite each to name decision/need. Read aloud: would a skimmer know the stakes?

Try-it B — Bury-the-ask autopsy (commute / lunch)

Time: 10–15. *Materials:* composite email with late ask. *Move:* Highlight the ask. Move it to sentence one. Cut fog. Keep necessary constraints as bullets.

Try-it C — One-sentence purpose + ask (commute / lunch)

Time: 5–8. *Materials:* a message you must send soon (practice sheet if sensitive). *Move:* Write only: purpose clause + ask. Then build the rest under it.

Try-it D — Full MPR status note (desk)

Time: 25–40. *Materials:* mentor status; parallel prompt. *Move:* Model (name moves) → Practice (write) → Reflect (three lines: audience clear? ask first? next action dated?).

Try-it E — Recommendation email with C/E/W (desk)

Time: 30–40. *Materials:* Chapter 3 skills + this chapter’s ask-first form. *Move:* Subject; ask; two evidence bullets; warrant; fair limit; close.

Try-it F — Audience-swap rewrite (desk)

Time: 20–30. *Materials:* yesterday’s draft. *Move:* Rewrite for a second audience. Note what evidence and tone shifted. Keep honesty.

Try-it G — Plain-language pass (desk or lunch)

Time: 10–15. *Materials:* a foggy paragraph. *Move:* *utilize*→*use*, *facilitate*→*help*, *in order to*→*to*, cut empty openers (“I just wanted to reach out to...”). Meaning first.

Try-it H — Incident note (desk)

Time: 20–30. *Safety:* composite only; no real private incident data in public tools. *Move:* what / impact / immediate action / follow-up ask.

Try-it I — Civic memo ordinary stakes (weekend)

Time: 40–60. *Materials:* library hours, checklist, museum volunteer shift — safe topics. *Move:* one-page memo; ask first; evidence; warrant; counter sticky.

Try-it J — MPR + wrong twin (weekend deep sit)

Time: 45–75. *Materials:* full cycle; wrong twin = chatbot-as-only-draft or buried ask; calendar. *Move:* Complete MPR; diagnose wrong twin in writing; schedule micros.

Incorrect example. Subject: “Quick question.” Body: 220 words; ask last. Repair: subject “Approval needed: Thursday 2 p.m. dock”; ask first; 80 words.

Second incorrect twin. Paste into a tool: “Make this professional” with no unaided draft. Repair: write ask-first draft first; tool may answer revision *questions* later, not replace the attempt.

One more incorrect twin. You write a clear ask, then add three hedging paragraphs that reopen every decision. Repair: keep one fair limit; delete hedge fog; if uncertainty is real, ask for a provisional approve. Ambiguity after clarity is how asks rebury themselves.

Mixed pair. Subject rewrite + ask-first lead + plain-language pass. Near transfer across status/recommendation/civic jackets.

Tiny record. Date; form (status/incident/recommendation/civic); subject; ask sentence; reflect three lines; exit sticky. Colleague-readable. Never “English for Adults I.”

Spacing seed. Mon: subjects. Tue: bury-ask autopsy. Wed desk: MPR status. Thu light retrieval. Fri: plain-language pass. Optional Sun: recommendation or

civic deep sit + wrong twin + calendar.

Maintenance. After done-enough, two ask-first micros weekly forever as life-of-the-habit — recorded in keeping track, not a tenth chapter.

Try-it K — Greeting without fog (commute)

Time: 5. *Move:* Write greeting + ask in two lines total. No “I hope this email finds you well” unless you truly need rapport and still keep the ask by line two.

Try-it L — Deadline clarity (commute)

Time: 5–8. *Move:* Add a specific time to an ask that lacked one. “Soon” becomes “by Tuesday 3 p.m.”

Try-it M — Bullet the constraints (desk)

Time: 10. *Move:* Turn a narrative paragraph of constraints into three bullets under the ask. Read both versions; keep the clearer.

Try-it N — Before/after strip (weekend)

Time: 30. *Move:* Take one real message you sent (greeked). Rewrite ask-first. Tape before/after in notebook. Name three moves you changed.

Try-it O — Three-form rotation (weekend)

Time: 60. *Move:* Write a status, an incident (composite), and a recommendation in one deep sit — short forms, not novels. Reflect once across all three: did asks lead?

Extended wrong-twin gallery.

- Passive that flatters without asking.
 - Ask without deadline.
 - Deadline without owner.
 - Evidence dump with no ask.
 - Ask for “thoughts” when you need a decision.
 - Civic memo that argues tone instead of hours/logistics.
- Diagnose each in one sentence. Repair each in one rewrite crumb.

Model–Practice–Reflect script (label SCRIPT — for you to say).

Model: “In the mentor, the subject names the decision. Sentence one asks for approval by noon. Bullets hold constraints. The warrant is one sentence. The limit keeps trust.”

Practice: “Now I write a parallel on my prompt without looking.”

Reflect: “Audience? Ask first? Next action dated? If no, I revise that line only.”

Say it. Do not paste it as your email.

Anxiety and hierarchy. Writing up can spike fear. Mentors help. So does separating clarity from courage: write the clear ask on a practice sheet first; decide later whether today's relationship needs an extra softener. This book is not coaching office politics. It is coaching literacy moves you control.

What this chapter refuses. CRM SKUs as curriculum. Guaranteed promotion promises. Grammarly-as-identity. Write-my-email-as-only-draft. Live controversy as civic practice. Five-paragraph essays as the workplace object. Fake certificates. Teen NAEP as your measure. "I'm not a words person."

If it isn't clicking

Diagnostic 1 — You paste into a rewrite tool in under a second.

Zero wait; skip-attempt. Cover; write ask sentence only; stop. Point back to refresh-hour AI box. Come back tomorrow.

Diagnostic 2 — Subjects stay vague ("Checking in").

Skim-blindness. Force decision verbs in subjects for five messages on a practice sheet: *approve, confirm, need, decision*.

Diagnostic 3 — Ask appears, then fog reburies it.

Habit of throat-clearing. Ban empty openers for a week. Constraints become bullets under the ask.

Diagnostic 4 — Tone anxiety freezes you.

Fear of sounding rude or sounding weak. Use a mentor close; keep ask clear; adjust softeners *after* the ask exists. Clarity is kindness.

Diagnostic 5 — School essay form takes over.

Five-paragraph muscle. Switch jackets to status notes until actionable form feels natural. Workplace object $\neq$ school essay object.

When to slow down. If buried asks return after a good day, return to blocked subject+ask drills. If warrants vanish, dip to Chapter 3. If words stall, dip to Chapter 1.

When to go ahead. When you can write purpose-first subjects, lead with one clear ask, complete an MPR cycle on a status or recommendation, run a plain-language pass, and catch a buried-ask wrong twin, you are ready to twin literacy/informational reading next — or to maintain this strip while life continues.

Last diagnostic. You only write clearly on practice sheets and freeze on live sends. Likely meaning: stakes anxiety, not missing knowledge. Next move: send isomorphic practice messages to yourself or a willing peer checklist buddy; then shrink the gap by using the same template on a low-stakes real send (scheduling, not conflict). If proprietary risk is high, stay on civic/composite jackets until the machine is automatic. Clarity under calm is still worth building; calm transfers unevenly, and that is ordinary.

When to ask a human. Bring a before/after email, not “I’m bad at writing.” Colleague, tutor, or class. Correct the reason without crushing the attempt. Community-college noncredit or co-requisite doors are local options when you want a human classroom — not required to finish this strip.⁶⁸

Desk sit, second narration. You model a mentor incident note. You practice a composite “scanner down — need loaner by 1 p.m.” Subject purpose-first. Ask first. Impact one line. Follow-up one line. Reflect checklist passes. You add a plain-language pass cutting “facilitate the continuance of operations” to “keep checkout open.” That single cut teaches more than a week of tone lectures.

Weekend sit, second narration. You diagnose a wrong twin: a chatbot-polished email that never had your ask. You rewrite from scratch ask-first. Then you draft a civic memo and an audience swap. You schedule Mon/Wed/Fri micros. You mark done-enough items you truly own and leave unchecked what still wobbles. Honesty in the checklist is part of the skill strip.

Tools, including AI

Short and late. Point back to the refresh-hour AI box.

Paper mentor scraps and a three-line checklist beat generative “write my email” during the attempt. Purdue OWL and plain-language checklists help after you tried. Spellcheck is fine; meaning still comes first. Open *your* employer’s acceptable-use page when workplace examples appear — do not invent a federal statute.

After you tried: explain this idea to yourself from this lesson; isomorphic practice with YOUR key; labelled SCRIPT for self-questions; revision questions after *your*

⁶⁸ALP/CCRC co-requisite evidence is a community-college pathway label, not kitchen proof of this paperback. Local doors vary.

draft (not rewrite-as-only-draft); hint; diagnose work you already wrote (crop — no face).

You may not ask the tool to write your workplace email as the only draft. You may not “fix this to professional” as a skip of your attempt. You may not paste live employer threads into public consumer tools. You may not photo-to-key. No fluency certificate. No detector-grading yourself. COPPA under-13 does not apply — not a companion licence.

OFF-AGE for literacy: in a high-school math field experiment, an unguarded chatbot made practice look better and left students worse unaided later.⁶⁹ Not an adult literacy RCT. The model may prepare you and the next prompt; it may not do your email during the attempt as the only draft.

Five-minute drills you can repeat forever (maintenance).

1. Rewrite one subject.
2. Move one ask to sentence one.
3. Cut one empty opener.
4. Add one deadline.
5. Swap one *utilize* for *use*.

Any drill alone is a micro. Together they are a desk crumb. After this chapter’s done-enough, keep two drills a week. That is the habit without a tenth chapter.

Illustration + notebook pairing. When you glance at the chapter opener still-life — greeked email, mentor scrap — open your notebook to a before/after. The book picture motivates. Your dated sample is the work product a stranger could follow.

You are ready enough when... a skimmer can answer your three locked questions from the first screen of your draft, your reflect checklist has been used at least three times this week, and you can name a buried-ask wrong twin without flinching. Perfect tone is not required. Clear ask is.

What “done enough” looks like

Skill strip, not diploma year. No fake certificate. No “English for Adults I.” No “Certified Professional Email.”

- ☐ I can write a purpose-first subject that names the decision or need.

⁶⁹Bastani et al., *PNAS* (2025): HS math; unguarded chatbot crutch. **OFF-AGE for literacy — not an adult literacy RCT.**

- ☐ I can put one clear ask in the first sentence.
- ☐ I can complete Model–Practice–Reflect on a status or recommendation note with a three-line reflect checklist.
- ☐ I can run a plain-language pass that shortens fog without deleting meaning.
- ☐ I can audience-swap once and keep honesty.
- ☐ I can catch buried-ask and tool-as-only-draft wrong twins.
- ☐ My exit sticky names next Tuesday’s cue.

Place by skill when you self-check at week’s end: if subjects still say “checking in” under light pressure, stay. If ask-first leads and MPR cycles hold on status *and* recommendation jackets, go ahead even if you never loved school essay writing. School essay love is not the placement test. Usable action writing is.

If asks still sink under pressure, stay here. Later chapters assume you can lead a message. Maintain with micros after you move on. Optional CLEP or community-college credit paths are bridges when credit is the goal — sitting an exam is not finishing this strip.⁷⁰

You do not need to be a novelist. You do need to hear a buried ask, and a finished-looking chatbot email that skipped your draft. On the commute, rewrite a subject and lead with the ask. At the desk, MPR a status or recommendation. This week-end, if needed, civic memo + wrong twin. Clarity is a kindness to busy readers and to future you who must reread the thread. That is done enough.

Remember the locked opening when tired: “Who is this for, what must they do next, and what’s my one clear ask?” Put it on a sticky near the keyboard. One pause before send is a micro-session even on days you cannot deep-sit.

A closing walk-through for this week

Monday, commute. Try-it A three subjects. Sticky → Tuesday autopsy.

Tuesday, lunch. Try-it B bury-the-ask. Sticky: *ask in sentence one*.

Wednesday, desk. Try-it D MPR status. Interloper: empty opener cut.

Friday, commute. Try-it G plain-language pass. Retrieve Monday’s best subject.

⁷⁰CLEP College Composition / Analyzing & Interpreting Literature are optional credit bridges (\$97 each plus fees as of sources opened for this book’s research). Institution sets credit. Sitting ≠ finishing this skill strip. Never English for Adults I.

Sunday, optional deep sit. Try-it E or I + J. Calendar micros. Done-enough if ready.

Longer desk narration (composite). Thirty-five minutes. Mentor recommendation on checklist keep. You name moves aloud. Parallel: recommend a four-week cart-routing trial with isomorphic numbers. Subject purpose-first. Ask first. Two evidence bullets. Warrant. Fair limit. Reflect: audience yes; ask yes; dated next action yes. You do not paste the real routing map into a chat. Exit sticky names Sunday civic memo if you want depth.

Longer weekend narration (composite). Diagnostic wrong: an old send with subject “FYI” and ask in paragraph five. Label wrong. Then write a one-page civic memo proposing a trial Saturday opening using composite counts. Audience-swap a paragraph for patrons vs staff. Plain-language pass. Schedule three micros. Checklist if ready.

Integration across Chapters 1–4. Unlock hard words → name paragraph jobs → link claim/evidence/warrant → lead messages with audience and ask. If a layer fails, repair that layer. Tips are moves, not slogans. Commute/lunch, desk-or-shift, and weekend deep sits motivate; they do not replace the ask that is clear or the warrant that links.

Encouragement. Busy readers are not enemies. They are why clarity exists. Lead with the ask. Support with evidence. Link with a warrant. Reflect with three lines. Keep the tone kind when you correct yourself. You are tuning an instrument you still need.

If you manage others occasionally. This chapter still addresses *your* writing first. Modelling clear asks for a team is powerful; do not turn this book into a management manual. Steal the mentor moves for yourself; share structure, not surveillance.

Connection to later chapters. Chapter 5 will twin literary and informational reading — still useful for adults who write. Chapter 6 will ask you to open a second source before some claims. Chapter 7 will revise for meaning before commas. Workplace writing does not end when those chapters open; it maintains.

Final encouragement. You already write. This week you rebuild the default so busy readers can act. Who is this for? What must they do next? What is your one clear ask? Ask yourself that on the commute. Answer it at the desk. Deepen it on the weekend if needed. That is English for adults on ordinary stakes — usable,

checkable, kind to the skimmer, and kind to you.

If you teach teenagers at home too, this chapter still addresses *you*. Other house books serve parent tables and younger ages. One pointer; then return to your subject line.

A full week when energy is low. Three micros only: Mon subject rewrites; Wed ask-first on a practice email; Fri plain-language pass. Skip the desk sit without shame. Resume depth next week. Consistency of cueing beats heroic Sunday dumps. Distributed practice is a high-utility technique in learning research; it is not a promise every adult will see the same result.⁷¹

Closing still-life for your desk. Greeked email printout; subject circled; ask underlined; mentor scrap with moves named; dated notebook. No portraits. No logos. The objects remind you what “done” looks like for a message: a skimmer can answer “what do you need from me?”

Permission to maintain. When Chapter 5 opens literary and informational reading, keep one workplace micro a week. Life-of-the-habit lives here, in done-enough, and in keeping track — not in a tenth teaching chapter titled “habits.”

⁷¹Dunlosky et al. (2013): distributed practice rated high utility — technique rating, not an adult-email RCT.

Chapter 5 — Literary and informational reading for adults



Figure 7: A still-life: literary scene sticky with two stars; informational feature with purpose question. No people. No logos. No readable UI.

Why this matters

You already read. You read messages, labels, sports blurbs, museum cards, features on your phone, and sometimes a story or essay that you chose because you wanted to. What often rusts is not the ability to decode ordinary words. What rusts is the habit of leaving a passage with a *defendable reading* — two lines you could star, a short claim about what the text is doing, and a reason that stays on the page when someone asks, “How do you know?”

This chapter twins two objects adults actually need: **literary** reading (a short story scene, a personal essay turn, a small poem set when you want it) and **informational** reading (a science or history feature, a workplace policy excerpt, a museum placard, a process article that is not a sales pitch). You do not have to finish an anthology to be done. You do not have to recreate a high-school American Literature survey as your adult identity. You do not get to call informational text “not real reading.” Both are real. Both ask the same adult question:

Which two lines would I star if I had to defend a reading?

That question keeps you honest. A summary that floats above the page is not a defense. A vibe about the author is not a defense. A highlighter rainbow with no claim is not a defense. Two starred lines plus one sentence you could say aloud to a colleague or a friend — that is the work.

Pleasure still counts. Dense informational text still counts. Optional college-credit edges (a literature exam shape that notices tone, imagery, and structure) stay optional. Your next real task places the week: a clearer reading of a feature before a meeting, a story you actually finish with a thought worth keeping, a placard you can explain without waving your hands. Sequence by what you need next, not by a school calendar that put novels before memos as if that order were a statute.

Adult literacy life is full of both twins.⁷² A shift lead who can only skim procedural text and never notice how a feature selects evidence will miss warrants. A reader who only chases “serious novels” and never practices on informational structure will stall on the pages that pay the bills. This chapter refuses that false split. It also refuses live controversy as curriculum. Ordinary stakes are enough: scenes,

⁷²NCES/IES PIAAC 2023 Highlights: U.S. literacy mean **258**; Level 1 or below **28%** (was **19%**); Level 3+ **44%** (was **48%**). Level-2→3 work includes longer texts and evaluate/reflect. Survey context, not a grade. Not teen NAEP. NCES **3.4%** is homeschool prevalence — not adult literacy.

essays, features, placards, sports-mechanism explainers, library articles. The skill of defending a reading does not require turning the week into a culture-war seminar. Keep the objects boring enough to practice on: the museum card, the feature, the scene, the policy excerpt. Boring objects make brave skills. Dramatic weekly topics often steal the session into opinion theater before two lines are starred.

Understand it yourself

Everyday picture

Imagine you and a colleague leave a short museum film. One of you says, “That was powerful.” The other says, “The last card said the bridge failed because the rivets were undersized — look, that line on the placard.” Both felt something. Only one of you could defend a reading. The starred line is the difference between a mood and a claim that could survive a second look at the wall.

Now swap the museum for a short story scene on your nightstand or a science feature on your phone. Same move. Star two lines. Say what they let you claim. Check that you did not invent a scene the author never wrote, and that you did not turn a topic label (“about bridges,” “about sleep”) into an analysis.

A second everyday picture: you read a workplace benefits leaflet on lunch. You finish. You feel informed. A coworker asks what the leaflet actually commits to. You say, “It covers family leave.” They ask where. You cannot point. That is highlight-and-hope without stars. The leaflet may be fine. Your reading is not yet defensible.

Precise picture

A defensible reading has three small parts:

1. **A purpose question** you wrote *before* or at the start of the read (“Watch how the narrator shifts after the knock,” “Mark what evidence the article uses for the claim about sleep duration,” “Notice how the policy section orders exceptions after the main rule”).
2. **Two textual stars** — lines, sentences, or a short exchange you can point to with a finger or a sticky.
3. **One analytical sentence** that links the stars to a claim about motive, structure, craft, or evidence selection — not a plot recap alone, and not a topic

sticker.

Volume reading and close reading stay twins here, as they were when you practiced complex text earlier.⁷³ Most days you read worthy literary or informational text with one purpose question and one response mark. Some days you run a short three-pass close-read:

- **Pass 1 — gist.** One-sentence paraphrase of what the passage is basically doing.
- **Pass 2 — marks.** Claim or motive cue; evidence or key craft/structure move; two stars.
- **Pass 3 — link.** A warrant sentence (“These lines support ____ because ”) or a missing-evidence question (“What would I need to see to trust ?”).

Neither silent reading alone nor quiz points prove comprehension.⁷⁴ Guessing from a picture, a first letter, or “what would make sense in life” is not the reading system.⁷⁵ Accelerated Reader-style points, where they appear in school stories, are not your adult proof either.⁷⁶ Your proof is a product you can show: stars, gist, defensible sentence.

Literature before workplace writing was a school habit, not an adult statute. If this week’s real need is an informational feature before a team huddle, start there. If you want a story scene for pleasure and craft, start there. Content-rich nonfiction builds knowledge; literary scenes build motive and craft noticing.⁷⁷ Adults need both strips available.

Optional exam shapes that ask about tone, imagery, and structure can sit at the edge if credit is a goal. They are not the default workplace path. You do not need

⁷³Volume + close-reading twin: purpose-first worthy text most days; three-pass close-read some days. Continuity with Chapter 2’s complex-text strip.

⁷⁴Kamil et al., *Improving Adolescent Literacy* (NCEE 2008-4027): comprehension strategies **strong**; extended discussion **moderate** — **school** labelled, portable as adult self-study moves. Access date: 6 September 2026.

⁷⁵Three-cueing (picture / context / first-letter guessing as the reading programme) is refused in this book’s architecture. Surrounding words support after a candidate; they do not replace print.

⁷⁶WWC Adolescent Literacy report on Accelerated Reader (August 2010): **no discernible** effects in rated fluency/comprehension domains for adolescent learners — **school/vendor** labelled. AR points are not adult comprehension proof.

⁷⁷Vaughn et al., *Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4–9* (IES practice guide, 2022): **school** continuity for multi-component reading intervention design — labelled school, not an adult commute RCT. Port the honesty that older readers still need explicit support when texts stall; do not invent an adult Vaughn RCT.

a named canon list to practice. A public-domain scene, a library essay, a museum card, and a science feature are enough objects for ordinary adult brush-up.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. **“I finished the chapter, so I understood it.”** Finishing is volume. Understanding is a product: stars, gist, or a defensible claim. Anthology finish is not done-enough.
2. **“Informational text doesn’t count — only novels are real reading.”** Refuse that. Features, placards, and policy excerpts are load-bearing adult literacy. They count.
3. **“My summary is my analysis.”** Summary says what happened or what the topic is. Analysis says what the text is *doing* — motive, structure turn, evidence selection, craft choice — and points to lines.
4. **“I highlighted everything important.”** Highlight-and-hope without two stars and a claim is decoration. Stars force a choice. Choice is the skill.
5. **“I felt what the author meant.”** Feeling can start the work. It does not replace lines on the page. If you cannot point, you cannot defend.
6. **“A study guide already explained it, so I am done.”** Guides can help *after* your try. During the attempt, the page is the partner. A fluent guide paragraph is not your reading.
7. **“I need the whole novel before I can say anything.”** Short scenes teach the move. Whole books are welcome later. Waiting for the entire anthology is often avoidance dressed as seriousness.

Five-minute warm-up before the try

Open any short public passage you already somewhat know — a one-page feature, a story scene, a museum card photo you took, a printed essay paragraph. Cover any notes. Write one purpose question in ten words. Read for three minutes. Star exactly two lines. Say aloud: “I can defend ____ because of these two lines.” Stop. That is the warm-up. Do not open a rewrite tool. Do not hunt a study-guide answer key. If the silence feels awkward, look at the page again, not at your phone’s assistant.

How to try it this week

Session shape across bands

Warm-up retrieval (2 minutes). Name last week’s reading move in one sentence: purpose first, star two, defend. Recall one wrong twin (summary-as-analysis or highlight-and-hope). If last week was rhetoric or workplace writing, name how “star the evidence” already prepared this chapter’s stars.

Short model (3–6 minutes). Study a mentor mark-up once: a short passage with two stars and one defensible sentence written in the margin. Name what the mentor did — not “they were smart,” but “they starred the dialogue turn and the last image, then claimed the narrator’s certainty cracked,” or “they starred the visit-count sentence and the staffing sentence, then claimed the article links hours to measured use *and* cost.”

Your attempt (most of the block). Parallel passage, unaided. Purpose → read → two stars → one defensible sentence. On some days add the three-pass close-read. Keep the passage short enough to finish the product inside the session. A half-finished epic with no sticky is not bravery.

One good self-question. Use the locked opening below. Wait before you peek at a guide or a chatbot.

Mixed practice. Pair a literary star day with an informational star day in the same week when you can. Mixing after you can tell the moves apart beats a Sunday dump of six stories you barely mark.

Exit sticky. “I can defend ____ because lines ____.” Date it. Put it where Tuesday-you can find it.

Exact wording you can say to yourself

Which two lines would I star if I had to defend a reading?

Then wait. Cover any answer key. Look at the page, not at a rewrite.

Talk-to-yourself box

Opening question (locked): Which two lines would I star if I had to defend a reading?

Follow-ups:

1. What is the narrator’s or author’s claim about X — can I say it in one sentence without a topic sticker?
2. What craft or structure turn matters here (scene break, evidence order, repeated image, counter buried then answered, section heading that reframes)?
3. What does the page show before I invent a motive, a statistic, or a moral?
4. Can I paraphrase the starred lines without inventing — and without copying the whole syntax and calling the copy “analysis”?
5. Where could summary-as-analysis hide — and may I change my mind after a second pass?

How to wait alone. After you ask, cover the answer. Count a slow three of real clock time (classroom-origin think-time translated to an adult pause before lookup — not a literacy RCT). If silence is hard, look at the two candidate lines on the page. Rescue at one second is still rescue. Forty minutes of scrolling is not a micro-session. Abandonment dressed as “I need more context from the whole internet” is still abandonment.

What a stuck silence usually means. The purpose question was vague; wait-time was zero; you are hunting a “teacher answer”; you offered a mood instead of lines; you think informational text does not count so you froze; you think only a famous novel legitimates analysis; anxiety is eating working memory — shorten: one purpose, two stars, stop, return tomorrow.

First try-it this week

Pick one short passage (literary *or* informational). Write a purpose question. Star two lines. Write one defensible sentence. That is enough for day one. Do not wait for the perfect book.

How to fade help

- **Day 1:** Mentor mark-up in view while you name the moves aloud.
- **Day 2:** Mentor covered; your parallel try on a new short passage.
- **Day 3:** No mentor; only your purpose sticky and the locked question.
- **Later:** A tool may ask questions *after* your try (“Which of your two stars actually support the claim?”). It may not finish the reading for you during the attempt.

When to stop looking up

Stop when you have two stars and one sentence you can say without the guide. Looking up every allusion, every technical term, or every historical aside is optional enrichment, not the spine of this chapter. If three load-bearing words block meaning, sticky them (definitional + how they work in *this* sentence), then return to stars. If decoding still collapses on ordinary adult sentences, that is a different repair strip — seek discreet help; do not pretend a points quiz is comprehension.

Context bands inside this week

Commute / lunch (~15–20 min). One short scene or feature paragraph on your phone or a print scrap. Purpose in ten words. Read. Two stars. Exit sticky spoken into a note or written on a card. No anthology finish. No live controversy piece as the day's identity.

Desk or shift break (~25–40 min). Volume read with purpose *or* a three-pass close-read of one to three paragraphs. One response mark. Optional: collect two craft or academic words on a sticky. If you are on shift, use a public feature or a labelled composite isomorphic scrap on *your* practice sheet — not a proprietary thread pasted into a public tool.

Weekend deep sit (~45–75 min when needed). Longer close-read of a short essay or story scene *or* an informational feature with a structure note. Write a half-page defensible reading with two textual stars named in the margin or footnotes of your notebook. Reflect: did I summarize or analyze? Schedule two micro cues for next week (one literary, one informational if you can). Space beats a single heroic Sunday.

Practice that actually builds it

Named try-its

Try-it A — Two-line star (commute / lunch)

- **Time:** 12–15 minutes.
- **Materials:** One short public passage (story beat, essay turn, science/history feature paragraph, museum placard photo). Phone note or sticky. No proprietary employer file required.

- **Safety:** Ordinary public text. No live controversy as the week's identity. No undercover audit of a workplace. Noticing is not a sting. No medical, lending, or legal advice dressed as literacy.
- **The move:** Write purpose → read once → star exactly two lines → say "I defend ____ because ____." If you cannot point, you do not yet have a reading. Record the sticky. Stop while the product is clean.

Try-it B — Motive / structure sticky (commute / lunch)

- **Time:** 15–20 minutes.
- **Materials:** Short literary scene or informational feature with a clear turn.
- **Safety:** Same ordinary-stakes rule.
- **The move:** After two stars, add one sticky: "Turn = ____ (dialogue shift / evidence order / repeated image / counter answered / heading that reframes)." The sticky names craft or structure, not plot alone. Say the locked question once more and check that your stars still match the turn you named.

Try-it C — Informational feature mark-up (desk)

- **Time:** 25–35 minutes.
- **Materials:** One public science, history, sports-mechanism, or process feature (composite label if you rewrite names). Pencil or annotation app you control.
- **Safety:** No medical, lending, or legal advice from the try-it. Product claim vs ingredients/spec is fine as literacy practice; it is not a shopping sermon or an investment pitch.
- **The move:** Purpose question first. Mark claim (box), evidence (underline), structure note (how sections order the case). Write one missing-evidence question. Star two lines that would defend *your* reading of what the article is doing — not two lines that merely repeat the title.

Try-it D — Literary scene close-read (desk)

- **Time:** 30–40 minutes.
- **Materials:** One short story scene or essay passage (public domain, library borrow, or a book you own). Mentor mark-up optional on day 1 only.
- **Safety:** Choose scenes without graphic harm as the teaching object. Pleasure is welcome; cruelty-as-curriculum is not.

- **The move:** Three passes — (1) one-sentence gist paraphrase without copying syntax, (2) two stars plus craft/structure mark, (3) defensible claim about motive or turn with the stars named. Exit: “I can defend ____ because lines ____.”

Try-it E — Half-page defensible reading (weekend deep)

- **Time:** 45–60 minutes.
- **Materials:** The passage from Try-it D or C; dated notebook.
- **Safety:** Your words. No paste of a study-guide essay as yours. No chatbot paragraph as the only draft of your analysis.
- **The move:** Write half a page: claim about what the text is doing; two quoted or precisely located stars; one warrant sentence linking stars to claim; one fair alternate reading you considered and why you set it aside. Optional craft notice (tone, imagery, structure) without a named-canon requirement — noticing craft is enough for ordinary adult practice. If credit later matters, you will recognize those noticing habits; you do not need them to license today’s session.

Try-it F — Twin day (mixed across the week)

- **Time:** Two micros in one week, or one desk sit split in half.
- **Materials:** One literary scrap + one informational scrap.
- **Safety:** Ordinary stakes both times.
- **The move:** Same opening question on both. Notice that the *moves* transfer even when the *genre* changes. Informational still counts. Literary still counts. Write one sentence: “What transferred?”

Try-it G — Placard or packaging structure (on the go, out-of-home optional)

- **Time:** 10–15 minutes in a museum, bookstore, or grocery aisle — or a photo you already took.
- **Materials:** Placard, blurb, or generic package claim vs fine-print/spec (no readable brand logo needed in your notes).
- **Safety:** Noticing is not a sting. No shoplifting a “test.” No public quiz that humiliates anyone. Strip brand names in your notebook if you prefer.
- **The move:** Purpose: “What does this text want me to believe, and what does it show?” Star two lines or two fine-print clauses. Defend a reading.

Missing-evidence question welcome.

Incorrect example to diagnose

Illustration (labelled composite, not a reported workplace or medical case):

Jordan reads a short feature about how city libraries extended weekend hours. Jordan highlights half the article in yellow, writes “Libraries good” at the top, and feels finished. When a friend asks what the article *argued*, Jordan shrugs: “It was positive about libraries.” Asked for a line, Jordan flips pages and says, “Somewhere in here.”

Diagnosis. Highlight-and-hope plus mood. No purpose question. No two stars. Summary-as-analysis (“positive”) without lines. Topic sticker instead of claim about what the text is doing.

Repair. Purpose: “How does this article select evidence for the claim that weekend hours matter?” Star the sentence that reports Saturday visit counts and the sentence that quotes a staff schedule constraint. Defend: “The piece links weekend hours to measured visits *and* staffing cost — not vibes.” Then try a parallel short feature unaided. Say the locked question before you start the parallel.

Second incorrect twin (literary): Sam finishes a two-page scene and writes, “The character is sad about family.” No lines. No turn named. Repair: star the dialogue that undercuts the apology and the image that closes the page; claim the scene shows the apology failing *because* those two moments collide — then paraphrase without inventing a childhood the author never gave.

Practice notes that keep the strip honest

Emails, features, library pages, scenes, and placards *are* the practice surface. They do not replace the structure: purpose, stars, defensible sentence. Keyword lists dressed as reading are not this chapter. Three-cueing is refused. Quiz points are refused as comprehension proof. Live controversy stays out of the week’s identity even if the skill of argument could be taught on harder contents — this book chooses ordinary stakes on purpose.

When you mix this strip with earlier ones, keep the jobs separate for a moment: morphology repairs a stuck word; rhetoric names claim–evidence–warrant; this

chapter insists the stars you would use in a defense are chosen and sayable. Later you will open a second source. Today, defend *this* page first.

A worked literary scrap (illustration)

Passage setup (composite illustration, not a published story to quote at length): A two-paragraph scene. In the first paragraph, a speaker apologizes twice for being late and blames traffic. In the second, the listener sets a mug down hard, says “You always say traffic,” and looks at the closed laptop instead of the speaker’s face.

Purpose question: Watch what happens to the apology between paragraph one and paragraph two.

Two stars: (1) the repeated “traffic” excuse; (2) “You always say traffic” plus the closed-laptop look.

Defendable reading: The scene is not mainly about lateness; it shows the apology failing because the listener names a pattern and withdraws attention — the mug and the laptop do the turn that the soft words in paragraph one cannot.

Wrong twin: “They had a fight about traffic.” That is topic/plot. It does not name the structure turn or the craft of withdrawal.

Check: Can you paraphrase without inventing a ten-year marriage the page never gave? Yes — stay inside the two paragraphs.

A worked informational scrap (illustration)

Passage setup (composite illustration): A short feature claims weekend library hours raise visits. It reports Saturday door counts for three months, quotes a staff schedule constraint, and ends with a paragraph of community-feel language.

Purpose question: How does this article select evidence for the claim that weekend hours matter?

Two stars: (1) the Saturday door-count sentence; (2) the staffing-constraint sentence.

Defendable reading: The article links hours to measured visits *and* to cost/staffing — the feel-good closing is atmosphere, not the load-bearing case.

Missing-evidence question: What happened to weekday visits in the same months — did the total rise, or did visits only shift days?

Wrong twin: “Libraries are important.” Topic sticker. No stars. No structure notice.

Mini-week map (honest lesson plan — not a 180-day dump)

Monday micro (commute): Try-it A on a feature paragraph. Exit sticky.

Tuesday micro (lunch): Try-it B on a short scene. Motive/structure sticky.

Wednesday desk: Try-it C mark-up. Missing-evidence question required.

Thursday off or light: Retrieval only — cover Monday’s sticky; recreate the defensible sentence; check against the page.

Saturday or Sunday deep (when needed): Try-it E half-page. Reflect checklist: purpose? two stars? analysis not summary? alternate reading considered?

Next Tuesday: New scrap, same moves. Space is the design.

This map is an ambition shaped like sessions, not a promise that every adult will see the same result as a classroom study. Portable comprehension-strategy guidance from school guides (summarize, question, paraphrase, main idea — model then try) is a useful ancestor here; it is not an adult commute RCT.

What transfers from earlier chapters

If you practiced morphology, load-bearing words in *this* passage still get a sticky when they stall — then return to stars. If you practiced complex text, paragraph-job naming feeds purpose questions. If you practiced rhetoric, claim–evidence–warrant is already half of a defensible reading; this chapter insists the evidence lines are starred and sayable on literary *and* informational objects. If you practiced workplace writing, you already know an ask needs a clear lead; reading’s cousin is a purpose that leads the eye.

Do not mash this chapter into a critical-thinking sequel. When a memo is wrong, the English question here is still: which lines defend a reading of what the text is doing? Deciding what to believe or do with civic weight lives in another book’s lane. One pointer is enough; then return to stars.

Scaffolds you can keep without turning soft

- Sticky glossary for three to five load-bearing words from *this* text.
- Purpose question written before reading.
- Mentor mark-up studied once, then parallel passage unaided.
- Oral reading under your breath when hard syntax needs it; silent when accurate enough.
- Short passages on hard days; longer only when the product still fits the session.

Scaffolds fade. They do not become a permanent tour guide that stars the lines for you.

Pleasure without pretending points

You may read for pleasure without a sticky every night. This chapter does not moralize leisure. When the week's skill is defensible reading, though, pleasure and practice can share a page: choose a scene you like, then still star two lines. Motivation often arrives from this week's need — a clearer feature before a meeting, a story you want to talk about without hand-waving. Use that. Do not replace explicit practice with "make it fun" as the only plan. Do not require AP-prestige reading lists to take yourself seriously.

If it isn't clicking

Diagnostic 1 — You finish pages but cannot name two stars

What it often means. Volume without a product. Or fear of choosing the "wrong" lines. Or a habit of highlighting everything so nothing is a choice.

Next move. Force a choice: set a gentle timer for eight minutes; you must star exactly two lines before time ends. Wrong stars that you can discuss beat no stars. Then ask: "If I had to defend one claim, which pair helps?" Parallel try on a shorter paragraph. If anxiety spikes, drop the timer and keep the two-star rule only.

Diagnostic 2 — Your "analysis" is only plot or topic summary

What it often means. Summary-as-analysis habit from packets that rewarded retell. Or rushing to sound finished.

Next move. Write the summary in one sentence, then *forbid* yourself from repeating it. Second sentence must name motive, structure turn, evidence selection, or craft. Use a stem: “The text does X by Y (see lines ____).” If you cannot fill Y, you are still summarizing. Study one mentor margin sentence, cover it, try a parallel.

Diagnostic 3 — Informational text feels like “not counting,” so you avoid it — or literary text feels “useless,” so you only skim features

What it often means. A school story about what “real English” is. Or workplace urgency crowding out pleasure reading until craft noticing dies. Or the reverse snobbery that treats novels as decoration.

Next move. Twin deliberately: one micro literary, one micro informational in the same week. Same opening question. Done-enough is skill on *both* objects over time, not anthology finish and not email-only forever. Write the twin-day sentence: “What transferred?”

Extra fork — You invent motives or facts the page never supports

Next move. Representation check: “What does the page show before I invent?” Close the notebook. Point only. Reopen. Revise the claim until every noun you lean on has a star or a clear paraphrase home. Alternate fair reading welcome; invented biography is not.

When to slow down, go ahead, or ask a human

Slow down when decoding collapses, when every sentence needs a glossary, or when anxiety makes fifteen minutes feel like a test. Shorten. One purpose. Two stars. Early win. No countdown timer as default rigor.

Go ahead when you can produce stars and a defensible sentence on a fresh short passage without a mentor in view, and when you can tell summary from analysis on a cold check.

Ask a human (colleague, tutor, class, librarian) when you want a second reader on your half-page defense, when you suspect you invent motives the text never

supports, or when reading still stalls after discreet word-level repair. Correct a wrong reason without crushing the attempt — including your own. “Never correct yourself” is not this book’s rule.

Anxiety is real. Rust is ordinary. Adulthood is not a literacy birthday. This is not a therapy manual. Short sessions and visible products beat shame spirals.

Checklist you can photocopy in your head

Before you call a session done:

1. Did I write a purpose question?
2. Did I star exactly two lines (not twenty highlights)?
3. Can I say one defensible sentence aloud without looking at a guide?
4. Did I check for summary-as-analysis?
5. Did I keep the topic ordinary — no live controversy as the week’s identity?
6. Did I try unaided before any tool?

If four of six are yes, you practiced the strip. If zero are yes, you read with your eyes and left the skill on the table — try a shorter scrap tomorrow.

A note on “I am not a literature person”

You do not need to become a novelist or a critic for hire. You need to hear when a reading has no lines under it, and when informational text is being dismissed as unworthy. “Not a words person” is refused here the same way destiny myths are refused elsewhere in this book: skill strips exist; rust is ordinary; placement is by what you can do on today’s page. A forty-five-year-old who can star and defend on a feature can learn a literary motive claim; a twenty-eight-year-old who only vibes through novels without stars is not “ahead” because the paperback looks serious.

Bridging to research edges

Sometimes one page is not enough — not because you failed, but because the claim reaches past the article. That is the next chapter’s job: leave this page, open a second source, paraphrase without copying syntax, note conflict. Skip the forty-page thesis costume. Skip the citation that was never opened. First, defend *this* reading with two stars. Then, when the question needs it, open the second door.

Tools, including AI

Keep this short.⁷⁸ The refresh-hour AI box still holds: you hold the account; try unaided first; a chatbot is never the only partner during the first attempt; write-my-essay as the only draft is banned; photo-to-key is banned; proprietary employer text stays out of public consumer tools.

After you have tried, a tool may:

- Ask which of your two stars best support your claim.
- Offer a labelled SCRIPT of questions for *you* to ask the page (not a paragraph to paste as your analysis).
- Help you list craft terms *after* you noticed a turn.
- Give isomorphic practice passages with answers on **YOUR** key.
- Diagnose a half-page you already wrote (crop to the page — no face, no secret-friend chat).

During the attempt, a tool may not:

- Finish the reading or invent a theme the passage never supports.
- Replace your stars with a fluent paragraph offered as your analysis.
- Photo-solve a comprehension packet.
- Detector-grade your unaided write-up as a honesty verdict.

Dictionaries, library apps, OpenStax-style handbooks, Purdue OWL-style pages for literary terms when you need a label *after* noticing, and annotation tools are helpers when they keep your eyes on the page. Study guides are optional after the try — not a substitute for starring lines yourself. Point back to the refresh hour for the full allow/ban list rather than expanding this box into a policy paper.

What “done enough” looks like

You are done enough with this strip — for now — when you can do most of the following on ordinary adult text without a mentor in the room:

- Write a purpose question before or as you start a short literary *or* informational passage.

⁷⁸Bastani et al., *PNAS* (2025): HS math field experiment; ungarded chatbot crutch. **OFF-AGE for literacy — not an adult literacy RCT.** Mechanism sentence only; Math Refresher’s ON-AGE-adjacent label does not travel here.

- Star two lines and say why those two, not a highlighter fog.
- Produce a one-sentence defensible reading that is not mere summary.
- Paraphrase a paragraph's job without inventing facts the page never gave and without copying syntax as a fake analysis.
- Run a short three-pass close-read (gist → marks → warrant or missing-evidence question) when the week needs depth.
- Treat informational and literary objects as twin practice — not a ranked caste.
- Leave anthology finish and named-canon completion out of your definition of "I finished adult reading."
- Show a dated half-page defensible reading a stranger could follow.

Placement is by skill, not diploma year. A literature exam shape (tone, imagery, structure notice) is an optional edge if credit is your goal — not the default workplace path and not required for ordinary adult reading.⁷⁹ Sitting an optional exam is not the same as finishing this book. A fake "English for Adults" certificate is a receipt for nothing this chapter asked you to do.

Cold check (ten minutes, once before you move on). Take a fresh short passage you have not marked. No mentor. Purpose, two stars, one defensible sentence, one fair alternate reading you reject with a reason. If you can do that cold, the strip is traveling with you.

Life of the habit (here, not a tenth chapter). Revisit next Tuesday with one micro: two stars on a fresh scrap. Space literary and informational across the week when you can.⁸⁰ Mix last week's purpose-question habit with this week's passage. Stop when the sticky is honest — do not mass a Sunday anthology to feel virtuous. Keep the dated half-page in the file you will use in keeping track. The habit is return and product, not a diploma year.

When this strip holds, you are ready to leave one page more often — to open a second source, paraphrase without copying syntax, and keep research light and honest. That is the next chapter's edge. Take the dated half-page with you; it is proof you can defend a reading, not a ticket to skip opening sources when a

⁷⁹College Board CLEP Analyzing and Interpreting Literature listed at **\$97.00** plus fees (opened 6 September 2026). Optional credit bridge when the receiving college accepts the score — not the default workplace path and not finishing this book.

⁸⁰Dunlosky et al. (2013): practice testing and distributed practice **high utility**; rereading/highlighting **low utility** — technique ratings, not an adult-English programme evaluation. Useful study, not a promise that every adult will see the same result.

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question reaches past one article.

Chapter object in one line: twin literary and informational reading; purpose; two stars; defensible claim — not anthology finish. Keep the sticky.

Return to the page. Star two lines. Defend the reading.

Chapter 6 — Research edges and open-the-source citation



Figure 8: A still-life: library article with two source tags; paraphrase sticky; conflict note. No people. No logos. No readable UI.

Why this matters

Research, for this book, is not a personality type. It is a short chain of habits you can run on a weeknight: narrow the question, leave the first page, open a second source, put the meaning in your own syntax, note where the sources fight or go quiet, and tag only what you opened. Adults skip steps because time is short and fluent tools are near. This chapter puts the steps back in order without demanding a graduate seminar.

Most adult “research” failures are not failures of brilliance. They are failures of leaving the first page. You find one article, one FAQ, one confident paragraph in a chat window, and you draft as if the case is closed. Or you paste a fluent bibliography you never opened. Or you paraphrase by copying the source’s sentence rhythm and swapping a few words — a cousin of plagiarism that still fails the meaning test.

This chapter teaches a light research edge for adults on the go: a focused question, two sources you actually open, paraphrase versus quote, a conflict or gap note, and consistent light attribution. Integrity over theater. Not a forty-page thesis. Not MLA mastery as the only adult identity. Not quote-patchwork. Not a chatbot bibliography dressed as diligence.

The locked question is the spine:

Did I leave this page and open a second source — and can I paraphrase without copying the syntax?

That question catches the two most common shortcuts at once: staying on page one, and “paraphrasing” with the author’s skeleton still showing.

You need this edge when a workplace recommendation leans on a claim, when a product promise should be checked against a second description, when a short civic memo (ordinary topic) needs more than memory, when a study note for optional credit asks you to support a point, or when a feature you trusted yesterday suddenly looks thin.⁸¹ You do not need this edge to become a professional researcher. You need it to stop performing research while skipping the open.⁸²

⁸¹NCES/IES PIAAC 2023: U.S. literacy mean **258**; Level 1 or below **28%**; Level 3+ **44%**. Evaluate/reflect across dense or multiple sources sits in the Level-2→3 spine. Survey context, not a grade. Not teen NAEP.

⁸²Optional CLEP College Composition / Analyzing & Interpreting Literature (**\$97** each plus fees, opened 6 September 2026) may ask you to support points from sources — still open what

One adult-side fact belongs in your pocket when tools offer citations: in a 2023 study of short literature reviews generated by models, about **55%** of GPT-3.5 citations and about **18%** of GPT-4 citations were fabricated — and many of the real ones still carried substantive errors.⁸³ Models are language tools, not automatic libraries. If a tool names a paper, open the paper. Works cited only for what you opened. That is not paranoia. That is the move.

Understand it yourself

Everyday picture

You are writing a short note recommending a new scheduling habit for your team. You read one vendor blog that says the habit “cuts meeting time in half.” It sounds perfect. You almost paste the line into your note.

Open-the-source is the pause where you leave that blog, open a second public page (a neutral how-to, a library article, a professional association FAQ — ordinary and safe), and ask: where do they agree, conflict, or leave a gap? Maybe the second source says time falls only when agendas are pre-sent. Your note changes. You attribute lightly: “According to A...; B adds...” You did not write a dissertation. You left the first page. The recommendation is weaker in costume and stronger in truth — which is what adult research edges are for.

Second picture: a chatbot gives you three impressive citations with years and journal-looking names. You feel finished. Open-the-source says: open them. If they do not exist, delete them. Fluency is not a source.

Precise picture

A light research edge for this book has six small moves:

1. **Focused question** in one sentence (answerable in one to two pages, not “everything about sleep”).

you cite. Sitting an exam is not finishing this skill strip.

⁸³William H. Walters and Esther Isabelle Wilder, “Fabrication and Errors in the Bibliographic Citations Generated by ChatGPT,” *Scientific Reports* 13 (2023): **55%** of GPT-3.5 citations and **18%** of GPT-4 citations were fabricated in that study; many real citations still carried substantive errors. Adult-side rule: open the source or delete the cite. Access date: 6 September 2026.

2. **Leave this page** — deliberately open a second source before you draft the spine of your answer.
3. **Paraphrase vs quote** — mostly paraphrase in your syntax; quote sparingly when wording itself matters.
4. **Conflict / gap note** — where sources agree, disagree, or stay silent.
5. **Light attribution** you will actually use (link + date; short reference list; “according to...” — consistency over costume.
6. **Draft crumb with tags** — claim and evidence tagged to sources you opened.

Inquiry-style writing activities in secondary research (effect size about **0.32** in a major Writing Next synthesis) are an ancestor of this light edge:⁸⁴ analyze immediate sources before or while drafting, not after the performance is over. Integrating reading and writing (a moderate recommendation in a secondary writing guide) is the same family.⁸⁵ Adult education research is thinner as a trial base — extrapolate the move honestly; there is no kitchen research RCT to lean on.⁸⁶ This is a useful study grain, not a promise that every adult will see the same result.

Safe ordinary topics only. No live controversy as the research bank. Product durability claims, sports performance claims that need more than an average, science-feature mechanisms, workplace process questions supported by two public policy or how-to pages, library how-tos — those are enough.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. **“One good source is enough if it sounds expert.”** One source can start you. A research edge asks for a second look before you draft the spine.
2. **“I paraphrased — I changed some words.”** If the syntax is still the author’s, you copied the skeleton. Close the source; say it aloud; write; reopen and check meaning.
3. **“The chatbot listed sources, so I am covered.”** Fabricated citations are an

⁸⁴Graham & Perin, *Writing Next* (2007): inquiry activities average effect size about **0.32** (grades 4–12 companion meta). Ancestor of open-the-source before drafting. Useful study, not a promise that every adult will see the same result.

⁸⁵Graham et al., *Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively* (NCEE 2017-4002): Recommendation 2 integrate writing and reading — **moderate**; grades **6–12** labelled. Portable to self-study; not an adult kitchen RCT.

⁸⁶TEAL Center Fact Sheet No. 1 (2010): adult-education writing research base thin; extrapolate from adolescent metas — honesty card, not invented adult RCTs.

adult writing fact. Open or delete.

4. **“I need a full thesis to prove I can research.”** Light edges count. A conflict note and a tagged draft crumb are honest products.
5. **“Quote more so it looks serious.”** Quote-mine is not seriousness. Over-quoting often hides missing paraphrase skill.
6. **“MLA theater will save me.”** Formatting costumes without opened sources are still empty. Consistent light attribution you will use beats a brittle ritual you abandon.
7. **“I’ll add citations after I write from memory.”** Tags before or during drafting keep you honest. Memory theater invents.

Five-minute warm-up before the try

Write one focused question on a sticky (ordinary topic). Open *one* short public source. Paraphrase one sentence in your own syntax. Tag it (Source A, title or URL stub, date accessed). Now open a *second* short public source. Paraphrase one sentence. Tag Source B. Write one line: agree / conflict / gap. Stop. Do not draft the essay yet. Do not ask a tool for a bibliography.

How to try it this week

Session shape across bands

Warm-up retrieval (2 minutes). Recite: leave this page; two sources; paraphrase without copying syntax; tag what you opened. Name one wrong twin (quote-mine or invented citation).

Short model (3–8 minutes). Study a mentor card: focused question, two tagged paraphrases, one conflict line, one draft sentence that cites lightly. Name the moves.

Your attempt (most of the block). Parallel on a new ordinary question. Micro days may only do question + leave + one paraphrase each. Desk days add conflict note and outline. Deep days add draft crumb + one-target revise.

One good self-question. Use the locked opening. Wait before the tool.

Mixed practice. Mix a paraphrase-without-copying drill with a “did I leave this page?” check on a different topic later in the week.

Exit sticky. “Question = ____ / A = ____ / B = ____ / conflict or gap = ____.”

Exact wording you can say to yourself

Did I leave this page and open a second source — and can I paraphrase without copying the syntax?

Then wait. Look at the two tabs or two print scraps — not at a rewrite that invents a third “source.”

Talk-to-yourself box

Opening question (locked): Did I leave this page and open a second source — and can I paraphrase without copying the syntax?

Follow-ups:

1. What is my focused question in one sentence — is it small enough to answer in one to two pages?
2. What does each page show before I invent a statistic or a citation?
3. Where do the sources agree, conflict, or leave a gap?
4. Does my paraphrase still mean what the source meant — or did I drift?
5. Did I invent a citation — and where could quote-mine hide? (You may change your mind and delete a fake.)

How to wait alone. Ask; cover the tempting chatbot bibliography; wait a slow three; attempt the paraphrase on paper. If stuck, look at Source A’s sentence, close it, speak your version, write, then reopen to check meaning. Rescue at one second is still rescue. Scrolling twenty tabs without a paraphrase is not struggle.

What a stuck silence usually means. Question too big; wait-time zero; you are hunting a perfect academic voice; you think one vendor page is enough; you fear conflict notes mean you “failed”; anxiety — shorten to two paraphrases and one conflict line; return tomorrow.

First try-it this week

Open a second short public source on an ordinary question and paraphrase one sentence with a tag. That alone begins the strip.

How to fade help

Day 1: mentor card visible. Day 2: mentor covered; your two paraphrases. Day 3: add conflict note without a template sentence in view. A tool may give search-query stems or a source-card *template* after you tried — not an annotated bibliography as yours, and not fabricated titles.

When to stop looking up

Stop when two sources are open, paraphrased, tagged, and conflict/gap is named. Endless tab collecting without a note is avoidance. Perfect citation style can wait until meaning and tags exist.

Context bands inside this week

Commute / lunch (~15–20 min). “Did I leave this page?” check on a question you already care about. Open second short source on your phone. One paraphrase + tag. Spoken conflict line. No thesis.

Desk or shift (~25–40 min). Two sources, two paraphrases, conflict/gap sticky, tiny outline: claim / evidence from A / evidence from B / warrant / open question. Proprietary employer material stays on an isomorphic practice sheet if any public tool will see it — strip clients, credentials, confidential numbers.

Weekend deep sit (~45–75 min when needed). Full light-edge crumb: focused question → two public sources → conflict note → outline → draft crumb with tags → one-target revise (meaning and attribution before polish). Done-enough checklist. Schedule two micros next week that only rehearse paraphrase-without-copying.

Practice that actually builds it

Named try-its

Try-it A — Leave-this-page check (commute / lunch)

- **Time:** 12–15 minutes.
- **Materials:** Phone; one starting page; one second public page; sticky note app.

- **Safety:** Ordinary public topics. No live controversy bank. No proprietary paste into public chat.
- **The move:** Write the question. Read page one for two minutes max. Force a leave. Open page two. Write “Left page: yes/no” and one sentence on what page two added. If you never left, the try-it failed honestly — try again tomorrow.

Try-it B — Second-source paraphrase with tag (commute / lunch)

- **Time:** 15–20 minutes.
- **Materials:** Two short public sources; notebook.
- **Safety:** Same.
- **The move:** From Source B (the second one), choose one load-bearing sentence. Close the source. Say the meaning aloud in new syntax. Write the paraphrase. Reopen. Check meaning. Tag: author/site, title stub, date accessed. Ask the locked question aloud.

Try-it C — Paraphrase-without-copying drill (desk)

- **Time:** 25 minutes.
- **Materials:** One dense paragraph from a public how-to or feature; timer.
- **Safety:** Public text.
- **The move:** Copy the original on the left half of a page (for check only). On the right, write a paraphrase with the original covered. Uncover. Circle any phrase of three+ words that survived unchanged. Rewrite circled spots. Meaning must hold. This is grammar-of-integrity, not a worksheet of parts of speech.

Try-it D — Conflict note (desk)

- **Time:** 25–35 minutes.
- **Materials:** Two sources on one focused ordinary question.
- **Safety:** Ordinary stakes; no medical/legal/lending advice as the product of the try-it.
- **The move:** Three boxes: Agree / Conflict / Gap. At least one bullet in Conflict or Gap (honest empty Agree is fine). One sentence: “What changes in my answer because of the conflict or gap?”

Try-it E — Two-source week crumb (weekend deep)

- **Time:** 50–70 minutes (or split Fri desk + Sat deep).
- **Materials:** Question sticky; two public sources; outline; draft page.
- **Safety:** Public sources; your words; no invented citations; no live controversy topic.
- **The move:** Question → open A and B → paraphrase each (one to three sentences) → conflict/gap note → outline → draft crumb (three-quarters to one page) with in-text light tags → revise once for attribution honesty. Reflect: Did I leave page one? Did syntax stay mine?

Try-it F — Invented-citation autopsy (desk, short)

- **Time:** 15–20 minutes.
- **Materials:** A sample “citation list” you generate *on purpose* from a tool *after* labeling this as a trap drill — or a mentor list of fake-looking cites provided in your notes as illustration.
- **Safety:** Do not use the fakes in real work. Adult-side Walters reminder: fabrication rates in one study were about **55%** / **18%** for two model generations — open or delete.⁸⁷
- **The move:** Try to open each named source. Mark Exists / Cannot find / Exists but doesn’t say that. Delete what you did not open. Write the rule in your sticky: “Works cited only for what I opened.”

Try-it G — Light attribution consistency (on the go)

- **Time:** 10 minutes.
- **Materials:** Yesterday’s two tags.
- **Safety:** None special.
- **The move:** Pick one habit you will keep for three weeks (link + access date; Author, Title, Site, Date; or numbered short list). Apply it to both tags. Consistency beats costume.

⁸⁷William H. Walters and Esther Isabelle Wilder, “Fabrication and Errors in the Bibliographic Citations Generated by ChatGPT,” *Scientific Reports* 13 (2023): 55% of GPT-3.5 citations and 18% of GPT-4 citations were fabricated in that study; many real citations still carried substantive errors. Adult-side rule: open the source or delete the cite. Access date: 6 September 2026.

Incorrect example to diagnose

Illustration (labelled composite):

Casey wants to argue that standing desks reduce back discomfort. Casey skims one vendor page, asks a chatbot for “three studies,” pastes the fluent citations, and writes a paragraph that closely mirrors the vendor’s sentence order with synonyms swapped. Casey feels academic.

Diagnosis. Never left the sales page in spirit; invented or unchecked citations; copied syntax paraphrase; quote-mine cousin without quotes.

Repair. Focused question: “What do two non-vendor public sources say about standing-desk effects on discomfort, and where do they limit claims?” Open a library article or public health FAQ and a second neutral explainer. Paraphrase with source closed. Conflict note: maybe one source stresses movement breaks more than the desk itself. Draft with tags only to opened pages. Delete chatbot cites you did not open. Ask the locked question before sending the note.

Practice notes that keep the strip honest

Library pages and public explainers *are* the practice. They do not replace the structure: leave, two sources, paraphrase, conflict, tags. A forty-page thesis is not the only proof of research skill. Chatbot bibliographies do not count. Full MLA mastery is not the adult default here — consistent habit you will use is. Integrating reading and writing means your draft shows the reading you did, not a costume of footnotes.

When this strip mixes with literary/informational reading, defend *each* source’s reading with stars when needed, then put the sources in conversation. When it mixes with workplace writing, the ask still leads; sources support; they do not bury the ask under a literature review.

Worked light-edge scrap (illustration)

Focused question: Do public how-tos on team stand-ups agree that a fifteen-minute cap helps — and what limit do they add?

Source A (composite public how-to): Recommends a hard fifteen-minute cap; evidence is a described team routine; stresses a standing agenda visible to all.

Source B (composite library/feature explainer): Says short stand-ups help only when blockers are escalated elsewhere; warns that a cap alone can turn into rushed status theater.

Paraphrase A (syntax owned): Source A argues that keeping the meeting to fifteen minutes works when everyone can see the same agenda in advance.

Paraphrase B (syntax owned): Source B limits that advice: speed helps only if problems that need depth move to another slot — otherwise the cap just hides issues.

Conflict / gap: Both like brevity; they conflict on whether the cap is sufficient. Gap: neither reports measured time savings for a specific industry.

Draft crumb lead: “Two public how-tos favor short stand-ups, but they disagree on whether a time cap alone is enough (A emphasizes a shared agenda; B requires a separate path for blockers).”

Wrong twin: Pasting three chatbot article titles about stand-ups without opening them, plus a paragraph that mirrors Source A’s sentence order.

Mini-week map (honest — not a dissertation calendar)

Monday micro: Try-it A — leave this page on an ordinary question.

Tuesday micro: Try-it B — one second-source paraphrase + tag.

Wednesday desk: Try-it C + start Try-it D conflict boxes.

Thursday retrieval: Cover Tuesday’s paraphrase; recreate it aloud; check meaning.

Weekend deep: Try-it E crumb with tags; one-target revise for attribution honesty.

Next week Tuesday: New question; only leave + two paraphrases if time is tight. Spacing beats a heroic unread binder.

What “light attribution” can look like without theater

Pick one and keep it for three weeks:

- **Link + date:** Title — URL — accessed 6 Sep 2026.

- **Short prose tag:** According to the City Library weekend-hours explainer (accessed 6 Sep 2026)...
- **Numbered list at bottom:** [1] Author or site. Title. Date. Link.

If a class or employer requires a named style, follow that style when you must. Until then, consistency and opened pages beat brittle perfection. Do not let formatting panic postpone the leave-this-page move.

Quote vs paraphrase — a practical split

Paraphrase when you need the idea in your argument's flow. **Quote** when the exact wording is the evidence (a policy clause; a definition; a line whose tone matters). Adults often over-quote to look safe. Safety is understanding. If you cannot paraphrase, you are not ready to argue from that sentence.

A quick check: read your paraphrase to a friend without showing the source. If they could reconstruct the original's unusual phrasing word-for-word, you probably copied syntax. Try again.

Integrating reading and writing on purpose

Graham's secondary guidance to integrate writing and reading (moderate evidence level, grades labelled) supports a simple adult habit:⁸⁸ write *from* sources you marked, and mark sources *for* writing you will do. Stars from the literary/informational chapter help; tags from this chapter help; neither replaces the other. Outline after conflict note so your structure shows both sources. Reflect with a three-line checklist: left page one? paraphrase mine? tags real?

Research edges that are out of scope (on purpose)

- Live controversy as the topic bank.
- Medical, legal, or lending advice as the product of a try-it.
- Secret scraping of employer private drives into public tools.
- A methods course, statistics deep dive, or systematic review.
- Fake certificates of research literacy.

⁸⁸Graham et al., *Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively* (NCEE 2017-4002): Recommendation 2 integrate writing and reading — **moderate**; grades **6–12** labelled. Portable to self-study; not an adult kitchen RCT.

- Detector-grading your unaided paraphrase as a honesty score.

Critical Thinking for Adults owns heavier questions about testimony and what to believe. This English chapter owns source use in reading/writing craft: open, paraphrase, attribute. One pointer; then return to the locked question.

Expanding the warm-up into a ten-minute desk variant

When a commute is too jagged for two sources, use a desk variant: print two short paragraphs already saved. No network theater. Question on top. Paraphrase both. Conflict line. You still practiced leave-and-compare even if both scraps came from a folder you prepared on Sunday. Preparation is allowed; fabrication is not.

Common workplace isomorphic prompts (labelled composites)

Use these on YOUR practice sheet — structure travels; proprietary threads do not:

- “Should our team try a written agenda before meetings?” (two public how-tos)
- “What do two public explainers say limits the value of standing desks?”
- “How do two library or city pages describe weekend-hour tradeoffs?”
- “What mechanism does a science feature claim for X, and what does a second feature limit?”

Rewrite names. Invent numbers only as placeholders clearly labelled practice — never as fake citations.

How conflict notes make you braver, not weaker

Adults often avoid second sources because conflict feels like failure. Flip it: conflict is the product. A sticky that says “A says cap is enough; B says cap without escalation fails” is more useful than a smooth paragraph that hides the fight. Your draft can still make a recommendation — with limits stated. Limits are literacy, not timidity.

Paraphrase gym — five reps (desk, 20 minutes)

Take five sentences from public sources (mix A and B or five from one article if you are drilling mechanics). For each: cover, speak, write, uncover, circle overlaps

of three+ words, rewrite, meaning-check. Score honesty, not elegance. Five clean paraphrases beat one pretty paragraph that still wears the author's bones.

The “third source later” rule

If your conflict note ends with “I cannot decide without mechanism data,” you have two honest options: limit your claim now, or schedule a third open later. What you may not do is invent the mechanism study and cite it. A dated sticky that says “Need third source: mechanism” is adult research behavior.

Audience swap on a research crumb (optional bridge)

Rewrite your tagged paragraph once for a colleague and once for a friend. Keep the same sources. Notice which details you explain. Attribution stays. This bridges workplace audience skill without turning the chapter into email class again.

If your job uses an enterprise knowledge base

Internal pages count as sources *when you open them* and when policy allows. They still need paraphrase integrity. They do not get pasted into public consumer tools. If you practice the skill with public isomorphic prompts, the structure transfers when you later work inside the allowed enterprise system. Open *your* acceptable-use page when unsure.

Encouragement without flattery

You do not need to sound like a journal. You need to leave page one, say the meaning in your own syntax, and refuse fake citations. That is rare enough to be valuable. Rust here is ordinary because modern tools make fluent emptiness easy. Your sticky card is how you push back — calmly, repeatedly, on the commute and at the desk.

If it isn't clicking

Diagnostic 1 — You cannot leave the first page

What it often means. Satisficing under time pressure; trust of fluent authority; fear that a second source will complicate the answer you wanted.

Next move. Rule for one week: no draft spine until a second tab/print exists. Set a two-minute timer on page one, then force leave. Conflict is allowed. Complexity is not failure.

Diagnostic 2 — Your paraphrase copies syntax

What it often means. Eyes still on the source while writing; synonym-swap habit from school; fear of “getting it wrong” in your own words.

Next move. Close the source. Speak aloud. Write from speech. Reopen only to check meaning. Circle three-word overlaps; rewrite. Parallel try on a new sentence.

Diagnostic 3 — You invent or trust fluent citations

What it often means. Tool fluency feels like library work; time panic; status anxiety about looking “researched.”

Next move. Open the named source or delete the cite. Reminder: Walters and Wilder found high fabrication rates in model-generated citation sets in their study — about **55%** and **18%** for two model generations. Adult-side rule: works cited only for pages opened. Run Try-it F once.

Extra fork — Quote-mine hides missing thought

Next move. Limit quotes to one short span per page of your draft this week. Everything else paraphrased and tagged. If you cannot paraphrase, you do not yet understand — reread, then try again.

When to slow down, go ahead, or ask a human

Slow down when the question is still a cloud, when every source is a sales page, or when anxiety makes you paste tool text. Narrow the question. Choose two calm public sources. Two paraphrases. Stop.

Go ahead when you can leave page one by habit, paraphrase with meaning intact, and show a conflict/gap note without shame.

Ask a human (librarian, tutor, colleague, class) when you need help finding a second non-vendor source, when attribution rules for a credit path confuse you, or when you suspect your draft still mirrors one page. Librarians are underrated research-edge partners. Correct yourself without humiliation theater.

Source-card template you can copy by hand

Question:

Source A title/URL:

Date accessed:

One-sentence paraphrase (source closed while writing):

Meaning check (reopen): hold / drift → fix:

Source B title/URL:

Date accessed:

One-sentence paraphrase:

Meaning check:

Agree:

Conflict:

Gap:

What changes in my claim:

Fill the card before drafting. The card is the research edge in miniature.

When optional credit asks for more

If you later sit a composition exam or take a class, you may need fuller source essays. The habits here still load-bear: opened sources, paraphrase skill, honest tags. Add length and style rules when the institution asks. Do not reverse the order — style first, sources never opened — just to feel college-shaped.

Talk-through script you can use at the desk (two minutes)

Say this aloud with two tabs open:

“My question is . **Source A says, in my words,** . Source B says, in my words, . **They agree on** . They conflict on . **The gap is** . So my claim can only be ____ unless I open a third source later.”

If you cannot fill a blank, that blank is today’s practice target. Do not fill it with a tool sentence during the attempt.

Diagnosis table (keep it kind)

Symptom	Likely wrong twin	Next move
Beautiful footnotes, thin understanding	Citation theater	Close notes; teach-back paraphrase
One vendor page only	Satisficing	Force second non-vendor page
Synonym-swap sentences	Copied syntax	Source-closed rewrite
Smooth certainty	Hidden conflict	Write conflict box first
Fluent DOI / title from a chat	Possible fabrication	Open or delete (Walters reminder)
Twenty tabs, zero notes	Avoidance scrolling	Two paraphrases only; stop

A longer incorrect example (informational + workplace)

Illustration (labelled composite): Riley must send a Friday recommendation about weekend customer-chat coverage. Riley reads the company FAQ (page one), asks a public chatbot for “studies on 24/7 chat ROI,” pastes two citations and a polished paragraph into the draft, and softens the ask into paragraph four.

What went wrong across strips: research edge failed (unchecked cites; no second real open); paraphrase integrity failed; workplace writing failed (buried ask).

Repair sequence: (1) Lead with the ask in a parallel practice sheet that strips proprietary numbers. (2) Open two public explainers on chat coverage tradeoffs — staffing cost vs response speed — not “studies” the model invented. (3) Conflict

note. (4) Tagged support sentences. (5) Delete unopened cites. (6) Ask the locked research question, then the workplace question from earlier in the book: who is this for, what must they do next, what’s my one clear ask?

Cross-chapter repairs are normal. Skills travel together in real life; you still name which strip failed.

Why “two sources” is enough for this book’s edge

Two is a floor for the leave-this-page habit, not a ceiling. A third source is welcome when conflict remains load-bearing. Ten sources without paraphrases are not harder practice — they are a different avoidance. Done-enough for this chapter can be met with two carefully opened pages and an honest gap note.

Connecting to volume + close reading

Sometimes Source A needs a three-pass close-read before you paraphrase. That is allowed. Spend the desk sit’s first fifteen minutes starring lines on A, then open B. Research edges do not cancel close reading; they add conversation between pages.

Connecting to rhetoric

Your conflict note often *is* the birthplace of a better warrant. “A’s visit counts support weekend hours only if B’s staffing limit is faced” is a warrant-shaped sentence. Steal that energy into the draft crumb.

Honest limits (say once, then teach)

There is no adult commute RCT in the opened sources that proves this exact two-source sticky.⁸⁹ Writing Next inquiry and secondary reading ↔ writing integration are portable ancestors with labelled school origins.^{90 91} TEAL-style honesty for

⁸⁹No opened adult commute RCT proves this exact two-source sticky. The light edge is pedagogical design grounded in labelled school ancestors.

⁹⁰Graham & Perin, *Writing Next* (2007): inquiry activities average effect size about **0.32** (grades 4–12 companion meta). Ancestor of open-the-source before drafting. Useful study, not a promise that every adult will see the same result.

⁹¹Graham et al., *Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively* (NCEE 2017-4002): Recommendation 2 integrate writing and reading — **moderate**; grades **6–12** labelled. Portable to self-study; not an adult kitchen RCT.

adult education still applies: thin adult RCT base — extrapolate moves; leave invented trials out of the story.⁹² Walters is adult-side for citation fabrication risk.⁹³ This is a useful study grain, not a promise that every workplace will reward the same note.

Printer-friendly micro card

Front: locked question.

Back: Leave? A paraphrase? B paraphrase? Conflict/gap? Tags real?

Keep it in your bag. When a confident page tempts you, flash the card before you draft.

Tools, including AI

Point back to the refresh-hour AI box.⁹⁴ Short version for this chapter:

After you try, a tool may: suggest search-query stems; provide a blank source-card template; ask whether your paraphrase drifted; help you list gaps as questions; remind you to open a named citation.

A tool may not: invent research; write your annotated bibliography as yours; become the only draft of your research crumb; paste proprietary employer data into a public chat to “find sources”; finish the open-the-source move for you during the attempt.

Dictionaries, library search, OpenStax-style handbooks, and Purdue OWL-style citation overviews are helpers when they support a habit you will use — after you have something real to attribute. Label vendor productivity tools as vendor. Fluency is not opening.

⁹²TEAL Center Fact Sheet No. 1 (2010): adult-education writing research base thin; extrapolate from adolescent metas — honesty card, not invented adult RCTs.

⁹³William H. Walters and Esther Isabelle Wilder, “Fabrication and Errors in the Bibliographic Citations Generated by ChatGPT,” *Scientific Reports* 13 (2023): 55% of GPT-3.5 citations and 18% of GPT-4 citations were fabricated in that study; many real citations still carried substantive errors. Adult-side rule: open the source or delete the cite. Access date: 6 September 2026.

⁹⁴Bastani et al., *PNAS* (2025): HS math field experiment; unguarded chatbot crutch. **OFF-AGE for literacy — not an adult literacy RCT.** Refresh-hour AI box still holds (reader holds account; unaided first; write-my-essay / write-my-email-as-only-draft ban; no fabricated bibliography as diligence).

Remember the mechanism caution from the refresh hour, labelled **OFF-AGE for literacy**: a high-school math field experiment showed an unguarded chatbot can make practice look better and leave learners worse when the window closes — that is school math, not an adult literacy RCT. The lunch-break translation still fits: the model may prepare prompts; it may not do your research open during the attempt.

What “done enough” looks like

You are done enough with this light edge — for now — when you can:

- State a focused question in one sentence.
- Leave the first page and open a second source before drafting the spine.
- Paraphrase without copying syntax, then check meaning against the page.
- Write a conflict or gap note that changes what you are willing to claim.
- Use consistent light attribution only for sources you opened.
- Delete fluent citations you cannot open.
- Produce a short tagged draft crumb a colleague could follow.
- Refuse thesis-length theater and chatbot bibliographies as proof of skill.

Placement is by skill, not diploma year. Optional credit paths may demand a specific citation style — learn that style when the institution requires it. This chapter’s done-enough is integrity of opening and paraphrasing, not a fake research certificate.

Life of the habit (here, not a tenth chapter). Next Tuesday: one leave-this-page micro on a new ordinary question. Space two-source crumbs across weeks rather than one Sunday “research binge.” Keep dated conflict notes in your file. Revisit a prior question with a fresh second source when the topic returns at work. Stop when tags are honest. A stranger-readable tagged note beats an unread thesis outline.

Sample done-enough cold check (20 minutes)

New ordinary question you have not used. No mentor card. Open two public sources. Fill a source card by hand. Write a half-page tagged crumb. Delete anything you did not open. Read the locked question and answer yes/no with evidence from your own page. If yes holds, schedule maintenance micros. If no, repeat Try-it B three times this week before another deep sit.

Maintenance vs rebuild weeks

Maintenance: two leave-this-page micros; one paraphrase drill.

Rebuild: full weekend crumb after a month away, or after a mistake with an unopened cite at work (practice sheet afterward — do not paste proprietary text into public tools to “fix it”).

Life-of-the-habit tips stay here and in keeping track — not a tenth teaching chapter.

When opening and paraphrasing hold, you are ready to revise for meaning with one target — grammar and style in service of the claim, not commas as costume. That is the next chapter.

Closing picture

Two print scraps on a table. Two tags. One sticky: conflict = _____. A half-written note that leads with a limited claim instead of a fake certainty. That still life is the chapter’s illustration in objects: not a diploma, not a chatbot scroll, not a binder of unopened PDFs. When you can build that still life on an ordinary Tuesday, the research edge is yours — light, honest, and done enough to use.

Chapter object in one line: focused question; leave this page; two sources; paraphrase without copying syntax; conflict note; light attribution — integrity over theater.

Keep the source card. Open the second tab. Delete what you did not open. That is enough integrity for an adult Tuesday — and enough practice to build on next week. Ask the locked question once more before you send.

Chapter 7 — Grammar, style, and revision in service of meaning

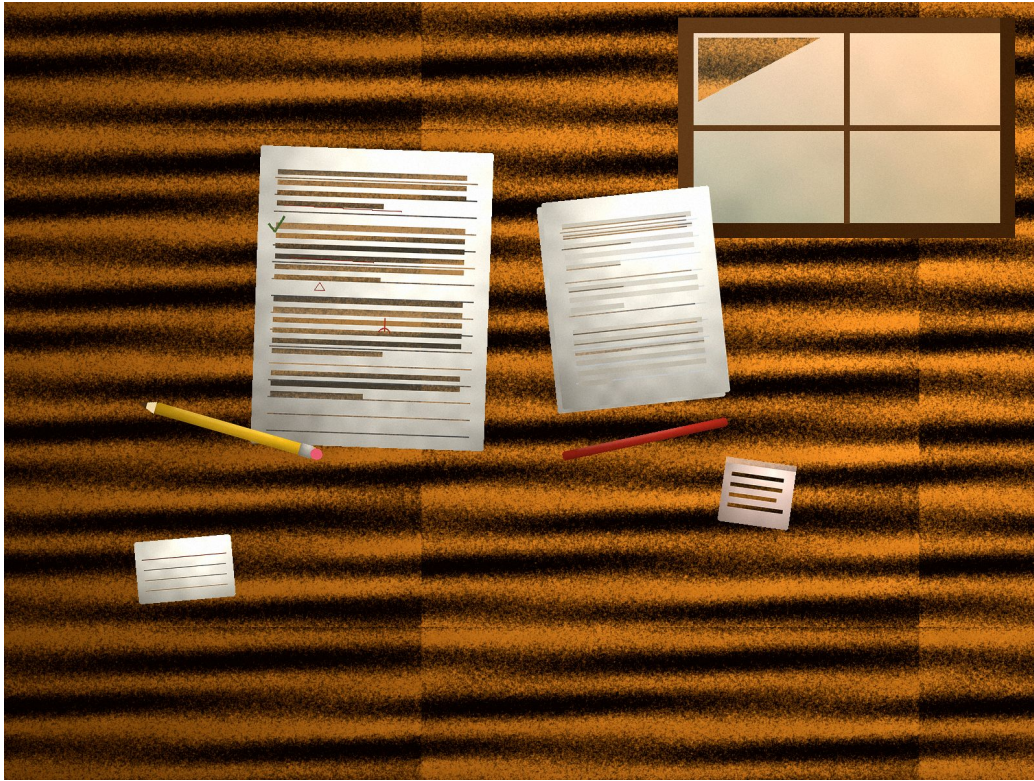


Figure 9: A still-life: before/after revision strip; one-target sticky; commas last. No people. No logos. No readable UI.

Why this matters

A draft that looks finished can still fail. The ask is buried. The warrant never appears. A modifier attaches to the wrong noun and changes who did what. Commas are tidy while the reader still cannot parse the claim on one read. Many adults were trained to treat “revision” as proofreading — neatness as virtue — or to treat grammar as a workbook of parts of speech detached from any page they actually need to send.

This chapter puts revision back in order: **one target first**, meaning before polish, grammar and style in service of what the sentence must do. Sentence combining is welcome as craft on *your* sentences.⁹⁵ Traditional grammar-as-programme focus has been associated with negative effects on writing quality in a major Writing Next synthesis — so this book refuses worksheet grammar as the writing identity.⁹⁶ Specific product goals help (that same research family reports a sizable positive effect for clear goals).⁹⁷ Model–Practice–Reflect writing already included evaluate/revise/edit; here we slow that step down until you can see it.⁹⁸

The locked question is the test:

What is my one revision target — and did meaning change, or did I only tidy commas?

If you cannot name the target, you are polishing fog. If only commas moved, you may have cleaned the window while the room stayed dark.

You need this strip for workplace emails, short recommendations, study paragraphs, and the research crumbs you just learned to tag. You need it because generative “fix to professional” tools can erase your claim while smoothing your tone — productivity for people who already know the genre, risk for people

⁹⁵Sentence combining as craft on *your* sentences (Writing Next positive companion) — not a parts-of-speech workbook programme.

⁹⁶Graham & Perin, *Writing Next* (2007): traditional grammar instruction showed a **negative** average effect on writing quality in that synthesis; strategy instruction and sentence combining were positive companions. Grades 4–12 labelled. Useful study, not a promise that every adult will see the same result. Access date: 6 September 2026.

⁹⁷Graham & Perin, *Writing Next* (2007): specific product goals average effect size about **0.70**. Name one revision target per pass.

⁹⁸Graham et al., *Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively* (NCEE 2017-4002): Recommendation 1 Model–Practice–Reflect — **strong**; Recommendation 3 formative assessment — **minimal** (ancestor of sample-that-changes-the-next-draft, not a national battery). Grades **6–12** labelled. TEAL FS1: adult RCT base thin — extrapolate honestly.

brushing up. Attempt first. Revision questions after. Rewrite-as-only-draft banned during the attempt.

Life-of-the-habit tips belong at the end of this chapter and in keeping track — not in a tenth teaching chapter. You are near the end of the teaching arc. Revision is how the earlier strips stay alive on Tuesday. Without it, morphology stickies never reach the email; warrants stay in your head; starred lines never survive into the half-page; opened sources lose their tags when paragraphs move. Revision is the shipping department of adult literacy — small, concrete, and easy to skip when you are tired.

Understand it yourself

Everyday picture

You wrote: “After reviewing the schedule with the team the change was approved delaying Friday’s inventory.” You add a comma. It looks better. It still does not say who approved what, or whether inventory moves. Meaning did not change — confusion stayed. One-target revision might be **sentence sense / who-did-what**: “After we reviewed the schedule with the team, Maya approved the change. Friday’s inventory moves to Monday.” Now a stranger can parse it on one read. Commas can come last.

Second picture: your email’s third paragraph finally states the ask. You spend ten minutes changing “utilize” to “use” and fixing a semicolon. The ask is still buried. Wrong target order. Target one: **lead with the ask**. Then style.

Precise picture

Revision in this book is a taught cycle:

1. **Name one target** for this pass (examples below).
2. **Change the draft** so a reader can see the difference (before/after sticky or highlight).
3. **Check meaning** — did the claim, ask, warrant, or who-did-what become clearer?
4. **Only then** copy-edit: commas, spelling, typography.
5. **Reflect** one line: target = ____; meaning changed = yes/no.

Good first targets (pick one per pass):

- Warrant visible (“because ____ on the page / from source A”).
- Evidence weave (claim next to the support, not three paragraphs away).
- Audience (colleague vs client vs friend — what must change).
- Ask placement (sentence one for many workplace notes).
- Sentence sense (who did what; break a runaway sentence; fix a modifier).
- Plain-language swaps (utilize→use; prior to→before) without erasing meaning.
- Source tags honesty (research crumb).
- Sentence combining (join related short choppy sentences *or* split a jammed one — craft, not worksheet).

Copy-edit last targets: commas, apostrophes, italics, subject-verb agreement once meaning is stable, spelling.

Style is tone and clarity for a reader — not perfume.⁹⁹ Grammar here means usable conventions that protect meaning. Neither is a humiliation sport. Red-ink theater is not formative assessment. A short sample that changes the next draft is.

Wrong answers you should be able to hear

1. **“I revised — look at all the commas.”** Tidying is not automatically revising for meaning.
2. **“Grammar workbook first, then I’ll write.”** Order flipped. Write; revise with grammar in service of meaning.
3. **“Fix to professional” as the only draft.** Skip of attempt. Banned during brush-up practice.
4. **“If it sounds fancy, it’s better.”** Fancy can hide the ask. Plain can be precise.
5. **“I need to fix everything in one pass.”** One target. Multiple passes beat chaos.
6. **“A detector score will tell me if it’s good.”** Detectors fail on human writing often enough to refuse them as honesty meters — do not detector-grade your unaided draft.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁹Digital.gov plain-language principles (audience, active voice, organize): public-communication guidance — plain is respect, not “dumbing down.”

¹⁰⁰Weixin Liang and colleagues, “GPT Detectors Are Biased against Non-Native English Writers,” *Patterns* 4, no. 7 (2023): average false-positive rate on human TOEFL essays **61.22%** in that

7. “My teacher circled every error, so that must be how feedback works.”

Quantity of red ink is not quality of next-draft change.¹⁰¹

Five-minute warm-up before the try

This warm-up is deliberately small. It exists to prove that revision can start without a red pen autobiography or a two-hour shame spiral. Three sentences are enough to reveal whether you are changing meaning or only tidying.

Take three sentences you already wrote (email scrap, notebook). Name one target at the top: “who-did-what” or “ask first” or “plain language.” Rewrite all three for that target only. Write before/after for one sentence. Ask: did meaning change? Stop. No full comma hunt yet.

How to try it this week

Session shape across bands

Warm-up retrieval (2 minutes). Name last draft’s weakness in one word: buried ask; missing warrant; runaway sentence; polish-first habit.

Short model (3–6 minutes). Study a before/after strip with the target labelled. Say what changed in meaning — not “it sounds nicer.”

Your attempt. One target; before/after visible; meaning check; copy-edit last if time.

One good self-question. Locked opening. Wait before the tool rewrite.

Mixed practice. Alternate a sentence-sense day with an ask-placement or warrant day once you can tell targets apart.

Exit sticky. “Target = ____ / meaning changed = yes-no / example: ____.”

study. Do not detector-grade your unaided draft as an honesty meter.

¹⁰¹Formative feedback that changes the next draft beats red-ink quantity. Graham Rec 3 **minimal** evidence tier is not a dismissal — it is the panel’s label for limited support in that guide.

Exact wording you can say to yourself

What is my one revision target — and did meaning change, or did I only tidy commas?

Then wait. Look at your before/after — not at a tool's full rewrite.

Talk-to-yourself box

Opening question (locked): What is my one revision target — and did meaning change, or did I only tidy commas?

Follow-ups:

1. Did I jump to polish too early?
2. Which sentence can a stranger not parse on one read — what does the page show vs what I meant?
3. Would a mentor structure help (ask first; claim–evidence–warrant; tag then claim)?
4. Is there another fair way to say this for this audience?
5. Where could “fix to professional” erase my claim — and may I change my mind about a smooth sentence that lost the point?

How to wait alone. Name the target aloud. Cover the chatbot. Wait a slow three. Attempt the rewrite by hand. If stuck, point at the unclear sentence and ask only “who did what?” Rescue at one second is still rescue. Endless synonym shopping is not a pass.

What a stuck silence usually means. Target vague (“make it better”); wait-time zero; perfectionism wanting one pass to fix all; fear of looking unprofessional in plain language; tool temptation; anxiety — shorten to three sentences, one target, stop.

First try-it this week

Pick one revision target and rewrite three sentences so meaning changes. Show before/after for at least one.

How to fade help

Day 1: mentor before/after in view. Day 2: target name only. Day 3: you choose the target from a short menu after reading your draft once. Tools may ask revision *questions* after your draft — not replace the draft.

When to stop looking up

Stop when the named target produced a visible meaning change. Do not spiral into a style manual rabbit hole during the pass. Look up one convention after meaning is stable if needed.

Context bands inside this week

Commute / lunch (~15–20 min). Three-sentence rewrite; one target; before/after photo or typed sticky. Plain-language swap list of five words you overuse.

Desk or shift (~25–40 min). One-target pass on a short email or paragraph you drafted earlier (isomorphic practice sheet if proprietary). Sentence-combining on five pairs. Meaning check. Light copy-edit last.

Weekend deep sit (~45–75 min when needed). Before/after revision of a multi-paragraph crumb (workplace, analytical, or research-tagged). Target named at top. Tone pass for audience as a *second* pass if needed. Copy-edit checklist last. Done-enough. Schedule next week’s three micro cues — spacing as design.

Practice that actually builds it

Named try-its

Try-it A — One-target three-sentence rewrite (commute / lunch)

- **Time:** 12–15 minutes.
- **Materials:** Three sentences from your recent writing (stripped of proprietary detail if needed); sticky “target = ____.”
- **Safety:** No public humiliation; no pasting live employer threads into public tools.
- **The move:** Name target. Rewrite all three. Mark meaning change yes/no. Read locked question.

Try-it B — Plain-language swap list (commute / lunch)

- **Time:** 10–15 minutes.
- **Materials:** A paragraph you wrote; list of five swaps (utilize/use; assist/help; prior to/before; in order to/to; facilitate/help or lead).
- **Safety:** Ordinary.
- **The move:** Apply swaps only where meaning holds. If a precise term is required (field vocabulary), keep it and clarify once. Fancy-for-fancy's-sake is the enemy, not expertise.

Try-it C — Find the break that changes meaning (desk)

- **Time:** 20–25 minutes.
- **Materials:** A runaway sentence, a dangling modifier example from your draft, or an agreement glitch.
- **Safety:** Kindness toward yourself; no red-ink identity.
- **The move:** Diagnose: run-on, modifier, agreement, unclear pronoun. Rewrite so who-did-what is unambiguous. Before/after required. This is grammar-in-revision, not a parts-of-speech quiz.

Try-it D — Sentence-combining revise (desk)

- **Time:** 25–30 minutes.
- **Materials:** A choppy paragraph of yours *or* a jammed paragraph of yours.
- **Safety:** Ordinary.
- **The move:** Combine related short sentences *or* split overloaded ones. Aim for readable rhythm that preserves claim. Writing Next reported sentence combining around **0.50** as a writing-quality effect size family — labelled school-origin synthesis grain; useful craft, not an adult RCT promise. Reflect: did meaning get clearer?

Try-it E — Before/after meaning pass (weekend deep)

- **Time:** 45–70 minutes.
- **Materials:** A short email, recommendation, or analytical/research crumb you drafted; dated notebook.
- **Safety:** Your draft first; tool may ask questions after; no rewrite-as-only-draft; no proprietary paste to public chat.

- **The move:** Title the page “Target = ____.” Highlight before. Rewrite for target. Highlight after. Write three lines: what changed; what a stranger can now parse; what copy-edit remains. Second pass only if time: audience tone. Third: copy-edit checklist.

Try-it F — Ask-first surgical pass (on the go or desk)

- **Time:** 15 minutes.
- **Materials:** An email where the ask is buried.
- **Safety:** Practice sheet if needed.
- **The move:** Move the ask to sentence one (or subject line + sentence one). Delete throat-clearing. Meaning change should be obvious: reader knows the next action immediately.

Try-it G — Warrant transplant (desk)

- **Time:** 20 minutes.
- **Materials:** A paragraph with claim + evidence but no link.
- **Safety:** Ordinary.
- **The move:** Insert one warrant sentence. If you cannot, your evidence may not support the claim — revise claim or evidence, not commas.

Try-it H — Tone pass for audience (weekend or desk)

- **Time:** 20–30 minutes.
- **Materials:** Same note, two audiences labelled.
- **Safety:** No identity fights as content.
- **The move:** Rewrite once for a busy manager and once for a peer. Keep the claim. Change explanation density and formality. Name what changed. Copy-edit last.

Incorrect example to diagnose

Illustration (labelled composite):

Avery’s draft: “Per my previous discussion utilizing the aforementioned metrics it would be appreciated if the report could be finalized sometime soon regarding inventory.” Avery runs a generative polish. The tool returns a silky paragraph

that never states who must finalize what by when — and quietly drops Avery’s inventory concern. Avery sends it because it “sounds professional.”

Diagnosis. Polish-first / rewrite-as-only-draft; buried ask; plain meaning erased; tool skipped Avery’s attempt at a clear ask.

Repair. Target one: ask first — “Please finalize the inventory report by Thursday 3 p.m.” Target two: plain language. Target three: one evidence sentence if needed. Copy-edit last. Tool may only ask: “Is the deadline visible? Is the owner named?” Avery answers by revising — the tool does not author the only draft.

Practice notes that keep the strip honest

Mentor paragraphs, emails, and tagged research crumbs *are* the practice. They do not replace the structure: one target, meaning change, copy-edit last. Grammar workbooks as the programme are refused. Humiliation is refused. “Fix to professional” as skip is refused. Specific product goals (“reader can find the ask in sentence one”) beat vague “make it better.”

Worked before/after strips (illustrations)

Target: who-did-what

Before: “After talking with operations the shipment was delayed notifying the client poorly.”

After: “After I talked with operations, I delayed the shipment. I notified the client late.”

Meaning change: actors appear; two actions separate.

Target: ask first

Before: “Hope you’re well. We’ve been thinking about inventory and various constraints. If you get a chance it would be great to finalize the report.”

After: “Please finalize the inventory report by Thursday 3 p.m. I can meet Wednesday to clear blockers.”

Meaning change: next action and time are visible immediately.

Target: warrant

Before: “Weekend hours work. Door counts rose.”

After: “Weekend hours work for our branch because Saturday door counts rose while weekday counts held steady — the gain is not only a shift of the same visits.”

Meaning change: link stated; limit considered.

Target: plain language

Before: “We will utilize additional personnel in order to facilitate onboarding prior to launch.”

After: “We will add two trainers to help onboarding before launch.”

Meaning change: same intent, faster parse; numbers made concrete.

Target: sentence combining

Before: “The feature lists steps. The feature hides costs. Readers miss the trade-off.”

After: “The feature lists steps but hides costs, so readers miss the tradeoff.”

Meaning change: causal link visible in one readable sentence.

Mini-week map

Mon micro: Try-it A on three sentences from Sunday’s draft.

Tue micro: Try-it B plain-language list.

Wed desk: Try-it C + D (break + combine).

Thu retrieval: Recreate Wednesday’s after sentence from memory; check against page.

Weekend deep: Try-it E on a full short note; copy-edit last.

Next Tue: Ask-first surgical pass on a new scrap.

Product goals you can steal (specific > vague)

- Reader finds the ask in sentence one.
- Reader can say who did what after one read.
- Warrant sentence starts with because / so / given that.
- Every statistic tagged to an opened source.
- No sentence longer than two breath units without a clear subject.

Write the goal at the top. Goals in the Writing Next family were linked to stronger writing-quality outcomes than vague encouragement — school-origin synthesis grain; still a practical adult move.

Grammar-in-revision menu (use on your draft only)

1. Unclear pronoun → name the noun.

2. Modifier misplaced → put description next to what it describes.
3. Run-on → split or subordinate on purpose.
4. Subject-verb clash → match after you find the true subject.
5. Parallel lists → make list items the same kind of thing.
6. Passive where actor matters → put actor in subject slot.
7. Passive where actor is unknown or irrelevant → leave it if clarity holds.

This menu is not a workbook chapter to memorize in isolation. It is a set of wrenches for sentences that failed a stranger-parse test.

What transfers from earlier chapters

Morphology: if a multisyllabic word stalls readers, repair or swap. Complex text: paragraph job naming helps you cut throat-clearing. Rhetoric: warrant target is revision's best friend. Workplace writing: ask-first is a revision target as much as a drafting habit. Literary/informational: star lines in mentor texts to see how pros place turns — then revise your own analysis for evidence weave. Research edges: attribution honesty is a revision target; delete unopened cites before you polish commas.

Wrong twin gallery (diagnose fast)

- **Comma theater:** twenty punctuation tweaks, buried ask remains.
- **Thesaurus fog:** longer words, same confusion.
- **Tool gloss:** silky tone, missing deadline.
- **Red-ink freeze:** so many marks you cannot choose a next move — pick one target anyway.
- **Fake certificate feeling:** neat PDF export treated as skill.

Encouragement with a standard

Busy adults revise under fluorescent lights and train noise. Short passes count. A three-sentence meaning change on the commute is real revision. You are not behind because you still use a sticky that says “target = who-did-what.” That sticky is expertise starting to form.

If it isn’t clicking

Diagnostic 1 — You only tidy commas

What it often means. School story that revision = proofreading; fear of changing “real content”; tool habits that reward smooth tone.

Next move. Ban commas for one pass. Allowed changes: move ask; add warrant; split sentence; name who-did-what. Then ask the locked question. Parallel try.

Diagnostic 2 — Everything feels like one tangled mess

What it often means. No product goal; too many targets; draft was never planned.

Next move. Write a one-sentence product goal at the top (specific goals help writing quality in the Writing Next family — about **0.70** effect size grain, school-origin synthesis). Then one target only. If needed, return to Model–Practice–Reflect planning sticky before more revision.

Diagnostic 3 — Smooth tool text erased your claim

What it often means. Rewrite-as-only-draft temptation; brush-up confused with productivity.

Next move: Restore your claim from the pre-tool draft. Use the tool only for questions. Reminder: refresh-hour bans hold. Bastani’s school-math caution stays **OFF-AGE for literacy** — still a useful crutch warning, not an adult literacy RCT.¹⁰² Liang’s high false-positive rates on detectors: do not detector-grade yourself as a substitute for revision judgment.¹⁰³

¹⁰²Bastani et al., *PNAS* (2025): HS math field experiment; unguarded chatbot crutch. **OFF-AGE for literacy — not an adult literacy RCT.** Rewrite-as-only-draft banned during the attempt.

¹⁰³Weixin Liang and colleagues, “GPT Detectors Are Biased against Non-Native English Writ-

Extra fork — Grammar anxiety freezes the session

Next move. Shorten. Three sentences. Target: who-did-what only. Early win. Come back tomorrow. No countdown timer as default rigor. Seek a human tutor if anxiety consistently blocks any attempt — this book is not therapy, but it will not shame you for needing a person.

When to slow down, go ahead, or ask a human

Slow down when you cannot name a target, when every pass multiplies changes, or when shame spikes. One target. Visible before/after. Stop.

Go ahead when you can name a target, show meaning change, and leave copy-edit for last on a cold draft.

Ask a human for a second reader on whether the ask is clear, for convention questions after meaning is stable, or for local workplace genre norms. Colleague feedback that changes the next draft beats a pile of unexplained circles.

A longer desk script (35 minutes)

Minutes 0–3: Retrieve. Read the locked question. Name yesterday’s wrong twin if any.

Minutes 3–8: Mentor before/after. Say the meaning change in one sentence.

Minutes 8–12: Choose *your* target from the menu; write it at the top of the page. Write a specific product goal.

Minutes 12–28: Revise the draft for that target only. Mark before/after with two colors or labels. If you drift into commas, stop and return to the target.

Minutes 28–32: Meaning check aloud: “A stranger must be able to ____.”

Minutes 32–35: Exit sticky; optional one-convention lookup; schedule tomorrow’s micro. Tools, if used at all, only in the last minutes as questions — window closed for an isomorphic retest sentence if you want Dunlosky-adjacent retrieval grain (technique rating, not adult RCT).

ers,” *Patterns* 4, no. 7 (2023): average false-positive rate on human TOEFL essays **61.22%** in that study. Do not detector-grade your unaided draft as an honesty meter.

Copy-edit-last checklist (use only after meaning pass)

- Spelling of names and numbers.
- Commas that protect who-did-what (not commas as decoration).
- Apostrophes on contractions vs possessives you meant.
- Subject-verb agreement on the true subject.
- Parallelism in lists the reader will skim.
- Links and tags still accurate after sentences moved.
- Subject line still matches the ask (workplace).

If you start this checklist before the meaning pass, you are early — return to target.

Style without perfume

Style here means readable order, honest tone for the audience, and words that carry the load. It does not mean imitating a brand voice guide you do not own. It does not mean stacking adverbs. Read a mentor paragraph from a clear public how-to and name two moves (short subject; early verb; one concrete noun). Steal moves, not identity.

Humor, if you use it, stays dry and kind — never sarcasm at a reader who must act. Workplace notes usually need less humor than you think; analytical notes need precision more than sparkle.

Revision and AI — a tight dialogue example (after try only)

You: “My draft is below. Do not rewrite it. Ask me five yes/no checks: ask visible? owner named? deadline visible? warrant present? any sentence a stranger can’t parse?”

Tool: asks checks.

You: revise yourself.

You may not: “Rewrite this to professional and I’ll send it” during brush-up practice.

Productivity contexts where you already own the genre are a different story — one contrast sentence from adult productivity research is enough if you need it: speed gains for skilled writers are not a literacy-learning trial. Brush-up still attempts first.

Model–Practice–Reflect as the parent shape

Graham Rec 1 (**strong**, grades 6–12 labelled) includes strategies for planning, drafting, and evaluating/revising/editing. This chapter is the evaluate/revise lens made visible. TEAL-style honesty still applies for adult education: thin adult RCT base — extrapolate honestly. Your weekend deep sit can run full MPR: mentor → your multi-paragraph practice → reflect with one revision target named for the next hour's pass.

Sentence combining — how to practice without a workbook personality

Take four short sentences you wrote:

“The counts rose. The staff stayed late. Costs rose. The board asked for a limit.”

Combine once to show tradeoff: “Counts rose when staff stayed late, but costs rose too — so the board asked for a limit.”

Split if you over-combine into sludge. The craft is clarity, not maximal joinery. Effect-size ancestry around **0.50** in Writing Next is encouragement for the craft, not a guarantee for your Tuesday email.

Audience tone — three dials

1. **Knowledge dial:** how much background you explain.
2. **Formality dial:** contractions, greetings, hedge words.
3. **Urgency dial:** deadline language vs soft preference.

Change one dial per pass when learning. Changing all three at once feels like “style” but often muddies the diagnostic.

If you write in a second language or dialect at home

You may bring full linguistic range to drafts. Revision for a workplace audience is audience fit, not shame about your home language. The target is still meaning for *this* reader. Seek human help that respects that distinction. This book will not police accent or identity — it will ask whether the ask is clear.

Safety reminders special to revision tools

- Strip proprietary content before any public tool sees a practice sentence.
- Do not paste a colleague’s email into a detector.
- Do not treat generative gloss as your learning evidence.
- Do not send a tool’s only draft under your name while claiming brush-up practice.

Diagnosis table

Symptom	Likely issue	Next move
Neat, still confusing	Polish-first	Ban commas one pass
Silky, claim gone	Tool rewrite as only draft	Restore pre-tool claim
Endless synonyms	No product goal	Write goal; three sentences
Freeze at grammar words	Anxiety / workbook trauma	Who-did-what only
Everything marked	No prioritization	One target menu
“I fixed it” weekly, same buried ask	Wrong target	Ask-first surgical pass

Connecting done-enough to the whole book

If morphology, reading, rhetoric, workplace writing, literary/informational defense, and open-the-source are upstream, revision is how they stay shippable. A warrant you can say aloud still needs to appear in the sentence a manager reads.

A second source you opened still needs a tag after you move paragraphs. Stars in a notebook still need to survive into an analytical half-page after you cut plot summary. Revision is not a separate personality; it is the last honest look.

Printer-friendly one-target sticky

Draft date:

One target:

Product goal (reader can ___):

Before (one sentence):

After:

Meaning changed? Y / N

Copy-edit left for later:

Fill one sticky per pass. Three stickies in a week beat one unmarked “revised” file.

Live debate this chapter settles quietly

Is generative Grammarly-style writing the revision programme? Labelled vendor productivity can help skilled writers go faster; it does not cancel attempt-first during brush-up, and rewrite-as-only-draft stays banned in practice sessions. Is red-ink humiliation formative assessment? No. Graham’s formative grain, even at minimal evidence level for the secondary recommendation, points toward samples that change the next draft — not toward shame as pedagogy.

Optional deeper sit: revise a research crumb for two targets in order

Pass 1 — attribution honesty and conflict visibility.

Pass 2 — sentence sense / stranger parse.

Pass 3 — copy-edit.

Never reverse to commas first. If time dies after pass 1, you still did the adult job.

Optional deeper sit: revise a literary half-page defense

Target: evidence weave — every claim noun has a star or a precise location. Cut summary sentences that do not earn a star. Meaning change: analysis denser, plot

thinner.

What “stranger can parse on one read” means in practice

Hand your after-version to a real person when you can, or read it aloud once without performing. If you must backfill context mid-sentence while reading, the sentence still hides meaning. Fix that before commas. Colleague checks are gold; they are not a public quiz that humiliates anyone.

Spacing and mixing for revision skill

Dunlosky-rated techniques favor retrieval and distributed practice as high-utility study methods in general — not as an adult English RCT. Translation: revisit Tuesday’s ask-first pass on Thursday with a new scrap; do not only binge revision on Sunday night. Mix warrant targets with who-did-what targets after you can tell them apart. Murray’s spacing meta-analysis is maths-labelled hedge only if you see it elsewhere in the series — do not launder it into a claim that this chapter was trialled on adult email.

A final incorrect twin (research + polish)

Illustration: Sam opens two good sources, writes a solid conflict note, then spends the deep sit choosing fonts and fixing commas while leaving two unopened chatbot citations in the reference list “to look full.”

Diagnosis: Copy-edit and costume replaced attribution honesty.

Repair: Target = tags real. Delete fakes. Then polish. Walters reminder still holds: fabrication happened at high rates in that study’s model citation sets — open or delete.

Closing still life

A before/after strip. A sticky: one target = ask first. A comma checklist folded underneath, waiting its turn. That picture is the chapter. Meaning moved. Polish can follow. You are ready to keep track without needing a fake diploma to prove the hour happened.

Tools, including AI

Short pointer back to the refresh hour.

After you have a draft, a tool may: ask revision questions; flag possible unclear sentences for *you* to judge; offer a labelled SCRIPT of checks (ask visible? warrant stated? who-did-what clear?); help build a personal plain-language list; run spelling checks.

A tool may not: write the email or essay as the only draft; “fix to professional” as a skip of your attempt; erase your claim under gloss; detector-grade your unaided write-up; paste proprietary employer text into a public consumer tool.

Labelled grammar-check tools can help after the try when they check; they replace thinking when they finish the attempt. Purdue OWL-style pages and OpenStax-style handbooks are useful when you look up one convention in service of a sentence you already chose to fix. Point back rather than expanding this into a policy paper.

What “done enough” looks like

You are done enough with this strip — for now — when you can:

- Name one revision target before a pass.
- Show a before/after where meaning clearly changed (ask, warrant, who-did-what, audience fit, evidence weave).
- Keep copy-edit last without pretending commas were the whole job.
- Use sentence combining or splitting as craft on your own sentences.
- Apply plain-language swaps without erasing necessary precision.
- Refuse rewrite-as-only-draft during brush-up practice.
- Let a stranger parse your short note on one read.
- Separate productivity polishing (when you already own the genre) from learning revision (when you are rebuilding the skill).

Placement is by skill, not diploma year. Optional composition credit may add timed essays and style sheets — still meaning first. No fake “English for Adults” certificate. A dated before/after strip in your notebook is the work product.

Life of the habit (here — and later in keeping track — not a tenth chapter).

Revision is a maintenance skill. Without a rhythm, polish-first creeps back, especially when tools make gloss cheap.

- **Next Tuesday micro:** three-sentence one-target rewrite on whatever you sent Monday.
- **Space across days:** one sentence-sense micro, one ask-first micro, one warrant micro — not a Sunday massacre of every comma you own.
- **Mix last week:** bring back a tagged research crumb and revise only attribution clarity or warrant visibility.
- **Stop rule:** when meaning change is visible and a stranger could act, stop the pass. Perfectionism is not rigor.
- **Maintenance week:** three micros, no deep sit.
- **Rebuild week:** after a month away or after a gloss-erased-claim incident, run Try-it E once, then return to micros.
- **File:** keep dated before/after strips beside your skill-strip log. That file is how the habit survives travel, shift changes, and busy seasons.
- **Kindness with standards:** correct a wrong reason (including “I revised because I tidied”) without crushing the attempt. You are allowed to change your mind about a smooth sentence that lost the point.

Cold check before you leave the teaching arc

Take an old email or paragraph you wrote before this book. Name one target. Produce a before/after on a fresh page. Read both aloud. If a stranger-friend would know what to do after the after-version — and could not after the before — you revised for meaning. File it. That is enough ceremony.

Bridge to keeping track and resources

Next, you will keep a skill-strip log, place yourself by what you can do, and choose resources by fit (library, OWL, OpenStax, local classes, optional exams). Revision samples belong in that file. Resources will not rank tools as moral virtue. Grammarly-as-identity stays refused; labelled help after a try stays allowed. You already know the difference.

When revision for meaning holds, the teaching chapters’ skills can stay in motion: morphology when words stall, volume and close reading with stars, warrants that link, emails that ask clearly, defensible readings, sources you opened. Keeping

track will help you place yourself and decide whether optional credit is a bridge you want — never a fake diploma, never English for Adults I.¹⁰⁴

You do not need to become a novelist. You do need to hear a claim without a warrant, a buried ask, a paraphrase that copied syntax, a finished-looking rewrite that skipped your draft, and a comma pass that pretended to be thinking. You can do this on the commute, at the desk, and in a weekend deep sit. ### Five-minute commute variants when you have almost no time

1. **Ask transplant:** move the ask to sentence one; stop.
2. **Who-did-what:** fix one runaway sentence; stop.
3. **Plain three:** swap three puffed words; stop.
4. **Warrant seed:** add because ____ ; stop.
5. **Delete throat-clearing:** cut the first two empty lines; stop.

Each is a complete micro if the sticky names the target and meaning change. Do not despise smallness. Smallness is how habits survive shift work.

If you only remember one thing from this chapter

Name the target. Change the meaning. Commas last. Ask yourself whether a stranger can act or understand after one read. Everything else is commentary.

Chapter object in one line

One revision target; visible meaning change; grammar and style in service of meaning — not a worksheet programme, not polish-first theater.

Keep the before/after sticky. Meaning first. Commas last.

When Tuesday comes, open the sticky, name one target, and change one meaning before you touch a single comma. That is the habit. File the strip. Return next

¹⁰⁴Never English for Adults I, English Refresher I, or a chatbot fluency certificate. Optional CLEP College Composition (\$97 plus fees, opened 6 September 2026) is a bridge when credit is the goal — not the revision spine.

week. That is done enough for now. One target. Visible change. Then rest. Begin again Tuesday morning.

Name the target before you touch the commas.

Chapter 8

Keeping track

There is often **no** “English for Adults I” as a job title, and this book will not invent one. A stranger — a manager, a later hiring panel, a college registrar, a colleague who missed the huddle — already reads work they understand: a dated note, a revised email, a skill named in ordinary language, an optional official score report. Never English Refresher I. Never Certified English for Adults. Never a fake certificate of fluency.

This chapter is the file you keep. The teaching chapters rebuilt meaning and fluency. Here you place yourself by skill, log what you practiced, leave a dated line someone else could almost follow, and — only if credit is your goal — decide honestly whether an optional exam is worth the fee.



Figure 10: Dated notebook with skill-strip checklist — no diploma seal

What you are making

You are making a **skill-strip log**, a **self-placement habit**, and a **dated practice note** (often with one revised workplace email, procedure note, or short writing sample). Stacked over months, that file is the honest adult work product. You are not making a national diploma. You are not making a chatbot badge. You are not making Certified English for Adults.

Titles a stranger already understands:

- the **skill** (academic vocabulary and morphology; complex-text reading; claim–evidence–warrant; workplace writing; literary or informational reading; research edges; revision for meaning)

- the **job artifact** (revised email; procedure note; short recommendation; status update with owners and dates)
- a **college course name** only if the work maps (College Composition; Analyzing and Interpreting Literature; workplace writing)
- an **optional CLEP** exam name if you sat it and the receiving college cares

Combining objects is allowed. Combining does not mint a franken-title. A Khan streak plus an OpenStax chapter plus a dated revised email is still the skill strip — not “Online English for Adults I.”

Here is an illustration, labelled as such, not a reported workplace:

6 September 2026. Skill strip: workplace writing + one-target revision. Object: composite status email (greeked names). Ask buried in paragraph three; subject line was “Quick update.” Rewrote subject to name the decision needed by Friday; led with the ask; cut throat-clearing opener; one revision target = clarity of ask (not commas). What would change my mind: if the recipient already owns the next step from a prior thread. Files: practice sheet 2026-09-06.

That is readable by a colleague who was not in the room. It is not a badge. Place by skill, not by brand.

The skill-strip log

Keep a simple table or checklist you will actually reopen. Columns that earn their keep:

Date	Skill strip	Object (email / procedure / feature / scene / article...)	What I tried	Exit sticky / cautious sentence	Next cue
------	-------------	--	-----------------	---------------------------------------	----------

Skill strips this book uses (match the teaching chapters):

1. Academic vocabulary and morphology (code repair by skill)
2. Reading complex text (volume + close reading)
3. Rhetoric: claim, evidence, warrant
4. Workplace and civic writing (email, report, short argument)
5. Literary and informational reading
6. Research edges and open-the-source citation (only if this strip is in your plan)
7. Grammar, style, and revision in service of meaning

You do not need every strip. A warehouse lead may live in workplace writing, procedure reading, and one-target revision. A returning student may add research edges and composition craft. Placement is by life demand and skill, not by a podcast that said “everyone needs literature survey.”

Rebuild week vs maintenance week. A rebuild week opens a rusty or new strip: more mentor-paragraph autopsies, a deeper sit, blocked practice before mixing. A maintenance week revisits last month’s email ask or claim–warrant check with three micros and one mixed interloper — no heroics. Adults who only rebuild and never maintain will re-rust. Adults who only maintain and never rebuild will not open the next gate. Name both in the log (“R” or “M” in the Next cue column is enough).

Life of the habit, here: the note is how the habit leaves a trace. Same kind of object next Tuesday, new date. “I used to bury the ask; now I lead with who must act and by when” is growth. It is not a diploma ceremony.

Self-placement by skill (not diploma year)

A college graduate can still send an unreadable email. A GED-holder can write a clean incident note. **No diploma was required** to open this book, and no diploma

year places the next module.¹⁰⁵

Use short probes — mirrors, not oracles. Placement quizzes on platforms (Khan diagnostics, OWL self-checks, OpenStax chapter previews, commercial adaptive tools, college guided self-placement, CLEP practice, GED Ready for high-school-equivalency seekers) place by skill; they are not IES-certified RCTs of this book.¹⁰⁶

Probe ladder (self-check, not a published test):

- **Sentence and convention.** Subject–verb agreement in long subjects; sentence boundaries (fragments, run-ons, comma splices); pronoun reference; modifiers that attach to the right word. If a stranger cannot parse your sentence on one read, stay here.
- **Paragraph and document coherence.** One purpose per message; topic sentences that match the body; transitions that earn their keep; cutting the throat-clearing opener.
- **Workplace genre edges.** Status update; request; apology/repair; procedure step; customer reply; meeting follow-up with owners and dates.
- **Reading for evidence.** Mark claims vs reasons; notice missing base facts; paraphrase without inventing; ask what would change the takeaway.
- **Rhetoric edges.** Name the claim; name the warrant that links this evidence; hear a claim without a warrant.
- **College composition edges (optional).** Thesis control; integrating and citing sources; synthesizing two sources — CLEP College Composition second-essay shape. Only if credit or study needs it.
- **Literature analysis edges (optional).** Tone, imagery, structure, rhetorical

¹⁰⁵Place by skill strip, not “too old,” not diploma year, not birthday. Adult flip of readiness-depends-on-prior-opportunity findings familiar from schooling debates. Access date for sources in these notes: 6 September 2026.

¹⁰⁶Platform placement tools (Khan diagnostics, OWL self-checks, OpenStax previews, commercial adaptive systems, college guided self-placement, CLEP practice, GED Ready for HSE seekers) are mirrors. IES / What Works Clearinghouse does not certify them as RCTs of this book.

effect without requiring a named canon — CLEP Analyzing and Interpreting Literature shape. Not the default workplace path.

Rule of thumb: if you cannot yet lead with a clear ask, you are not ready to skip to synthesizing two sources for credit. If multisyllabic workplace words still stall you, you are still in the morphology gate, whatever your diploma. Patch the hole in front of the next real task. You may be strong at procedure notes and weak at claim–warrant craft in the same week — that is ordinary, not a character flaw.

A nurse, a warehouse lead, a junior analyst, and a retail manager can share an email-clarity gap and diverge everywhere else. Place by skill strip, not job title and not years since last English class.

Dated practice note / revised sample

Keep what a stranger can use.

A dated note. Object named. Skill strip named. What you tried. The date is 6 September 2026 or whatever day it actually was — not “Q3 writing.”

One revised sample. A workplace email with the ask in front; a procedure note a colleague could follow; a short recommendation with claim–evidence–warrant; a before/after strip that names the one revision target (meaning first, not polish first).

Sources named when research edges appear. If “it” needs the meeting, rewrite. If a paraphrase still copies the source’s syntax, revise again.

What not to keep as the proof: a random PDF “certificate of completion” from a site that is not transcript credit; a LinkedIn badge; a percentile; a franken-title; a chatbot fluency diploma. Those can be receipts. They are not the work.¹⁰⁷ Prefer: dated notebook; community-college noncredit completion letter on letterhead if you earned one; official CLEP score report if you chose that path; actual college transcript; high-school equivalency credential only if that was your goal.

¹⁰⁷Fake certificates and invented course titles (English for Adults I / English Refresher I / Certified English for Adults) are refused as stranger-readable proof. Prefer dated notes, letterhead completions, official score reports, transcripts.

How much is enough? A line after a micro-session is enough for a first week. A stack of dated revised samples over a quarter is enough for a later reader. A binder labelled “English for Adults, Level 2” is not more lawful than the line. Frequency the evidence actually supports at the desk grain for *this* book is unknown — there is no adult commute RCT at this exact grain. The honest pitch is often enough that the question is familiar, and dated enough that next Tuesday can find last Tuesday.

If writing itself is the wall, keep the parts anyway: skill, object, ask or claim, check, date. A human colleague who already writes clear notes can help with the writing shape. You still own the literacy question.

What employers and colleges already read

Most workplaces do not have a line item called “English refresher.” They have emails, procedures, handoffs, customer notes, and short recommendations. Put the dated check inside those objects. An auditor’s workpaper energy — what did I look at, what did I conclude, what would change my mind — is the grain, applied to claims on the page. A nurse’s chart note, an analyst’s handoff, a lead’s decision log: same idea. The title stays the job you hold.

Colleges read transcripts, placement results, and sometimes CLEP. They do not need a homemade course code. If you completed a local noncredit refresher, keep the letter on letterhead. If you sat CLEP and credit posted, keep the official report. If you only used this book and free practice, say that honestly when someone asks how you prepared — the log is still the proof of *practice*, not a substitute transcript.

PIAAC and other large adult-skills surveys describe a national pond. They are not your pretest cut score and not a grade for your notebook.¹⁰⁸

High-school equivalency (GED Reasoning Through Language Arts; HiSET Language Arts) sits as an **edge** for adults who need that credential — not this book’s default spine. Overlap with the skill strips is real. The ending is still a dated sample and a real credential if HSE was the goal, not a homemade title.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸National Center for Education Statistics / OECD, PIAAC 2023 U.S. literacy context (mean **258**; Level 1 or below **28%**; Level 3+ **44%**). Survey pond, not this book’s placement cut score. Do not mash NCES homeschool prevalence (**3.4%** / ~1.765M) as adult literacy.

¹⁰⁹GED Reasoning Through Language Arts and HiSET Language Arts are high-school-

Optional CLEP — honesty, not spine

CLEP is **optional** credit-by-exam. It is a bridge when a specific institution will grant credit. It is not required to refresh English for work, civic memos, or ordinary reading life. Sitting CLEP $\neq$ finishing this book.

Opened College Board pages (6 September 2026): College Composition and Analyzing and Interpreting Literature list at **\$97.00** each, plus a test-center administration fee or a remote-proctor fee (Quick Reference Guide for Educators 2026–27 lists remote proctoring **\$30**).¹¹⁰

College Composition (rough shape). About **125 minutes** total: **50** multiple-choice in **55 minutes**; **2** essays in **70 minutes** (first essay about 30 minutes from reading, observation, or experience; second about 40 minutes synthesizing and citing two provided sources). Essays are scored by college English faculty; combined essay score is weighted equally with multiple-choice; scaled score 20–80; scores available about **one to two weeks** after the test date. ACE recommendation: credit-granting score **50 / 6** semester hours — institutions may differ.

Analyzing and Interpreting Literature (rough shape). About **80** multiple-choice questions in about **98 minutes**. Passages supplied; no familiarity with specific works required. Genre mix roughly poetry, prose, and drama as listed on the exam page. ACE recommendation: credit-granting score **50 / 3** semester hours — institutions may differ.

Credit-granting scores are **institution-set**. ACE notes on exam pages are notes — colleges may differ. Sitting without checking transfer rules wastes money — say that plainly.

DANTES funding for eligible service members is a neighboring path — confirm locally. AP English Language / Literature sittings are high-school logistics with

equivalency edges for adults who need that credential — not the default spine of this book. Fees and state availability are local; omit invented national price totals.

¹¹⁰College Board CLEP exam pages for College Composition and Analyzing and Interpreting Literature, opened 6 September 2026: fee **\$97.00** each plus administration or remote-proctor fee. Quick Reference Guide for Educators 2026–27: remote proctoring **\$30**. Confirm live fee pages at publication before you budget. Institutions set credit.

coordinator rules; they are not the adult default year. SAT Subject Tests were discontinued (last international June 2021) — one sentence, then stop.¹¹¹

If your goal is credit, prep from the skill strips you still miss, confirm the receiving college, then sit. If your goal is a cleaner email next Tuesday, skip the fee and keep the log.

If a later reader asks

A manager who sees “English for Adults I, A” has been given a slogan. A manager who sees “Aug–Sep 2026 practice log: workplace email ask-first; five revised procedure notes; two claim–warrant stickies on product claims” has been given a month they can use.

A registrar who sees an official CLEP score report and a catalog match has a credit question. A registrar who sees a chatbot PDF certificate has a paperweight.

Export inside the job’s real title or a real college course name only when the work maps. Adding “Certified English Practitioner” to a résumé does not make the year more lawful. It may confuse the next stranger.

You try this week

Open one page in a notebook or a plain file. Date it. Name the skill strip you touched. Paste or rewrite one revised sample (email with ask in front, procedure note, or short claim–evidence–warrant). Mark rebuild or maintenance. Write one next cue for Tuesday.

If you have three dated lines already, glance back: which strip reappears? That strip may need a maintenance week. Which strip never appears though life keeps asking for it? That strip may need a rebuild week.

¹¹¹College Board: SAT Subject Tests discontinued (U.S. January 2021; last international June 2021). AP English remains a high-school exam object — not the adult refresher default.

That is the record. It is not a diploma. You can stop when the next life demand is met — and you can return without starting from shame.

Chapter 9

Resources

This chapter names programs a working adult actually meets. It does not rank them. It does not sell them. Fit is cost shape, time shape, social shape, credential shape, depth, and tone — whether a commute, a desk, or a weekend sit can use the object this week.

Paper, a library card, and a free text before any paid platform. Library **\$0** practice before a subscription. Confirm a current price on the live page before you buy; this chapter does not invent list prices it did not open.

Whenever secondary-school writing or adolescent-literacy products are named below, keep the **school** label with them. Graham's *Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively* practice guide (grades 6–12) is useful as **shape** — Model–Practice–Reflect, integrate writing and reading, use writing to inform feedback — not as a kitchen RCT proving this book.¹¹² No opened WWC report crowns Purdue OWL, OpenStax *Writing Guide with Handbook*, or Khan Academy for adult self-study.

¹¹²Institute of Education Sciences / What Works Clearinghouse, *Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively* practice guide (November 2016; revised December 2019): grades **6–12** recommendations — Model–Practice–Reflect (**strong**); integrate writing and reading (**moderate**); use assessments of student writing to inform instruction (**minimal**). **School-labelled**. Adolescent literacy intervention reports (READ 180, Achieve3000, Accelerated Reader, and cousins) stay school-labelled. TEAL Fact Sheet No. 1: adult-education writing RCT base is thin; extrapolate carefully. IES/NCEE 2021-007 Adult Education Strategies: limited support for identifying specific literacy strategies with clear positive effects in the snapshot's key-findings voice. No opened WWC adult self-study crowning report for OWL, OpenStax Writing Guide, or Khan. Access date for sources in these notes: 6 September 2026.



Figure 11: Three fit cards: library \$0, local class, optional credit — no logos

How to read a program

Six questions do the work.

Cost shape. Nothing tonight? Free digital text? Local adult-ed fee? Tuition? Exam fee (\$97 plus proctor for CLEP)? Subscription?

Time shape. Asynchronous twenty minutes? Scheduled evening class? One sitting after weeks of prep?

Social shape. Alone? Instructor? Cohort?

Credential shape. None? Local completion letter? Transcript credit? Optional CLEP score report? High-school equivalency only if that is the goal?

Depth shape. Email clarity and procedure notes? College composition bridge? Literature analysis?

Tone shape. Patient remediation? College-credit pace? Contest or anthology culture?

What a stranger can still read is the skill you rebuilt or the college course you actually took. Combining two honest objects does not mint English for Adults I. Never a fake certificate as the year's proof.

Library \$0 first

Borrow print. Quiet desk. Sometimes a tutor hour or adult-education flyer on the bulletin board. Your own inbox rewritten onto *your* practice sheet (structure travels; proprietary names stay off the public tool).¹¹³

Fit. Tonight, one adult, low load, low cost, offline-friendly when you print.

Title. The skill strip or the job artifact. Never English for Adults I.

This is not “failing the specialist.” It is the object this book already taught. Wait. One question. One look. One dated line. No opened national “average library English minutes” study exists in this stream — leave that number unclaimed. Quality of tutoring and hours vary by branch. Ask the desk what they offer this month.

Purdue OWL — \$0 conventions backbone

Fit card. Cost: \$0. Mode: just-in-time web pages from Purdue University Writing Lab (general writing, research and citation including MLA / APA / Chicago, professional and workplace genres, grammar, ESL support). Credential: none. Strength: look up the convention in front of you; revise a draft against a checklist. Weakness: not a paced course; easy to tab-hop without writing. Evidence: no

¹¹³Library hour: \$0 materials borrow + quiet desk; tutoring and hours vary. No national minutes RCT opened.

WWC adult self-study report opened for OWL.¹¹⁴

Adult use. After you have drafted, open the page that matches tonight’s stuck spot — subject–verb in long subjects, citation shape, professional email genre. Pair with a dated revision log so the open tab is not the only memory.

Not. A diploma. An employer ID. CLEP. A licence to skip the unaided attempt. “WWC-approved OWL” — no such opened report.

OpenStax *Writing Guide with Handbook* — \$0 text backbone

Fit card. Cost: \$0 digital (low-cost print editions exist per OpenStax higher-ed pattern). Mode: peer-reviewed open textbook for first-year college composition — genre-organized; writing process; editing and documentation handbook. Credential: none unless a college adopts the book inside a credit course. Strength: stable scope that stays put when you want a book, not a feed. Weakness: alone, less adaptive; requires self-pacing. Live detail pages can be script-heavy — open the subject page you need.¹¹⁵

Adult use. Read a section. Write a real workplace or college genre piece away from the screen’s rewrite button. Keep a dated error/revision log. Pair with OWL for just-in-time conventions and Khan for interactive drills when that helps.

Not. A diploma by itself. “WWC-approved OpenStax” — no such opened report.

¹¹⁴Purdue OWL (Purdue University Writing Lab); OpenStax *Writing Guide with Handbook* (Rice University nonprofit OER); Khan Academy ELA/grammar practice — catalogue consensus for free practice and free digital text. None is a diploma. None is WWC-crowned for adult kitchen self-study in opened reports.

¹¹⁵Purdue OWL (Purdue University Writing Lab); OpenStax *Writing Guide with Handbook* (Rice University nonprofit OER); Khan Academy ELA/grammar practice — catalogue consensus for free practice and free digital text. None is a diploma. None is WWC-crowned for adult kitchen self-study in opened reports.

Khan Academy — \$0 practice backbone

Fit card. Cost: \$0. Mode: asynchronous videos and practice sets for grammar and related ELA skills (live pages often script-heavy — catalogue consensus). Credential: none. Strength: low-friction drills and gap-finding between shifts. Weakness: the loop can feel school-coded; authentic workplace genres may be thin. Evidence: no WWC adult self-study report opened for this stream.¹¹⁶ Placement quizzes on the platform are mirrors, not oracles.

Adult use. Diagnose a convention gap. Drill it. Move on. Pair with a dated log so the energy bar is not the only memory.

Not. A diploma. An employer ID. CLEP. A licence to skip unaided attempts on your own email.

Pairing shape

OWL for just-in-time conventions; OpenStax for longer process and genre chapters; Khan for drills; library for quiet and print. None replaces a community-college transcript if you need credit. None replaces the talk-to-yourself wait before the key or the chatbot rewrite.

Community college — noncredit, developmental, co-requisite

Noncredit refresher / adult education — fit card. Cost: local tuition or adult-ed fee (varies; not invented nationally here). Mode: scheduled or flexible. Credential: sometimes a local completion letter on letterhead. Strength: human instructor, peers, a door into credit pathways. Weakness: calendar, transport, and the stigma

¹¹⁶Purdue OWL (Purdue University Writing Lab); OpenStax *Writing Guide with Handbook* (Rice University nonprofit OER); Khan Academy ELA/grammar practice — catalogue consensus for free practice and free digital text. None is a diploma. None is WWC-crowned for adult kitchen self-study in opened reports.

some adults feel walking into a “remedial” room — stigma is social weather, not a measure of your skill.

Developmental / integrated reading-writing / co-requisite credit path — fit card. Cost: tuition plus time. Credential: transcript progress when successful. Strength: for co-requisite models like the Accelerated Learning Program (ALP; Community College of Baltimore County origin), CCRC studies report substantially higher college-English success versus traditional sequential developmental writing in the studied cohorts — **community-college pathways research**, not a kitchen RCT, not a national mandate, and not proof that every 2026 local “ALP-like” label matches the studied model.¹¹⁷ Weakness: bureaucracy; co-requisite load is real work. Ask the college what it runs this term.

OCTAE College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education are a program framework for adult basic education providers — not a consumer syllabus you must finish as a PDF.¹¹⁸

Tie evidence only when the college actually runs a co-requisite or pathways model. Do not assume every noncredit evening class is ALP. Do not treat CCRC cohort outcomes as proof that your commute app works. Local 2026 implementation rates stay local — ask the college.

ABE evidence under WWC standards is limited; literacy instruction was among the more studied categories in an IES adult-education strategies snapshot, yet research has yet to identify specific literacy strategies with clear positive effects in that snapshot’s key-findings voice.¹¹⁹ This book leans on portable method con-

¹¹⁷Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), Community College of Baltimore County origin; CCRC working papers report substantially higher college-English success versus sequential developmental writing in studied CCBC cohorts — **community-college research**, not kitchen RCT, not national mandate. Confirm local 2026 co-requisite practice. Do not invent a WWC improvement-index number for ALP if the opened page does not carry one.

¹¹⁸U.S. Department of Education / OCTAE, College and Career Readiness Standards for Adult Education — ABE program framework, not a consumer syllabus mandate for kitchen self-study.

¹¹⁹Institute of Education Sciences / What Works Clearinghouse, *Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively* practice guide (November 2016; revised December 2019): grades 6–12 recommendations — Model–Practice–Reflect (**strong**); integrate writing and reading (**moderate**); use assessments of student writing to inform instruction (**minimal**). **School-labelled.** Adolescent literacy intervention reports (READ 180, Achieve3000, Accelerated Reader, and cousins) stay school-labelled. TEAL Fact Sheet No. 1: adult-education writing RCT base is thin; extrapolate carefully. IES/NCEE 2021-007 Adult Education Strategies: limited support for identifying specific literacy strategies with clear positive effects in the snapshot’s key-findings voice. No opened WWC adult self-study crowning report for OWL, OpenStax Writing Guide, or Khan. Access date for sources

tinuity (labelled school/secondary origin where that is the source) plus ordinary adult practice — it does not invent a WWC-strong adult English practice guide that does not exist.

CLEP — optional credit bridge

Fit card. Cost: **\$97** per exam plus test-center or remote-proctor fee (College Board pages opened 6 September 2026; Quick Reference 2026–27 lists remote proctoring **\$30**).¹²⁰ Mode: one sitting after prep. Credential: possible transcript credit if the receiving college accepts the score and maps it. Strength: fast bridge for adults who already know the material — College Composition includes scored essays; Analyzing and Interpreting Literature is passage-based multiple choice without a named-canon requirement. Weakness: no credit if the institution says no; sitting anxiety; College Composition scores arrive about one to two weeks later; prep time still required.

College Composition and Analyzing and Interpreting Literature are the English exams adults most often mean. Check transfer **before** you pay. DANTES funding for eligible service members — confirm locally. Sitting CLEP $\neq$ finishing this book. CLEP $\neq$ a fake certificate.

AP English Language / Literature remain high-school exam objects with coordinator logistics — not the adult default year. Mention once if you already teach or sit near a school; then return to adult fit. SAT Subject Tests were discontinued (last international June 2021) — one sentence if asked.

in these notes: 6 September 2026.

¹²⁰College Board CLEP College Composition and Analyzing and Interpreting Literature pages, opened 6 September 2026: **\$97.00** each plus administration or remote-proctor fee. Quick Reference Guide for Educators 2026–27: remote proctoring **\$30**. Institution sets credit. Confirm live fees before budgeting.

GED / HiSET Language Arts — edges, not default

Some adults need a **high-school equivalency** credential. For them, GED Reasoning Through Language Arts and HiSET Language Arts–Reading / Writing are real, state-mediated doors. Overlap with this book’s skills is real (evidence-based reading, clear writing, conventions). The book may help an HSE seeker prepare. The book is **not** a GED or HiSET franchise, and HSE is **not** the default refresher spine.¹²¹

Fees, passing scores, and which testing program a state accepts are **local**. National price totals are easy to get wrong — open your state adult-education or testing page instead. TASC is discontinued in historical state policies — do not send a 2026 adult to TASC.

Print spines and paid platforms (labelled, not crowned)

Homeschool / high-school writing brands familiar from parent-and-teen catalogs (names vary). Age packaging is often parent-and-teen. Adult fit is incidental: use a clear writing spine if it helps, after checking age labels. Do not default over library / OWL / OpenStax without a reason (offline preference, pedagogy you already trust). *English for Emerging Adults* owns those cards for ages 15–18 — one pointer, then stop. Prices omitted unless you open a specific product page.¹²²

Commercial adaptive collegeware and “business writing” platforms. Fit when a class or employer requires them. Strength: placement plus practice inside an institutional course, or sits on real workbooks. Weakness: can train click patterns or button fluency — check whether you can still lead with an ask and name a warrant without the software. Feature cards and list prices belong on the live product page; they are not opened as RCTs of this book. Skip quoting a 2026 subscription total

¹²¹GED Reasoning Through Language Arts and HiSET Language Arts — high-school-equivalency edges. Fees and state availability local; omit unverified national prices. TASC discontinued — do not send 2026 adults there.

¹²²*English for Emerging Adults* covers high-school transcript, dual-enrollment, and teen writing-brand grain. One pointer for adults who also teach or guide a teen — then return to adult self-placement and adult fit. This book is not a reprint of that lesson bank.

unless you opened that page.

Employer L&D “business writing” or email modules. Fit: sits on real templates; internal completion at best. Weakness: often thin on claim–warrant craft; may teach tone slogans not meaning. Still an HR module, not a transcript.

Grammar-check and generative writing tools. Fit after a draft you already wrote — questions and named moves, not a rewrite as the only draft. Point back to the refresh-hour AI box. Marketing claims on tool pages are not adult RCTs of this book.

Secondary WWC and other school objects — one pointer

If you remember READ 180, Achieve3000, Accelerated Reader, or similar names from school-era debates: those WWC ratings are **school** intervention reports (mixed, potentially positive, or no discernible depending on product and outcome).¹²³ One pointer for writers and curious adults. Do not paste them as adult kitchen proof. Accelerated Reader points are not proof of comprehension under the adolescent reports opened in this research stream.

Graham 2016 / WWC secondary writing practice guide recommendations stay **school-labelled** (grades 6–12) even when this book borrows their shape for Model–Practice–Reflect. TEAL Fact Sheet No. 1 states the adult-education writing RCT base is thin and recommendations often extrapolate from adolescent metas — keep that hedge; this book is not an adult kitchen replication.¹²⁴

¹²³Institute of Education Sciences / What Works Clearinghouse, *Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively* practice guide (November 2016; revised December 2019): grades **6–12** recommendations — Model–Practice–Reflect (**strong**); integrate writing and reading (**moderate**); use assessments of student writing to inform instruction (**minimal**). **School-labelled**. Adolescent literacy intervention reports (READ 180, Achieve3000, Accelerated Reader, and cousins) stay school-labelled. TEAL Fact Sheet No. 1: adult-education writing RCT base is thin; extrapolate carefully. IES/NCEE 2021-007 Adult Education Strategies: limited support for identifying specific literacy strategies with clear positive effects in the snapshot’s key-findings voice. No opened WWC adult self-study crowning report for OWL, OpenStax Writing Guide, or Khan. Access date for sources in these notes: 6 September 2026.

¹²⁴Institute of Education Sciences / What Works Clearinghouse, *Teaching Secondary Students to Write Effectively* practice guide (November 2016; revised December 2019): grades **6–12** recom-

Dual enrollment and credit courses (neighbor, not reprint)

Some adults sit credit composition through dual enrollment, evening credit, or on-line college sections with placement gates. State and college rules vary. That path is a neighbor to CLEP: transcript credit when you pass the course the college actually offers. It is not a reprint of high-school dual-enrollment or athletic-eligibility machinery from *English for Emerging Adults*. One pointer to that book if you also teach or guide a teen — then return to your adult load.¹²⁵

Placement tests and guided self-placement at the college are institutional tools. Use them as mirrors. They do not license skipping sentence control or email clarity because a schedule wants you in College Composition next Monday.

What not to chase

- Fake PDF certificates and invented course titles (**English for Adults I, English Refresher I**, “Certified English for Adults”).
- “WWC-proven OWL” or “WWC-approved OpenStax” for kitchen self-study — no such opened report.
- AP English or GED/HiSET as the default adult refresher year (HSE remains an edge when that credential is the goal).
- Productized business-writing badges dressed as English credentials.

mendations — Model–Practice–Reflect (**strong**); integrate writing and reading (**moderate**); use assessments of student writing to inform instruction (**minimal**). **School-labelled**. Adolescent literacy intervention reports (READ 180, Achieve3000, Accelerated Reader, and cousins) stay school-labelled. TEAL Fact Sheet No. 1: adult-education writing RCT base is thin; extrapolate carefully. IES/NCEE 2021-007 Adult Education Strategies: limited support for identifying specific literacy strategies with clear positive effects in the snapshot’s key-findings voice. No opened WWC adult self-study crowning report for OWL, OpenStax Writing Guide, or Khan. Access date for sources in these notes: 6 September 2026.

¹²⁵*English for Emerging Adults* covers high-school transcript, dual-enrollment, and teen writing-brand grain. One pointer for adults who also teach or guide a teen — then return to adult self-placement and adult fit. This book is not a reprint of that lesson bank.

- Invented claims that most employers require CLEP or a commercial writing badge.
- Treating this book as a replacement for developmental English policy at a college — it can prepare you to walk in less afraid; it does not rewrite the catalog.
- NCAA / high-school transcript machinery reprinted from *English for Emerging Adults*.
- NCES homeschool prevalence (3.4%) mashed as adult literacy.

If you want proof, prefer the dated notebook, a letterhead completion, an official score report, a real transcript, or an HSE credential if that was the goal.

Choosing without ranking — a five-minute decision

1. What skill strip is in front of you this week?
2. Do you need **credit**, a **high-school equivalency**, or **usable fluency** for an email, procedure, feature, or library article?
3. If fluency only: start library \$0, OWL, OpenStax, or Khan.
4. If credit: open the receiving college's CLEP and placement pages *before* paying an exam fee or buying a platform.
5. If HSE is the goal: open your state testing page; treat this book as support, not the franchise.
6. If a local class fits your calendar and stigma budget, walk through that door — and keep the skill-strip log anyway.

Fit is personal. A night-shift adult and a remote analyst can both be right with different rows of the table below.

Fit table (use; do not rank)

Tonight's need	Object	Load	Note
Nothing spent	Library + dated note	Low	Not a fake certificate.
Free conventions	Purdue OWL	Low	\$0; not a diploma.
Free text backbone	OpenStax <i>Writing Guide</i>	Moderate	\$0 digital; self-pace.
Free drills	Khan Academy	Low–moderate	\$0; not CLEP.
Human instructor / local door	CC noncredit or adult ed	Moderate–high	Local fees; letter sometimes.
Transcript progress	Developmental / IRW / co-requisite (ALP-like)	High	CCRC/ALP labelled CC pathways — not commute RCT. ¹²⁶
Optional credit-by-exam	CLEP Composition / Literature	Prep + sitting	\$97 + fees; check college first. ¹²⁷
High-school equivalency	GED RLA / HiSET Language Arts	High / state-gated	Edge , not default spine. ¹²⁸
Familiar print sets	HS/homeschool writing brands	Moderate	Age-labelled; not adult default. ¹²⁹
Required by a class	Adaptive collegeware	Gated	Buttons $\neq$ meaning.

¹²⁶ Accelerated Learning Program (ALP), Community College of Baltimore County origin; CCRC working papers report substantially higher college-English success versus sequential developmental writing in studied CCBC cohorts — **community-college research**, not kitchen RCT, not national mandate. Confirm local 2026 co-requisite practice. Do not invent a WWC improvement-index number for ALP if the opened page does not carry one.

¹²⁷ College Board CLEP College Composition and Analyzing and Interpreting Literature pages, opened 6 September 2026: **\$97.00** each plus administration or remote-proctor fee. Quick Reference Guide for Educators 2026–27: remote proctoring **\$30**. Institution sets credit. Confirm live fees before budgeting.

¹²⁸ GED Reasoning Through Language Arts and HiSET Language Arts — high-school-equivalency edges. Fees and state availability local; omit unverified national prices. TASC discontinued — do not send 2026 adults there.

¹²⁹ *English for Emerging Adults* covers high-school transcript, dual-enrollment, and teen writing-brand grain. One pointer for adults who also teach or guide a teen — then return to adult self-placement and adult fit. This book is not a reprint of that lesson bank.

Tonight's need	Object	Load	Note
Employer module	L&D business writing / email	Low–moderate	Internal receipt at best.

You try this week

Name *why* tonight's object fits — usually library \$0, OWL, OpenStax, or Khan before paid. Open one free section or one drill set that matches the skill strip in front of you. Do one unaided parallel item on an email, procedure, feature, or short scene. Date the line.

If credit is on the table, open *one* receiving-college page and write the CLEP or placement rule in your notebook before you spend \$97. If credit is not on the table, do not let an exam brochure become this week's homework.

If a branded co-requisite or pathways program is named at your college, remember CCRC/ALP evidence is for **community-college developmental pathways**, not a solo commute proof — then practice the craft on *your* objects anyway. The file is still the proof. Fit first. Rank never. Start free when free will do. Return to the skill strip when a catalog page starts to feel like shopping.

A Note on Sources

Studies named in the chapters are listed in Notes, in one series at the back. That is where the full citations live, so the teaching pages can stay a teaching voice.

Some items the research behind this book did not open stay out of the teaching voice. I did not invent a coefficient, a statute, or a product feature to fill a hole. If a study is in the chapter, it is in the notes. If we could not open it, it is not used as a finding here.

Program hours, exam fees, and product descriptions in the resources chapter are taken from the companies' or agencies' own pages. Kamil / Vaughn / Graham ratings stay school-labelled when named. Bastani 2025 stays OFF-AGE for literacy. Access date 6 September 2026.