



# **Writing Skills**

## **Adding Meaning**

## **Simplify and Elaborate**

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## Adding Meaning: Simplify and Elaborate

One of my favorite writing skills exercises! Your students will actually enjoy working on their language skills with this activity! Middle school and high school students learn that extra words do not always equal extra meaning, all while improving the descriptiveness and specificity of their writing. The worksheet begins with an example sentence: *I ventured outside accompanied by my canine companion to arrive at a public designated area of shrubbery and foliage*, and then points out that all this means is I took my dog to the park. The next example is another long sentence about taking a dog to the park, but this one is packed with meaning, including descriptions of the dog, the park, the walk, and the day. For the writing exercise, students are tasked with simplifying other lengthy, comically complicated sentences down to the contained meanings, and then they roll a die to find out which elements (including adjectives, adverbs, places, times, more descriptive verbs, and more specific nouns) they must add to their simplified sentences. Included is an answer key that incorporates therapeutic notes.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Sentence Simplification and Elaboration

**Directions:** First, simplify the sentence.

Next, elaborate on the sentence: roll die and follow the chart below to add to sentence.

- 1) Adjective
- 2) Adverb
- 3) Descriptive verb
- 4) Specific noun
- 5) Time
- 6) Place

### Example

**Sentence:** I ventured outside accompanied by my canine companion to arrive at a public designated area of shrubbery and foliage.

**Simplification:** I took my dog to the park.

**Elaboration:** I strolled to the giant park at the end of my block with my faithful Golden Retriever on a snowy, winter morning.

### Sentences

- 1) The man that married my mother after my parents got divorced entered my sleeping compartment to make me transition from an R.E.M. state into consciousness in order so that I could transport myself to my learning institution.

**Simplify:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Elaborate:** (roll die once)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Elaborate:** (roll die twice more)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## Sentence Simplification and Elaboration (cont.)

- 2) The feline companion that lives with me in my domicile exited said domicile and since the time of the exit I have been unable to locate said feline.

Simplify: \_\_\_\_\_

Elaborate: (roll die twice)

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- 3) The individual who instructs my classmates and myself in the strategies of number addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division was not present at the institution of instruction yesterday because his heterosexual domestic partner was procreating.

Simplify: \_\_\_\_\_

Elaborate: (roll die twice)

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- 4) While traveling by means of underground transportation the receptacle that contains my toiletries, my currency, and my portable communication device was illegally confiscated by an unknown perpetrator.

Simplify: \_\_\_\_\_

Elaborate: (roll die 3 times)

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- 5) The guy that I am monogamously, romantically involved with accompanied me on a recreational excursion to the 50th state of the United States of America for the nationally enforced respite celebrating the resurrection of the Christian religion's savior.

Simplify: \_\_\_\_\_

Elaborate: (roll die 4 times)

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Write your own simple sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

Elaborate: (roll die twice)

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## Sentence Simplification and Elaboration – Answer Key

(Note: will need a die) **Directions:** First, simplify the sentence. Next, elaborate on the sentence: roll die and follow the chart below to add to sentence.

1) Adjective

2) Adverb

3) Descriptive verb

4) Specific noun

5) Time

6) Place

### Example

**Sentence:** I ventured outside accompanied by my canine companion to arrive at a public designated area of shrubbery and foliage.

**Simplification:** I took my dog to the park.

**Elaboration:** I strolled to the giant park at the end of my block with my faithful Golden Retriever on a snowy, winter morning.

**Note:** It is very important to point out here to your students that the original sentence and the elaborated sentence are almost exactly the same length (in fact the original is slightly longer), and yet the elaborated sentence is chock full of extra meaning: how I walked, the size of the park, the location of the park, the breed of the dog, a description of the dog's personality, the weather, the season, and the time of day!

### **Sentences**

- 1) The man that married my mother after my parents got divorced entered my sleeping compartment to make me transition from an R.E.M. state into consciousness in order so that I could transport myself to my learning institution.

**Simplify:** My stepfather woke me for school.

**Elaborate:** (roll die once)

For example, if a student rolled a one, she would need to add an adjective, and could write: My organized stepfather woke me for school.

**Elaborate:** (roll die two more times)

For example, if she then rolled a two and a five, she would need to add an adverb and a time, and could write: My organized stepfather gently woke me for school at a quarter to eight.

**Note:** Not all rolls will fit all sentences. For example, the verb “woke” is very straightforward and cannot be replaced by a more descriptive verb. In these cases, simply have the student roll again. Some rolls can be repeated. For example, a student can add more than one adjective to one sentence.

- 2) The feline companion that lives with me in my domicile exited said domicile and since the time of the exit I have been unable to locate said feline.





**Simplify:** I lost my cat.

**Elaborate:** (roll die twice)

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- 3) The individual who instructs my classmates and myself in the strategies of number addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division was not present at the institution of instruction yesterday because his heterosexual domestic partner was procreating.

**Simplify:** My math teacher missed school yesterday because his wife had a baby.

**Elaborate:** (roll die twice)

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- 4) While traveling by means of underground transportation the receptacle that contains my toiletries, my currency, and my portable communication device was illegally confiscated by an unknown perpetrator.

**Simplify:** My purse was stolen on the subway.

**Elaborate:** (roll die 4 times)

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- 5) The guy that I am monogamously, romantically involved with accompanied me on a recreational excursion to the 50th state of the United States of America for the nationally enforced respite celebrating the resurrection of the Christian religion's savior.

**Simplify:** My boyfriend and I went to Hawaii for spring break.

**Elaborate:** (roll die 4 times)

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Write your own simple sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

**Elaborate:** (roll die twice)

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