

Introducing Writing Skills



Name: _____

Introducing WRITTING SKILLS

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First published 2001 by Southgate Publishers Ltd
Southgate Publishers Ltd, The Square, Sandford, nr Crediton, Devon EX17 4LW

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.
ISBN 1-85741-120-X

Introduction

Information and skills you will acquire

Introducing Writing Skills is one of a valuable and user-friendly new series of easy-to-read booklets created specially to help you develop at work. The materials have been created from actual experience in workplace training. Experts from Workbase Training and the Campaign for Learning have pooled their knowledge and experience to involve you in learning new skills and building on those you already have. The booklet is divided into clear *sections*, containing specially devised *activities* and a *mini project*, to allow you to practise as you learn.

Introducing Writing Skills will enable you to:

- Use capital and small letters appropriately.
- Use basic punctuation, including full stop, comma, colon, semicolon, apostrophe and quotation marks.
- Write clear sentences.
- Use paragraphs to structure your writing.
- You may want to work through the booklet from start to finish or focus on an area of interest.
- Once you have completed the questionnaire on page 4 you will be able to see clearly which topics you need most help with, and which areas you can safely leave out.
- The questionnaire will also allow you to create your own learning plan, for which an example and space are provided on page 5.
- You may want to ask your supervisor or another colleague for their views on the areas you could work on, or for help with the activities in the booklet.
- As you may want to use the booklet for future reference, you may want to write the answers out in rough first and then write them in the booklet.

Getting the most out of this booklet

Questionnaire

This questionnaire is to enable you to think about which writing skills you need most help with.

Tick the boxes as appropriate.

What do you need most help with?

	1 I need a lot of help.	2 I need some help.	3 I can cope.
SECTION 1: Using capital and small letters			
SECTION 2: Using the full stop			
Using the comma			
Using the colon			
Using the semi-colon			
Using the apostrophe			
Using quotation marks			
SECTION 3: Writing clear sentences			
SECTION 4: Dividing your writing into paragraphs			

The most important areas for you to work on are those which you have marked 1 or 2.

Section I

USING CAPITAL AND SMALL LETTERS

What are capital and small letters?

Most people know the letters of the alphabet and will say them without hesitation. However, some people might have difficulty writing some letters of the alphabet, both capital and small letters.

Capital letters are sometimes referred to as **upper case letters** while small letters are referred to as **lower case letters**.

It is very easy to make a mistake when writing capital and small letters. Have you noticed how capital **P** and small **p** look similar? The main difference between the two **Ps** is their position on the line: capital **P** stays on the line while small **p** goes through the line.

It is important that you know how to write the letters of the alphabet clearly using both capital and small letters.

Here is the alphabet written in both capital and small letters:

A a	B b	C c	D d	E e	F f	G g	H h
I i	J j	K k	L l	M m	N n	O o	P p
Q q	R r	S s	T t	U u	V v	W w	X x
Y y	Z z						

When to use capital and small letters

It is usual to do most writing in small letters. You may notice that some people always write in capital letters. This is not good practice for letters and longer pieces of writing. It does not matter if you are only leaving a rough note to someone. You should avoid using a mixture of capital and small letters in a word, e.g. **wRitiNg**, except where you start a word with a capital letter (see opposite).

Some documents ask people to write in capital letters because this is often easier to read than normal handwriting.

To make sure that you use the correct type of letter when writing, you need to follow the rules opposite on when to use capital letters.

Capital letters

Start a word with a capital letter if it is:

- the beginning of a sentence
Example: The post has been late every day this week.
- the name of a person
Example: My name is **Maxine Donovan**.
- a day of the week or a month of the year
Example: The team meeting is held on the first **Monday** in **June** each year.
- the name of a place or thing, such as a company, country, street, river, newspaper, hotel, book, film, television programme.
Example: Jane works at **Tesco** in **Albion Road** on **Saturday** morning.
- the word 'I'
Example: **I** and Sanjay will be working on the computer this afternoon.
- a title
Example: **Prime Minister**, **Traffic Warden**, **Play Leader**
- a title before a name
Example: **Mr** Ali, **Mrs** Dutta, **Reverend** Green.

Activity 1

Write some sentences about yourself using capital and small letters. You should include the following information: your name, your address, where you work, your hobbies.

Information about myself

FEEDBACK: Ask a friend, relative or colleague to look at your writing and give you some feedback. An example is given in the feedback section on page 21.

Activity 2

Rewrite the sentences below, putting in the capital letters.

1. my favourite tutor is diane heffernan.
2. yesterday mrs smith and mrs kaur had a meeting in the office.
3. every friday i have to do a print-out for the warehouse.
4. we decided to have our christmas dinner at the red lion pub.
5. in january i will be working with my friend becky.
6. datrice likes to get her lunchtime sandwich at tesco, but I prefer to go to waitrose.
7. the meeting will be held at northway house on the last monday in december.
8. my son, dominic, works for british airways. he is now training to be a steward at gatwick.
9. if liverpool beat manchester united they will play newcastle at wembley.
10. last thursday i went on a course in brighton.

You will find the feedback to this activity on page 21.

Activity 3

Now make up some sentences of your own to describe your job or your family.

About my job/my family

Ask a friend, relative or colleague to look at your sentences and give you some feedback.

Key Learning Points

- Never mix capital and small letters except when a capital letter is needed at the start of a word.
- When you are writing about yourself always use capital 'I'.
- Always use a capital letter for proper names – people, places, titles, etc.

Section 2

USING BASIC PUNCTUATION

The full stop: marking the end of a sentence

The full stop is a very important punctuation mark. When you come across a full stop, you know you need to pause for a few seconds. The full stop gives you a chance to take in what you have just read. If you read a piece of writing without full stops, you will find that it is very difficult to understand.

When a full stop is used

A full stop is used at the end of a sentence.

A sentence can also end with a question mark (?) or an exclamation mark (!). Remember, when you write a new sentence you need to start with a capital letter.

Reading for understanding

Read aloud the passage below. It has no capital letters or full stops. Were you able to understand it?

my name is rita de sota i work for broomley council next week i will be attending a computer course at the open learning centre I feel quite nervous about it my friends tell me that the tutor is very friendly and helps you to feel quickly at ease

Now read the passage with capital letters and full stops included.

My name is Rita De Sota. I work for Broomley Council. Next week I will be attending a computer course at the Open Learning Centre. I feel quite nervous about it. My friends tell me that the tutor is very friendly and helps you to feel quickly at ease.

Activity 4

Read the passage below and put in the capital letters and full stops.

my name is kevin i am a single parent i have a son, david, who is 30 months old every morning david wakes me up at 6 o' clock i give david his breakfast and get him dressed I then get myself ready for work I work in the stores at Wetherfield's

we leave the house at 7.30 am and catch the bus to the childminder the childminder's house is around the corner from where I work

You will find the feedback to this activity on page 21.

The comma: helping to break up sentences

The comma is a punctuation mark that is used frequently in writing. When you come across a comma, you know you need to pause briefly. This is shorter than the pause made for a full stop.

A comma is used:

When a comma is used

- to separate items in a list or series of events
Example: Before I left for work this morning, I made the children's packed lunches, walked the dogs, had a bath and drove the children to school.
(Note: You write the word *and* before the last item in a list, rather than using a comma.)
- to enclose extra information in a sentence
Example: John and Mary, who work at Riverdale Leisure Centre, will be getting married next month.
- to break up a long sentence
Example: The machinist worked long hours to get the order out on time, which made her very tired.
- to separate two or more describing words of the same type
Example: The happy, lively worker always made her colleagues laugh.

Activity 5

You have been asked to leave the following three messages for your colleagues. Put the commas in the right places.

To: Bob **From:** Dave **Date:** 25/1/20XX **Time:** 14.00

Please collect the following items from the stores this afternoon: 10 blue biros 1 packet of paper clips 2 rulers and a stapler.

To: Abdul **From:** Dave **Date:** 25/1/20XX **Time:** 14.00

Mrs Smith the new Sales Assistant had a minor accident this afternoon. Please talk to me about it in the morning.

To: Sade **From:** Dave **Date:** 25/1/20XX **Time:** 14.00

Order number O989J for 2500 chocolate fudge cakes must be ready tonight even if the late shift has to work an extra hour to finish it.

You will find the feedback to this activity on page 21.

The colon: introducing related text

When a colon is used

A colon acts as a break between two groups of words. It is not used as much as the full stop or the comma, but it is helpful to know where to use it when you are writing.

A colon is used:

- to introduce a list

Example: This afternoon I did the following work: filed the invoices, typed a letter, tidied the stock cupboard and printed the report.

- to divide a sentence when the second part of the sentence explains further the first part

Example: The new employees felt very nervous on their first day at work: they were sitting in the Learning Centre waiting for their induction to start.

Activity 6

Your colleague Max has been asked to write a few sentences about a course he recently attended. He has asked you to put in the colons for him as he is not quite sure about where to put them.

Max – End of Course Feedback
Course: Introduction to Computers

I thought the most useful parts of the course were learning about the following the mouse, the keyboard, word-processing, saving and copying.

I did not like the technical part it went over my head and I will not be able to use it in my job.

You will find the feedback to this activity on page 22.

The semicolon: joining similar sentences

When a semicolon is used

A semicolon has certain uses in writing. Like the colon, it is not used very much in everyday writing, but it is important for you to know when to use it.

A semicolon is used:

- to join two related sentences to make them into one sentence

The sentences must be about the same subject. The semicolon is being used instead of a full stop.

Example: The woman was carrying an armful of new dresses; she lost her balance and tripped.

- to separate long items in a list

Example: Rita's supervisor said that her performance was good for the following reasons: the accuracy of her messages; her friendliness when talking to customers; her ability to solve problems; the quality of her reports.

Activity 7

Your supervisor has asked you to write down your main tasks in a typical day. You have sent her the short memo below. Put in the semicolons.

You will find the feedback to this activity on page 22.

Memorandum

To: Sandra

From: Marcus

Date: 26 January 20XX

Time: 01.27

Subject: My main daily tasks

I have found it difficult to say what my main daily tasks are. My job is very varied no day is ever the same.

After a lot of thought I would say that the following are my main tasks: writing to new customers answering customer complaints following up existing customers looking for new leads and sending out information to customers.

The apostrophe: ownership and missing letters

An apostrophe looks like a comma, but it is positioned above the writing line.

An apostrophe is used:

- to show that a letter or letters are missing
Example: 'I'll give you a ring', instead of 'I will give you a ring'.
'It's not safe to do that', instead of 'It is not safe to do that'.
- to show who or what owns something (possession)
Example: That is Dawn's pen.

If the owner is singular put an apostrophe at the end of the word and add an **s**.

Example: It is Liselle's day off.

If the owner is plural and the word already ends in an **s** put the apostrophe at the end of the word.

Example: The workers' payslips are handed out today.

If the owner is plural and the word does not end in an **s** put the apostrophe at the end of the word and add an **s**.

Example: The women's computers were turned off.

Note: You do not put an apostrophe in its when the word is used to show possession. (A useful tip is to ask yourself whether its can be replaced by it is. If it can't then there is no apostrophe.)

Example: Its safety record makes my company a good place to work.

Activity 8

You are working in a hotel kitchen and have been asked to order work clothes for all the kitchen staff. You know that you ordered the correct sizes but, when they arrive, the clothes don't seem to fit. Here is the note you leave for the Head Chef. Add the apostrophes where they are needed.

MESSAGE

To: Vincent

From: Madeleine

Date: 22 January 20XX

New Work Clothes

The new overalls arrived today but none of them seem to fit properly. Ive checked the order and I definitely asked for the right sizes. Well have to wear the old ones until we can get them changed.

Maxs apron is too long. The kitchen assistants jackets dont do up properly. Lavinias hat is too small. The chefs trousers are too short. The three cooks overalls are also too small.

Its important that we get the correct sizes quickly.

You will find the feedback to this activity on page 22.

Activity 9

Can you spot the mistakes in the following sentences? Circle those words you think are wrong.

1. The cashier's figures were wrong and they had to correct them before they went home.
2. The factory was very dark. It's windows were small and dirty.
3. The mans' hand was trapped in the machine and couldn't be released.
4. The airline is very popular. Its known to have a good safety record.
5. Mrs Jones was late for work this morning. She'll have to see the foreman when he returns from his meeting.
6. The staff canteen is very popular. It's opening hours are to be extended to eight o'clock.
7. The womens' training was delayed because the bottling line was very busy.

You will find the feedback to this activity on page 22.

Quotation marks: showing speech

When quotation marks are used

Quotation marks are also called inverted commas or speech marks. You use quotation marks when writing to show that these are the exact words that someone spoke.

When you are writing you put quotation marks at the beginning and at the end of the exact words that were spoken. Before the closing quotation mark you must use either . , ! ?

Example: "Get out," he shouted.

Here is a piece of student's writing. Notice that the quotation marks are used to show only the actual words which were said.

My job

My name is Horace. I work as a Recreation Assistant at the Leisure Centre. I help to organise special events for people. We do all sorts of events including aerobics, swimathons, short tennis and baby gym.

People often come up to me and say, "That was great. Would you organise one of those again?"

I always say the same thing to them, "I'll pass that on to my supervisor."

Activity 10

Add the missing quotation marks to this piece of writing.

Yesterday at work, I was talking to my friend Sally. She said I think that we are going to get some new office furniture. A man had been in the office measuring up. He said I think it is to see if you have room for some new desks or computers.

I asked my supervisor when I saw her and she said I don't know anything about it. My supervisor rang her manager and he said That's right we are going to get two new desks and two computers; the old ones are past their best.

You will find the feedback to this activity on page 23.

Key Learning Points

- The full stop and the comma are very important punctuation marks. Get into the habit of using them for personal letters, business letters, memos, messages, even notes you pin on the fridge or leave for the milkman. They are essential in helping to make clear what you are trying to say.
- The colon and the semicolon are not used so often in everyday writing. However, it is important that you know when they should be used.
- The apostrophe is another very important piece of punctuation. It makes it easier for your reader to understand when you are writing words such as “I’ll” or “You’re”. These words are in their shortened form and have letters missing; an apostrophe shows that a letter or letters are missing. You should also use an apostrophe to show that something belongs to someone or something, e.g. the man’s pen. (Remember you do not put an apostrophe in its when used to show possession.)
- Quotation marks must always be used when you are writing down exactly what someone said.

Section 3

WRITING CLEAR SENTENCES

How do we define a sentence?

A sentence is a set of words that makes sense and is complete.

If someone says 'I am going to work by bus today' we would understand what the person means. If a person says 'On my way to work' we would continue listening to get more information from them. This would not be a sentence because it is not complete. 'I am going to work by bus today' is a sentence because it makes sense and it is complete.

Remember that a sentence always starts with a capital letter and ends with a full stop (.), question mark (?) or exclamation mark (!).

Verb

A sentence has a verb or verbs.

Verbs are often called 'doing words'. A sentence always has a verb which tells us what something or someone is doing.

Example: The woman is writing.

If you just use verbs on their own, the words are not a complete sentence because they don't make sense.

Example: 'Writes and draws' doesn't make sense on its own.

Subject

A sentence has a subject.

For a sentence to be complete someone or something needs to be 'doing' the verb or doing word.

Example: The woman is writing.

The person or thing who is 'doing' the activity is called the subject. 'The woman' in the above sentence is therefore the subject.

You can find out what the subject is by asking yourself who is doing the activity.

Example: We are going to the canteen. In this sentence 'are going' is the verb so 'we' is the subject.

Activity 11

Read the short piece below then write down the subject and verb in each sentence. (Note that two sentences have two subjects and verbs.)

My football team

I am a member of the factory football team. We call ourselves 'The Red Devils'. I have been in the team for nine years. We don't often win. The friends and the company are the best thing about it. We play until 9 pm on summer evenings. After the game we go for a few drinks.

You get to know people better at work. I work with many of the people I play football with. I find that I get on far better with these people. There is more team spirit.

Subject	Verb
1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____
7. _____	_____
8. _____	_____
9. _____	_____
10. _____	_____
11. _____	_____
12. _____	_____
13. _____	_____

You will find the feedback to this activity on page 23.

Activity 12

Write six sentences about anything you do at work or with your work colleagues. For example, you may want to write about a typical day at work, any groups you belong to, how you get to work or any courses or events you have attended. Each sentence should have a subject and a verb, start with a capital letter, end with a full stop and make complete sense in itself.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

FEEDBACK: Ask a friend or colleague to read your sentences and give you some feedback. Remember to make notes or rewrite your sentences if necessary.

Key Learning Points

A sentence is a set of words that is complete and makes sense. Every sentence starts with a capital letter and ends with a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark.

A sentence must contain a subject and a verb. (It may also include other words but these are not essential for it to make sense.)

Section 4 DIVIDING YOUR WRITING INTO PARAGRAPHS

What is a paragraph?

A paragraph usually contains two or more sentences which cover the same topic or theme.

Sometimes, in a letter for example, a paragraph may have only one sentence.

Example: I saw your advertisement in the *Evening Standard* and would like to apply for the post of Administrator.

You begin a paragraph by starting your first sentence on a new line, usually leaving a double line of space between the previous paragraph and the new one.

Why do we use paragraphs?

Paragraphs help to arrange information on a page into sections. They make information easier to read. They give the eye and the brain a chance to rest and take in what has been read.

You start a new paragraph when there is a change in the topic or theme you are writing about.

Look at this example of a job description.

Sheila's job

I enjoy reception work most of all because I meet lots of different people. I find out what is happening in the company and I can put names to faces.

Word-processing doesn't interest me so much because there is no variety and I have to sit at a desk all the time.

You will see from the example that Sheila started a new paragraph when she wrote about word-processing. She had moved away from writing about reception work and was now writing about a different topic.

Activity 13

Read the passage below and then decide where you would start a new paragraph. Show the paragraph breaks by using //.

In 20XX, I applied for the post of Office Administrator with an organisation called Computer World. After ten years, I am still with the organisation and I have been promoted to Information Technology Training

Consultant. There have been many changes in the organisation. I have enjoyed watching Computer World develop from a small to a large organisation. It has grown from a workforce of ten to having over two hundred staff. The organisation likes to encourage people who use computers in the workplace to improve their computing skills. They also do this for their own staff. I have benefited myself from their training and development programmes.

You will find the feedback to this activity on page 23.

Key Learning Points

- Paragraphs are used to group together sentences which are about the same topic or theme.
- Paragraphs help to break up long pieces of written information into manageable sections.
- When you are writing, use a new paragraph to start a new theme or topic.

Mini Project

The aim of this activity is to help you understand fully the different pieces of punctuation we have looked at in this booklet. Find examples of the pieces of writing listed below and make photocopies of them. It may be helpful to enlarge some of them. Then, with a red pen, mark all the pieces of punctuation you recognise, write down what they are and look carefully at how they are used.

- two or three short newspaper articles
- a short magazine article
- a page from a book (try to choose a page that includes some conversation)
- a personal letter
- a business letter.

Ask a colleague or friend to take a look at what you have marked and see if they agree with you.

Action Plan

On a separate sheet of paper, make a note of any punctuation you were unsure of before you began this booklet. Perhaps you can see some of the mistakes you have been making in the past.

Now note down which points in the booklet you will need to give special attention to when you are writing in the future. This will help you to improve your writing skills.

FeedBack toActivities

FEEDBACK TO ACTIVITY 1

My name is Jenna Francis.

I live in London.

My address is 415 Bedford Road.

I work at Highgrove Residential Home for the Elderly.

My favourite television programme is *Home and Away*. I take my sons to watch football on Saturday.

FEEDBACK TO ACTIVITY 2

1. My favourite tutor is Diane Heffernan.
2. Yesterday Mrs Smith and Mrs Kaur had a meeting in the office.
3. Every Friday I have to do a print-out for the warehouse.
4. We decided to have our Christmas dinner at the Red Lion pub.
5. In January I will be working with my friend Becky.
6. Datrice likes to get her lunchtime sandwich at Tesco, but I prefer to go to Waitrose.
7. The meeting will be held at Northway House on the last Monday in December.
8. My son, Dominic, works for British Airways. He is now training to be a steward at Gatwick.
9. If Liverpool beat Manchester United they will play Newcastle at Wembley.
- 10 Last Thursday I went on a course in Brighton.

FEEDBACK TO ACTIVITY 4

My name is Kevin. I am a single parent. I have a son, David, who is 30 months old. Every morning David wakes me up at 6 o'clock. I give David his breakfast and get him dressed. I then get myself ready for work. I work in the stores at Wetherfield's.

We leave the house at 7.30 am and catch the bus to the childminder. The childminder's house is around the corner from where I work.

FEEDBACK TO ACTIVITY 5

To: Bob **From:** Dave **Date:** 25/1/2007 **Time:** 14.00

Please collect the following items from the stores this afternoon: 10 blue biros, 1 packet of paper clips, 2 rulers and a stapler.

To: Abdul **From:** Dave **Date:** 25/1/20XX **Time:** 14.00

Mrs Smith, the new Sales Assistant, had a minor accident this afternoon. Please talk to me about it in the morning.

To: Sade **From:** Dave **Date:** 25/1/20XX **Time:** 14.00

Order number O989J for 2500 chocolate fudge cakes

must be ready tonight, even if the late shift has to work an extra hour to finish it.

FEEDBACK TO ACTIVITY 6

Max – End of Course Feedback

Course: Introduction to Computers

I thought the most useful parts of the course were learning about the following: the mouse, the keyboard, word-processing, saving and copying.

I did not like the technical part: it went over my head and I will not be able to use it in my job.

FEEDBACK TO ACTIVITY 7

Memorandum

To: Sandra

From: Marcus

Date: 26 January 20XX

Time: 01.27

Subject: My main daily tasks

I have found it difficult to say what my main daily tasks are. My job is very varied; no day is ever the same.

After a lot of thought I would say that the following are my main tasks: writing to new customers; answering customer complaints; following up existing customers; looking for new leads; sending out information to customers.

FEEDBACK TO ACTIVITY 8

MESSAGE

To: Vincent

From: Madeleine

Date: 22 January 20XX

New Work Clothes

The new overalls arrived today but none of them seem to fit properly. I've checked the order and I definitely asked for the right sizes. We'll have to wear the old ones until we can get them changed.

Max's apron is too long. The kitchen assistants' jackets don't do up properly. Lavinia's hat is too small. The chef's trousers are too short. The three cooks' overalls are also too small.

It's important that we get the correct sizes quickly.

FEEDBACK TO ACTIVITY 9

1. **The cashier's figures** should be **The cashiers' figures**.
2. **It's windows** should be **Its windows**.

3. **The mans' hand** should be **The man's hand**.
4. **Its known to** should be **It's known to**.
5. **She'll have to** is correct.
6. **It's opening hours** should be **Its opening hours**.
7. **The womens' training** should be **The women's training**.

FEEDBACK TO ACTIVITY 10

Yesterday at work, I was talking to my friend Sally. She said, "I think that we are going to get some new office furniture." A man had been in the office measuring up. He said, "I think it is to see if you have room for some new desks or computers."

I asked my supervisor when I saw her and she said, "I don't know anything about it." My supervisor rang her manager and he said, "That's right we are going to get two new desks and two computers; the old ones are past their best."

FEEDBACK TO ACTIVITY 11

Subject	Verb
1. I	am
2. We	call
3. I	have been
4. We	don't win
5. The friends and the company	are
6. We	play
7. We	go
8. You	get to know
9. I	work
10. I	play
11. I	find
12. I	get on
13. There	is

FEEDBACK TO ACTIVITY 13

In 20XX, I applied for the post of Office Administrator with an organisation called Computer World. After ten years, I am still with the organisation and I have been promoted to Information Technology Training Consultant. // There have been many changes in the organisation. I have enjoyed watching Computer World develop from a small to a large organisation. It has grown from a workforce of ten to having over two hundred staff. // The organisation likes to encourage people who use computers in the workplace to improve their computing skills. They also do this for their own staff. I have benefited myself from their training and development programmes.

Do you:

Not feel very confident about writing? Find it difficult to put pen to paper?

Want to be able to write short, clear sentences?

If you answered 'yes' to one or more of these questions, you will find that the activities in this booklet will help you with the following: Appropriate use of capital and small letters. Creating a short piece of writing.

Using the most common forms of punctuation, including the full stop, comma and apostrophe.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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SOUTHGATE PUBLISHERS LTD

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