COLLEGE ESL WRITERS APPLIED GRAMMAR AND COMPOSING STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS



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College ESL Writers Applied Grammar and Composing Strategies for Success

Barbara Hall & Elizabeth Wallace

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Licensing

*A detailed breakdown of this resource's licensing can be found in **Back Matter/Detailed Licensing**.*

Preface

We have structured the etext into three basic parts. Part I, Composing Strategies and Techniques, includes a sequenced discussion from composing effective sentences through paragraph and essay writing. This includes the prewriting and planning stages of writing as well as the revising and editing stage in the first five chapters. Part II, Language Use, Grammar, and Mechanics, is meant to be used as a grammar and mechanics handbook as well as the practice and review of idiomatic wording. Part III, All About Writing: Samples, Topics, and Rubrics, has chapters with additional writing topics for practice, sample student papers, and rubrics for evaluating writing.

A Note to the Instructor

Writing is often a challenge, especially when you are writing in a second language. If you ever felt challenged to express yourself via the written word and in particular, in another language, this book is for you. We encourage you to explore it, use the exercises as opportunities to learn new skills, and most of all, to be successful in your achievement of your course objectives and goals. This text is available free online and is the result of the dedication of many professionals who share the common goal of increasing access to educational materials for all students. Please thank your instructor for choosing an open source text!

Features

- Exercises are integrated in each segment. Each concept is immediately reinforced as soon as it is introduced to keep students on track.
- Exercises are designed to facilitate interaction and collaboration. This allows for peer-peer engagement, development of interpersonal skills, and promotion of critical-thinking skills.
- Exercises that involve self-editing. This feature develops and promotes student interest in the knowledge areas and content.
- Clear internal summaries and effective displays of information are available. This contributes to ease of access to information and increases students' ability to locate desired content.
- Rule explanations are simplified with clear, relevant, and themebased examples. This feature provides context that will facilitate learning and increase knowledge retention.
- Easy maneuverability within sections of the book. Within the Table of Contents, you can click on the section title to go to the appropriate section of the book. Also, at the bottom of each page is a link to "Return to Table of Contents."
- Real student samples that serve as good models of writing are provided. The writing samples that we have incorporated into this book come from our own college ESL students who have agreed to publication of their papers. They write like you do! They are not professional writers, but have been students in our college ESL classes.
- Remember: this text is meant to be adaptable and should be transformed to meet the particular needs of your ESL students.

A Note to the Student

College ESL Writers: Applied Grammar and Composing Strategies for Success provides instruction in steps, builds writing, reading, and critical thinking, and combines comprehensive grammar review with an introduction to paragraph writing and academic essay composition.

Beginning with the sentence and its essential elements, this book addresses each concept with clear, concise, and effective examples that are immediately reinforced with exercises and opportunities to demonstrate learning. Each chapter that follows allows students to demonstrate mastery of the principles of quality writing. With its incremental approach, this book can address a range of writing levels and abilities, helping students prepare for the next writing or university course. Constant reinforcement is provided through examples and exercises, and the text involves students in the learning process through reading of student samples, problem solving, and practicing the writing process.

Each chapter also has integrated examples that unify the discussion and form a common, easy-to-understand basis for discussion and exploration. We are hoping that this will put students at ease and allow for greater understanding and demonstration of mastery of the material.

Tips for effective writing are included in every chapter as well. These exercises are especially helpful for working with groups of students. Clear exercises teach sentence and paragraph writing skills that lead to common English composition and documents.

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Writing Basics - What Makes a Good Sentence?

1.1: Sentence Writing
1.2: Sentence Structure
1.3: Pronouns
1.4: Adjectives and Adverbs
1.5: Writing basics (Exercise)

Thumbnail: Alphabetic writing is a frequent category in human communication. (CC BY-SA 4.0; Petar Milošević).

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1.1: Sentence Writing

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the components of a basic sentence.
2. Identify the four most serious writing errors.
3. Review sentence structure formation and issues.

Imagine you are reading a book for school. You need to find important details that you can use for an assignment. However, when you begin to read, you notice that the book has very little punctuation. Sentences fail to form complete paragraphs and instead form one block of text without clear organization. Most likely, this book would frustrate and confuse you. Without clear and concise sentences, it is difficult to find the information you need.

For both students and professionals, clear communication is important. Whether you are typing an e-mail or writing a report, it is your responsibility to present your thoughts and ideas clearly and precisely. Writing in complete sentences is one way to ensure that you communicate well. This section covers how to recognize and write basic sentence structures and how to avoid some common writing errors.

Components of a Sentence

Clearly written, complete sentences require key information: a subject, a verb and a complete idea. A sentence needs to make sense on its own. Sometimes, complete sentences are also called independent clauses. A clause is a group of words that may make up a sentence. An independent clause is a group of words that may stand alone as a complete, grammatically correct thought. The following sentences show independent clauses.



Example 1.1.1

All complete sentences have at least one independent clause. You can identify an independent clause by reading it on its own and looking for the subject and the verb.

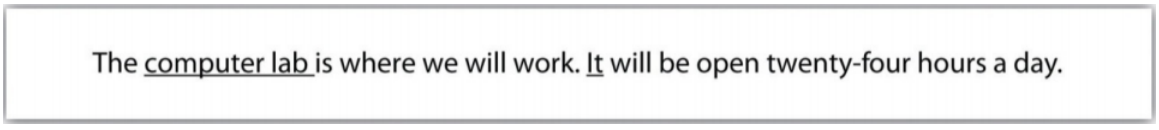
Subjects

When you read a sentence, you may first look for the subject, or what the sentence is about. The subject usually appears at the beginning of a sentence as a noun or a pronoun. A noun is a word that identifies a person, place, thing, or idea. A pronoun is a word that replaces a noun. Common pronouns are *I*, *he*, *she*, *it*, *you*, *they*, and *we*. In the following sentences, the subject is underlined once.



Example 1.1.2

In these sentences, the subject is a person: *Malik*. The pronoun *He* replaces and refers back to *Malik*.



Example 1.1.3

In the first sentence, the subject is a place: *computer lab*. In the second sentence, the pronoun *It* substitutes for *computer lab* as the subject.

The project will run for three weeks. It will have a quick turnaround.

Example 1.1.4

In the first sentence, the subject is a thing: *project*. In the second sentence, the pronoun *It* stands in for the *project*.

Tip

In this chapter, please refer to the following grammar key:

Subjects are underlined once.

Verbs are underlined twice.

LV means linking verb, HV means helping verb, and V means action verb.

Figure 1.1.1

Compound Subjects

A sentence may have more than one person, place, or thing as the subject. These subjects are called compound subjects. Compound subjects are useful when you want to discuss several subjects at once.

Desmond and Maria have been working on that design for almost a year.

Books, magazines, and online articles are all good resources.

Example 1.1.5

Prepositional Phrases

You will often read a sentence that has more than one noun or pronoun in it. You may encounter a group of words that includes a preposition with a noun or a pronoun. Prepositions connect a noun, pronoun, or verb to another word that describes or modifies that noun, pronoun, or verb. Common prepositions include *in*, *on*, at, *under*, *near*, *by*, for, *with*, and *about*. A group of words that begin with a preposition is called a prepositional phrase. A prepositional phrase begins with a preposition, and the object of that preposition is a noun. It cannot act as the subject of a sentence. The following circled phrases are examples of prepositional phrases.

We went on a business trip. That restaurant with the famous pizza was on the way. We stopped for lunch.

Example 1.1.6

Verbs

Once you locate the subject of a sentence, you can move on to the next part of a complete sentence: the verb. A verb is often an action word that shows what the subject is doing. A verb can also link the subject to a describing word. There are three types of verbs that you can use in a sentence: action verbs, linking verbs, or helping verbs.

Action Verbs

A verb that connects the subject to an action is called an action verb. An action verb answers the question *what is the subject doing?* In the following sentences, the words underlined twice are action verbs.

The dog barked at the jogger.

He gave a short speech before we ate.

Example 1.1.7

Linking Verbs

A verb can often connect the subject of the sentence to a describing word. This type of verb is called a linking verb because it links the subject to a describing word. In the following sentences, the words underlined twice are linking verbs.

The coat was old and dirty.

The clock seemed broken.

Example 1.1.8

If you have trouble telling the difference between action verbs and linking verbs, remember that an action verb shows that the subject is doing something, whereas a linking verb simply connects the subject to another word that describes or modifies the subject. A few verbs can be used as either action verbs or linking verbs.

Action Verb: The boy looked for his glove.

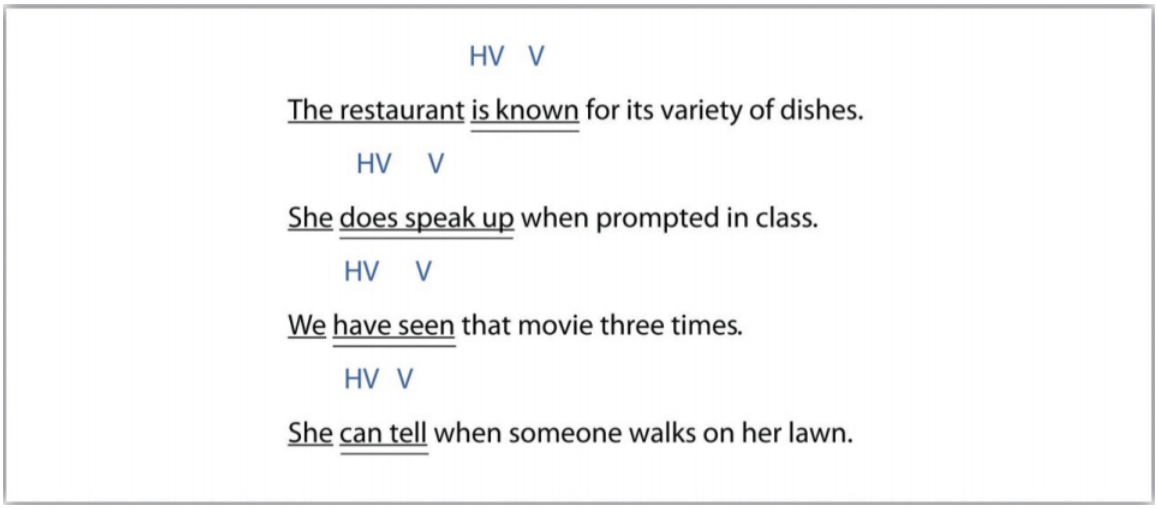
Linking Verb: The boy looked tired.

Example 1.1.9

Although both sentences use the same verb, the two sentences have completely different meanings. In the first sentence, the verb describes the boy's action. In the second sentence, the verb describes the boy's appearance.

Helping Verbs

A third type of verb you may use as you write is a helping verb. Helping verbs are verbs that are used with the main verb to describe a mood or tense. Helping verbs are usually a form of *be*, *do*, or *have*. The word *can* is also used as a helping verb.



Example 1.1.10

Tip

Whenever you write or edit sentences, keep the subject and verb in mind. As you write, ask yourself these questions to keep yourself on track:

Subject: Who or what is the sentence about?

Verb: Which word shows an action or links the subject to a description?

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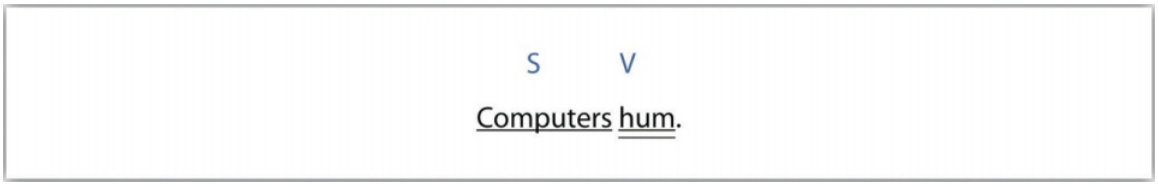
1.2: Sentence Structure

Now that you know what makes a complete sentence — a subject and a verb — you can use other parts of speech to build on this basic structure. This section gives a general overview of sentence structure. Chapter 2 goes into more detail on sentence variety and how to strengthen your writing. Good writers use a variety of sentence structures to make their work more interesting.

Sentence Patterns

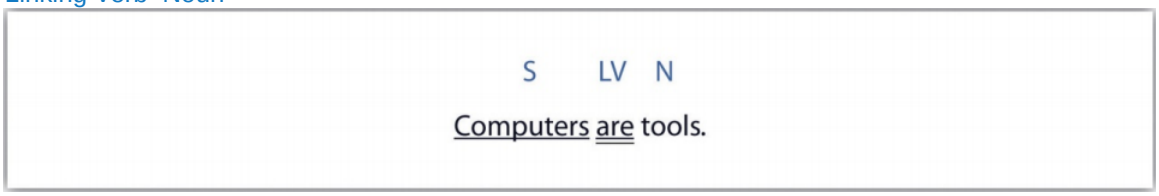
Six basic subject-verb patterns can enhance your writing. A sample sentence is provided for each pattern. As you read each sentence, take note of where each part of the sentence falls. Notice that some sentence patterns use action verbs and others use linking verbs.

Subject–Verb



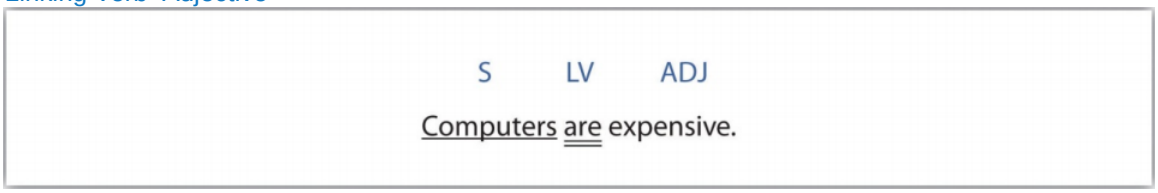
Example 1.2.1

Subject–Linking Verb–Noun



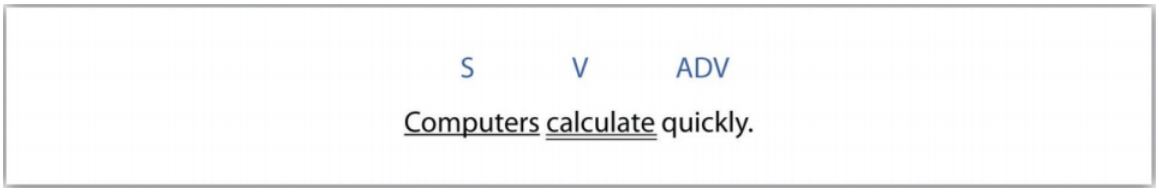
Example 1.2.2

Subject–Linking Verb–Adjective



Example 1.2.3

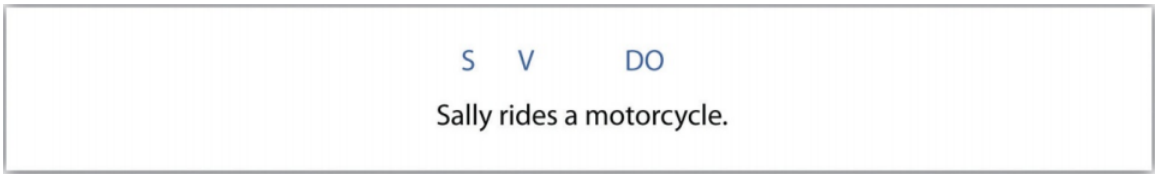
Subject–Verb–Adverb



Example 1.2.4

Subject–Verb–Direct Object

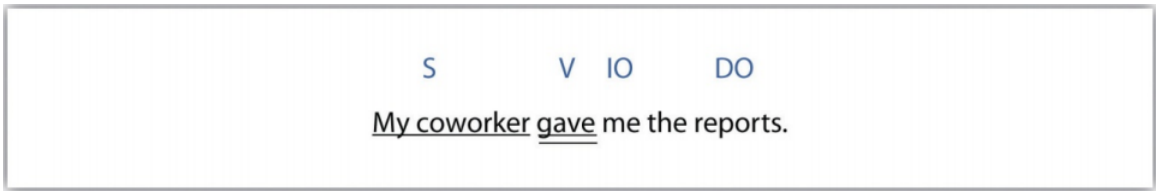
When you write a sentence with a direct object (DO), make sure that the DO receives the action of the verb.



Example 1.2.5

Subject–Verb–Indirect Object–Direct Object

In this sentence structure, an indirect object explains *to whom* or *to what* the action is being done. The indirect object is a noun or pronoun, and it comes before the direct object in a sentence.



Example 1.2.6

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1.3: Pronouns

Pronouns are very important to your writing and speaking. Without them, your language would be very boring. Pronouns also help a writer avoid repetition of words. Knowing just how pronouns work is an important aspect of clear and concise writing. Chapter 7 covers this in greater detail.

Pronoun Agreement

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of (or refers back to) a noun or another pronoun. The word or words a pronoun refers to is called the antecedent of the pronoun.

1. *Lani* complained that *she* was exhausted.
   - *She* refers to *Lani*.
   - *Lani* is the antecedent of *she*.
2. *Hieu* left the party early, so I did not see *him* until Monday at work.
   - *Him* refers to Hieu.
   - *Hieu* is the antecedent of *him*.
3. *Ansam and Sherry* have been best friends ever since *they* were freshman in high school.
   - *They* refers to *Ansam and Sherry*.
   - *Ansam and Sherry* is the antecedent of *they.*

There are several types of pronoun agreement:

Agreement in number: If the pronoun takes the place of or refers to a singular noun, the pronoun must also be singular. Likewise, if the pronoun refers to a plural noun, the pronoun must be plural.

Agreement in person:

Table 1.3.1

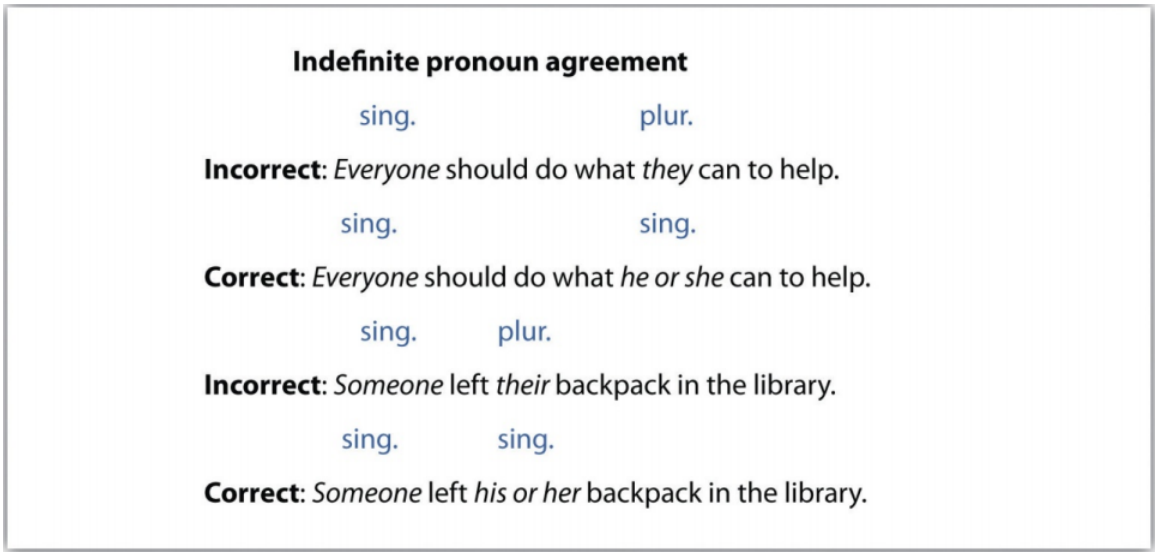
	Singular Pronouns			Plural Pronouns		
First Person	I	me	my (mine)	we	us	our (ours)
Second Person	you	you	your (yours)	you	you	your (yours)
Third Person	he, she, it	him, her, it	his, her, its	they	them	their (theirs)

Indefinite Pronouns and Agreement

Indefinite pronouns do not refer to a specific person or thing and are *usually singular*. Note that a pronoun that refers to an indefinite singular pronoun should also be singular. The following are some common indefinite pronouns:

Table 1.3.2

Common Indefinite Pronouns				
all	each one	few	nothing	several
any	each other	many	one	some
anybody	either	neither	one another	somebody
anything	everybody	nobody	oneself	someone
both	everyone	none	other	something
each	everything	no one	others	anyone



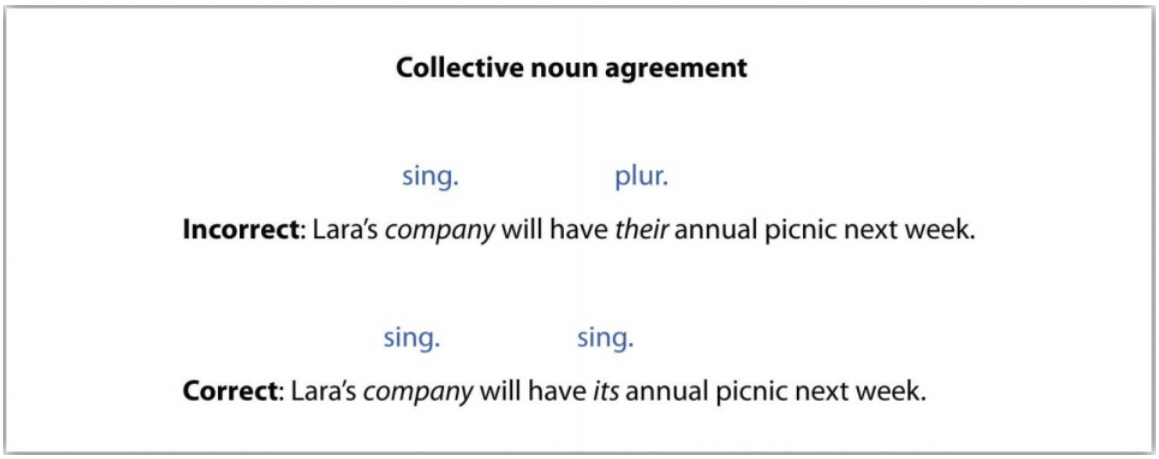
Example 1.3.1

Collective Nouns

One issue with collective nouns is that writers sometimes want to use a plural verb with them. However, even though they suggest more than one person, they are *usually considered singular*. Look over the following examples of common collective nouns:

Table 1.3.3

Common Collective Nouns						
audience	faculty	public	class	government	society	company
band	family	school	committee	group	team	jury



Example 1.3.2

Subject and Object Pronouns

Subject pronouns function as subjects in a sentence. Object pronouns function as the object of a verb or of a preposition.

Table 1.3.4

Singular Pronouns		Plural Pronouns	
Subject	Object	Subject	Object
I	me	we	us
you	you	you	you

Singular Pronouns		Plural Pronouns	
he, she, it	him, her, it	they	them

The following sentences show pronouns as subjects:

1. *She* loves the Blue Ridge Mountains in the fall.
2. Every summer, *they* picked up litter from national parks.

The following sentences show pronouns as objects:

1. Marie leaned over and kissed *him*.
2. Barbara moved *it* to the corner.

Tip

Note that a pronoun can also be the object of a preposition:

> Near *them*, the children played.
>
> My mother stood between *us*.

The pronouns *us* and *them* are objects of the prepositions *near* and *between*. They answer the questions *near* whom? And *between* whom?

Note that object pronouns are never used in the subject position. One way to remember this rule is to remove the other subject in a compound subject, leave only the pronoun, and see whether the sentence makes sense. For example, *me visited the Grand Canyon last summer* sounds immediately incorrect.

Relative Pronouns

A relative pronoun is a type of pronoun that helps connect details to the subject of the sentence and may often combine two shorter sentences. The relative pronouns are *who*,*whom*, *whose*, *which* or *that*. Chapter 2 discusses the use of relative pronouns in clauses.

Tip

Remember the following uses of relative pronouns:

- *Who*, *whom*, and *whose* refer only to people.
- *Which* refers to things.
- *That* refers to people or things.

Key Takeaways

- A pronoun is used in place of a noun.
- Pronouns and their antecedents need to agree in number and person.
- There are several types of pronouns, including subject and object pronouns, possessive pronouns, and relative pronouns.
- Most indefinite pronouns are singular.
- Collective nouns are usually singular.
- Object pronouns are the “who” and “what” that receives the action.
- A possessive pronoun is a pronoun showing ownership.
- Common pronoun errors include mixing up subject, object, and gender pronouns, and repeating the subject of a sentence with a pronoun.
- Relative pronouns help combine two separate sentences.

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1.4: Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectives and adverbs are descriptive words that bring your writing to life.

An adjective is a word that describes a noun or a pronoun. It often answers questions such as *which one*, *what kind*, or *how many?*

- The *green* sweater belongs to Iris. (The adjective *green* describes the noun *sweater.*)
- She looks *beautiful*. (The adjective *beautiful* describes the pronoun *she*.)

An adverb is a word that describes a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. Adverbs frequently end in-*ly*. They answer questions such as *how*, *to what extent*, *why*, *when*, and *where*.

- Francois sings *horribly*. (*Horribly* describes the verb *sings.* How does Francois sing? He sing *horribly*.)
- My sociology instructor is *extremely* wise. (*Extremely* describes theadjective *wise.* How *wise* is the instructor? *Extremely* wise.)
- He threw the ball *very* accurately. (*Very* describes the adverb *accurately*. How *accurately* did he throw the ball? *Very* accurately.)

Key Takeaways

- Adjectives describe a noun or a pronoun.
- Adverbs describe a verb, adjective, or another adverb.
- Most adverbs are formed by adding-*ly* to an adjective.
- Comparative adjectives and adverbs compare two persons or things.
- Superlative adjectives or adverbs compare more than two persons or things.
- The adjectives *good* and *bad* and the adverbs *well* and *badly* are unique in their comparative and superlative forms and require special attention.

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1.5: Writing basics (Exercise)

On your own sheet of paper, identify each sentence as a fragment, a run-on, or correct (no error). Then rewrite the paragraph by correcting sentence fragments and run-ons.

My favorite book is *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley, he was born in 1894 and died in 1963 _____. Written in 1931 _____. A futuristic society where humans are born out of test tubes and kept in rigid social classes _____. This may not seem like a humorous premise for a novel, but Huxley uses satire, which is a type of humor that is used to make a serious point _____. The humans in *Brave New World* learn through sleep teaching, Huxley calls this "hypnopedia"_____. Everyone is kept "happy" in the brave new world by taking a pill called soma, there is one character named John the Savage who does not take soma _____. because he comes from a different part of the world where there is no technology, and he believes in natural ways of living _____. It turns out that John has a big problem with the brave new world and how people live there _____. Will he be able to survive living there, well you will have to read the novel to find out _____. *Brave New World* is considered a classic in English literature, it is one of the best novels I have ever read _____.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Sentence Variety - How do I Refine My Writing?

2.1: Sentence Variety
2.2: Coordination and Subordination
2.3: Sentence Structure Boundaries and Associated Errors
2.4: Parallelism
2.5: Refining Your Writing (Exercises)

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2.1: Sentence Variety

Learning Objectives

1. Identify ways to vary sentence structure.
2. Write and revise sentence structure at the beginning of sentences.
3. Write and revise sentence structure by connecting ideas.
4. Use correct punctuation when creating a variety of sentence structures.

Have you ever ordered a dish in a restaurant and been not happy with its taste, even though it contained most of your favorite ingredients? Just as a meal might lack the finishing touches needed to spice it up, so too might a paragraph contain all the basic components but still lack the stylistic finesse required to engage a reader. Sometimes writers have a tendency to reuse the same sentence pattern throughout their writing. Like any repetitive task, reading a text that contains too many sentences with the same length and structure can become monotonous and boring. Experienced writers mix it up by using an assortment of sentence patterns, rhythms, and lengths.

In this chapter, you will look at introducing sentence variety into your writing, how to open sentences using a variety of techniques, and how to use different types of sentence structure when connecting ideas. Each section also contains the punctuation to keep you from creating sentence structure errors. In academic writing (and work situations), these techniques can bring life and make your writing more enjoyable to read.

Incorporating Sentence Variety

Experienced writers incorporate sentence variety into their writing by varying sentence style and structure. Using a mixture of different sentence structures reduces repetition and adds emphasis to important points in the text. Read the following example:

> During my time in office I have achieved several goals. I have helped increase funding for local schools. I have reduced crime rates in the neighborhood. I have encouraged young people to get involved in their community. My competitor argues that she is the better choice in the upcoming election. I argue that it is ridiculous to fix something that isn't broken. If you reelect me this year, I promise to continue to serve this community.

In this extract from an election campaign, the writer uses short, simple sentences of a similar length and style. What did you think about this paragraph? Writers often mistakenly believe that this technique makes the text more clear for the reader, but the result is a choppy, unsophisticated paragraph that does not grab the audience's attention. Now read the revised paragraph with sentence variety:

> During my time in office, I have achieved several goals such as increase funding for local schools, reduce crime rates in the neighborhood, and encourage young people to get involved in their community. Why fix what isn't broken? My competitor argues that she is the better choice, but by electing me, I will continue to achieve great things for this community. Don't take a chance on someone unknown; vote for the candidate you know has proven success.

Notice how introducing a short rhetorical question among the longer sentences in the paragraph is an effective means of keeping the reader's attention. In the revised version, the writer combines the choppy sentences at the beginning into one longer sentence, which adds rhythm and interest to the paragraph.

Tip

Effective writers often implement the "rule of three," which is basically the thought that things that contain three elements are more memorable and more satisfying to readers than any other number. Try to use a series of three when providing examples, grouping adjectives, or generating a list.

Using Sentence Variety at the Beginning of Sentences

Read the following sentences and consider what they all have in common:

> John and Amanda will be analyzing this week's financial report.
>
> The car screeched to a halt just a few inches away from the young boy.
>
> Students rarely come to the exam adequately prepared.

If you are having trouble figuring out why these sentences are similar, try underlining the subject in each. You will notice that the subject is positioned at the beginning of each sentence — *John and Amanda*, *the car*, *students*. Since the subject-verb-object pattern is the simplest sentence structure, many writers tend to overuse this technique, which can result in repetitive paragraphs with little sentence variety.

Naomi wrote an essay about the 2008 government bailout. Read this excerpt from Naomi's essay:

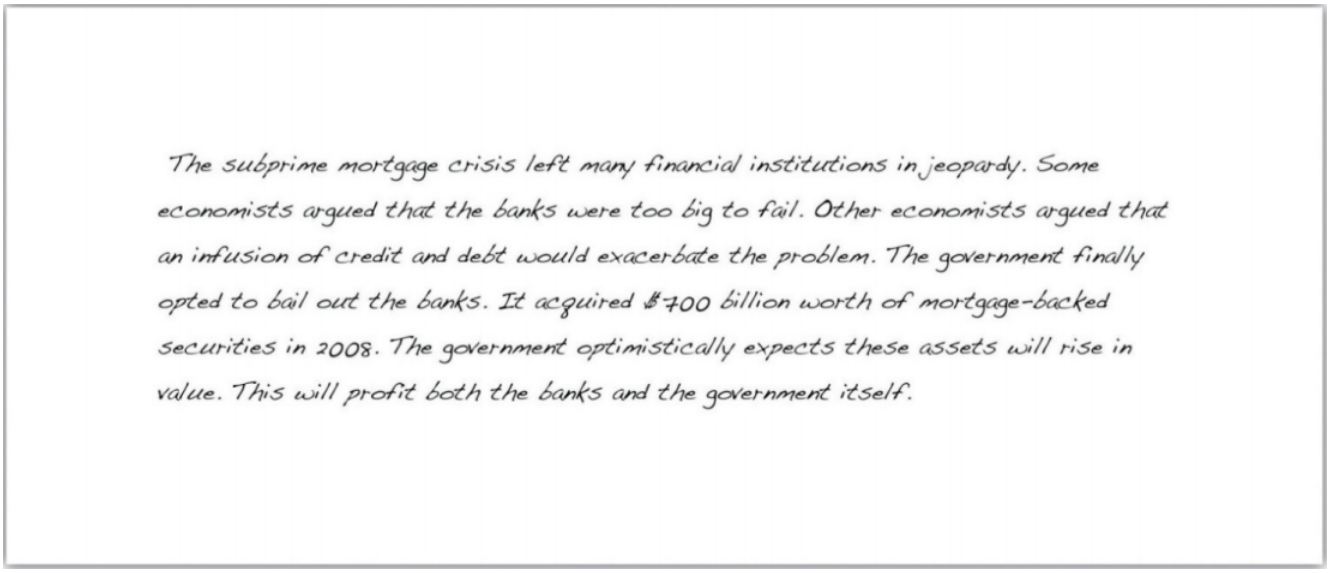


Figure 2.1.1

This section examines several ways to introduce sentence variety at the beginning of sentences, using Naomi's essay as an example.

Starting a Sentence with an Adverb

One technique you can use so as to avoid beginning a sentence with the subject is to use an adverb. An adverb is a word that describes a verb, adjective, or other adverb and often ends in-*ly*. Examples of adverbs include *quickly*, *softly*, *quietly*, *angrily*, and *timidly*. Read the following sentences:

> She slowly turned the corner and peered into the murky basement.
>
> Slowly, she turned the corner and peered into the murky basement.

In the second sentence, the adverb *slowly* is placed at the beginning of the sentence. If you read the two sentences aloud, you will notice that moving the adverb changes the rhythm of the sentence and slightly alters its meaning. The second sentence emphasizes how the subject moves — slowly — creating a buildup of tension. This technique is effective in fictional writing.

Note that an adverb used at the beginning of a sentence is usually followed by a comma. A comma indicates that the reader should pause briefly, which creates a useful rhetorical device. Read the following sentences aloud and consider the effect of pausing after the adverb:

> Cautiously, he unlocked the kennel and waited for the dog's reaction.
>
> Solemnly, the policeman approached the mayor and placed him under arrest.
>
> Suddenly, he slammed the door shut and sprinted across the street.

In an academic essay, moving an adverb to the beginning of a sentence serves to vary the rhythm of a paragraph and increase sentence variety.

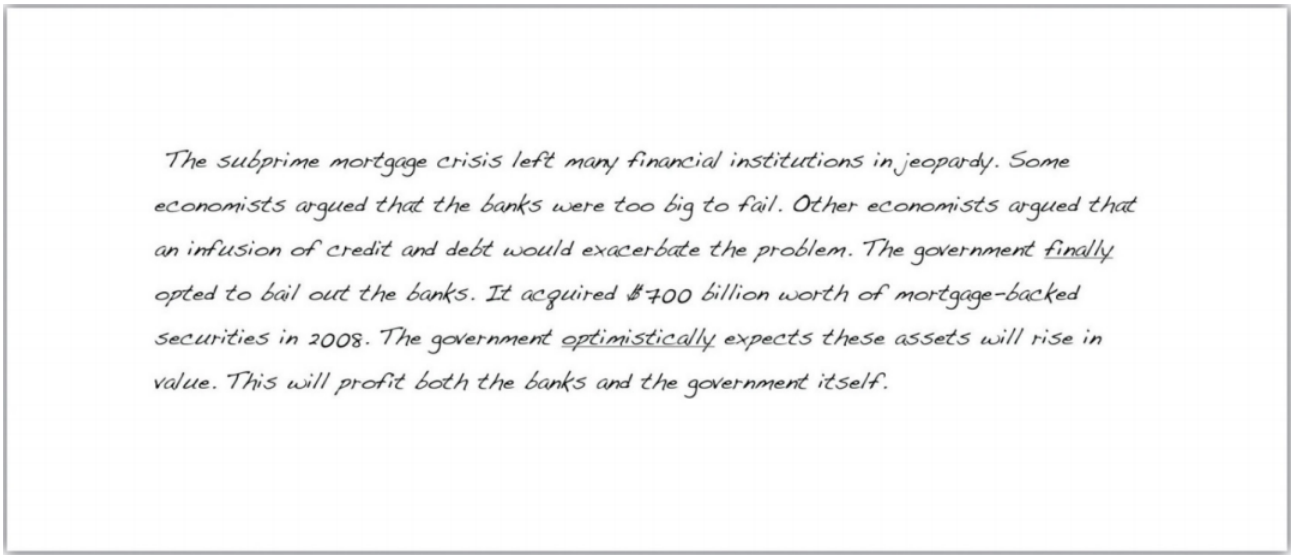


Figure 2.1.2

Naomi has used two adverbs in her essay that could be moved to the beginning of their respective sentences. Notice how the following revised version creates a more varied paragraph:

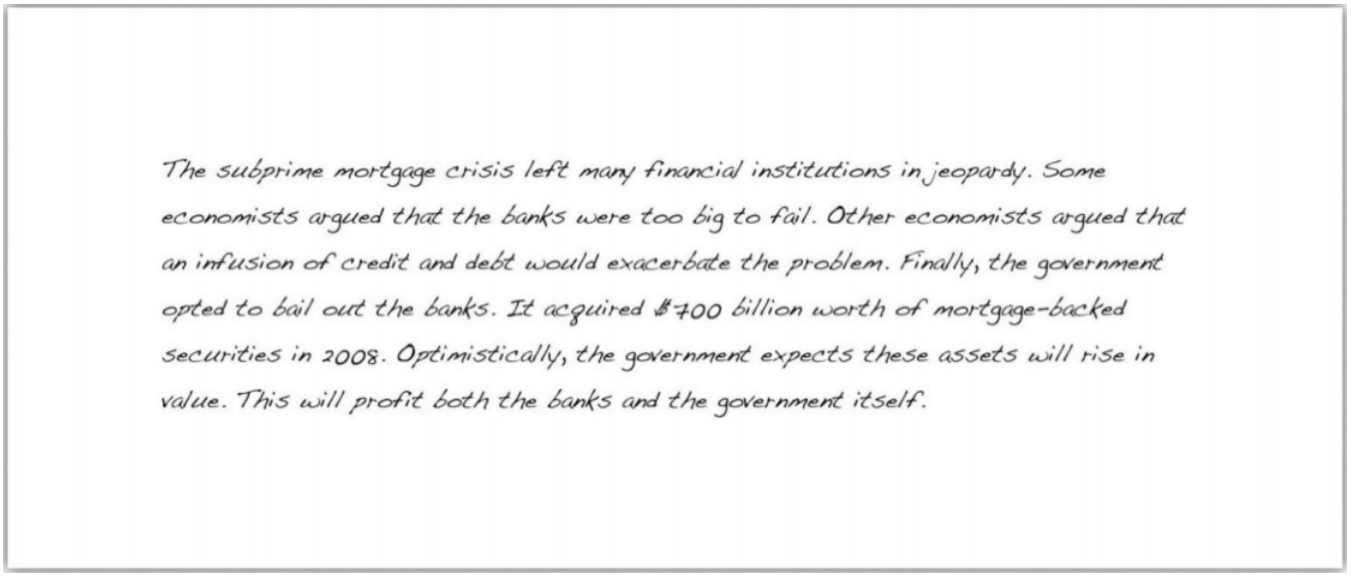


Figure 2.1.3

Tip

Adverbs of time — adverbs that indicate *when* an action takes place — do not always require a comma when used at the beginning of a sentence. Adverbs of time include words such as *yesterday*, *today*, *later*, *sometimes*, *often*, and *now*.

Exercise 2.1.1:

On your own sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentences by moving the adverbs to the beginning.

1. The red truck sped furiously past the camper van, blaring its horn.
2. Fernando snatched at the bread hungrily, polishing off three slices in under a minute.
3. Underage drinking typically results from peer pressure and lack of parental attention.
4. The firefighters bravely tackled the blaze, but they were beaten back by flames.
5. Mayor Kasim Reed privately acknowledged that the budget was excessive and that further discussion was needed.

Starting a Sentence with a Prepositional Phrase

A prepositional phrase is a group of words that behaves as an adjective or an adverb, modifying a noun or a verb. Prepositional phrases contain a preposition (a word that specifies place, direction, or time) and an object of the preposition (a noun phrase or pronoun that follows the preposition).

above	beneath	into	till
across	beside	like	toward
against	between	near	under
after	beyond	off	underneath
among	by	on	until
around	despite	over	up
at	except	past	with
before	for	since	without
behind	from	through	
below	inside	throughout	

Read the following sentence:

> The terrified child hid **underneath the table**.

In this sentence, the prepositional phrase is *underneath the table*. The preposition *underneath* relates to the object that follows the preposition — *the table*. Adjectives may be placed between the preposition and the object in a prepositional phrase.

> The terrified child hid **underneath the heavy wooden table**.

Some prepositional phrases can be moved to the beginning of a sentence in order to create variety in a piece of writing. Look at the following revised sentence:

> **Underneath the heavy wooden table**, the terrified child hid.

Notice that when the prepositional phrase is moved to the beginning of the sentence, the emphasis shifts from the subject — the terrified child — to the location in which the child is hiding. Words that are placed at the beginning or end of a sentence generally receive the greatest emphasis. Take a look at the following examples. The prepositional phrase is underlined in each:

> The bandaged man waited **in the doctor's office**.
>
> **In the doctor's office**, the bandaged man waited.
>
> My train leaves the station **at 6:45 a.m**.
>
> **At 6:45 a.m.**, my train leaves the station.
>
> Teenagers exchange drugs and money **under the railway bridge**.
>
> **Under the railway bridge**, teenagers exchange drugs and money.

Prepositional phrases are useful in any type of writing. Take another look at Naomi's essay on the government bailout.

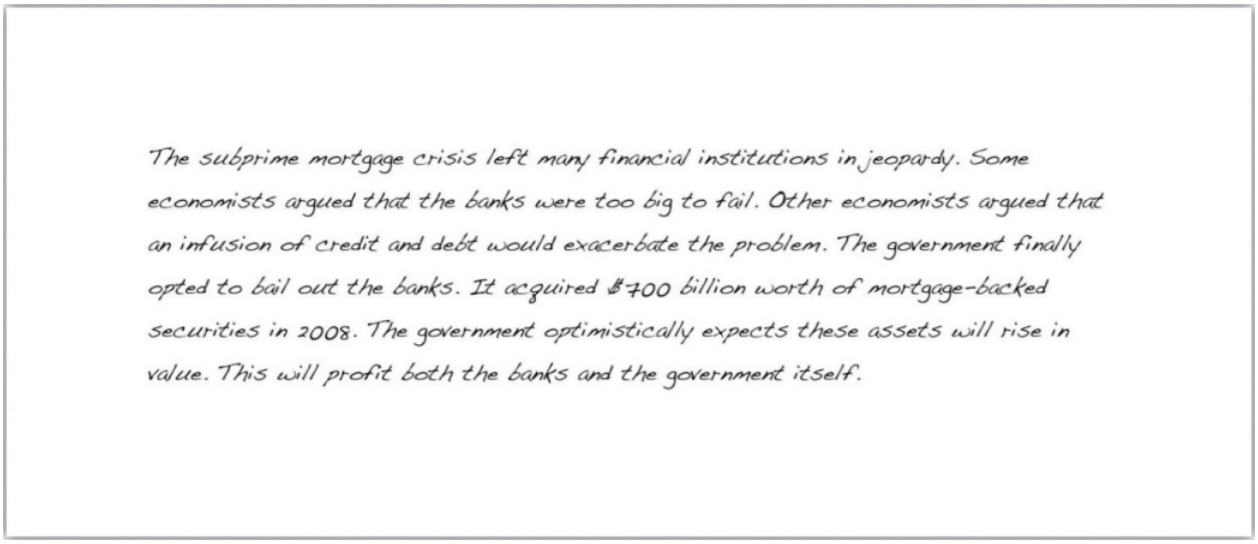


Figure 2.1.4

Now read the revised version.

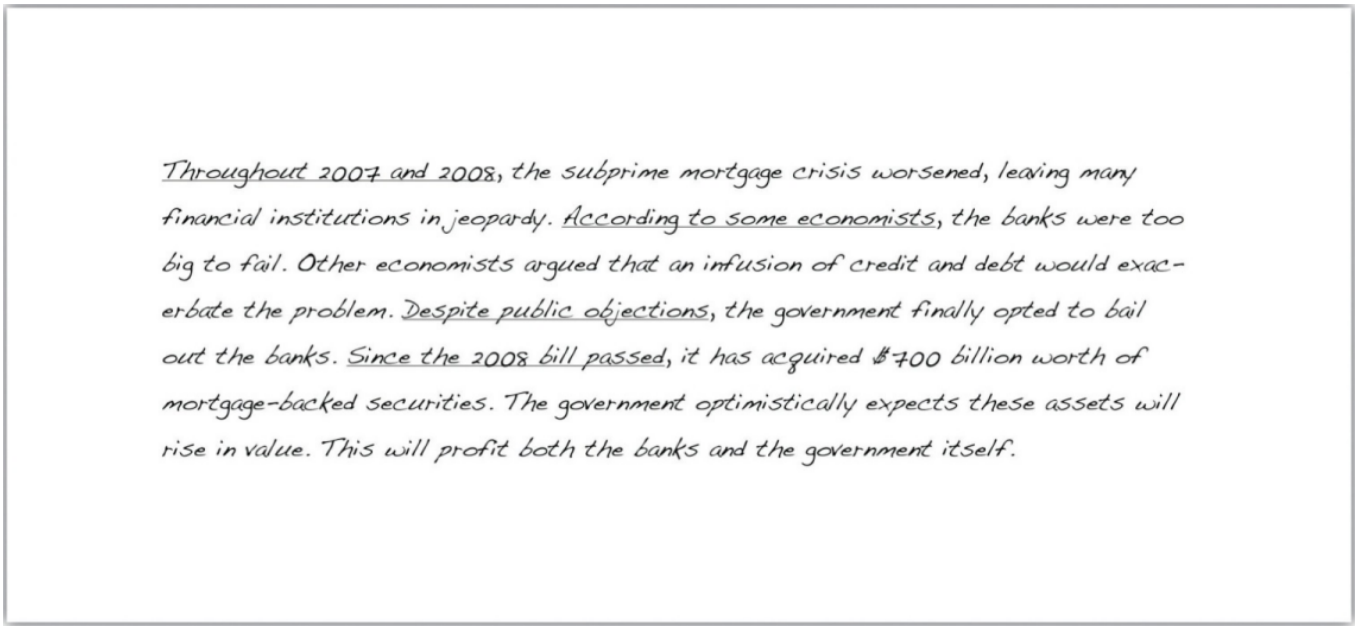


Figure 2.1.5

The underlined words are all prepositional phrases. Notice how they add additional information to the text and provide a sense of flow to the essay, making it less choppy and more pleasurable to read.

Unmovable Prepositional Phrases

Not all prepositional phrases can be placed at the beginning of a sentence. Read the following sentence:

> I would like a chocolate sundae **without whipped cream**.

In this sentence, *without whipped cream* is the prepositional phrase. Because it describes the chocolate sundae, it cannot be moved to the beginning of the sentence. “Without whipped cream I would like a chocolate sundae” does not make as much (if any) sense. To determine whether a prepositional phrase can be moved, we must determine the meaning of the sentence.

Overuse of Prepositional Phrases

Experienced writers often include more than one prepositional phrase in a sentence; however, it is important not to overload your writing. Using too many modifiers in a paragraph may create an unintentionally comical effect as the following example shows:

The treasure lay buried under the old oak tree, behind the crumbling fifteenth-century wall, near the schoolyard, where children played merrily during their lunch hour, unaware of the riches that remained hidden beneath their feet.

A sentence is not necessarily effective just because it is long and complex. If your sentence appears cluttered with prepositional phrases, divide it into two shorter sentences. The previous sentence is far more effective when written as two simpler sentences:

The treasure lay buried under the old oak tree, behind the crumbling fifteenth-century wall. In the nearby schoolyard, children played merrily during their lunch hour, unaware of the riches that remained hidden beneath their feet.

Starting a Sentence by Inverting Subject and Verb

As we noted earlier, most writers follow the subject-verb-object sentence structure. In an inverted sentence, the order is reversed so that the subject follows the verb. Read the following sentence pairs:

1. A truck was parked in the driveway.
2. Parked in the driveway was a truck.

1. A copy of the file is attached.
2. Attached is a copy of the file.

Notice how the second sentence in each pair places more emphasis on the subject — *a truck* in the first example and *the file* in the second. This technique is useful for drawing the reader's attention to your primary area of focus. We can apply this method to an academic essay. Take another look at Naomi's paragraph.

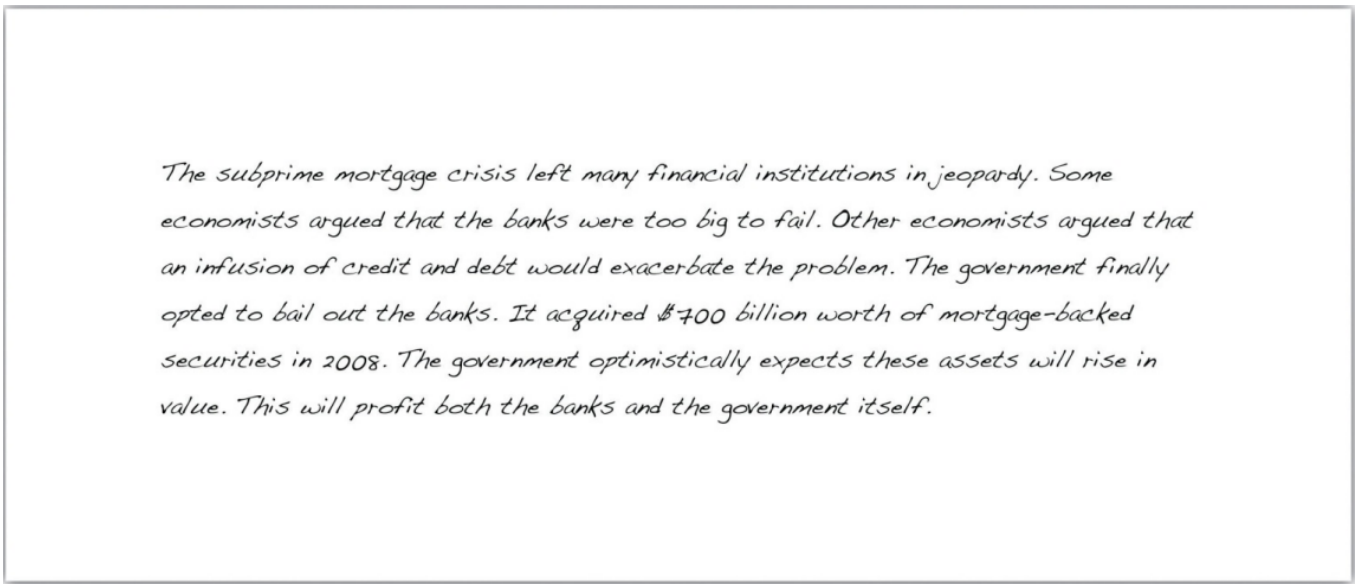


Figure 2.1.6

To emphasize the subject in certain sentences, Naomi can invert the traditional sentence structure. Read her revised paragraph:

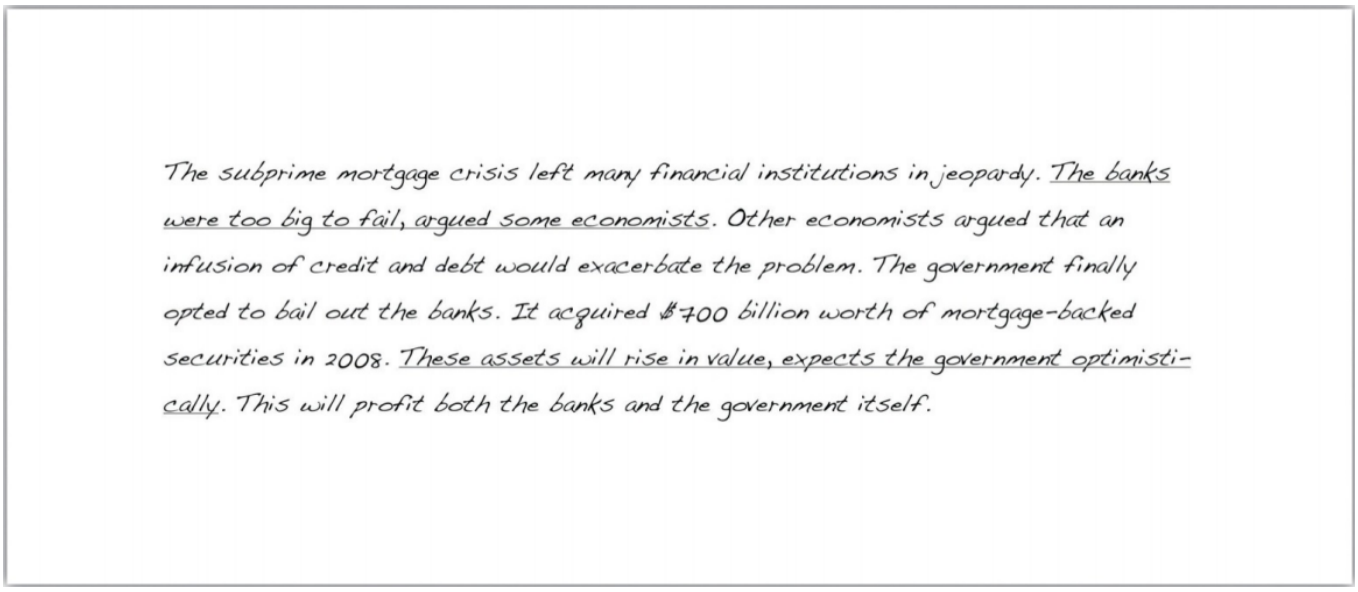


Figure 2.1.7

Notice that in the first underlined sentence, the subject (*some economists*) is placed after the verb (*argued*). In the second underlined sentence, the subject (*the government*) is placed after the verb (*expects*).

Exercise 2.1.2:

On your own sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentences as inverted sentences.

1. Teresa will never attempt to run another marathon.
2. A detailed job description is enclosed with this letter.
3. Bathroom facilities are across the hall to the left of the water cooler.
4. The well-dressed stranger stumbled through the doorway.
5. My colleagues remain unconvinced about the proposed merger.

Connecting Ideas to Increase Sentence Variety

Reviewing and rewriting the beginning of sentences is a good way of introducing sentence variety into your writing. Another useful technique is to connect two sentences using a modifier, a relative clause, or an appositive. This section examines how to connect ideas across several sentences in order to increase sentence variety and improve writing.

Joining Ideas Using an –ing Modifier

Sometimes it is possible to combine two sentences by converting one of them into a modifier using the *-ing* verb form — *singing*, *dancing*, *swimming*. A modifier is a word or phrase that qualifies the meaning of another element in the sentence. Read the following example:

Original sentences: Steve checked the computer system. He discovered a virus.

Revised sentence: Checking the computer system, Steve discovered a virus.

To connect two sentences using an *-ing* modifier, add *-ing* to one of the verbs in the sentences (*checking*) and delete the subject (*Steve*). Use a comma to separate the modifier from the subject of the sentence. It is important to make sure that the main idea in your revised sentence is contained in the main clause, not in the modifier. In this example, the main idea is that Steve discovered a virus, not that he checked the computer system.

In the following example, an *-ing* modifier indicates that two actions are occurring at the same time:

1. Noticing the police car, she shifted gears and slowed down.

   This means that she slowed down at the same time she noticed the police car.

2. Barking loudly, the dog ran across the driveway.

This means that the dog barked as it ran across the driveway.

You can add an *-ing* modifier to the beginning or the end of a sentence, depending on which fits best.

Beginning: Conducting a survey among her friends, Amanda found that few were happy in their jobs.

End: Maria filed the final report, **meeting her deadline**.

Joining Ideas Using an –ed Modifier

Some sentences can be combined using an *-ed* verb form — *stopped*, *finished*, *played*. To use this method, one of the sentences must contain a form of *be* as a helping verb in addition to the *-ed* verb form. Take a look at the following example:

Original sentences: The Ramirez family was delayed by a traffic jam. They arrived several hours after the party started.

Revised sentence: Delayed by a traffic jam, the Ramirez family arrived several hours after the party started.

In the original version, *was* acts as a helping verb — it has no meaning by itself, but it serves a grammatical function by placing the main verb (*delayed*) in the perfect tense.

To connect two sentences using an *-ed* modifier, drop the helping verb (*was*) and the subject (*the Jones family*) from the sentence with an *-ed* verb form. This forms a modifying phrase (*delayed by a traffic jam*) that can be added to the beginning or end of the other sentence according to which fits best. As with the *-ing* modifier, be careful to place the word that the phrase modifies immediately after the phrase in order to avoid a dangling modifier.

Using *-ing* or *-ed* modifiers can help streamline your writing by drawing obvious connections between two sentences. Take a look at how Naomi might use modifiers in her paragraph.

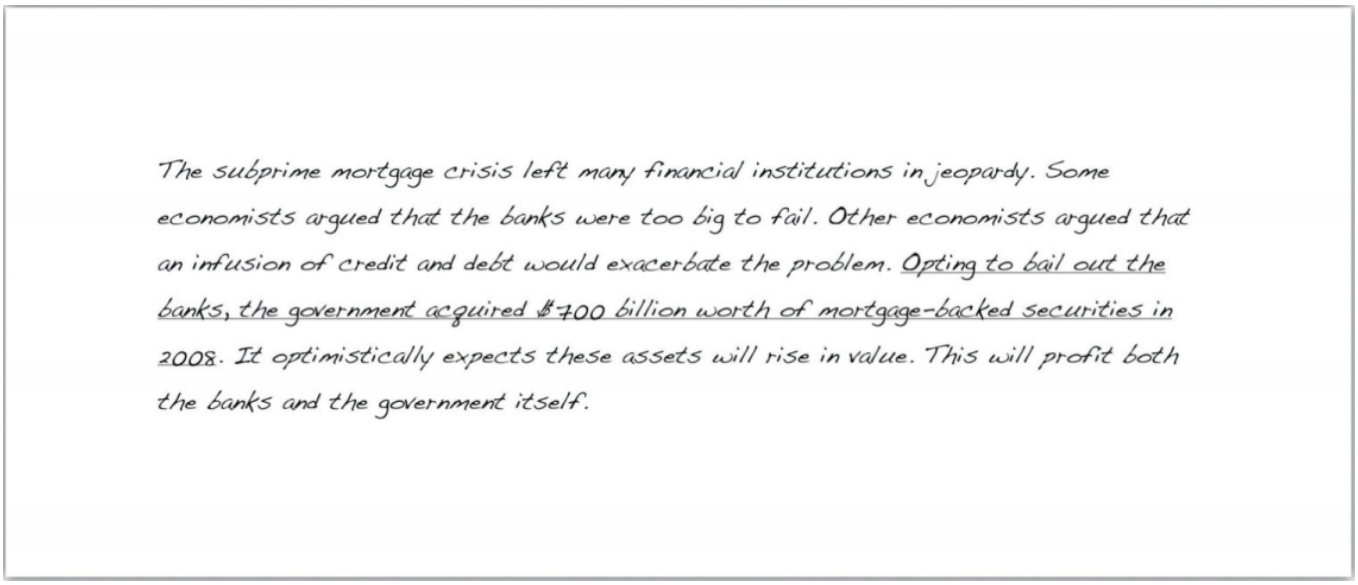


Figure 2.1.8

The revised version of the essay uses the *-ing* modifier *opting* to draw a connection between the government's decision to bail out the banks and the result of that decision — the acquisition of the mortgage-backed securities.

Joining Ideas Using a Relative Clause

Another technique that writers use to combine sentences is to join them using a relative clause. A relative clause is a group of words that contains a subject and a verb and describes a noun. Relative clauses function as adjectives by answering questions such as *which one?* or *what kind?* Relative clauses begin with a relative pronoun, such as *who*, whose, whom, *which*, or that. Read the following examples:

Original sentences: The managing director is visiting the company next week. He lives in Seattle.

Revised sentence: The managing director, who lives in Seattle, is visiting the company next week.

To connect two sentences using a relative clause, substitute the subject of one of the sentences (*he*) for a relative pronoun (*who*). This gives you a relative clause (*who lives in Seattle*) that can be placed next to the noun it describes (*the managing director*).

Make sure to keep the sentence you want to emphasize as the main clause. For example, reversing the main clause and subordinate clause in the preceding sentence emphasizes where the managing director lives, not the fact that he is visiting the company.

> **Revised sentence:** The managing director, who is visiting the company next week, lives in Seattle.

Relative clauses are a useful way of providing additional, nonessential information in a sentence. Take a look at how Naomi might incorporate relative clauses into her essay. Notice how the underlined relative clauses can be removed from Naomi's essay without changing the meaning of the sentence.

> The subprime mortgage crisis, which had been steadily building throughout 2007 and 2008, left many financial institutions in jeopardy. Some economists, who opposed the bailout, argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. The government finally optioned to bail out the banks. It acquired $700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. The government optimistically expects these assets will rise in value. This will problem both the banks and the government itself.

Tip

To check the punctuation of relative clauses, assess whether or not the clause can be taken out of the sentence without changing its meaning. If the relative clause is not essential to the meaning of the sentence, it should be placed in commas. If the relative clause is essential to the meaning of the sentence, it does not require commas around it.

Joining Ideas Using an Appositive

An appositive is a word or group of words that describes or renames a noun or pronoun. Incorporating appositives into your writing is a useful way of combining sentences that are too short and choppy. Take a look at the following example:

> **Original sentences:** Harland Sanders began serving food for hungry travelers in 1930. He is Colonel Sanders or "the Colonel."
>
> **Revised sentence:** Harland Sanders, "the Colonel," began serving food for hungry travelers in 1930.

In the revised sentence,"the Colonel" is an appositive because it renames Harland Sanders. To combine two sentences using an appositive, drop the subject and verb from the sentence that renames the noun and turn it into a phrase. Note that in the previous example, the appositive is positioned immediately after the noun it describes. An appositive may be placed anywhere in a sentence, but it must come directly before or after the noun to which it refers:

> **Appositive after noun:** Scott, a poorly trained athlete, was not expected to win the race.
>
> **Appositive before noun:** A poorly trained athlete, Scott was not expected to win the race.

Unlike relative clauses, appositives are always punctuated by a comma or a set commas. Take a look at the way Naomi uses appositives to include additional facts in her essay.

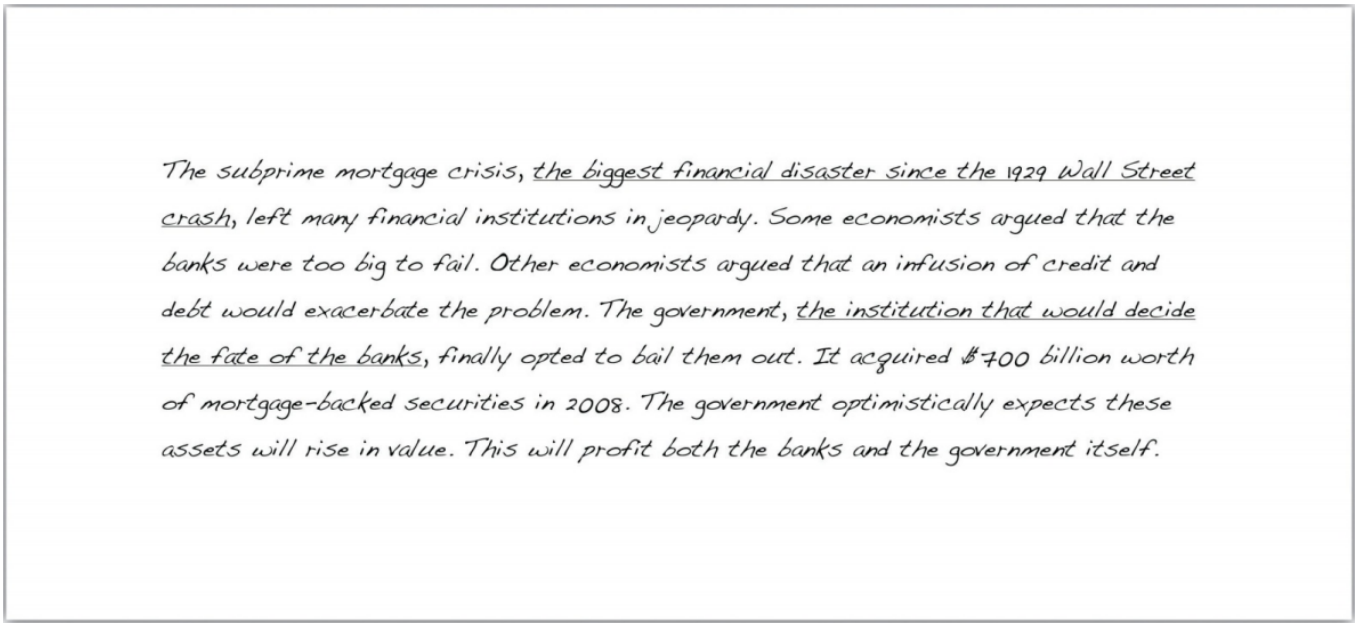


Figure \(\
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Exercise 2.1.3:

On your own sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentence pairs as one sentence using the techniques you have learned in this section.

1. Baby sharks are called pups. Pups can be born in one of three ways.
2. The Pacific Ocean is the world's largest ocean. It extends from the Arctic in the north to the Southern Ocean in the south.
3. Michael Phelps won eight gold medals in the 2008 Olympics. He is a champion swimmer.
4. Punam introduced her colleague Timothy to her husband, Mahendra. She speculated that the two of them would have a lot in common.
5. Cacao is harvested by hand. It is then sold to chocolate-processing companies at the Coffee, Sugar, and Cocoa Exchange.

Key Takeaways

- Sentence variety reduces repetition in a piece of writing and adds emphasis to important points in the text.
- Sentence variety can be introduced to the beginning of sentences by starting a sentence with an adverb, starting a sentence with a prepositional phrase, or by inverting the subject and verb.
- Combine ideas, using modifiers, relative clauses, or appositives, to achieve sentence variety.

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2.2: Coordination and Subordination

Learning Objectives

1. Identify coordination and subordination in writing.
2. Combine sentences and ideas using coordination.
3. Combine sentences and ideas using subordination.

In the previous section, we learned how to use different patterns to create sentence variety and to add emphasis to important points in our writing. Next, we will examine two ways in which we can join sentences with related ideas:

- Coordination - Joining two related ideas of equal importance.
- Subordination - Joining two related ideas of unequal importance.

Connecting sentences with coordinate or subordinate clauses creates more coherent paragraphs, and in turn, produces more effective writing. In this section, you will read excerpts from Naomi's classmate named Joshua, who drafted an essay about wine production. Read this excerpt from Joshua's essay.

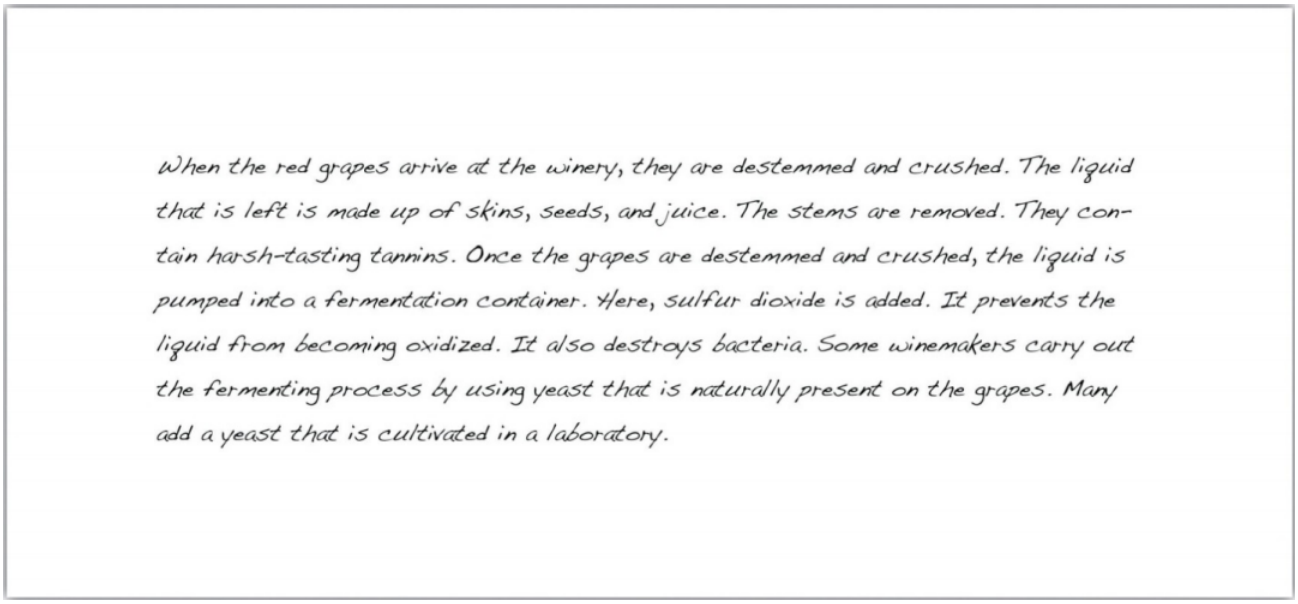


Figure 2.2.1

This section examines several ways to combine sentences with coordination and subordination, using Joshua's essay as an example.

Coordination and Sentence Combining

This method of combining sentences creates a compound sentence. Coordination joins two independent clauses that contain related ideas of equal importance.

Original sentences: I spent my entire paycheck last week. I am staying home this weekend.

In their current form, these sentences contain two separate ideas that may or may not be related. Am I staying home this week *because* I spent my paycheck, or is there another reason for my lack of enthusiasm to leave the house? To indicate a relationship between the two ideas, we can use the coordinating conjunction **so**:

Revised sentence: I spent my entire paycheck last week, **so** I am staying home this weekend.

The revised sentence illustrates that the two ideas are connected. Notice that the sentence retains two independent clauses (*I spent my entire paycheck*; *I am staying home this weekend*) because each can stand alone as a complete idea.

Coordinating Conjunctions

A coordinating conjunction is a word that joins two independent clauses. The most common coordinating conjunctions are *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, and *so*. Note that a comma precedes the coordinating conjunction when joining two clauses.

Independent Clause	Coordinating Conjunction	Independent Clause	Revised Sentence
I will not be attending the dance.	for (indicates a reason or cause)	I have no one to go with.	I will not be attending the dance, for I have no one to go with.
I plan to stay home.	and (joins two ideas)	I will complete an essay for class.	I plan to stay home, and I will complete an essay for class.
Jessie isn't going to be at the dance.	nor (indicates a negative)	Tom won't be there either.	Jessie isn't going to be at the dance, nor will Tom be there.
The fundraisers are hoping for a record-breaking attendance.	but (indicates a contrast)	I don't think many people are going.	The fundraisers are hoping for a record-breaking attendance, but I don't think many people are going.
I might go to the next fundraising event.	or (offers an alternative)	I might donate some money to the cause.	I might go to the next fundraising event, or I might donate some money to the cause.
My parents are worried that I am antisocial.	yet (indicates a reason)	I have many friends at school.	My parents are worried that I am antisocial, yet I have many friends at school.
Buying a new dress is expensive.	so (indicates a result)	By staying home I will save money.	Buying a new dress is expensive, so by staying home I will save money.

Tip

To help you remember the seven coordinating conjunctions, think of the acronym FANBOYS: *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, *so*. Remember that when you use a coordinating conjunction in a sentence, a comma should precede it.

Conjunctive Adverbs

Another method of joining two independent clauses with related and equal ideas is to use a conjunctive adverb and semicolon. A conjunctive adverb is a linking word that demonstrates a relationship between two clauses. Read the following sentences:

Original sentences: Bridget wants to take part in the next Olympics. She trains every day.

Since these sentences contain two equal and related ideas, they may be joined using a conjunctive adverb. Now, read the revised sentence:

Revised sentence: Bridget wants to take part in the next Olympics; therefore, she trains every day.

The revised sentence explains the relationship between Bridget's desire to take part in the next Olympics and her daily training. Notice that the conjunctive adverb comes after a semicolon that separates the two clauses and is followed by a comma.

Review the following chart of some common conjunctive adverbs with examples of how they are used:

Function	Conjunctive Adverb	Example
Addition	also, furthermore, moreover, besides	Alicia was late for class and stuck in traffic; furthermore, her shoe heel had broken and she had forgotten her lunch.
Comparison	similarly, likewise	Recycling aluminum cans is beneficial to the environment; similarly, reusing plastic bags and switching off lights reduces waste.

Function	Conjunctive Adverb	Example
Contrast	instead, however, conversely	Most people do not walk to work; instead, they drive or take the train.
Emphasis	namely, certainly, indeed	The Siberian tiger is a rare creature; indeed, there are fewer than five hundred left in the wild.
Cause and Effect	accordingly, consequently, hence, thus	I missed my train this morning; consequently, I was late for my meeting.
Time	finally, next, subsequently, then	Tim crossed the barrier, jumped over the wall, and pushed through the hole in the fence; finally, he made it to the station.

Take a look at Joshua's essay on wine production and identify some areas in which he might use coordination.

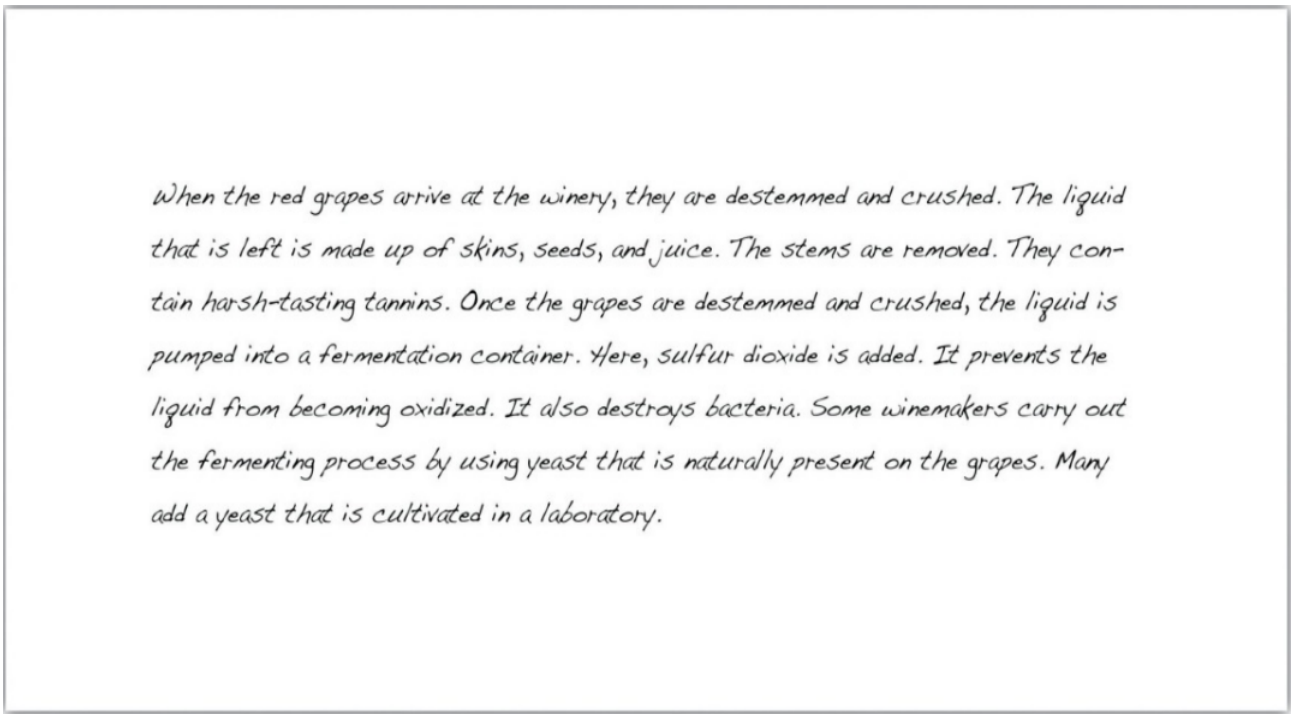

When the red grapes arrive at the winery, they are destemmed and crushed. The liquid that is left is made up of skins, seeds, and juice. The stems are removed. They contain harsh-tasting tannins. Once the grapes are destemmed and crushed, the liquid is pumped into a fermentation container. Here, sulfur dioxide is added. It prevents the liquid from becoming oxidized. It also destroys bacteria. Some winemakers carry out the fermenting process by using yeast that is naturally present on the grapes. Many add a yeast that is cultivated in a laboratory.

Figure 2.2.2

Now look at Joshua's revised essay. Did you coordinate the same sentences? You may find that your answers are different because there are usually several ways to join two independent clauses.

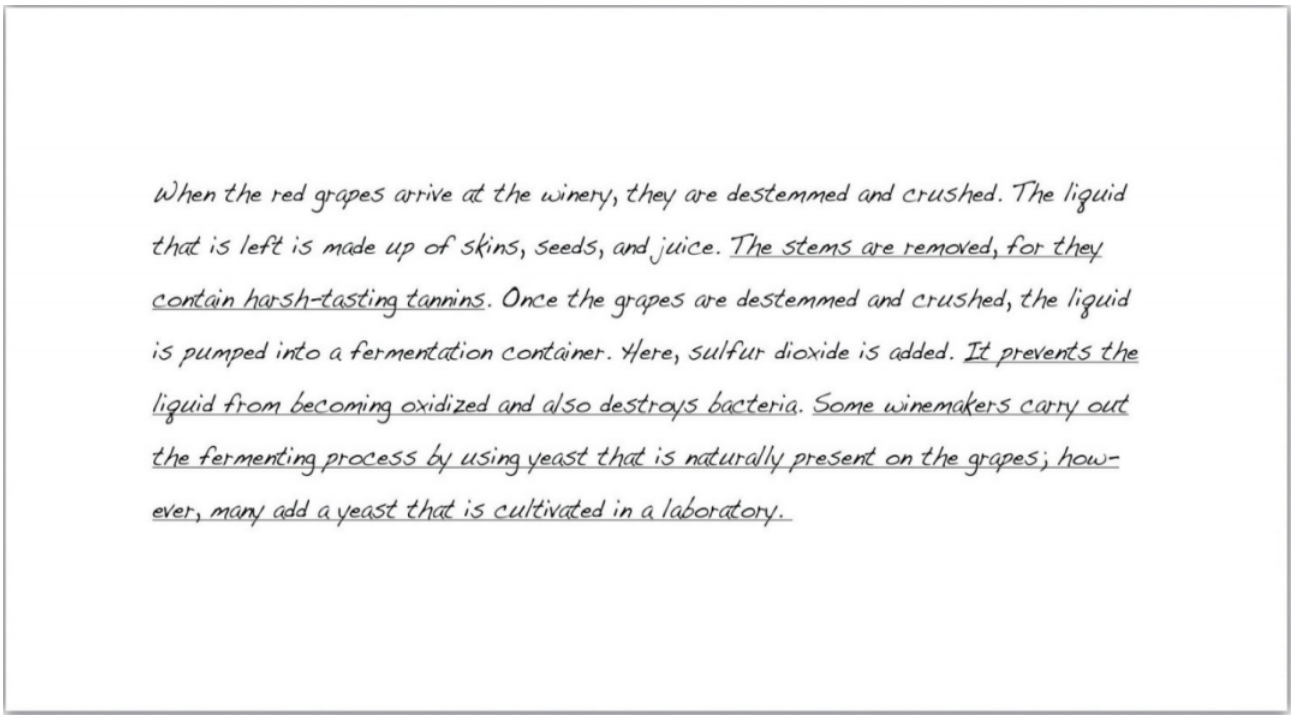


Figure 2.2.3

Exercise 2.2.1:

Combine each sentence pair into a single sentence using either a coordinating conjunction or a conjunctive adverb. Then copy the combined sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Pets are not allowed in Ms. Wallace's building. She owns several cats and a parrot.
2. New legislation prevents drivers from sending or reading text messages while driving. Many people continue to use their phones illegally.
3. The coroner concluded that the young man had taken a lethal concoction of drugs. By the time his relatives found him, nothing could be done.
4. Amphibians are vertebrates that live on land and in the water. Flatworms are invertebrates that live only in water.
5. Priya carefully fed and watered her tomato plants all summer. The tomatoes grew juicy and ripe.
6. When he lost his car key, Olamileykan attempted to open the door with a wire hanger, a credit card, and a paper clip. He called the manufacturer for advice.

Tip

When writing an essay or a report, it is important that you do not use excessive coordination. Workplace documents should be clear and concise, so only join two clauses that are logically connected and can work together to make one main point. If you repeat the same coordinating conjunction several times in a sentence, you are probably including more than one idea. This may make it difficult for readers to pick out the most important information in each sentence.

Subordination and Sentence Combining

Subordination is used to join two sentences with related ideas by merging them into a main clause (a complete sentence) and a dependent clause (a construction that relies on the main clause to complete its meaning). This creates a Complex sentence. Coordination allows a writer to give equal weight to the two ideas that are being combined, and subordination enables a writer to emphasize one idea over the other. Take a look at the following sentences:

Original sentences: Farnaz stopped to help the injured man. She would be late for work.

To illustrate that these two ideas are related, we can rewrite them as a single sentence using the subordinating conjunction *even though*.

Revised sentence: Even though Farnaz would be late for work, she stopped to help the injured man.

In the revised version, we now have an independent clause (*she stopped to help the injured man*) that stands as a complete sentence and a dependent clause (*even though Farnaz would be late for work*) that is subordinate to the main clause. Notice that the revised sentence emphasizes the fact that Tracy stopped to help the injured man, rather than the fact she would be late for work. We could also write the sentence this way:

Revised sentence: Farnaz stopped to help the injured man even though she would be late for work.

The meaning remains the same in both sentences, with the subordinating conjunction *even though* introducing the dependent clause.

Tip

To punctuate sentences correctly, look at the position of the main clause and the subordinate clause. If a subordinate clause precedes the main clause, use a comma. If the subordinate clause follows the main cause, no punctuation is required.

Subordinating Conjunctions

A subordinating conjunction is a word that joins a subordinate (dependent) clause to a main (independent) clause. Review the following chart of some common subordinating conjunctions and examples of how they are used:

Function	Subordinating Conjunction	Example
Concession	although, while, though, whereas, even though	Sarah completed her report even though she had to stay late to get it done.
Condition	if, unless, until	Until we know what is causing the problem, we will not be able to fix it.
Manner	as if, as, though	Everyone in the conference room stopped talking at once, as though they had been stunned into silence.
Place	where, wherever	Rita is in San Jose where she has several important client meetings.
Reason	because, since, so that, in order that	Because the air conditioning was turned up so high, everyone in the office wore sweaters.
Time	after, before, while, once, when	After the meeting had finished, we all went to lunch.

Take a look at the excerpt from Jose's essay and identify some areas in which he might use subordination.

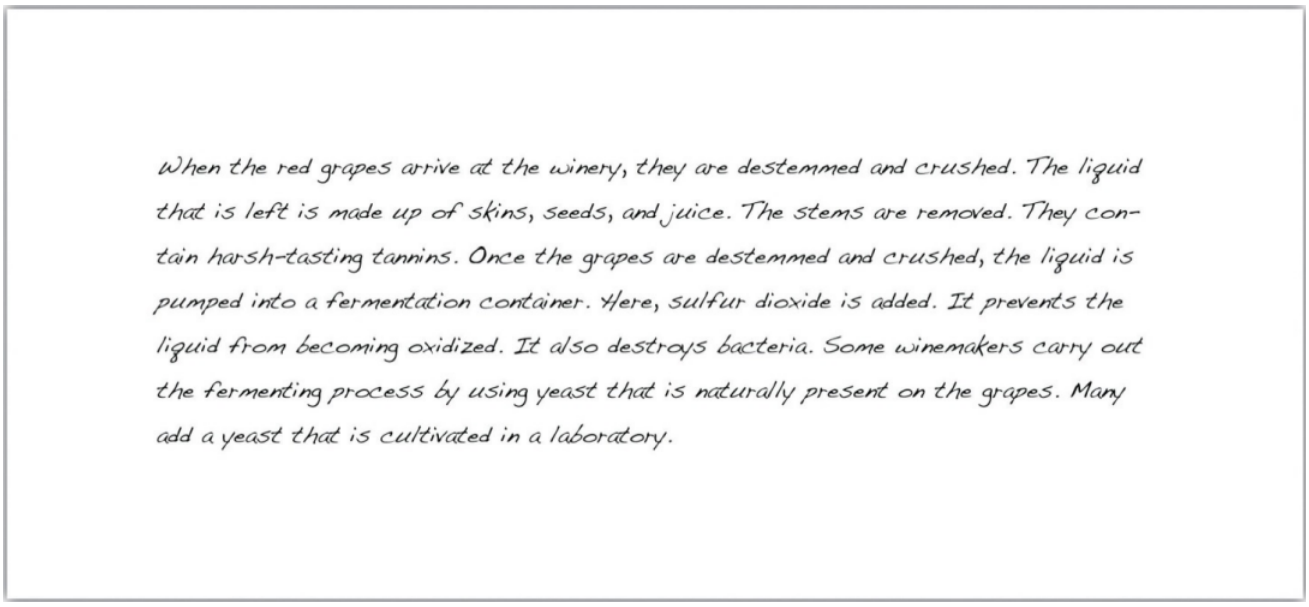


Figure 2.2.4

Now look at Jose's revised essay and compare your answers. You will probably notice that there are many different ways to subordinate sentences.

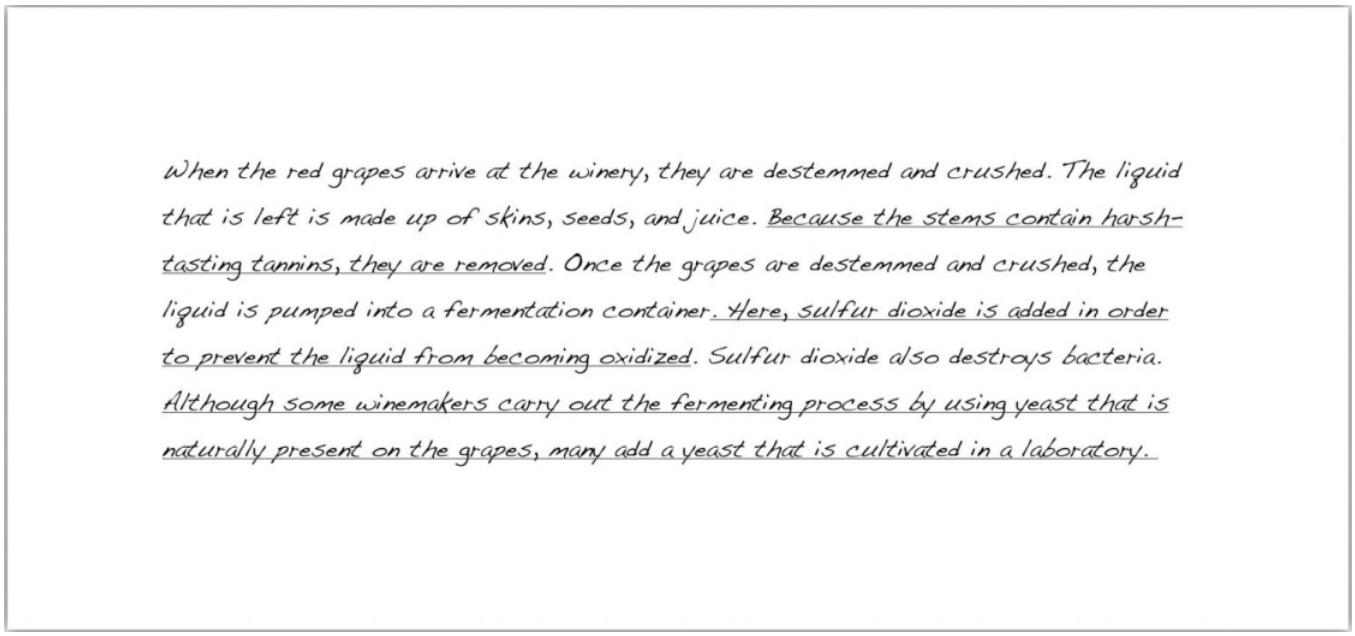


Figure 2.2.5

Exercise 2.2.2:

Combine each sentence pair into a single sentence using a subordinating conjunction and then copy the combined sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Amir is going to Mexico. There are beautiful beaches in Mexico.
2. A snowstorm disrupted traffic all over the east coast. There will be long delivery delays this week.
3. My neighbor had his television volume turned up too high. I banged on his door and asked him to keep the noise down.
4. Jessica prepared the potato salad and the sautéed vegetables. Brenda marinated the chicken.
5. Romeo poisons himself. Juliet awakes to find Romeo dead and stabs herself with a dagger.

Exercise 2.2.3:

Combine each set of simple sentences into a compound or a complex sentence. Write the combined sentence on your own sheet of paper.

1. Heroin is an extremely addictive drug. Thousands of heroin addicts die each year.
2. Shakespeare's writing is still relevant today. He wrote about timeless themes. These themes include love, hate, jealousy, death, and destiny.
3. Originally, gay marriage was legal in only six states: Iowa, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. The Supreme Court ruled it was legal in all states.
4. Prewriting is a vital stage of the writing process. Prewriting helps you organize your ideas. Types of prewriting include outlining, brainstorming, and idea mapping.
5. Ernest Hemingway is a famous writer. He also served on the local school board. His house is in Key West, Florida.

Exercise 2.2.4:

Copy the paragraph from Jose's essay onto your own sheet of paper. Then edit using the techniques you have learned in this section. Join the underlined sentences using coordination or subordination. Check your revised sentences for punctuation.

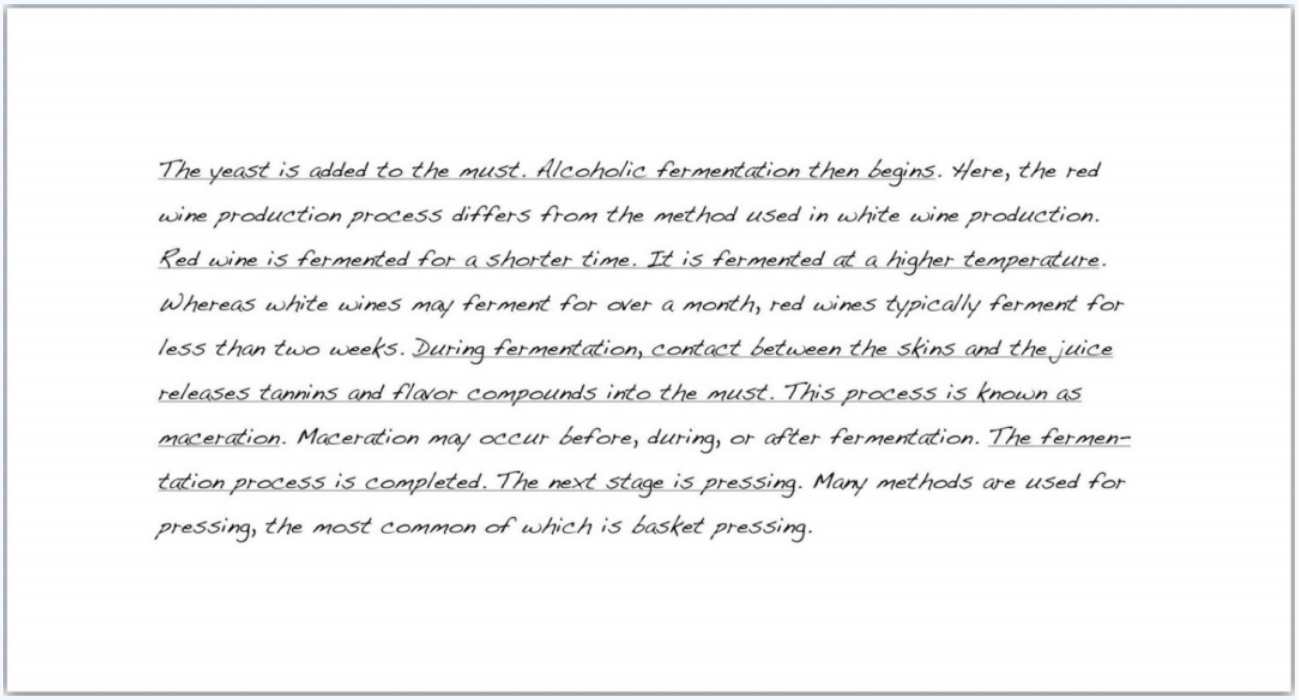


Figure 2.2.6

Key Takeaways

- Coordination and subordination join two sentences with related ideas.
- Coordination joins sentences with related and equal ideas, whereas subordination joins sentences with related but unequal ideas.
- Sentences can be coordinated using either a coordinating conjunction and a comma or a conjunctive adverb and a semicolon.
- Subordinate sentences are characterized by the use of a subordinate conjunction.
- In a subordinate sentence, a comma is used to separate the main clause from the dependent clause if the dependent clause is placed at the beginning of the sentence.

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2.3: Sentence Structure Boundaries and Associated Errors

Sentence Structure

Chapter 1 covered the basics of sentence structure in creating a good sentences. It also covered the variety of sentence patterns to make good sentences. As mentioned before, good writers use a variety of sentence structures to make their work more interesting. However, students may have sentence structure issues and you need to understand how these sentences are put together and how to fix the errors possibly made in writing. This section will cover a variety of sentence structure boundaries and show you how to fix those errors you may have such as fragments, comma splices and run-ons.

Fragments

As mentioned in Chapter 1, a sentence that is missing a subject or a verb is called a fragment. You can easily fix a fragment by adding the missing subject or verb.

See whether you can identify what is missing in the following fragments:

Fragment: Told her about the broken vase.

Complete sentence: I told her about the broken vase.

Fragment: The store down on Main Street.

Complete sentence: The store down on Main Street **sells music**.

The following Figure on the next page gives you a good path to fix errors:

Editing Fragments That Are Missing a Subject or a Verb

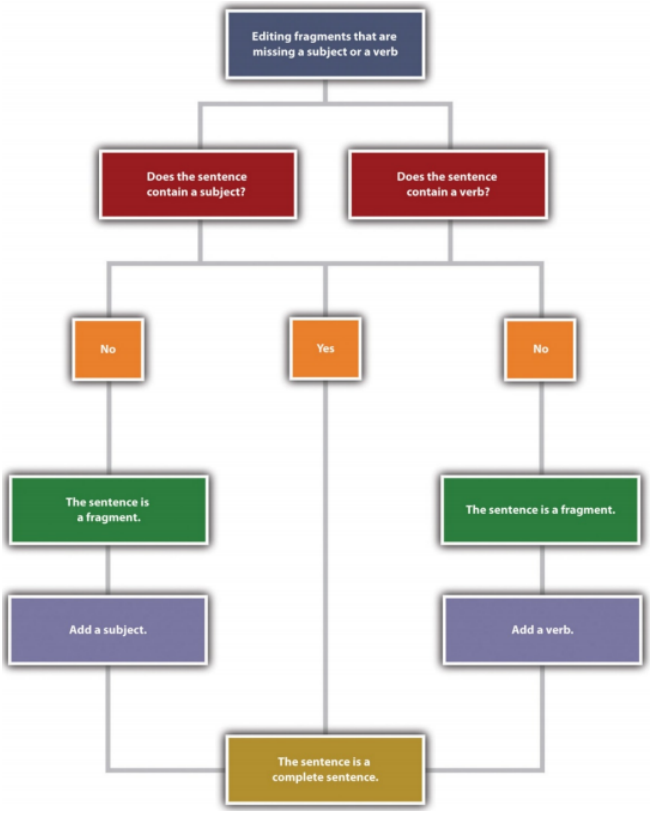


Figure 2.3.1

Common Sentence Errors Which Cause Fragments

Fragments often occur because of some common error, such as starting a sentence with a preposition, a dependent word, an infinitive, or a gerund. If you use the six basic sentence patterns discussed in Chapter 1 when you write, you should be able to avoid these errors and thus avoid writing fragments.

When you see a preposition, check to see that it is part of a sentence containing a subject and a verb. If it is not connected to a complete sentence, it is a fragment, and you will need to fix this type of fragment by combining it with another sentence. You can add the prepositional phrase to the end of the sentence. If you add it to the beginning of the other sentence, insert a comma after the prepositional phrase.

Example 2.3.1:

Incorrect: After walking over two miles. John remembered his wallet.

Correct: After walking over two miles, John remembered his wallet.

Correct: John remembered his wallet ~~After~~ after walking over two miles.

Figure 2.3.2

Incorrect: The dog growled at the vacuum cleaner. When it was switched on.

Correct: When the vacuum cleaner was switched on, the dog growled.

Correct: The dog growled at the vacuum cleaner ~~When~~ when it was switched on.

Figure 2.3.3

The figure on the following page shows you the method to edit fragments that begin with a preposition:

Editing Fragments That Begin with a Preposition

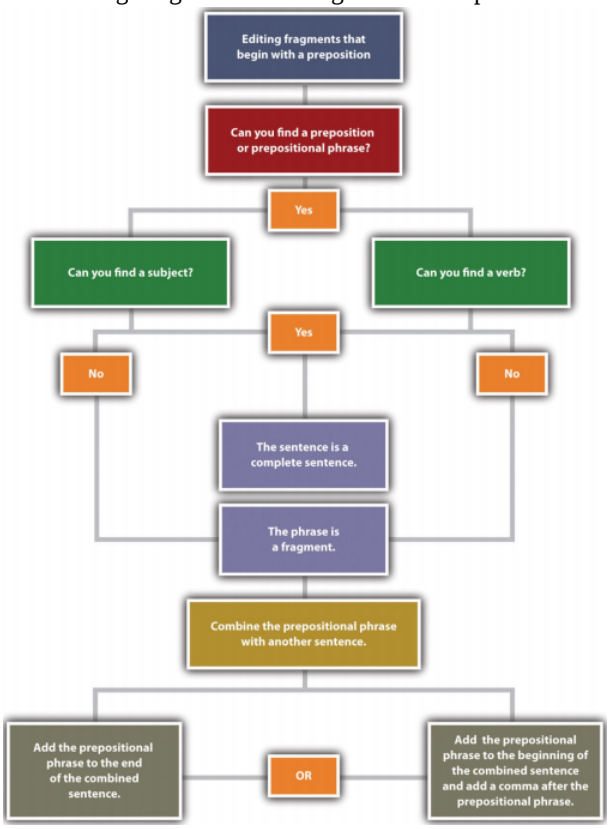


Figure 2.3.4

Clauses that start with a dependent word — such as since, if, because, when, although, even though, after, without, or unless — are similar to prepositional phrases. Like prepositional phrases, these clauses can be fragments if they are not connected to an independent clause containing a subject and a verb. To fix the problem, you can add such a fragment to the beginning or end of a sentence. If the fragment is added at the beginning of a sentence, add a comma.

Incorrect: Because we lost power. The entire family overslept.

Correct: Because we lost power, the entire family overslept.

Correct: The entire family overslept ~~Because~~ because we lost power.

Example 2.3.1

Incorrect: He has been seeing a physical therapist. Since his accident.

Correct: Since his accident, he has been seeing a physical therapist.

Correct: He has been seeing a physical therapist ~~Since~~ since his accident.

Example 2.3.2

When you encounter a word ending in *-ing* in a sentence, identify whether or not this word is used as a verb in the sentence. You may also look for a helping verb. If the word is not used as a verb or if no helping verb is used with the *-ing* verb form, the verb is being used as a noun. An *-ing* verb form used as a noun is called a gerund.

HV V

Verb: I was working on homework until midnight.

Noun: Working until midnight makes me tired the next morning.

Example 2.3.3

Once you know whether the *-ing* word is acting as a noun or a verb, look at the rest of the sentence. Does the entire sentence make sense on its own? If not, what you are looking at is a fragment. You will need to either add the parts of speech that are missing or combine the fragment with a nearby sentence.

Incorrect: Taking deep breaths. Saul prepared for his presentation.

Correct: Taking deep breaths**,** Saul prepared for his presentation.

Correct: Saul prepared for his presentation. He **was taking** deep breaths.

Incorrect: Congratulating the entire team. Sarah raised her glass to toast their success.

Correct: She was congratulating the entire team. Sarah raised her glass to toast their success.

Correct: Congratulating the entire team**,** Sarah raised her glass to toast their success.

The figure on the following page shows you the method to edit fragments that begin with a gerund:

Editing Fragments That Begin with Gerunds

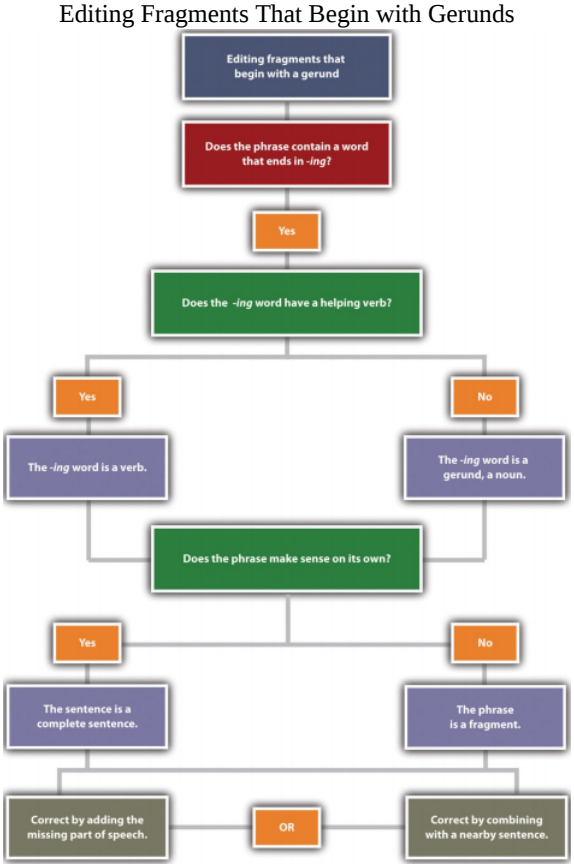


Figure 2.3.5

Another error in sentence construction is a fragment that begins with an infinitive. An infinitive is a verb paired with the word *to*; for example, *to run*, *to write*, or *to reach* are all infinitives. Although infinitives are verbs, they can be used as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs. You can correct a fragment that begins with an infinitive by either combining it with another sentence or adding the parts of speech that are missing.

Incorrect: We needed to make three hundred more paper cranes. To reach the one thousand mark.

Correct: We needed to make three hundred more paper cranes **to** reach the one thousand mark.

Correct: We needed to make three hundred more paper cranes. **We wanted to** reach the one thousand mark.

Exercise 2.3.1:

Copy the following sentences onto your own sheet of paper and circle the fragments. Then combine the fragment with the independent clause to create a complete sentence.

1. Working without taking a break. We try to get as much work done as we can in an hour.
2. I needed to bring work home. In order to meet the deadline.
3. Unless the ground thaws before spring break. We won't be planting any tulips this year.
4. Turning the lights off after he was done in the kitchen. Mohammed tries to conserve energy whenever possible.
5. You'll find what you need if you look. On the shelf next to the potted plant.
6. To find the perfect apartment. Thuy scoured the classifieds each day

Run-on Sentences

Just as short, incomplete sentences can be problematic, lengthy sentences can be problematic too. Sentences with two or more independent clauses that have been incorrectly combined are known as run-on sentences. A run-on sentence may consist of either a fused sentence or a comma splice or both.

When two complete sentences are combined into one without any punctuation, the result is a fused sentence.

Fused sentence: A family of foxes lived under our shed young foxes played all over the yard.

When two complete sentences are joined by a comma, the result is a comma splice.

Comma splice: We looked outside, the kids were hopping on the trampoline.

Writers sometimes create run-ons that are an entire paragraph. An example of writing with both a fused sentence and a comma splice is the following:

Fused sentence and comma splice: A good communicator always possesses these traits like being a good and non-interruptive listener this is the #1 traits that lets people know if you are a good communicator, Confidence is one of them, Good posture, Respect, Clarity, Eye contact, body language is another important of them too because we have verbal and non-verbal communication we have people who cannot talk but use sign language to communicate.

Correcting a Run-on Sentence

Punctuation

One way to correct run-on sentences is to correct the punctuation. For example, adding a period will correct the run-on by creating two separate sentences.

Run-on: There were no seats left, we had to stand in the back.

Correct: There were no seats left. ~~we~~ We had to stand in the back.

Example 2.3.4

Using a semicolon between the two complete sentences will also correct the error. A semicolon allows you to keep the two closely related ideas together in one sentence. When you punctuate with a semicolon, make sure that both parts of the sentence are independent clauses. For more information on semicolons, see Chapter 8.

Run-on: The accident closed both lanes of traffic we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

Complete sentence: The accident closed both lanes of traffic**;** we waited an hour for the wreckage to be cleared.

When you use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses, you may wish to add a transition word to show the connection between the two thoughts. After the semicolon, add the transition word and follow it with a comma. For more information on transition words, see Chapter 8.

Run-on: The project was put on hold we didn't have time to slow down, so we kept working.

Complete sentence: The project was put on hold**; however,** we didn't have time to slow down, so we kept working.

Coordinating Conjunctions (FANBOYS)

You can also fix run-on sentences by adding a comma and a coordinating conjunction. A coordinating conjunction acts as a link between two independent clauses. The acronym *FANBOYS* will help you remember this group of coordinating conjunctions. These are the seven coordinating conjunctions that you can use: *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, and *so*. Use these words appropriately when you want to link the two independent clauses.

Run-on: The new printer was installed, no one knew how to use it.

Complete sentence: The new printer was installed**, but** no one knew how to use it.

Dependent Words (Conjunctive Adverbs)

Adding dependent words is another way to link independent clauses. Like the coordinating conjunctions, dependent words show a relationship between two independent clauses.

Run-on: We took the elevator, the others still got there before us.

Complete sentence: Although we took the elevator, the others got there before us.

Run-on: Cobwebs covered the furniture, the room hadn't been used in years.

Complete sentence: Cobwebs covered the furniture **because** the room hadn't been used in years.

Sample e-mail

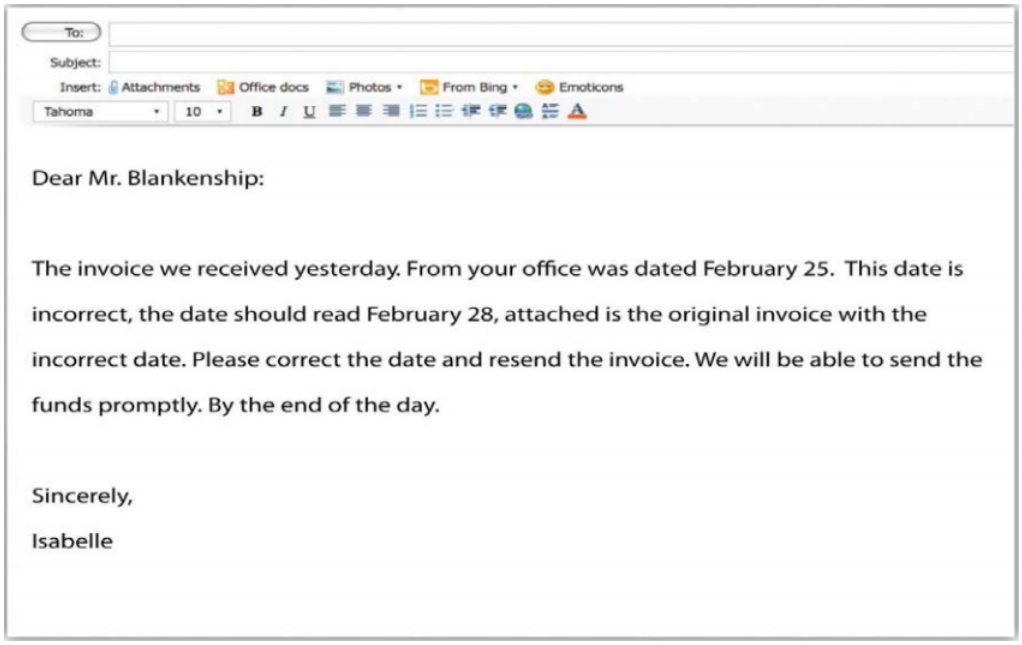


Figure 2.3.6

Discussion:

Isabelle's e-mail opens with two fragments and two run-on sentences containing comma splices. The e-mail ends with another fragment. What effect would this e-mail have on Mr. Blankenship or other readers? Mr. Blankenship or other readers may not think highly of Isabelle's communication skills or — worse — may not understand the message at all! Communications written in precise, complete sentences are not only more professional but also easier to understand. Before you hit the "send" button, read your e-mail carefully to make sure that the sentences are complete, are not run together, and are correctly punctuated.

Example 2.3.2:

A reader can get lost or lose interest in material that is too dense and rambling. Use what you have learned about run-on sentences to correct the following passages:

1. The report is due on Wednesday but we're flying back from Miami that morning. I told the project manager that we would be able to get the report to her later that day she suggested that we come back a day early to get the report done and I told her we had meetings until our flight took off. We e-mailed our contact who said that they would check with his boss, she said that the project could afford a delay as long as they wouldn't have to make any edits or changes to the file our new deadline is next Friday.
2. Ana tried getting a reservation at the restaurant, but when she called they said that there was a waiting list so she put our names down on the list when the day of our reservation arrived we only had to wait thirty minutes because a table opened up unexpectedly which was good because we were able to catch a movie after dinner in the time we'd expected to wait to be seated.
3. Without a doubt, my favorite artist is Leonardo da Vinci, not because of his paintings but because of his fascinating designs, models, and sketches, including plans for scuba gear, a flying machine, and a life-size mechanical lion that actually walked and moved its head. His paintings are beautiful too, especially when you see the computer enhanced versions researchers use a variety of methods to discover and enhance the paintings' original colors, the result of which are stunningly vibrant and yet delicate displays of the man's genius.

Example 2.3.3:

Edit this paragraph on your own paper to fix the run-on issues:

Communication is a big topic that if I keep going I could write up to two pages, in conclusion communication is the way of life it can detect ones' feelings and emotions and that's where body language comes in because you can tell if someone is paying attention to you speak by the way they are sitting, looking or even the way they answer or reply to you, we all can be good communicators if we listen more before we speak that's why we have one mouth and two ears talk less and listen more.

Key Takeaways

- A sentence is complete when it contains both a subject and verb. A complete sentence makes sense on its own. Otherwise, it is a fragment!
- Every sentence must have a subject, which usually appears at the beginning of the sentence. A subject may be a noun (a person, place, or thing) or a pronoun.
- A compound subject contains more than one noun.
- A prepositional phrase describes, or modifies, another word in the sentence but cannot be the subject of a sentence.
- A verb is often an action word that indicates what the subject is doing. Verbs may be action verbs, linking verbs, or helping verbs.
- Variety in sentence structure and length improves writing by making it more interesting and more complex.
- Focusing on the six basic sentence patterns will enhance your writing.
- Fragments and run-on sentences are two common errors in sentence construction.
- Fragments can be corrected by adding a missing subject or verb. Fragments that begin with a preposition or a dependent word can be corrected by combining the fragment with another sentence.
- Run-on sentences can be corrected by adding appropriate punctuation or adding a coordinating conjunction.

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2.4: Parallelism

Learning Objectives

1. Identify sentences that are parallel and not parallel.
2. Identify ways to create parallelism in writing.
3. Write and revise sentences using parallelism.

Earlier in this chapter, we learned that increasing sentence variety adds interest to a piece of writing and makes the reading process more enjoyable for others. Using a mixture of sentence lengths and patterns throughout an essay is an important writing technique. However, it is equally important to avoid introducing variation within individual sentences. A strong sentence is composed of balanced parts that all have the same structure. In this section, we will examine how to create a balanced sentence structure by using parallelism.

Using Parallelism

Parallelism is the use of similar structure in related words, clauses, or phrases. It creates a sense of rhythm and balance within a sentence. As readers, we often correct faulty parallelism — a lack of parallel structure — intuitively because an unbalanced sentence sounds awkward and poorly constructed. Read the following sentences aloud:

Faulty parallelism: Kelly had to iron, do the washing, and shopping before her parents arrived.

Faulty parallelism: Driving a car requires coordination, patience, and to have good eyesight.

Faulty parallelism: Ali prefers jeans to wearing a suit.

All of these sentences contain faulty parallelism. Although they are factually correct, the construction is clunky and confusing. In the first example, three different verb forms are used. In the second and third examples, the writer begins each sentence by using a noun (*coordination*, *jeans*), but ends with a phrase (*to have good eyesight*, *wearing a suit*). Now read the same three sentences that have correct parallelism.

Correct parallelism: Kelly had to do the ironing, washing, and shopping before her parents arrived.

Correct parallelism: Driving a car requires coordination, patience, and good eyesight.

Correct parallelism: Ali prefers wearing jeans to wearing a suit.

When these sentences are written using a parallel structure, they sound more aesthetically pleasing because they are balanced. Repetition of grammatical construction also minimizes the amount of work the reader has to do to decode the sentence. This enables the reader to focus on the main idea in the sentence and not on how the sentence is put together.

Tip

A simple way to check for parallelism in your writing is to make sure you have paired nouns with nouns, verbs with verbs, prepositional phrases with prepositional phrases, and so on. Underline each element in a sentence and check that the corresponding element uses the same grammatical form.

Creating Parallelism Using Coordinating Conjunctions

When you connect two clauses using a coordinating conjunction (*for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, *so*), make sure that the same grammatical structure is used on each side of the conjunction. Take a look at the following example:

Faulty parallelism: When I walk the dog, I like **to listen to music** and **talking to friends** on the phone.

Correct parallelism: When I walk the dog, I like **listening to music** and **talking to friends** on the phone.

The first sentence uses two different verb forms (*to listen*, *talking*). In the second sentence, the grammatical construction on each side of the coordinating conjunction (*and*) is the same, creating a parallel sentence. The same technique should be used for joining items or lists in a series:

Faulty parallelism: This committee needs to decide whether the company should **reduce its workforce, cut its benefits,** or **lowering workers' wages**.

Correct parallelism: This committee needs to decide whether the company should **reduce its workforce, cut its benefits,** or **lower workers' wages**.

The first sentence contains two items that use the same verb construction (*reduce*, *cut*) and a third item that uses a different verb form (*lowering*). The second sentence uses the same verb construction in all three items, creating a parallel structure.

Exercise 2.4.1:

On your own sheet of paper, revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using coordinating conjunctions.

1. Mr. Koirla enjoys reading and to play his guitar on weekends.
2. The doctor told Mrs. Hall that she should either eat less or should exercise more.
3. Breaking out of the prison compound, the escapees moved carefully, quietly, and were quick on their feet.
4. I have read the book, but I have not watched the movie version.
5. Deal with a full inbox first thing in the morning, or by setting aside short periods of time in which to answer e-mail queries.

Creating Parallelism Using Than or As

When you are making a comparison, the two items being compared should have a parallel structure. Comparing two items without using parallel structure can lead to confusion about what is being compared. Comparisons frequently use the words *than* or *as*, and the items on each side of these comparison words should be parallel. Take a look at the following example:

Faulty parallelism: Swimming in the ocean is much tougher than **a pool**.

Correct parallelism: Swimming in the ocean is much tougher than **swimming in a pool**.

In the first sentence, the elements before the comparison word (*than*) are not equal to the elements after the comparison word. It appears that the writer is comparing an action (*swimming*) with a noun (*a pool*). In the second sentence, the writer uses the same grammatical construction to create a parallel structure. This clarifies that an action is being compared with another action.

To correct some instances of faulty parallelism, it may be necessary to add or delete words in a sentence.

Faulty parallelism: A brisk walk is as beneficial to your health as **going for a run**.

Correct parallelism: Going for a brisk walk is as beneficial to your health as **going for a run**.

In this example, it is necessary to add the verb phrase *going for* to the sentence in order to clarify that the act of walking is being compared to the act of running.

Exercise 2.4.2:

On your own sheet of paper, revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using than or as.

1. I would rather work at a second job to pay for a new car than a loan.
2. How you look in the workplace is just as important as your behavior.
3. The firefighter spoke more of his childhood than he talked about his job.
4. Indian cuisine is far tastier than the food of Great Britain.
5. Amber's opponent was as tall as Amber and he carried far more weight.

Creating Parallelism Using Correlative Conjunctions

A correlative conjunction is a paired conjunction that connects two equal parts of a sentence and shows the relationship between them. Common correlative conjunctions include the following:

- either…or
- not only…but also
- neither…nor
- whether…or
- rather…than
- both…and

Correlative conjunctions should follow the same grammatical structure to create a parallel sentence. Take a look at the following example:

Faulty parallelism: We can neither **wait** for something to happen nor **can we take** evasive action.

Correct parallelism: We can neither **wait** for something to happen nor **take** evasive action.

When using a correlative conjunction, the words, phrases, or clauses following each part should be parallel. In the first sentence, the construction of the second part of the sentence does not match the construction of the first part. In the second sentence, omitting needless words and matching verb constructions create a parallel structure. Sometimes, rearranging a sentence corrects faulty parallelism.

Faulty parallelism: It was both a long movie and poorly written.

Correct parallelism: The movie was both long and poorly written

Tip

This is an area where we see mistakes. To see examples of parallelism in use, read some of the great historical speeches by rhetoricians such as Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther King Jr. Notice how they use parallel structures to emphasize important points and to create a smooth, easily understandable oration.

Here is a link to text, audio, video, and the music of Martin Luther King's speech "I Have a Dream": http://www.mlkonline.net/dream.html

Note that the spelling and grammar checker on most word processors will not draw attention to faulty parallelism. When proofreading a document, read it aloud and listen for sentences that sound awkward or poorly phrased.

Exercise 2.4.3:

On your own sheet of paper, revise each of the following sentences to create parallel structure using correlative conjunctions.

1. The cyclist owns both a mountain bike and has a racing bike.
2. The movie not only contained lots of action, but also it offered an important lesson.
3. My current job is neither exciting nor is it meaningful.
4. Antonio would rather listen to his father than be taking advice from me.
5. We are neither interested in buying a vacuum cleaner nor do we want to utilize your carpet cleaning service.

Exercise 2.4.4:

Read through the following excerpt from Alex's essay and revise any instances of faulty parallelism. Rewrite the sentences to create a parallel structure.

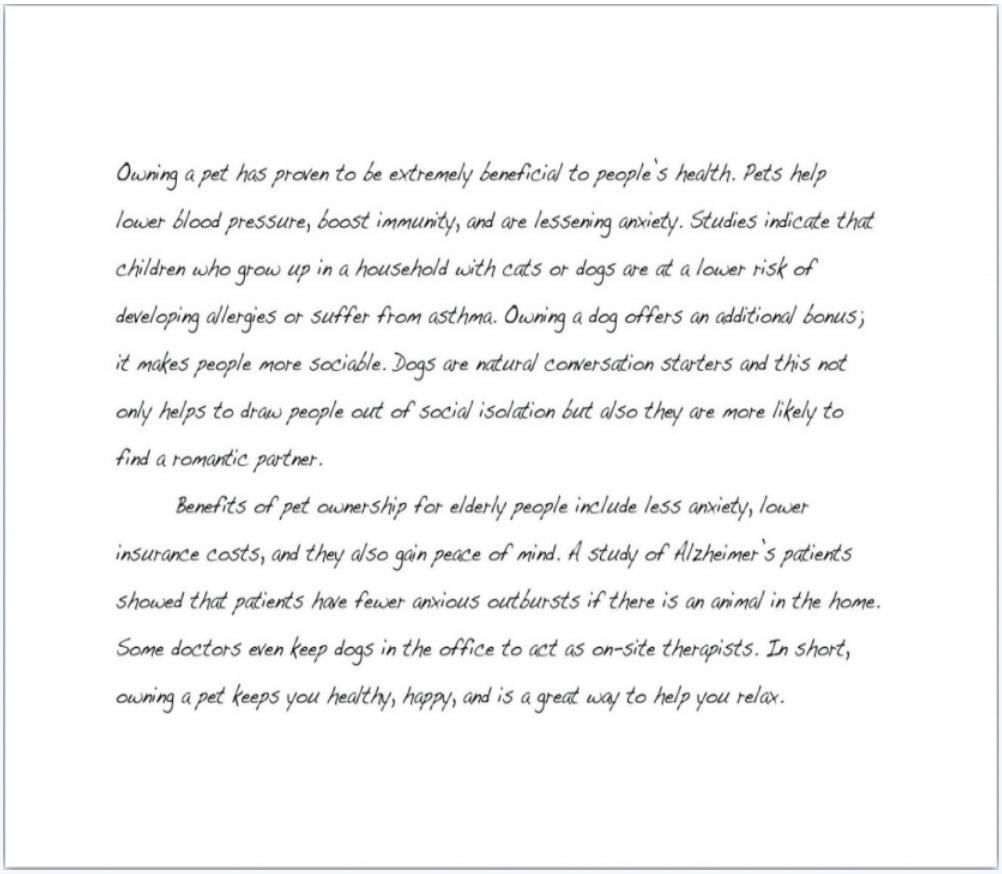


Figure 2.4.1

Key Takeaways

- Parallelism creates a sense of rhythm and balance in writing by using the same grammatical structure to express equal ideas.
- Faulty parallelism occurs when elements of a sentence are not balanced, causing the sentence to sound clunky and awkward.
- Parallelism may be created by connecting two clauses or making a list using coordinating conjunctions; by comparing two items using *than* or *as*; or by connecting two parts of a sentence using correlative conjunctions.

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2.5: Refining Your Writing (Exercises)

1. Fix the following paragraph based the methods described in the sentence structure section:

   I can't live without my Mom because my parents got divorced in 2012 and since that day my Mom has sacrificed her life to give me a better life. After my parents got separated my Mom has never said no to me for anything. She is my really good friend I can share anything with her and she always guides me through it.

2. Children's stories are deliberately written in short, simple sentences to avoid confusion. Most sentences are constructed using the standard subject-verb-object format. Choose a children's story that is suitable for eight- to ten-year-olds. Rewrite a chapter of the story so that it appeals to a slightly older age group, by editing for sentence variety. Experiment with the techniques you learned in "Sentence Variety," including the three different ways to vary sentence structure at the beginning of a sentence and the three different ways to connect ideas between sentences. Compare the revised chapter with the original version and consider how sentence variety can be used to target a particular audience.
3. Compile a selection of real-life writing samples from the workplace or around the home. You might like to choose one of the following: e-mail, junk mail, personal letter, company report, social networking page, local newspaper, bulletin-board posting, or public notice. Choose two samples that lack sentence variety. Highlight areas of each writing sample that you would edit for sentence variety and explain why. Replace any recognizable name with a pseudonym, or a fictitious name.
4. **Group activity.** Choose a well-known speech, such as Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech, Winston Churchill's "Blood, Toil, Tears, and Sweat" speech, or Barack Obama's inaugural address. Make a copy of the speech and, as a group, underline examples of parallelism. Discuss the effects of using parallelism and consider whether it is always used to achieve the same result or whether the writer manipulates parallelism to create a variety of responses among his or her audience.
5. **Group activity.** Working in a small group, select a workplace document or academic essay. Examine each paragraph and identify examples of sentence variety, coordination and subordination, and parallelism. Then, choose one particular paragraph and discuss the following questions:
   - Does the writer use sentence variety effectively?
   - Does the writer connect his or her ideas effectively?
   - Does the writer use subordination and coordination correctly?
   - Does the writer use parallelism to emphasize his or her points?

   As a group, identify the weaker areas of the paragraph and rewrite them. Focus on sentence structure and sentence variation. Use coordinating conjunctions and subordinating conjunctions to join sentences.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Writing Paragraphs - Separating Ideas and Shaping Content

3.1: Effective Means for Writing a Paragraph

3.2: Purpose, Audience, Tone, and Content

3.3: Writing Paragraphs (Exercises)

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3.1: Effective Means for Writing a Paragraph

Learning Objectives

1. Identify characteristics of a good topic sentence.
2. Identify the three parts of a developed paragraph.
3. Apply knowledge of topic sentences and parts of a developed paragraph in an assignment.

Now that you have identified common purposes for writing and learned how to select appropriate content for a particular audience, you can think about the structure of a paragraph in greater detail. Composing an effective paragraph requires a method similar to building a house. You may have the finest content, or materials, but if you do not arrange them in the correct order, then the final product will not hold together very well.

A strong paragraph contains three distinct components:

1. Topic sentence**.** The topic sentence is the main idea of the paragraph.
2. Body**.** The body is composed of the supporting sentences that develop the main point.
3. Conclusion**.** The conclusion is the final sentence that summarizes the main point.

The foundation of a good paragraph is the topic sentence, which expresses the main idea of the paragraph. The topic sentence relates to the thesis, or main point, of the essay and guides the reader by signposting what the paragraph is about. All the sentences in the rest of the paragraph should relate to the topic sentence.

This section covers the major components of a paragraph and examines how to develop an effective topic sentence.

Developing a Topic Sentence

Pick up any newspaper or magazine and read the first sentence of an article. Are you fairly confident that you know what the rest of the article is about? If so, you have likely read the topic sentence. An effective topic sentence combines a main idea with the writer's personal attitude or opinion. It serves to orient the reader and provides an indication of what will follow in the rest of the paragraph. Read the following example.

Creating a national set of standards for math and English education will improve student learning in many states.

This topic sentence declares a favorable position for standardizing math and English education. After reading this sentence, a reader might reasonably expect the writer to provide supporting details and facts as to why standardizing math and English education might improve student learning in many states. If the purpose of the essay is actually to evaluate education in only one particular state, or to discuss math or English education specifically, then the topic sentence is misleading.

Tip

When writing a draft of an essay, allow a friend or colleague to read the opening line of your first paragraph. Ask your reader to predict what your paper will be about. If he or she is unable to guess your topic accurately, you should consider revising your topic sentence so that it clearly defines your purpose in writing.

Main Idea versus Controlling Idea

Topic sentences contain both a main idea (the subject, or topic that the writer is discussing) and a controlling idea (the writer's specific stance on that subject). Just as a thesis statement includes an idea that controls a document's focus, a topic sentence must also contain a controlling idea to direct the paragraph. Different writers may use the same main idea but can steer their paragraph in a number of different directions according to their stance on the subject.

Read the following examples.

- Marijuana is a destructive influence on teens and causes long-term brain damage.
- The anti-nausea properties in marijuana are a lifeline for many cancer patients.
- Legalizing marijuana would create a higher demand for harmful and dangerous drugs.

Although the main idea — marijuana — is the same in all three topic sentences, the controlling idea differs depending on the writer's viewpoint.

Exercise 3.1.1:

Circle the main idea and underline the controlling idea in each of the following topic sentences.

1. Exercising three times a week is the only way to maintain good physical health.
2. Sexism and racism are still rampant in today's workplace.
3. Raising the legal driving age to twenty-one would decrease road traffic accidents.
4. Owning a business is the only way to achieve financial success.
5. Dog owners should be prohibited from taking their pets on public beaches.

Characteristics of a Good Topic Sentence

Five characteristics define a good topic sentence:

Weak example. People rarely give firefighters the credit they deserve for such a physically and emotionally demanding job. (The paragraph is about a specific incident that involved firefighters; therefore, this topic sentence is too general.)

Stronger example. During the October riots, Unit 3B went beyond the call of duty. (This topic sentence is more specific and indicates that the paragraph will contain information about a particular incident involving Unit 3B.)

Stronger example. Introducing a salary cap would improve the game of baseball for many reasons. (This topic sentence omits the additional supporting detail so that it can be expanded upon later in the paragraph.)

1. A good topic sentence provides an accurate indication of what will follow in the rest of the paragraph.
2. A good topic sentence contains both a topic and a controlling idea or opinion.

   Weak example. In this paper, I am going to discuss the rising suicide rate among young professionals. (This topic sentence provides a main idea, but it does not present a controlling idea, or thesis.)

   Stronger example. The rising suicide rate among young professionals is a cause for immediate concern. (This topic sentence presents the writer's opinion on the subject of rising suicide rates among young professionals.)

3. A good topic sentence is clear and easy to follow.

   Weak example. In general, writing an essay, thesis, or other academic or nonacademic document is considerably easier and of much higher quality if you first construct an outline, of which there are many different types. (This topic sentence includes a main idea and a controlling thesis, but both are buried beneath the confusing sentence structure and unnecessary vocabulary. These obstacles make it difficult for the reader to follow.)

   Stronger example. Most forms of writing can be improved by first creating an outline. (This topic sentence cuts out unnecessary verbiage and simplifies the previous statement, making it easier for the reader to follow.)

4. A good topic sentence does not include supporting details.

   Weak example. Salaries should be capped in baseball for many reasons, most importantly so we don't allow the same team to win year after year. (This topic sentence includes a supporting detail that should be included later in the paragraph to back up the main point.)

5. 5. A good topic sentence engages the reader by using interesting vocabulary.

   Weak example. The military deserves better equipment. (This topic sentence includes a main idea and a controlling thesis, but the language is bland and unexciting.)

   Stronger example. The appalling lack of resources provided to the military is outrageous and requires our immediate attention. (This topic sentence reiterates the same idea and controlling thesis, but adjectives such as *appalling* and *immediate* better engage the reader. These words also indicate the writer's tone.)

Exercise 3.1.2:

Choose the most effective topic sentence from the following sentence pairs.

1. a. This paper will discuss the likelihood of the Democrats winning the next election.

   b. To boost their chances of winning the next election, the Democrats need to listen to public opinion.

2. a. The unrealistic demands of union workers are crippling the economy for three main reasons.

   b. Union workers are crippling the economy because companies are unable to remain competitive as a result of added financial pressure.

3. a. Authors are losing money as a result of technological advances.

   b. The introduction of new technology will devastate the literary world.

4. a. Rap music is produced by untalented individuals with oversized egos.

   b. This essay will consider whether talent is required in the rap music industry.

Exercise 3.1.3:

Using the tips on developing effective topic sentences in this section, create a topic sentence on each of the following subjects. Remember to include a controlling idea as well as a main idea. Write your responses on your own sheet of paper.

1. Working while in high school

   _____

2. Attending a two-year college

   _____

3. The legal drinking age

   _____

4. Using public transportation

   _____

Tip

When writing to professors or colleagues, use the "top-down" approach — keep the topic sentence at the beginning of each paragraph so that readers immediately understand the gist of the message. This method saves busy colleagues precious time and effort trying to figure out the main points and relevant details.

Developing Paragraphs That Use Topic Sentences, Supporting Ideas, and Transitions Effectively

Learning how to develop a good topic sentence is the first step toward writing a solid paragraph. Once you have composed your topic sentence, you have **a guideline** for the rest of the paragraph. To complete the paragraph, a writer must support the topic sentence with additional information and summarize the main point with a concluding sentence.

This section identifies the three major structural parts of a paragraph and covers how to develop a paragraph using transitional words and phrases.

Identifying Parts of a Paragraph

An effective paragraph contains three main parts: a topic sentence, the body, and the concluding sentence. A topic sentence is often the first sentence of a paragraph. This chapter has already discussed its purpose — to express a main idea combined with the writer's attitude about the subject. Below you will see how the topic sentence can appear in a variety of positions in effective writing. In standard academic writing, the preferred position is the first sentence of the paragraph. The body of the paragraph usually follows, containing supporting details. Supporting sentences help explain, prove, or enhance the topic sentence. The concluding sentence is the last sentence in the paragraph. It reminds the reader of the main point by restating it in different words.

Example 3.1.1:

Paragraph Structure Graphic Organizer

Topic Sentence

(main idea + personal opinions)

Body

Supporting Sentence _____

Supporting Sentence _____

Supporting Sentence _____

Conclusion

(Summary of main idea + personal opinion)

Concluding Sentence _____

Read the following paragraph. The topic sentence is underlined for you.

> After reading the new TV guide this week, I had just one thought — we are still being bombarded with reality shows. This season, the plague of reality television continues to darken our airwaves. Along with the return of viewer favorites, we are to be cursed with yet another mindless creation. *Prisoner* follows the daily lives of eight suburban housewives who have chosen to be put in jail for the purposes of this fake psychological experiment. A preview for the first episode shows the usual tears and tantrums associated with reality television. I dread to think what producers will come up with next season, but if any of them are reading this blog — stop it! We've had enough reality television to last us a lifetime!

The first sentence of this paragraph is the topic sentence. It tells the reader that the paragraph will be about reality television shows, and it expresses the writer's distaste for these shows through the use of the word *bombarded*. Each of the following sentences in the paragraph supports the topic sentence by providing further information about a specific reality television show. The final sentence is the concluding sentence. It reiterates the main point that viewers are bored with reality television shows by using different words from the topic sentence.

Paragraphs that begin with the topic sentence move from the general to the specific. They open with a general statement about a subject (reality shows) and then discuss specific examples (the reality show *Prisoner*). Most academic essays contain the topic sentence at the beginning of the first paragraph.

Now take a look at the following paragraph. The topic sentence is underlined for you.

> Last year, a cat traveled 130 miles to reach its family, who had moved to another state and had left their pet behind. Even though it had never been to their new home, the cat was able to track down its former owners. A dog in my neighborhood can predict when its master is about to have a seizure. It makes sure that he does not hurt himself during an epileptic fit. Compared to many animals, our own senses are almost dull.

The last sentence of this paragraph is the topic sentence. It draws on specific examples (a cat that tracked down its owners and a dog that can predict seizures) and then makes a general statement that draws a conclusion from these examples (animals' senses are better than humans'). In this case, the supporting sentences are placed before the topic sentence and the concluding sentence is the same as the topic sentence.

This technique is frequently used in persuasive writing. The writer produces detailed examples as evidence to back up his or her point, preparing the reader to accept the concluding topic sentence as the truth.

Sometimes, the topic sentence appears in the middle of a paragraph. Read the following example. The topic sentence is underlined for you.

> For many years, I suffered from severe anxiety every time I took an exam. Hours before the exam, my heart would begin pounding, my legs would shake, and sometimes I would become physically unable to move. Last year, I was referred to a specialist and finally found a way to control my anxiety — breathing exercises. It seems so simple, but by doing just a few breathing exercises a couple of hours before an exam, I gradually got my anxiety under control. The exercises help slow my heart rate and make me feel less anxious. Better yet, they require no pills, no equipment, and very little time. It's amazing how just breathing correctly has helped me learn to manage my anxiety symptoms.

In this paragraph, the underlined sentence is the topic sentence. It expresses the main idea — that breathing exercises can help control anxiety. The preceding sentences enable the writer to build up to his main point (breathing exercises can help control anxiety) by using a personal anecdote (how he used to suffer from anxiety). The supporting sentences then expand on how

breathing exercises help the writer by providing additional information. The last sentence is the concluding sentence and restates how breathing can help manage anxiety.

Placing a topic sentence in the middle of a paragraph is often used in creative writing. If you notice that you have used a topic sentence in the middle of a paragraph in an academic essay, read through the paragraph carefully to make sure that it contains only one major topic.

Exercise 3.1.4:

Identify the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence in the following paragraph.

> The desert provides a harsh environment in which few mammals are able to adapt. Of these hardy creatures, the kangaroo rat is possibly the most fascinating. Able to live in some of the most arid parts of the southwest, the kangaroo rat neither sweats nor pants to keep cool. Its specialized kidneys enable it to survive on a miniscule amount of water. Unlike other desert creatures, the kangaroo rat does not store water in its body but instead is able to convert the dry seeds it eats into moisture. Its ability to adapt to such a hostile environment makes the kangaroo rat a truly amazing creature.

Supporting Sentences

If you think of a paragraph as a hamburger, the supporting sentences are the meat inside the bun. They make up the body of the paragraph by explaining, proving, or enhancing the controlling idea in the topic sentence. Most paragraphs contain three to six supporting sentences depending on the audience and purpose for writing. A supporting sentence usually offers one of the following:

- **Example:** The refusal of the baby boom generation to retire is contributing to the current lack of available jobs.
- **Example:** Many families now rely on older relatives to support them financially.
- **Example:** Nearly 10 percent of adults are currently unemployed in the United States.
- **Example:** “We will not allow this situation to continue,”stated Senator Johns.
- **Example:** Last year, my uncle Bill was asked to retire at the age of fifty-five.

The type of supporting sentence you choose will depend on what you are writing and why you are writing. For example, if you are attempting to persuade your audience to take a particular position you should rely on facts, statistics, and concrete examples, rather than personal opinions. Read the following example:

> There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car. **(Topic sentence)**
>
> First, they get 20 percent to 35 percent more miles to the gallon than a fuel-efficient gas-powered vehicle. **(Supporting sentence 1: a statistic)**
>
> Second, they produce very few emissions during low speed city driving.**(Supporting sentence 2: fact)**
>
> Because they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependency on fossil fuels, which helps lower prices at the pump. **(Supporting sentence 3: reason)**
>
> Alexis bought a hybrid car two years ago and has been extremely impressed with its performance. **(Supporting sentence 4: personal example)**
>
> “It’s the cheapest car I’ve ever had,”she said. “The running costs are far lower than previous gas powered vehicles I’ve owned.”**(Supporting sentence 5: quotation)**
>
> Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex’s example in the near future.**(Concluding sentence)**

To find information for your supporting sentences, you might consider using one of the following sources:

- Reference book
- Encyclopedia
- Website
- Biography/autobiography
- Map
- Dictionary

- Newspaper/magazine
- Interview
- Previous experience
- Personal research

Tip

When searching for information on the Internet, remember that some websites are more reliable than others. Websites ending in .gov or .edu are generally more reliable than websites ending in .com or .org. Wikis and blogs are not reliable sources of information because they are subject to inaccuracies.

Concluding Sentences

An effective concluding sentence draws together all the ideas you have raised in your paragraph. It reminds readers of the main point — the topic sentence — without restating it in exactly the same words. Using the hamburger example, the top bun (the topic sentence) and the bottom bun (the concluding sentence) are very similar. They frame the "meat" or body of the paragraph. Compare the topic sentence and concluding sentence from the previous example:

> **Topic sentence:** There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car.
>
> **Concluding sentence:** Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex's example in the near future.

Notice the use of the synonyms *advantages* and *benefits*. The concluding sentence reiterates the idea that owning a hybrid is advantageous without using the exact same words. It also summarizes two examples of the advantages covered in the supporting sentences: low running costs and environmental benefits.

You should avoid introducing any new ideas into your concluding sentence. A conclusion is intended to provide the reader with a sense of completion. Introducing a subject that is not covered in the paragraph will confuse the reader and weaken your writing.

A concluding sentence may do any of the following:

- Restate the main idea.

  Example: Childhood obesity is a growing problem in the United States.

- Summarize the key points in the paragraph.

  Example: A lack of healthy choices, poor parenting, and an addiction to video games are among the many factors contributing to childhood obesity.

- Draw a conclusion based on the information in the paragraph.

  Example: These statistics indicate that unless we take action, childhood obesity rates will continue to rise.

- Make a prediction, suggestion, or recommendation about the information in the paragraph.

  Example: Based on this research, more than 60 percent of children in the United States will be morbidly obese by the year 2030 unless we take evasive action.

- Offer an additional observation about the controlling idea.

  Example: Childhood obesity is an entirely preventable tragedy

Exercise 3.1.5:

On your own paper, write one example of each type of concluding sentence based on a topic of your choice.

Transitions

A strong paragraph moves seamlessly from the topic sentence into the supporting sentences and on to the concluding sentence. To help organize a paragraph and ensure that ideas logically connect to one another, writers use transitional words and phrases. A transition is a connecting word that describes a relationship between ideas. Take another look at the earlier example:

There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car. First, they get 20 percent to 35 percent more miles to the gallon than a fuel-efficient gas-powered vehicle. Second, they produce very few emissions during low speed city driving. Because they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependency on fossil fuels, which helps lower prices at the pump. Alexis bought a hybrid car two years ago and has been extremely impressed with its performance. “It’s the cheapest car I’ve ever had,” she said. “The running costs are far lower than previous gas-powered vehicles I’ve owned.” Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alexis’ example in the near future.

Each of the underlined words is a transition word. Words such as *first* and *second* are transition words that show sequence or clarify order. They help organize the writer’s ideas by showing that he or she has another point to make in support of the topic sentence. Other transition words that show order include *third*, *also*, and *furthermore*.

The transition word *because* is a transition word of consequence that continues a line of thought. It indicates that the writer will provide an explanation of a result. In this sentence, the writer explains why hybrid cars will reduce dependency on fossil fuels (because they do not require gas). Other transition words of consequence include *as a result*, *so that*, *since*, or *for this reason*.

To include a summarizing transition in her concluding sentence, the writer could rewrite the final sentence as follows:

All in all, given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alexis’ example in the near future.

The following chart provides some useful transition words to connect supporting sentences and concluding sentences.

Table 3.1.1:Useful Transitional Words and Phrases

For Supporting Sentences					
above all	but	for instance	in particular	moreover	subsequently
also	conversely	furthermore	later on	nevertheless	therefore
aside from	correspondingly	however	likewise	on one hand	to begin with
at the same time	for example	in addition	meanwhile	on the contrary	

For Concluding Sentences					
after all	all things considered	in brief	in summary	on the whole	to sum up
all in all	finally	in conclusion	thus		

Exercise 3.1.6:

Using your own paper, write a paragraph on a topic of your choice. Be sure to include a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and a concluding sentence and to use transitional words and phrases to link your ideas together.

Key Takeaways

- A good paragraph contains three distinct components: a topic sentence, body, and concluding sentence.
- The topic sentence expresses the main idea of the paragraph combined with the writer’s attitude or opinion about the topic.
- Good topic sentences contain both a main idea and a controlling idea, are clear and easy to follow, use engaging vocabulary, and provide an accurate indication of what will follow in the rest of the paragraph.
- Topic sentences may be placed at the beginning, middle, or end of a paragraph. In most academic essays, the topic sentence is placed at the beginning of a paragraph.
- Supporting sentences help explain, prove, or enhance the topic sentence by offering facts, reasons, statistics, quotations, or examples.
- Concluding sentences summarize the key points in a paragraph and reiterate the main idea without repeating it word for word.
- Transitional words and phrases help organize ideas in a paragraph and show how these ideas relate to one another.

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3.2: Purpose, Audience, Tone, and Content

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the four common academic purposes.
2. Identify audience, tone, and content.
3. Apply purpose, audience, tone, and content to a specific assignment.

Imagine reading one long block of text, with each idea blurring into the next. Even if you are reading a thrilling novel or an interesting news article, you will likely lose interest in what the author has to say very quickly. During the writing process, it is helpful to position yourself as a reader. Ask yourself whether you can focus easily on each point you make. One technique that effective writers use is to begin a fresh paragraph for each new idea they introduce.

Paragraphs separate ideas into logical, manageable chunks. One paragraph focuses on only one main idea and presents coherent sentences to support that one point. Because all the sentences in one paragraph support the same point, a paragraph may stand on its own. To create longer assignments and to discuss more than one point, writers group together paragraphs.

Three elements shape the content of each paragraph:

1. **Purpose**. The reason the writer composes the paragraph.
2. **Tone**. The attitude the writer conveys about the paragraph's subject.
3. **Audience**. The individual or group whom the writer intends to address.

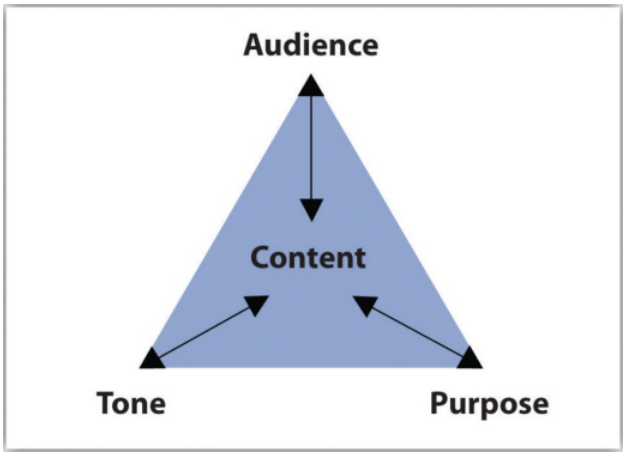


Figure 3.2.1: Purpose, Audience, Tone, and Content Triangle

The assignment's purpose, audience, and tone dictate what the paragraph covers and how it will support one main point. This section covers how purpose, audience, and tone affect reading and writing paragraphs.

Identifying Common Academic Purposes

The purpose for a piece of writing identifies the reason you write a particular document. Basically, the purpose of a piece of writing answers the question "Why?" For example, why write a play? To entertain a packed theater. Why write instructions to the babysitter? To inform him or her of your schedule and rules. Why write a letter to your congressman? To persuade him to address your community's needs.

In academic settings, the reasons for writing fulfill these main purposes: to summarize, to analyze, to synthesize, and to evaluate. You will encounter these four purposes not only as you read for your classes but also as you read for work or pleasure. Because reading and writing work together, your writing skills will improve as you read.

Eventually, your instructors will ask you to complete assignments specifically designed to meet one of these purposes. As you will see, the purpose for writing will guide you through each part of the paper, helping you make decisions about content and style. For now, identifying these purposes by reading paragraphs will prepare you to write individual paragraphs and to build longer assignments.

Summary Paragraphs

A summary shrinks a large amount of information into only the essentials. You probably summarize events, books, and movies daily. Think about the last blockbuster movie you saw or the last novel you read. Chances are, at some point in a casual conversation with a friend, coworker, or classmate, you compressed all the action in a two-hour film or in a two-hundred-page book into a brief description of the major plot movements. While in conversation, you probably described the major highlights, or the main points in just a few sentences, using your own vocabulary and manner of speaking.

Similarly, a summary paragraph condenses a long piece of writing into a smaller paragraph by extracting only the vital information. A summary uses only the writer's own words. Like the summary's purpose in daily conversation, the purpose of an academic summary paragraph is to maintain all the essential information from a longer document. Although shorter than the original piece of writing, a summary should still communicate all the key points and key support. In other words, summary paragraphs should be succinct and to the point.

Analysis Paragraphs

An analysis separates complex materials in their different parts and studies how the parts relate to one another. The analysis of simple table salt, for example, would require a deconstruction of its parts — the elements sodium (Na) and chloride (Cl). Then, scientists would study how the two elements interact to create the compound NaCl, or sodium chloride, which is also called simple table salt.

Analysis is not limited to the sciences, of course. An analysis paragraph in academic writing fulfills the same purpose. Instead of deconstructing compounds, academic analysis paragraphs typically deconstruct documents. An analysis takes apart a primary source (an essay, a book, an article, etc.) point by point. It communicates the main points of the document by examining individual points and identifying how the points relate to one another.

Synthesis Paragraphs

A synthesis combines two or more items to create an entirely new item. Consider the electronic musical instrument aptly named the synthesizer. It looks like a simple keyboard but displays a dashboard of switches, buttons, and levers. With the flip of a few switches, a musician may combine the distinct sounds of a piano, a flute, or a guitar — or any other combination of instruments — to create a new sound. The purpose of the synthesizer is to blend together the notes from individual instruments to form new, unique notes.

The purpose of an academic synthesis is to blend individual documents into a new document. An academic synthesis paragraph considers the main points from one or more pieces of writing and links the main points together to create a new point, one not replicated in either document.

Evaluation Paragraphs

An evaluation judges the value of something and determines its worth. Evaluations in everyday experiences are often not only dictated by set standards but also influenced by opinion and prior knowledge. For example, at work, a supervisor may complete an employee evaluation by judging his subordinate's performance based on the company's goals. If the company focuses on improving communication, the supervisor will rate the employee's customer service according to a standard scale. However, the evaluation still depends on the supervisor's opinion and prior experience with the employee. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine how well the employee performs at his or her job.

An academic evaluation communicates your opinion, and its justifications, about a document or a topic of discussion. Evaluations are influenced by your reading of the document, your prior knowledge, and your prior experience with the topic or issue. Because an evaluation incorporates your point of view and reasons for your point of view, it typically requires more critical thinking and a combination of summary, analysis, and synthesis skills. Thus evaluation paragraphs often follow summary, analysis, and synthesis paragraphs.

Tip

When reviewing directions for assignments, look for the verbs *summarize*, *analyze*, *synthesize*,or *evaluate*. Instructors often use these words to clearly indicate the assignment's purpose. These words will cue you on how to complete the assignment because you will know its exact purpose.

Exercise 3.2.1:

Read the following paragraphs about four films and then identify the purpose of each paragraph.

1. This film could easily have been cut down to less than two hours. By the final scene, I noticed that most of my fellow moviegoers were snoozing in their seats and were barely paying attention to what was happening on screen. Although the director sticks diligently to the book, he tries too hard to cram in all the action, which is just too ambitious for such a detail-oriented story. If you want my advice, read the book and give the movie a miss.
2. During the opening scene, we learn that the character Laura is adopted and that she has spent the past three years desperately trying to track down her real parents. Having exhausted all the usual options — adoption agencies, online searches, family trees, and so on — she is on the verge of giving up when she meets a stranger on a bus. The chance encounter leads to a complicated chain of events that ultimately result in Laura getting her lifelong wish. But is it really what she wants? Throughout the rest of the film, Laura discovers that sometimes the past is best left where it belongs.
3. To create the feeling of being gripped in a vice, the director, May Lee, uses a variety of elements to gradually increase the tension. The creepy, haunting melody that subtly enhances the earlier scenes becomes ever more insistent, rising to a disturbing crescendo toward the end of the movie. The desperation of the actors, combined with the claustrophobic atmosphere and tight camera angles create a realistic firestorm, from which there is little hope of escape. Walking out of the theater at the end feels like staggering out of a Roman dungeon.

Identifying the Audience

Imagine you must give a presentation to a group of college classmates. Weeks before the big day, you spend time creating and rehearsing the presentation. You must make important, careful decisions not only about the content but also about your delivery. Will the presentation require technology to project figures and charts? Should the presentation define important words? Should you wear your suit and dress shirt? The answers to these questions will help you develop an appropriate relationship with your audience, making them more receptive to your message.

Now imagine you must explain the same concepts from your presentation to a group of high school students. Those important questions you previously answered may now require different answers. The figures and charts may be too sophisticated, and the terms will certainly require definitions. You may even reconsider your outfit and sport a more casual look. Because the audience has shifted, your presentation and delivery will shift as well to create a new relationship with the new audience.

In these two situations, the audience — the individuals who will watch and listen to the presentation — plays a role in the development of presentation. As you prepare the presentation, you visualize the audience to anticipate their expectations and reactions. What you imagine affects the information you choose to present and how you will present it. Then, during the presentation, you meet the audience in person and discover immediately how well you perform.

Although the audience for writing assignments — your readers — may not appear in person, they play an equally vital role. Even in everyday writing activities, you identify your readers' characteristics, interests, and expectations before making decisions about what you write. In fact, thinking about audience has become so common that you may not even detect the audience-driven decisions.

For example, you update your status on a social networking site with the awareness of who will digitally follow the post. If you want to brag about a good grade, you may write the post to please family members. If you want to describe a funny moment, you may write with your friends' senses of humor in mind. Even at work, you send e-mails with an awareness of an unintended receiver who could intercept the message.

In other words, being aware of "invisible" readers is a skill you most likely already possess and one you rely on every day. Consider the following paragraphs. Which one would the author send to her parents? Which one would she send to her best friend?

Example 3.2.1:

Last Saturday, I volunteered at a local hospital. The visit was fun and rewarding. I even learned how to do cardiopulmonary resuscitation, or CPR. Unfortunately, I think caught a cold from one of the patients. This week, I will rest in bed and drink plenty of clear fluids. I hope I am well by next Saturday to volunteer again.

Example 3.2.2:

OMG! You won't believe this! My advisor forced me to do my community service hours at this hospital all weekend! We learned CPR but we did it on dummies, not even real peeps. And some kid sneezed on me and got me sick! I was so bored and sniffling all weekend; I hope I don't have to go back next week. I definitely do NOT want to miss the basketball tournament!

Most likely, you matched each paragraph to its intended audience with little hesitation. Because each paragraph reveals the author's relationship with her intended readers, you can identify the audience fairly quickly. When writing your own paragraphs, you must engage with your audience to build an appropriate relationship given your subject. Imagining your readers during each stage of the writing process will help you make decisions about your writing. Ultimately, the people you visualize will affect what and how you write.

Tip

While giving a speech, you may articulate an inspiring or critical message, but if you left your hair a mess and laced up mismatched shoes, your audience would not take you seriously. They may be too distracted by your appearance to listen to your words.

Similarly, grammar and sentence structure serve as the appearance of a piece of writing. Polishing your work using correct grammar will impress your readers and allow them to focus on what you have to say.

Because focusing on audience will enhance your writing, your process, and your finished product, you must consider the specific traits of your audience members. Use your imagination to anticipate the readers' demographics, education, prior knowledge, and expectations.

- **Demographics.** These measure important data about a group of people, such as their age range, their ethnicity, their religious beliefs, or their gender. Certain topics and assignments will require these kinds of considerations about your audience. For other topics and assignments, these measurements may not influence your writing in the end. Regardless, it is important to consider demographics when you begin to think about your purpose for writing.
- **Education.** Education considers the audience's level of schooling. If audience members have earned a doctorate degree, for example, you may need to elevate your style and use more formal language. Or, if audience members are still in college, you could write in a more relaxed style. An audience member's major or emphasis may also dictate your writing.
- **Prior knowledge.** This refers to what the audience already knows about your topic. If your readers have studied certain topics, they may already know some terms and concepts related to the topic. You may decide whether to define terms and explain concepts based on your audience's prior knowledge. Although you cannot peer inside the brains of your readers to discover their knowledge, you can make reasonable assumptions. For instance, a nursing major would presumably know more about health-related topics than a business major would.
- **Expectations.** These indicate what readers will look for while reading your assignment. Readers may expect consistencies in the assignment's appearance, such as correct grammar and traditional formatting like double-spaced lines and legible font. Readers may also have content-based expectations given the assignment's purpose and organization. In an essay titled "The Economics of Enlightenment: The Effects of Rising Tuition," for example, audience members may expect to read about the economic repercussions of college tuition costs.

Tip

Also, remember that decisions about style depend on audience, purpose, and content. Identifying your audience's demographics, education, prior knowledge, and expectations will affect how you write, but purpose and content play an equally important role. The next subsection covers how to select an appropriate tone to match the audience and purpose.

Selecting an Appropriate Tone

Tone identifies a speaker's attitude toward a subject or another person. You may pick up a person's tone of voice fairly easily in conversation. A friend who tells you about her weekend may speak excitedly about a fun skiing trip. An instructor who means business may speak in a low, slow voice to emphasize her serious mood. Or, a coworker who needs to let off some steam after a long meeting may crack a sarcastic joke.

Just as speakers transmit emotion through voice, writers can transmit through writing a range of attitudes, from excited and humorous to somber and critical. These emotions create connections among the audience, the author, and the subject, ultimately building a relationship between the audience and the text. To stimulate these connections, writers intimate their attitudes and feelings with useful devices, such as sentence structure, word choice, punctuation, and formal or informal language. Keep in mind that the writer's attitude should always appropriately match the audience and the purpose.

Read the following paragraph and consider the writer's tone. How would you describe the writer's attitude toward wildlife conservation?

> Many species of plants and animals are disappearing right before our eyes. If we don't act fast, it might be too late to save them. Human activities, including pollution, deforestation, hunting, and overpopulation, are devastating the natural environment. Without our help, many species will not survive long enough for our children to see them in the wild. Take the tiger, for example. Today, tigers occupy just 7 percent of their historical range, and many local populations are already extinct. Hunted for their beautiful pelt and other body parts, the tiger population has plummeted from one hundred thousand in 1920 to just a few thousand. Contact your local wildlife conservation society today to find out how you can stop this terrible destruction.

Choosing Appropriate, Interesting Content

Content refers to all the written substance in a document. After selecting an audience and a purpose, you must choose what information will make it to the page. Content may consist of examples, statistics, facts, anecdotes, testimonies, and observations, but no matter the type, the information must be appropriate and interesting for the audience and purpose. An essay written for third graders that summarizes the legislative process, for example, would have to contain succinct and simple content.

Content is also shaped by tone. When the tone matches the content, the audience will be more engaged, and you will build a stronger relationship with your readers. Consider that audience of third graders. You would choose simple content that the audience will easily understand, and you would express that content through an enthusiastic tone. The same considerations apply to all audiences and purposes.

Key Takeaways

- Paragraphs separate ideas into logical, manageable chunks of information.
- The content of each paragraph and document is shaped by purpose, audience, and tone.
- The four common academic purposes are to summarize, to analyze, to synthesize, and to evaluate.
- Identifying the audience's demographics, education, prior knowledge, and expectations will affect how and what you write.
- Devices such as sentence structure, word choice, punctuation, and formal or informal language communicate tone and create a relationship between the writer and his or her audience.
- Content may consist of examples, statistics, facts, anecdotes, testimonies, and observations. All content must be appropriate and interesting for the audience, purpose and tone.

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3.3: Writing Paragraphs (Exercises)

1. Select one of the following topics or choose a topic of your choice:
    1. Working part-time while attending college
    2. Health care reform
    3. Introducing a four-day work week
    4. Bringing pets to work
    5. Taking on-line classes

    Create a topic sentence based on the topic you chose, remembering to include both a main idea and a controlling idea. Next, write an alternative topic sentence using the same main idea but a different controlling idea. Explain how each fully developed paragraph might differ in tone and content.
2. **Group activity.** Working in a small group, select a writing sample or academic essay that has a clear thesis. Examine each paragraph and identify the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. Then, choose one particular paragraph and discuss the following questions:
    - Is the topic sentence clearly identifiable or is it implied?
    - Do all the supporting sentences relate to the topic sentence?
    - Does the writer use effective transitions to link his or her ideas?
    - Does the concluding sentence accurately summarize the main point of the paragraph?

    As a group, identify the weakest areas of the paragraph and rewrite them. Focus on the relationship among the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. Use transitions to illustrate the connection between each sentence in the paragraph.
3. **Peer activity.** Using the information you have learned in this chapter, write a paragraph about a current event. Underline the topic sentence in your paragraph. Now, rewrite the paragraph, placing the topic sentence in a different part of the paragraph. Read the two paragraphs aloud to a peer and have him or her identify the topic sentence. Discuss which paragraph is more effective and why.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Writing Essays - From Start to Finish

4.1: The Writing Process - Prewriting and Drafting
4.2: Developing a Strong, Clear Thesis Statement
4.3: Outlining
4.4: Writing Introductory Paragraphs
4.5: Writing Body Paragraphs
4.6: More About the Basic Elements of a First Draft
4.7: Writing a Conclusion
4.8: Writing Essays (Exercises)

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4.1: The Writing Process - Prewriting and Drafting

Learning Objectives

1. Conquer the blank page
2. Use prewriting strategies to choose a topic and narrow the focus.

If you think that a blank sheet of paper or a blinking cursor on the computer screen is a scary sight, you are not alone. Many writers, students, and employees find that beginning to write can be intimidating. When faced with a blank page, however, experienced writers remind themselves that writing, like other everyday activities, is a process. Every process, from writing to cooking, bike riding, and learning to use a new cell phone, will get significantly easier with practice.

Just as you need a recipe, ingredients, and proper tools to cook a delicious meal, you also need a plan, resources, and adequate time to create a good written composition. In other words, writing is a process that requires following steps and using strategies to accomplish your goals.

These are **the five steps in the writing process:**

1. Prewriting
2. Outlining the structure of ideas
3. Writing a rough draft
4. Revising
5. Editing

Effective writing can be simply described as good ideas that are expressed well and arranged in the proper order. This chapter will give you the chance to work on all these important aspects of writing. Although many more prewriting strategies exist, this chapter covers just a few techniques: using experience and observations, freewriting, brainstorming, and mapping. Using the strategies in this chapter can help you overcome the fear of the blank page and confidently begin the writing process.

Prewriting

Prewriting is the stage of the writing process during which you transfer your abstract thoughts into more concrete ideas in ink on paper (or in type on a computer screen). Although prewriting techniques can be helpful in all stages of the writing process, the following strategies are best used when initially deciding on a topic:

1. Using experience and observations
2. Reading
3. Freewriting

At this stage in the writing process, it is OK if you choose a general topic. Later you will learn more prewriting strategies that will narrow the focus of the topic.

Choosing a Topic

In addition to understanding that writing is a process, writers also understand that choosing a good general topic for an assignment is an essential step. Sometimes your instructor will give you an idea to begin an assignment, and other times your instructor will ask you to come up with a topic on your own. A good topic not only covers what an assignment will be about but also fits the assignment's purpose and its audience.

In this chapter, you will follow a writer named Tuyet as she prepares a piece of writing. You will also be planning one of your own. The first important step is for you to tell yourself why you are writing (to inform, to explain, or some other purpose) and for whom you are writing. Write your purpose and your audience on your own sheet of paper, and keep the paper close by as you read and complete exercises in this chapter.

My purpose: _____

My audience: _____

Using Experience and Observations

When selecting a topic, you may also want to consider something that interests you or something based on your own life and personal experiences. Even everyday observations can lead to interesting topics. After writers think about their experiences and observations, they often take notes on paper to better develop their thoughts. These notes help writers discover what they have to say about their topic.

> **Tip**
>
> Have you seen an attention-grabbing story on your local news channel? Many current issues appear on television, in magazines, and on the Internet. These can all provide inspiration for your writing.

The Importance of Reading as Related to Writing

Reading plays a vital role in all the stages of the writing process, but it first figures in the development of ideas and topics. Different kinds of documents can help you choose a topic and also develop that topic. For example, a magazine advertising the latest research on the threat of global warming may catch your eye in the supermarket. This cover may interest you, and you may consider global warming as a topic. Or maybe a novel's courtroom drama sparks your curiosity of a particular lawsuit or legal controversy.

After you choose a topic, critical reading is essential to the development of a topic. While reading almost any document, you evaluate the author's point of view by thinking about his main idea and his support. When you judge the author's argument, you discover more about not only the author's opinion but also your own. If this step already seems daunting, remember that even the best writers need to use prewriting strategies to generate ideas.

> **Tip**
>
> The steps in the writing process may seem time consuming at first, but following these steps will save you time in the future. The more you plan in the beginning by reading and using prewriting strategies, the less time you may spend writing and editing later because your ideas will develop more swiftly.
>
> Prewriting strategies depend on your critical reading skills. Reading prewriting exercises (and outlines and drafts later in the writing process) will further develop your topic and ideas. As you continue to follow the writing process, you will see how Tuyet uses critical reading skills to assess her own prewriting exercises.

Freewriting

Freewriting is an exercise in which you write freely about any topic for a set amount of time (usually three to five minutes). During the time limit, you may jot down any thoughts that come to your mind. Try not to worry about grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Instead, write as quickly as you can without stopping. If you get stuck, just copy the same word or phrase over and over until you come up with a new thought.

Writing often comes easier when you have a personal connection with the topic you have chosen. Remember, to generate ideas in your freewriting, you may also think about readings that you have enjoyed or that have challenged your thinking. Doing this may lead your thoughts in interesting directions.

Quickly recording your thoughts on paper will help you discover what you have to say about a topic. When writing quickly, try not to doubt or question your ideas. Allow yourself to write freely and unselfconsciously. Once you start writing with few limitations, you may find you have more to say than you first realized. Your flow of thoughts can lead you to discover even more ideas about the topic. Freewriting may even lead you to discover another topic that excites you even more.

Look at Tuyet's example. The instructor allowed the members of the class to choose their own topics, and Tuyet thought about her experiences as a communications major. She used this freewriting exercise to help her generate more concrete ideas from her own experience.



Last semester my favorite class was about mass media. We got to study radio and television. People say we watch too much television, and even though I try not to, I end up watching a few reality shows just to relax. Everyone has to relax! It's too hard to relax when something like the news (my husband watches all the time) is on because it's too scary now. Too much bad news, not enough good news. News. Newspapers I don't read as much anymore. I can get the headlines on my homepage when I check my e-mail. E-mail could be considered mass media too these days. I used to go to the video store a few times a week before I started school, but now the only way I know what movies are current is to listen for the Oscar nominations. We have cable but we can't afford the movie channels, so I sometimes look at older movies late at night. UGH. A few of them get played again and again until you're sick of them. My husband thinks I'm crazy, but sometimes there are old black-and-whites on from the 1930s and '40s. I could never live my life in black-and-white. I like the home decorating shows and love how people use color on their walls. Makes rooms look so bright. When we buy a home, if we ever can, I'll use lots of color. Some of those shows even show you how to do major renovations by yourself. Knock down walls and everything. Not for me—or my husband. I'm handier than he is. I wonder if they could make a reality show about us!

Figure 4.1.1

Tip

Some prewriting strategies can be used together. For example, you could use experience and observations to come up with a topic related to your course studies. Then you could use freewriting to describe your topic in more detail and figure out what you have to say about it.

Exercise 4.1.1:

Free write about one event you have recently experienced. With this event in mind, write without stopping for five minutes. After you finish, read over what you wrote. Does anything stand out to you as a good general topic to write about?

More Prewriting Techniques

The prewriting techniques of freewriting and asking questions helped Tuyet think more about her topic, but the following prewriting strategies can help her (and you) narrow the focus of the topic:

- Narrowing the focus
- Brainstorming
- Idea mapping

Narrowing the Focus

Narrowing the focus means breaking up the topic into subtopics, or more specific points. Generating lots of subtopics will help you eventually select the ones that fit the assignment and appeal to you and your audience.

After rereading her syllabus, Tuyet realized her general topic, mass media, is too broad or her class's short paper requirement. Three pages are not enough to cover all the concerns in mass media today. Tuyet also realized that although her readers are other communications majors who are interested in the topic, they may want to read a paper about a particular issue in mass media.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is similar to list making. You can make a list on your own or in a group with your classmates. Start with a blank sheet of paper (or a blank computer document) and write your general topic across the top. Underneath your topic, make a list of more specific ideas. Think of your general topic as a broad category and the list items as things that fit in that category. Often you will find that one item can lead to the next, creating a flow of ideas that can help you narrow your focus to a more specific paper topic. Here is Tuyet's brainstorming list:



Figure 4.1.2

From this list, Tuyet could narrow her focus to a particular technology under the broad category of mass media.

Idea Mapping

Idea mapping allows you to visualize your ideas on paper using circles, lines, and arrows. This technique is also known as clustering because ideas are broken down and clustered, or grouped together. Many writers like this method because the shapes show how the ideas relate or connect, and writers can find a focused topic from the connections mapped. Using idea mapping, you might discover interesting connections between topics that you had not thought of before.

To create an idea map, start with your general topic in a circle in the center of a blank sheet of paper. Then write specific ideas around it and use lines or arrows to connect them together. Add and cluster as many ideas as you can think of.

In addition to brainstorming, Tuyet tried idea mapping. Review the following idea map that Tuyet created:



Figure 4.1.3: Tuyet's Idea Map

Notice Tuyet's largest circle contains her general topic, mass media. Then, the general topic branches into two subtopics written in two smaller circles: television and radio. The subtopic television branches into even more specific topics: cable and DVDs. From there, Tuyet drew more circles and wrote more specific ideas: high definition and digital recording from cable and Blu-ray from DVDs. The radio topic led Tuyet to draw connections between music, downloads versus CDs, and, finally, piracy.

From this idea map, Tuyet saw she could consider narrowing the focus of her mass media topic to the more specific topic of music piracy.

Topic Checklist – Developing a Good Topic

The following checklist can help you decide if your narrowed topic is a good topic for your assignment.

- Am I interested in this topic?
- Would my audience be interested?
- Do I have prior knowledge or experience with this topic? If so, would I be comfortable exploring this topic and sharing my experiences?
- Do I want to learn more about this topic?
- Is this topic specific?
- Does it fit the length of the assignment?

With your narrowed focus in mind, answer the bulleted questions in the checklist for developing a good topic. If you can answer "yes" to all the questions, write your topic on the line. If you answer "no" to any of the questions, think about another topic or adjust the one you have and try the prewriting strategies again.

My narrowed topic: _____

Key Takeaways

- All writers rely on steps and strategies to begin the writing process.
- The steps in the writing process are prewriting, outlining, writing a rough draft, revising, and editing.
- Prewriting is the transfer of ideas from abstract thoughts into words, phrases, and sentences on paper.
- A good topic interests the writer, appeals to the audience, and fits the purpose of the assignment.
- Writers often choose a general topic first and then narrow the focus to a more specific topic.

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4.2: Developing a Strong, Clear Thesis Statement

Learning Objectives

1. Develop a strong, clear thesis statement with the proper elements.
2. Revise your thesis statement.

Have you ever known a person who was not very good at telling stories? You probably had trouble following his train of thought as he jumped around from point to point, either being too brief in places that needed further explanation or providing too many details on a meaningless element. Maybe he told the end of the story first, then moved to the beginning and later added details to the middle. His ideas were probably scattered, and the story did not flow very well. When the story was over, you probably had many questions.

Just as a personal anecdote can be a disorganized mess, an essay can fall into the same trap of being out of order and confusing. That is why writers need a thesis statement to provide a specific focus for their essay and to organize what they are about to discuss in the body.

Just like a topic sentence summarizes a single paragraph, the thesis statement summarizes an entire essay. It tells the reader the point you want to make in your essay, while the essay itself supports that point. It is like a signpost that signals the essay's destination. You should form your thesis before you begin to organize an essay, but you may find that it needs revision as the essay develops.

Elements of a Thesis Statement

For every essay you write, you must focus on a central idea. This idea stems from a topic you have chosen or been assigned or from a question your teacher has asked. It is not enough merely to discuss a general topic or simply answer a question with a yes or no. You have to form a specific opinion, and then articulate that into a controlling idea — the main idea upon which you build your thesis.

Remember that a thesis is not the topic itself, but rather your interpretation of the question or subject. For whatever topic your professor gives you, you must ask yourself, "What do I want to say about it?" Asking and then answering this question is vital to forming a thesis that is precise, forceful and confident.

A thesis is one sentence long and appears toward the end of your introduction. It is specific and focuses on one to three points of a single idea — points that are able to be demonstrated in the body. It forecasts the content of the essay and suggests how you will organize your information. Remember that a thesis statement does not summarize an issue but rather dissects it.

A Strong Thesis Statement

A strong thesis statement contains the following qualities:

Specificity. A thesis statement must concentrate on a specific area of a general topic. As you may recall, the creation of a thesis statement begins when you choose a broad subject and then narrow down its parts until you pinpoint a specific aspect of that topic. For example, health care is a broad topic, but a proper thesis statement would focus on a specific area of that topic, such as options for individuals without health care coverage.

Precision. A strong thesis statement must be precise enough to allow for a coherent argument and to remain focused on the topic. If the specific topic is options for individuals without health care coverage, then your precise thesis statement must make an exact claim about it, such as that limited options exist for those who are uninsured by their employers. You must further pinpoint what you are going to discuss regarding these limited effects, such as whom they affect and what the cause is.

Ability to be argued. A thesis statement must present a relevant and specific argument. A factual statement often is not considered arguable. Be sure your thesis statement contains a point of view that can be supported with evidence.

Ability to be demonstrated. For any claim you make in your thesis, you must be able to provide reasons and examples for your opinion. You can rely on personal observations in order to do this, or you can consult outside sources to demonstrate that what you assert is valid. A worthy argument is backed by examples and details.

Forcefulness. A thesis statement that is forceful shows readers that you are, in fact, making an argument. The tone is assertive and takes a stance that others might oppose.

Confidence. In addition to using force in your thesis statement, you must also use confidence in your claim. Phrases such as *I feel* or *I believe* actually weaken the readers' sense of your confidence because these phrases imply that you are the only person who feels the way you do. In other words, your stance has insufficient backing. Taking an authoritative stance on the matter persuades your readers to have faith in your argument and open their minds to what you have to say.

Tip

Even in a personal essay that allows the use of first person, your thesis should **not** contain phrases such as *in my opinion* or *I believe*. These statements reduce your credibility and weaken your argument. Your opinion is more convincing when you use a firm attitude.

Exercise 4.2.1:

On a separate sheet of paper, write a thesis statement for each of the following topics. Remember to make each statement specific, precise, demonstrable, forceful and confident.

Topics

- Texting while driving
- The legal drinking age in the United States
- Teenagers having jobs while in high school
- Advantages of being bilingual
- Maintaining a healthy life style while in college

Examples of Appropriate Thesis Statements

Each of the following thesis statements meets several of the following requirements:

- Specificity
- Precision
- Ability to be argued
- Ability to be demonstrated
- Forcefulness
- Confidence

1. Closing all American borders for a period of five years is one solution that will tackle illegal immigration.
2. Compared to an absolute divorce, no-fault divorce is less expensive, promotes fairer settlements, and reflects a more realistic view of the causes for marital breakdown.
3. Exposing children from an early age to the dangers of drug abuse is a sure method of preventing future drug addicts.
4. In today's crumbling job market, a high school diploma is not significant enough education to land a stable, lucrative job.

Tip

You can find thesis statements in many places, such as in the news; in the opinions of friends, coworkers or teachers; and even in songs you hear on the radio. Become aware of thesis statements in everyday life by paying attention to people's opinions and their reasons for those opinions. Pay attention to your own everyday thesis statements as well, as these can become material for future essays.

Now that you have read about the contents of a good thesis statement and have seen examples, take a look at the pitfalls to avoid when composing your own thesis:

- A thesis is weak when it is simply a declaration of your subject or a description of what you will discuss in your essay.

  Weak thesis statement: My paper will explain why imagination is more important than knowledge.

- A thesis is weak when it makes an unreasonable or outrageous claim or insults the opposing side.

Weak thesis statement: Religious radicals across America are trying tolegislate their Puritanical beliefs by banning required high school books.

- A thesis is weak when it contains an obvious fact or something that no one can disagree with or provides a dead end.

  Weak thesis statement: Advertising companies use sex to sell their products.

- A thesis is weak when the statement is too broad.

  Weak thesis statement: The life of Abraham Lincoln was long and challenging.

Exercise 4.2.2:

Read the following thesis statements. On a separate piece of paper, identify each as weak or strong. For those that are weak, list the reasons why. Then revise the weak statements so that they conform to the requirements of a strong thesis.

1. The subject of this paper is my experience with snakes as pets.
2. The government must expand its funding for research on renewable energy resources in order to prepare for the impending end of oil.
3. Edgar Allan Poe was a poet who lived in Baltimore during the nineteenth century.
4. In this essay, I will give you lots of reasons why slot machines should not be legalized in Baltimore.
5. Despite his promises during his campaign, President Kennedy took few executive measures to support civil rights legislation.
6. Because many children's toys have potential safety hazards that could lead to injury, it is clear that not all children's toys are safe.
7. My experience with young children has taught me that I want to be a disciplinary parent because I believe that a child without discipline can be a parent's worst nightmare.

Thesis Statement Revision

Your thesis will probably change as you write, so you will need to modify it to reflect exactly what you have discussed in your essay. Your thesis may begin as a working thesis statement, an indefinite statement that you make about your topic early in the writing process for the purpose of planning and guiding your writing.

Working thesis statements often become stronger as you gather information and form new opinions and reasons for those opinions. Revision helps you strengthen your thesis so that it matches what you have expressed in the body of the paper.

You can cut down on irrelevant aspects and revise your thesis by taking the following steps:

1. Pinpoint and replace all nonspecific words, such as *people*, *everything*, *society*, or *life*, with more precise words in order to reduce any vagueness.

   Working thesis: Young people have to work hard to succeed in life.

   Revised thesis: Recent college graduates must have discipline and persistence in order to find and maintain a stable job in which they can use and be appreciated for their talents.

   The revised thesis makes a more specific statement about success and what it means to work hard. The original includes too broad a range of people and does not define exactly what success entails. By replacing those general words like *people* and *work hard*, the writer can better focus his or her research and gain more direction in his or her writing.

2. Clarify ideas that need explanation by asking yourself questions that narrow your thesis.

   Working thesis: The welfare system is a joke.

   Revised thesis: The welfare system keeps a socioeconomic class from gaining employment by alluring members of that class with unearned income, instead of programs to improve their education and skill sets.

   A joke means many things to many people. Readers bring all sorts of backgrounds and perspectives to the reading process and would need clarification for a word so vague. This expression may also be too informal for the selected audience. By asking questions, the writer can devise a more precise and appropriate explanation for *joke*.

   Working thesis: DeKalb County schoolteachers are not paid enough.

Revised thesis: The DeKalb County legislature cannot afford to pay its educators, resulting in job cuts and resignations in a district that sorely needs highly qualified and dedicated teachers.

The linking verb in this working thesis statement is the word *are*. Linking verbs often make thesis statements weak because they do not express action. Rather, they connect words and phrases to the second half of the sentence. Readers might wonder, "Why are they not paid enough?" But this statement does not compel them to ask many more questions. The writer should ask himself or herself questions in order to replace the linking verb with an action verb, thus forming a stronger thesis statement, one that takes a more definitive stance on the issue:

- Who is not paying the teachers enough?
- What is considered "enough"?
- What is the problem?
- What are the results

3. Omit any general claims that are hard to support.

Working thesis: Today's teenage girls are too sexualized.

Revised thesis: Teenage girls who are captivated by the sexual images on MTV are conditioned to believe that a woman's worth depends on her sensuality, a feeling that harms their self-esteem and behavior.

It is true that some young women in today's society are more sexualized than in the past, but that is not true for all girls. Many girls have strict parents, dress appropriately, and do not engage in sexual activity while in middle school and high school. The writer of this thesis should ask the following questions:

- Which teenage girls?
- What constitutes "too" sexualized?
- Why are they behaving that way?
- Where does this behavior show up?
- What are the repercussions?

Tip

The best way to revise your thesis statement is to ask questions about it and then examine the answers to those questions. By challenging your own ideas and forming definite reasons for those ideas, you grow closer to a more precise point of view, which you can then incorporate into your thesis statement.

Key Takeaways

- Proper essays require a thesis statement to provide a specific focus and suggest how the essay will be organized.
- A thesis statement is your interpretation of the subject, not the topic itself.
- A strong thesis is specific, precise, forceful, confident, and is able to be demonstrated.
- A strong thesis challenges readers with a point of view that can be debated and can be supported with evidence.
- A weak thesis is simply a declaration of your topic or contains an obvious fact that cannot be argued.
- Depending on your topic, it may or may not be appropriate to use first person point of view.
- Revise your thesis by ensuring all words are specific, all ideas are exact, and all verbs express action.

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4.3: Outlining

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the steps in constructing an outline.
2. Construct a topic outline and a sentence outline.

Your prewriting activities and readings have helped you gather information for your assignment. The more you sort through the pieces of information you found, the more you will begin to see the connections between them. Patterns and gaps may begin to stand out. But only when you start to organize your ideas will you be able to translate your raw insights into a form that will communicate meaning to your audience.

Tip

Longer papers require more reading and planning than shorter papers do. Most writers discover that the more they know about a topic, the more they can write about it with intelligence and interest.

Organizing Ideas

When you write, you need to organize your ideas in an order that makes sense. The writing you complete in all your courses exposes how analytically and critically your mind works. In some courses, the only direct contact you may have with your instructor is through the assignments you write for the course. You can make a good impression by spending time ordering your ideas.

Order refers to your choice of what to present first, second, third, and so on in your writing. The order you pick closely relates to your purpose for writing that particular assignment. For example, when telling a story, it may be important to first describe the background for the action. Or you may need to first describe a 3-D movie projector or a television studio to help readers visualize the setting and scene. You may want to group your support effectively to convince readers that your point of view on an issue is well reasoned and worthy of belief.

In longer pieces of writing, you may organize different parts in different ways so that your purpose stands out clearly and all parts of the paper work together to consistently develop your main point.

Methods of Organizing Writing – What You Might See in Freshman Composition

The three common methods of organizing writing are chronological order, spatial order, and order of importance. You need to keep these methods of organization in mind as you plan how to arrange the information you have gathered in an outline. An outline is a written plan that serves as a skeleton for the paragraphs you write. Later, when you draft paragraphs in the next stage of the writing process, you will add support to create “flesh” and “muscle” for your assignment.

When you write, your goal is not only to complete an assignment but also to write for a specific purpose — perhaps to inform, to explain, to persuade, or for a combination of these purposes. Your purpose for writing should always be in the back of your mind, because it will help you decide which pieces of information belong together and how you will order them. In other words, choose the order that will most effectively fit your purpose and support your main point.

Table 4.3.1:"Order versus Purpose" shows the connection between order and purpose

Order	Purpose
Chronological Order	To explain the history of an event or a topic
	To tell a story or relate an experience
	To explain how to do or make something
	To explain the steps in a process
Spatial Order	To help readers visualize something as you want them to see it
	To create a main impression using the senses (sight, touch, taste, smell, and sound)
Order of Importance	To persuade or convince

Order	Purpose
	To rank items by their importance, benefit, or significance

Writing an Outline

For an essay question on a test or a brief oral presentation in class, you may need to prepare a short, informal outline in which you jot down key ideas in the order you will present them. This kind of outline reminds you to stay focused in a stressful situation and to include all the good ideas that help you explain or prove your point.

For a longer assignment, like an essay or a research paper, many college instructors require students to submit a formal outline before writing a major paper as a way to be sure you are on the right track and are working in an organized manner. A formal outline is a detailed guide that shows how all your supporting ideas relate to each other. It helps you distinguish between ideas that are of equal importance and ones that are of lesser importance. You build your paper based on the framework created by the outline.

Tip

Instructors may also require you to submit an outline with your final draft to check the direction of the assignment and the logic of your final draft. If you are required to submit an outline with the final draft of a paper, remember to revise the outline to reflect any changes you made while writing the paper.

There are two types of formal outlines: the topic outline and the sentence outline. You format both types of formal outlines in the same way.

- Place your thesis (not your introduction) at the top of the outline page.
- Use roman numerals (I, II, III, IV, V, etc.) to identify main points that develop the thesis statement.
- Use capital letters (A, B, C, D, etc.) to divide your main points into parts, the sub-headings.
- Use arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc.) if you need to subdivide any As, Bs, or Cs into smaller parts. This will be the examples and specifics of your paper.

Here is what the skeleton of a traditional formal outline looks like. The indention helps clarify how the ideas are related.

Thesis statement

1. **Main point 1** → *becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 1*
    A. Supporting detail → *becomes a support sentence of body paragraph 1*
        Subpoint 1
        Subpoint 2
    B. Supporting detail → *becomes a support sentence of body paragraph 1*
        Subpoint 1
        Subpoint 2
    C. Supporting detail → *becomes a support sentence of body paragraph 1*
        Subpoint 1
        Subpoint 2
2. ***Main point 2*** → *becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 2*
    A. Supporting detail → *becomes a support sentence of body paragraph 2*
        Subpoint 1
        Subpoint 2
    B. Supporting detail → *becomes a support sentence of body paragraph 2*
        Subpoint 1

Subpoint 2

C. Supporting detail → *becomes a support sentence of body paragraph 2*

3. **Main point 3** → *becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 3*

A. Supporting detail → *becomes a support sentence of body paragraph 3*

Subpoint 1

Subpoint 2

B. Supporting detail → *becomes a support sentence of body paragraph 3*

Subpoint 1

Subpoint 2

C. Supporting detail → *becomes a support sentence of body paragraph 3*

Subpoint 1

Subpoint 2

Tip

In an outline, any supporting detail can be developed with subpoints. For simplicity, the model shows them only under the first main point.

Formal outlines are often quite rigid in their organization. As many instructors will specify, you cannot subdivide one point if it is only one part. For example, for every roman numeral I, there must be a II. For every A, there must be a B. For every Arabic numeral 1, there must be a 2.

Constructing Topic Outlines

A topic outline is the same as a sentence outline except you use words or phrases instead of complete sentences. Words and phrases keep the outline short and easier to comprehend. All the headings, however, must be written in parallel structure.

Checklist for Writing an Effective Topic Outline

This checklist can help you write an effective topic outline for your assignment. It will also help you discover where you may need to do additional reading or prewriting.

- Do I have a controlling idea that guides the development of the entire piece of writing?
- Do I have three or more main points that I want to make in this piece of writing? Does each main point connect to my controlling idea?
- Is my outline in the best order — chronological order, spatial order, or order of importance — for me to present my main points? Will this order help me get my main point across?
- Do I have supporting details that will help me inform, explain, or prove my main points?
- Do I need to add more support? If so, where?
- Do I need to make any adjustments in my working thesis statement before I consider it the final version?

Key Takeaways

- Writers must put their ideas in order so the assignment makes sense. The most common orders are chronological order, spatial order, and order of importance.
- After gathering and evaluating the information you found for your essay, the next step is to write a working, or preliminary, thesis statement.
- The working thesis statement expresses the main idea that you want to develop in the entire piece of writing. It can be modified as you continue the writing process.
- Effective writers prepare a formal outline to organize their main ideas and supporting details in the order they will be presented.
- A topic outline uses words and phrases to express the ideas.

- The writer’s thesis statement is placed at the beginning of the outline, and the outline may end with suggestions for the concluding paragraph.

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4.4: Writing Introductory Paragraphs

Learning Objectives

1. Recognize the importance of strong introductory paragraphs.
2. Learn to engage the reader immediately with the introductory paragraph.

Picture your introduction as a storefront window: You have a certain amount of space to attract your customers (readers) to your goods (subject) and bring them inside your store (discussion). Once you have enticed them with something intriguing, you then point them in a specific direction and try to make the sale (convince them to accept your thesis).

Your introduction is an invitation to your readers to consider what you have to say and then to follow your train of thought as you expand upon your thesis statement.

An introduction serves the following purposes:

1. Establishes your voice and tone, or your attitude, toward the subject
2. Introduces the general topic of the essay
3. States the thesis that will be supported in the body paragraphs

First impressions are crucial and can leave lasting effects in your reader's mind, which is why the introduction is so important to your essay. If your introductory paragraph is dull or disjointed, your reader probably will not have much interest in continuing with the essay.

Attracting Interest in Your Introductory Paragraph

Your introduction should begin with an engaging statement devised to provoke your readers' interest. In the next few sentences, introduce them to your topic by stating general facts or ideas about the subject. As you move deeper into your introduction, you gradually narrow the focus, moving closer to your thesis. Moving smoothly and logically from your introductory remarks to your thesis statement can be achieved using a funnel technique, as illustrated in the diagram in the figure below "Funnel Technique".

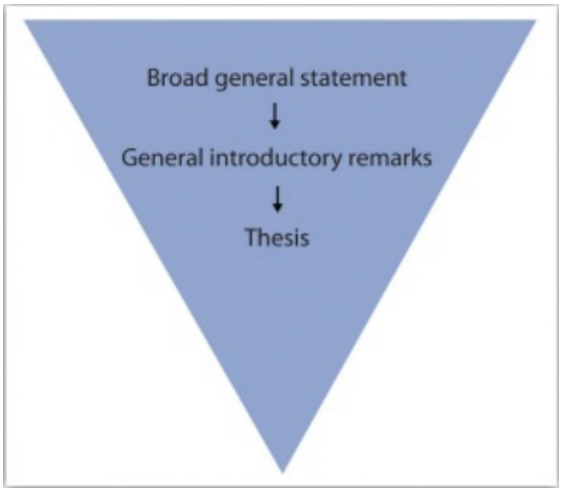


Figure 4.4.1: Funnel Technique

The Funnel Technique, or General to Specific, is a very common introductory technique. Other good introductory "lead-in" techniques are the following: the use of a question (that is answered in the thesis); the use of a dictionary definition; an anecdote (short personal story), background information (the "back story" that give explanation of why you are writing on this topic), a striking fact or statistic.

Tip

Make sure your essay is balanced by not having an excessively long or short introduction or conclusion. Check that they match each other in length as closely as possible, and try to mirror the formula you used in each. Parallelism strengthens the message of your essay.

Key Takeaways

- A strong opening captures your readers' interest and introduces them to your topic before you present your thesis statement.
- An introduction should restate your thesis, review your main points, and emphasize the importance of the topic.
- The funnel technique to writing the introduction begins with generalities and gradually narrows your focus until you present your thesis.
- A good introduction engages people's emotions or logic, questions or explains the subject, or provides a striking image or quotation.
- Carefully chosen diction in both the introduction prevents any confusing or boring ideas

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4.5: Writing Body Paragraphs

Learning Objectives

1. Select primary support related to your thesis.
2. Support your topic sentences.
3. Providing connections between thesis and body paragraphs.

If your thesis and outline give the reader a roadmap to your essay, then body paragraphs should closely follow that map. The reader should be able to predict what follows your introductory paragraph by simply reading the thesis statement. Using transition words helps in connecting ideas for your reader and creates coherence. See Chapter 5 for chart of effective transitions.

The body paragraphs present the evidence you have gathered to confirm your thesis. Before you begin to support your thesis in the body, you must find information from a variety of sources that support and give credit to what you are trying to prove.

Primary Support for Your Thesis

Without primary support, your argument is not likely to be convincing. Primary support can be described as the major points you choose to expand on your thesis. It is the most important information you select to argue for your point of view. Each point you choose will be incorporated into the topic sentence for each body paragraph you write. Your primary supporting points are further supported by supporting details within the paragraphs.

Identify the Characteristics of Good Primary Support

In order to fulfill the requirements of good primary support, the information you choose must meet the following standards:

- **Be specific.** The main points you make about your thesis and the examples you use to expand on those points need to be specific. Use specific examples to provide the evidence and to build upon your general ideas. These types of examples give your reader something narrow to focus on, and if used properly, they leave little doubt about your claim. General examples, while they convey the necessary information, are not nearly as compelling or useful in writing because they are too obvious and typical.
- **Be relevant to the thesis.** Primary support is considered strong when it relates directly to the thesis. Primary support should show, explain, or prove your main argument without delving into irrelevant details. When faced with lots of information that could be used to prove your thesis, you may think you need to include it all in your body paragraphs. But effective writers resist the temptation to lose focus. Choose your examples wisely by making sure they directly connect to your thesis.
- **Be detailed.** Remember that your thesis, while specific, should not be very detailed. The body paragraphs are where you develop the discussion that a thorough essay requires. Using detailed support shows readers that you have considered all the facts and chosen only the most precise details to enhance your point of view.

Prewrite to Identify Primary Supporting Points for a Thesis Statement

Recall that when you prewrite you essentially make a list of examples or reasons why you support your stance. Stemming from each point, you further provide details to support those reasons. After prewriting, you are then able to look back at the information and choose the most compelling pieces you will use in your body paragraphs.

Exercise 4.5.1:

Choose one of the following working thesis statements. On a separate sheet of paper, write for at least five minutes using one of the prewriting techniques you learned in this chapter.

1. Unleashed dogs on city streets are a dangerous nuisance.
2. Students cheat for many different reasons.
3. Drug use among teens and young adults is a problem.
4. The most important change that should occur at my college or university is _____.

Select the Most Effective Primary Supporting Points for a Thesis Statement

After you have prewritten about your working thesis statement, you may have generated a lot of information, which may be edited out later. Remember that your primary support must be relevant to your thesis. Remind yourself of your main argument, and delete

any ideas that do not directly relate to it. Omitting unrelated ideas ensures that you will use only the most convincing information in your body paragraphs. Choose at least three of only the most compelling points. These will serve as the topic sentences for your body paragraphs.

Exercise 4.5.2:

Refer to the previous exercise and select three of your most compelling reasons to support the thesis statement. Remember that the points you choose must be specific and relevant to the thesis. The statements you choose will be your primary support points, and you will later incorporate them into the topic sentences for the body paragraphs. You may also choose to outline your reasons, as part of your pre-writing.

Using Evidence to Support Your Thesis

When you support your thesis, you are revealing evidence. Evidence includes anything that can help support your stance. The following are the kinds of evidence you will encounter as you conduct your research:

1. **Facts.** Facts are the best kind of evidence to use because they often cannot be disputed. They can support your stance by providing background information on or a solid foundation for your point of view. However, some facts may still need explanation. For example, the sentence "The most populated state in the United States is California" is a pure fact, but it may require some explanation to make it relevant to your specific argument.
2. **Judgments.** Judgments are conclusions drawn from the given facts. Judgments are more credible than opinions because they are founded upon careful reasoning and examination of a topic.
3. **Testimony.** Testimony consists of direct quotations from either an eyewitness or an expert witness. An eyewitness is someone who has direct experience with a subject; he adds authenticity to an argument based on facts. An expert witness is a person who has extensive experience with a topic. This person studies the facts and provides commentary based on either facts or judgments, or both. An expert witness adds authority and credibility to an argument.
4. **Personal observation.** Personal observation is similar to testimony, but personal observation consists of your testimony. It reflects what you know to be true because you have experiences and have formed either opinions or judgments about them. For instance, if you are one of five children and your thesis states that being part of a large family is beneficial to a child's social development, you could use your own experience to support your thesis.

Choose Supporting Topic Sentences

Each body paragraph contains a topic sentence that states one aspect of your thesis and then expands upon it. Like the thesis statement, each topic sentence should be specific and supported by concrete details, facts, or explanations.

Each body paragraph should comprise the following elements:

topic sentence + supporting details (examples, reasons, or arguments)

As you read earlier, topic sentences indicate the location and main points of the basic arguments of your essay. These sentences are vital to writing your body ragraphs because they always refer back to and support your thesis statement. Topic sentences are linked to the ideas you have introduced in your thesis, thus reminding readers what your essay is about. A paragraph without a clearly identified topic sentence may be unclear and scattered, just like an essay without a thesis statement.

Tip

Unless your teacher instructs otherwise, you should include at least three body paragraphs in your essay. A five-paragraph essay, including the introduction and conclusion, is commonly the standard for exams and essay assignments. It is not, however, the only format for an academic essay. It is, perhaps, the most familiar one.

Draft Supporting Detail Sentences for Each Primary Support Sentence

After deciding which primary support points you will use as your topic sentences, you must add details to clarify and demonstrate each of those points. These supporting details provide examples, facts, or evidence that support the topic sentence.

The writer drafts possible supporting detail sentences for each primary support sentence based on the thesis statement:



Figure 4.5.1

Tip

You have the option of writing your topic sentences in one of three ways. You can state it at thebeginning of the body paragraph, or at the end of the paragraph, or you do not have to write it at all. This is called an implied topic sentence. An implied topic sentence lets readers form the main idea for themselves. For beginning writers, it is best to not use implied topic sentences because it makes it harder to focus your writing. Your instructor may also want to clearly identify the sentences that support your thesis.

Print out the first draft of your essay and use a highlighter to mark your topic sentences in the body paragraphs. Make sure they are clearly stated and accurately present your paragraphs, as well as accurately reflect your thesis. If your topic sentence contains information that does not exist in the rest of the paragraph, rewrite it to more accurately match the rest of the paragraph.

Key Takeaways

- Your body paragraphs should closely follow the path set forth by your thesis statement.
- Strong body paragraphs contain evidence that supports your thesis.
- Primary support comprises the most important points you use to support your thesis.
- Strong primary support is specific, detailed, and relevant to the thesis.
- Prewriting helps you determine your most compelling primary support.
- Evidence includes facts, judgments, testimony, and personal observation.
- Reliable sources may include newspapers, magazines, academic journals, books, encyclopedias, and firsthand testimony.
- A topic sentence presents one point of your thesis statement while the information in the rest of the paragraph supports that point.
- A body paragraph comprises a topic sentence plus supporting details.

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4.6: More About the Basic Elements of a First Draft

If you have been using the information in this chapter step by step to help you develop an assignment, you may already have a topic outline to direct your writing. Knowing what a first draft looks like will help you make the creative leap from the outline to the first draft. A first draft should include the following elements:

- An introduction that piques the audience's interest, tells what the essay is about, and motivates readers to keep reading.
- A *thesis statement* that presents the main point, or controlling idea, of the entire piece of writing.
- A topic sentence in each paragraph that states the main idea of the paragraph and implies how that main idea connects to the thesis statement.
- Supporting sentences in each paragraph that develop or explain the topic sentence. These can be specific facts, examples, anecdotes, or other details that elaborate on the topic sentence.
- A conclusion that reinforces the thesis statement and leaves the audience with a feeling of completion.

These elements follow the standard five-paragraph essay format, which you probably first encountered in high school. This basic format is valid for most essays you will write in college, even much longer ones.

The Role of Topic Sentences

Topic sentences make the structure of a text and the writer's basic arguments easy to locate and comprehend. In college writing, using a topic sentence in each paragraph of the essay is the standard rule. However, the topic sentence does not always have to be the first sentence in your paragraph even if it the first item in your formal outline.

The topic sentence can be the first, middle, or final sentence in a paragraph. The assignment's audience and purpose will often determine where a topic sentence belongs.When the purpose of the assignment is to persuade, for example, the topic sentence should be the first sentence in a paragraph. In a persuasive essay, the writer's point of view should be clearly expressed at the beginning of each paragraph.

Choosing where to position the topic sentence depends not only on your audience and purpose but also on the essay's arrangement, or order. When you organize information according to order of importance, the topic sentence may be the final sentence in a paragraph. All the supporting sentences build up to the topic sentence. Chronological order may also position the topic sentence as the final sentence because the controlling idea of the paragraph may make the most sense at the end of a sequence.

When you organize information according to spatial order, a topic sentence may appear as the middle sentence in a paragraph. An essay arranged by spatial order often contains paragraphs that begin with descriptions. A reader may first need a visual in his or her mind before understanding the development of the paragraph. When the topic sentence is in the middle, it unites the details that come before it with the ones that come after it.

Tip

When you begin to draft your paragraphs, you should follow your outline fairly closely. After all, you spent valuable time developing those ideas. However, as you begin to express your ideas in complete sentences, it might strike you that the topic sentence might work better at the end of the paragraph or in the middle. Try it. Writing a draft, by its nature, is a good time for experimentation.

As you read critically throughout the writing process, keep topic sentences in mind. Developing topic sentences and thinking about their placement in a paragraph will prepare you to write the rest of the paragraph.

The Role of Paragraphs

The paragraph is the main structural component of an essay as well as other forms of writing. Each paragraph of an essay adds another related main idea to support the writer's thesis, or controlling idea. Each related main idea is supported and developed with facts, examples, and other details that explain it. By exploring and refining one main idea at a time, writers build a strong case for their thesis.

Students often ask the question:"How long should a paragraph be?" One answer to this important question may be "long enough" — long enough for you to address your points and explain your main idea. To grab attention or to present succinct supporting ideas, a paragraph can be fairly short and consist of two to three sentences. A paragraph in a complex essay about some abstract point in philosophy or archaeology can be three-quarters of a page or more in length. As long as the writer maintains close focus on the

topic and does not ramble, a long paragraph is acceptable in college-level writing. In general, try to keep the paragraphs longer than one sentence but shorter than one full page of double-spaced text.

Journalistic style often calls for brief two-or three-sentence paragraphs because of how people read the news, both online and in print. Blogs and other online information sources often adopt this paragraphing style, too. Readers often skim the first paragraphs of a great many articles before settling on the handful of stories they want to read in detail.

You may find that a particular paragraph you write may be longer than one that will hold your audience's interest. In such cases, you should divide the paragraph into two or more shorter paragraphs, adding a topic statement or some kind of transitional word or phrase at the start of the new paragraph. Transition words or phrases show the connection between the two ideas.

In all cases, however, be guided by what your instructor wants and expects to find in your draft. Many instructors will expect you to develop a mature college-level style as you progress through the semester's assignments.

Starting Your First Draft

Now we are finally ready to look over Tuyet's shoulder as she begins to write her essay about digital technology and the confusing choices that consumers face. As she does, you should have in front of you your outline, with its thesis statement and topic sentences, and the notes you wrote earlier in this lesson on your purpose and audience. Reviewing these will put both you and Tuyet in the proper mind-set to start.

The following is Tuyet's thesis statement:

> Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are many, and the specifications are often confusing

Here are the notes that Tuyet wrote to herself to characterize her purpose and audience:

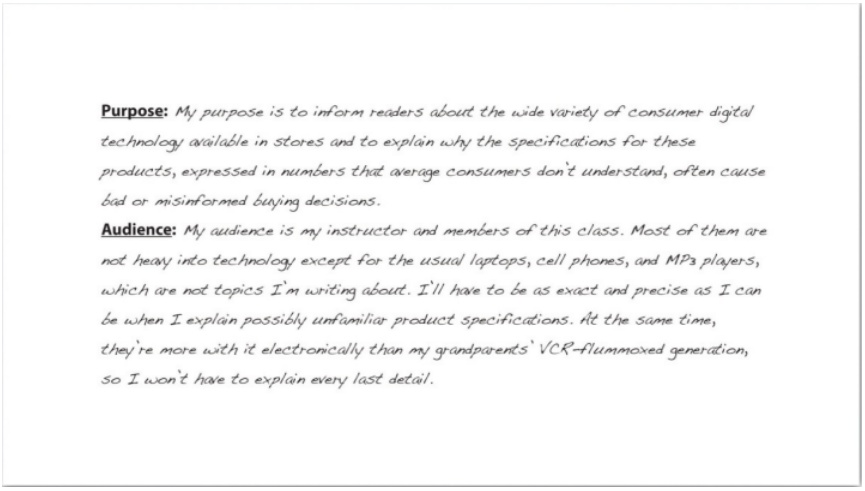
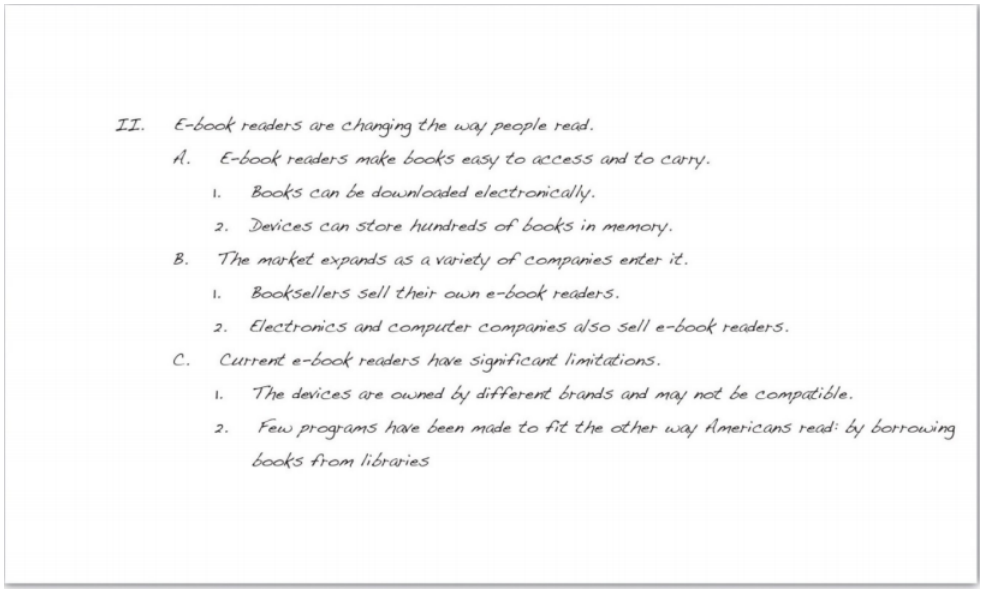

Purpose: My purpose is to inform readers about the wide variety of consumer digital technology available in stores and to explain why the specifications for these products, expressed in numbers that average consumers don't understand, often cause bad or misinformed buying decisions.
Audience: My audience is my instructor and members of this class. Most of them are not heavy into technology except for the usual laptops, cell phones, and MP3 players, which are not topics I'm writing about. I'll have to be as exact and precise as I can be when I explain possibly unfamiliar product specifications. At the same time, they're more with it electronically than my grandparents' VCR-flummoxed generation, so I won't have to explain every last detail.

Figure 4.6.1

Tuyet chose to begin by writing a quick introduction based on her thesis statement. She knew that she would want to improve her introduction significantly when she revised. Right now, she just wanted to give herself a starting point. You will read her introduction again in the chapter on "Revising and Editing" when she revises it.

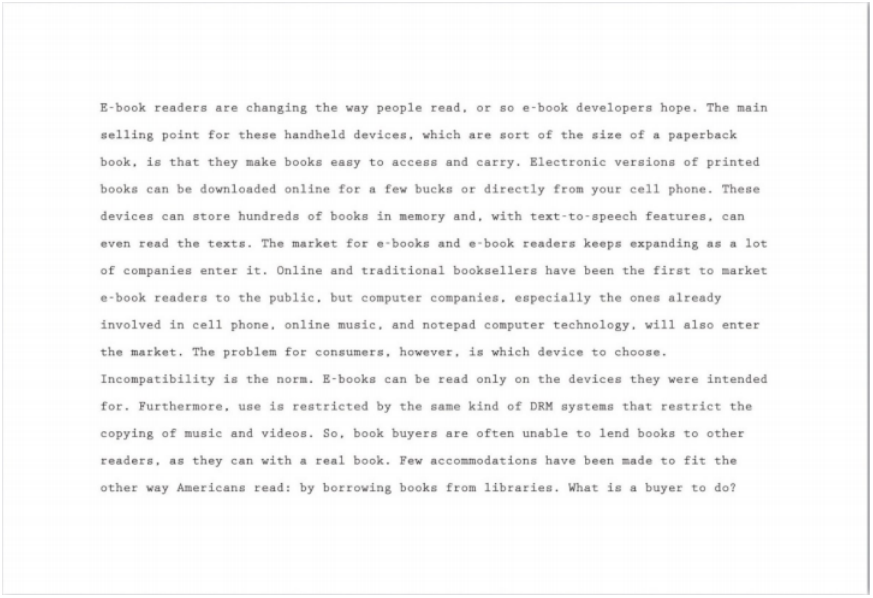
With her thesis statement and her purpose and audience notes in front of her, Tuyet then looked at her outline. She chose to use that outline because it includes the topic sentences. The following is the portion of her outline of one of her body paragraphs. The roman numeral II identifies the topic sentence for the paragraph, capital letters indicate supporting details, and Arabic numerals label subpoints.



II. E-book readers are changing the way people read.
A. E-book readers make books easy to access and to carry.
1. Books can be downloaded electronically.
2. Devices can store hundreds of books in memory.
B. The market expands as a variety of companies enter it.
1. Booksellers sell their own e-book readers.
2. Electronics and computer companies also sell e-book readers.
C. Current e-book readers have significant limitations.
1. The devices are owned by different brands and may not be compatible.
2. Few programs have been made to fit the other way Americans read: by borrowing books from libraries

Figure 4.6.2

Tuyet then began to expand the ideas in her outline into a paragraph. Notice how the outline helped her guarantee that all her sentences in the body of the paragraph develop the topic sentence.



E-book readers are changing the way people read, or so e-book developers hope. The main selling point for these handheld devices, which are sort of the size of a paperback book, is that they make books easy to access and carry. Electronic versions of printed books can be downloaded online for a few bucks or directly from your cell phone. These devices can store hundreds of books in memory and, with text-to-speech features, can even read the texts. The market for e-books and e-book readers keeps expanding as a lot of companies enter it. Online and traditional booksellers have been the first to market e-book readers to the public, but computer companies, especially the ones already involved in cell phone, online music, and notepad computer technology, will also enter the market. The problem for consumers, however, is which device to choose. Incompatibility is the norm. E-books can be read only on the devices they were intended for. Furthermore, use is restricted by the same kind of DRM systems that restrict the copying of music and videos. So, book buyers are often unable to lend books to other readers, as they can with a real book. Few accommodations have been made to fit the other way Americans read: by borrowing books from libraries. What is a buyer to do?

Figure 4.6.3

In your documents, observe any formatting requirements—for margins, headers, placement of page numbers, and other layout matters—that your instructor requires.

Continuing the First Draft

Tuyet continued writing her essay, moving to the second and third body paragraphs. She had supporting details but no numbered subpoints in her outline, so she had to consult her prewriting notes for specific information to include. Then she began to write the conclusion of her paper.

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4.7: Writing a Conclusion

It is not unusual to want to rush when you approach your conclusion, and even experienced writers may fade. But what good writers remember is that it is vital to put just as much attention into the conclusion as in the rest of the essay. After all, a hasty ending can undermine an otherwise strong essay.

A conclusion that does not correspond to the rest of your essay, has loose ends, or is unorganized can unsettle your readers and raise doubts about the entire essay. However, if you have worked hard to write the introduction and body, your conclusion can often be the most logical part to compose.

The Anatomy of a Strong Conclusion

Keep in mind that the ideas in your conclusion must conform to the rest of your essay.In order to tie these components together, restate your thesis at the beginning of your conclusion. This helps you assemble, in an orderly fashion, all the information you have explained in the body. Repeating the exact words of your thesis is usually seen as being redundant, but phrasing the main ideas in different language is a good idea. A strong conclusion reviews your main points and emphasizes the importance of the topic.

The construction of the conclusion is similar to the introduction, in which you make general introductory statements and then present your thesis. The difference is that in the conclusion you first paraphrase, or state in different words, your thesis and then follow up with general concluding remarks. These sentences should progressively broaden the focus of your thesis and maneuver your readers out of the essay.

Many writers like to end their essays with a final emphatic statement. This strong closing statement will cause your readers to continue thinking about the implications of your essay; it will make your conclusion, and thus your essay, more memorable. Another powerful technique is to challenge your readers to make a change in either their thoughts or their actions. Challenging your readers to see the subject through new eyes is a powerful way to ease yourself and your readers out of the essay. Thinking about how your particular topic fits into the larger world view and expressing the wider, global issues is also another technique for ending. Sometimes, this is called the “so, what?” conclusion (as in, why does this issue really matter? Or why is this important?)

Remember that often when the instructor is reading your last paragraph, he or she is deciding on the grade for that paper. Thus, it is important to end your paper skillfully.

It is wise to avoid doing any of the following in your conclusion:

- Introducing new material
- Contradicting your thesis
- Changing your thesis
- Using apologies or disclaimers

Introducing new material in your conclusion has an unsettling effect on your reader.When you raise new points, you make your reader want more information, which you could not possibly provide in the limited space of your final paragraph.

Contradicting or changing your thesis statement causes your readers to think that you do not actually have a conviction about your topic. After all, you have spent several paragraphs adhering to a singular point of view. When you change sides or open up your point of view in the conclusion, your reader becomes less inclined to believe your original argument.

By apologizing for your opinion or stating that you know it is tough to digest, you are in fact admitting that even you know what you have discussed is irrelevant or unconvincing. You do not want your readers to feel this way. Effective writers stand by their thesis statement and do not stray from it.

Make sure your essay is balanced by not having an excessively long or short introduction or conclusion. Check that they match each other in length as closely as possible, and try to mirror the formula you used in each. Parallelism strengthens the message of your essay.

Tip

When closing your essay, do not expressly state that you are drawing to a close. Your reader will know that a conclusion is forthcoming. In advanced academic writing, you would not necessarily rely on statements such as *in conclusion*, *it is clear that*, *as you can see*, or *in summation*. However, until you are more comfortable with essay writing skills, you should feel free to use a transition that indicates a closing.

Writing Your Own First Draft

Now you may begin your own first draft, if you have not already done so. Follow the suggestions and the guidelines presented in this section.

Key Takeaways

- Make the writing process work for you. Use any and all of the strategies that help you move forward in the writing process.
- Always be aware of your purpose for writing and the needs of your audience. Cater to those needs in every sensible way.
- Remember to include all the key structural parts of an essay: a thesis statement that is part of your introductory paragraph, three or more body paragraphs as described in your outline, and a concluding paragraph. Then add an engaging title to draw in readers.
- Write paragraphs of an appropriate length for your writing assignment. Paragraphs in college-level writing can be a page long, as long as they cover the main topics in your outline.
- Use your outline to guide the development of your paragraphs and the elaboration of your ideas. Each main idea, indicated by a roman numeral in your outline, becomes the topic of a new paragraph. Develop it with the supporting details and the subpoints of those details that you included in your outline.
- Generally speaking, write your introduction and conclusion last, after you have fleshed out the body paragraphs.
- A conclusion that does not connect to the rest of the essay can diminish the effect of your paper.
- The conclusion should remain true to your thesis statement. It is best to avoid changing your tone or your main idea and avoid introducing any new material.
- Closing with a final emphatic statement or a thoughtful reflection provides closure for your readers and makes your essay more memorable.

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4.8: Writing Essays (Exercises)

1. On a separate sheet of paper, choose one of the examples of a proper thesis statement from this chapter (one that interests you) and form three supporting points for that statement. After you have formed your three points, write a topic sentence for each body paragraph. Make sure that your topic sentences can be backed up with examples and details.
2. On a separate sheet of a paper, write an introduction for an essay based on the thesis statement from the group activity using the techniques for introductory paragraphs that you learned in this chapter.
3. Start a journal in which you record “spoken” thesis statements. Start listening closely to the opinions expressed by your teachers, classmates, friends, and family members. Ask them to provide at least three reasons for their opinion and record them in the journal. Use this as material for future essays.
4. Open a magazine and read a lengthy article. See if you can pinpoint the thesis statement as well as the topic sentence for each paragraph and its supporting details.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Revising and Editing

5.1: Reviewing Your Essay
5.2: Completing a Peer Review
5.3: Editing Your Draft for Standard Grammar and Mechanics
5.4: Keeping Track of Your Sentence-Level Grammar Errors

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5.1: Reviewing Your Essay

Learning Objectives

1. Identify major areas of concern in the draft essay during revising and editing.
2. Use peer reviews and editing checklists to assist revising and editing.
3. Revise and edit the first draft of your essay and produce a final draft.

Revising and editing are the two tasks you undertake to significantly improve your essay. Both are very important elements of the writing process. You may think that a completed first draft means little improvement is needed. However, even experienced writers need to improve their drafts and rely on peers during revising and editing. You may know that athletes miss catches, fumble balls, or overshoot goals. Dancers forget steps, turn too slowly, or miss beats. For both athletes and dancers, the more they practice, the stronger their performance will become. Web designers seek better images, a more clever design, or a more appealing background for their web pages. Writing has the same capacity to profit from improvement and revision.

Understanding the Purpose of Revising and Editing

Revising and editing allow you to examine two important aspects of your writing separately, so that you can give each task your undivided attention.

- When you **revise,** you take a second look at your ideas. You might add, cut, move, or change information in order to make your ideas clearer, more accurate, more interesting, or more convincing.
- When you **edit**, you take a second look at how you expressed your ideas. You add or change words. You fix any problems in grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. You improve your writing style. You make your essay into a polished, mature piece of writing, the end product of your best efforts.
- Many people hear the words *critic*, *critical*, and *criticism* and pick up only negative vibes that provoke feelings that make them blush, grumble, or shout. However, as a writer and a thinker, you need to learn to be critical of yourself in a positive way and have high expectations for your work. You also need to train your eye and trust your ability to fix what needs fixing. For this, you need to teach yourself where to look.

Tip

How do you get the best out of your revisions and editing? Here are some strategies that writers have developed to look at their first drafts from a fresh perspective. Try them over the course of this semester; then keep using the ones that bring results.

- Take a break. You are proud of what you wrote, but you might be too close to it to make changes. Set aside your writing for a few hours or even a day until you can look at it objectively.
- Ask someone you trust for feedback and constructive criticism.
- Pretend you are one of your readers. Are you satisfied or dissatisfied? Why?
- Use the resources that your college provides. Find out where your school's writing lab is located and ask about the assistance they provide online and in person.

The Importance of Unity and Coherence

Following your outline or other organizational plan closely offers you a reasonable guarantee that your writing will stay on purpose and not drift away from the controlling idea. However, when writers are rushed, are tired, or cannot find the right words, their writing may become less than they want it to be. Their writing may no longer be clear and concise, and they may be adding information that is not needed to develop the main idea.

When a piece of writing has unity, all the ideas in each paragraph and in the entire essay clearly belong and are arranged in an order that makes logical sense. When the writing has coherence, the ideas flow smoothly. The wording clearly indicates how one idea leads to another within a paragraph and from paragraph to paragraph.

Tip

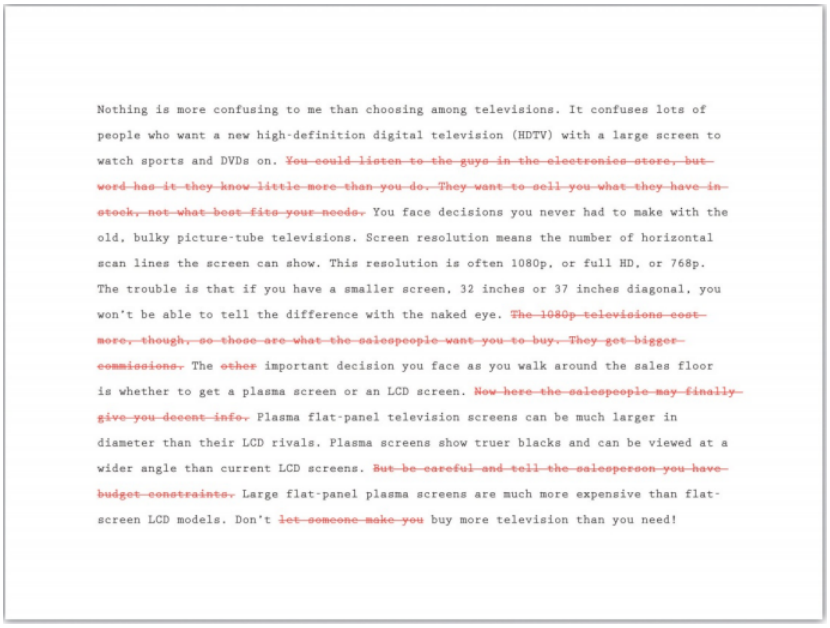
Reading your writing aloud will often help you find problems with unity and coherence. Listen for the clarity and flow of your ideas. Identify places where you find yourself confused, and write a note to yourself about possible fixes.

Creating Unity

Sometimes writers get caught up in the moment and cannot resist a good digression. Even though you might enjoy such detours when you chat with friends, unplanned digressions usually harm a piece of writing.

Tuyet stayed close to her outline when she drafted the three body paragraphs of her essay she tentatively titled "Digital Technology: The Newest and the Best at What Price?" But a recent shopping trip for an HDTV upset her enough that she digressed from the main topic of her third paragraph and included comments about the sales staff at the electronics store she visited. When she revised her essay, she deleted the off-topic sentences that affected the unity of the paragraph.

Read the following paragraph twice, the first time without Tuyet's changes, and the second time with them.



Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of people who want a new high-definition digital television (HDTV) with a large screen to watch sports and DVDs on. ~~You could listen to the guys in the electronics store, but word has it they know little more than you do. They want to sell you what they have in stock, not what best fits your needs.~~ You face decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky picture-tube televisions. Screen resolution means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often 1080p, or full HD, or 768p. The trouble is that if you have a smaller screen, 32 inches or 37 inches diagonal, you won't be able to tell the difference with the naked eye. ~~The 1080p televisions cost more, though, so those are what the salespeople want you to buy. They get bigger commissions.~~ The ~~other~~ important decision you face as you walk around the sales floor is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen. ~~Now here the salespeople may finally give you decent info.~~ Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma screens show truer blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. ~~But be careful and tell the salesperson you have budget constraints.~~ Large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. Don't ~~let someone make you~~ buy more television than you need!

Figure 5.1.1

Exercise 5.1.1:

Answer the following questions about Tuyet's paragraph:

1. Do you agree with Tuyet's decision to make the deletions she made? Did she cut too much, too little, or just enough? Explain.
2. Is the explanation of what screen resolution means a digression? Or is it audience friendly and essential to understanding the paragraph? Explain.
3. Is the use of 2nd person, "you," acceptable in a college paper?

Tip

When you reread your writing to find revisions to make, look for each type of problem in a separate sweep. Read it straight through once to locate any problems with unity. Read it straight through a second time to find problems with coherence. You may follow this same practice during many stages of the writing process.

Creating Coherence

Careful writers use transitions to clarify how the ideas in their sentences and paragraphs are related. These words and phrases help the writing flow smoothly. Adding transitions is not the only way to improve coherence, but they are often useful and give a mature

feel to your essays. The table below, "Common Transitional Words and Phrases," groups many common transitions according to their purpose.

Table 5.1.1: Common Transitional Words and Phrases

Transitions That Show Sequence or Time		
After	before	later
afterward	before long	meanwhile
as soon as	finally	next
at first	first, second, third	soon
at last	in the first place	then

Transitions That Show Position		
Above	across	at the bottom
at the top	behind	below
Beside	beyond	inside
Near	next to	opposite
to the left, to the right, to the side	under	where

Transitions That Show a Conclusion		
Indeed	hence	all in all
in the final analysis	therefore	thus

Transitions That Continue a Line of Thought		
consequently	furthermore	additionally
because	besides the fact	following this idea further
in addition	in the same way	moreover
looking further	considering…, it is clear that	

Transitions That Change a Line of Thought		
but	yet	however
nevertheless	on the contrary	on the other hand

Transitions That Show Importance		
above all	best	especially
in fact	more important	most important
most	worst	

Transitions That Introduce the Final Thoughts in a Paragraph or Essay		
finally	last	in conclusion

Transitions That Introduce the Final Thoughts in a Paragraph or Essay		
most of all	least of all	last of all

All-Purpose Transitions to Open Paragraphs or to Connect Ideas Inside Paragraphs		
admittedly	at this point	certainly
granted	it is true	generally speaking
in general	in this situation	no doubt
no one denies	obviously	of course
to be sure	undoubtedly	unquestionably

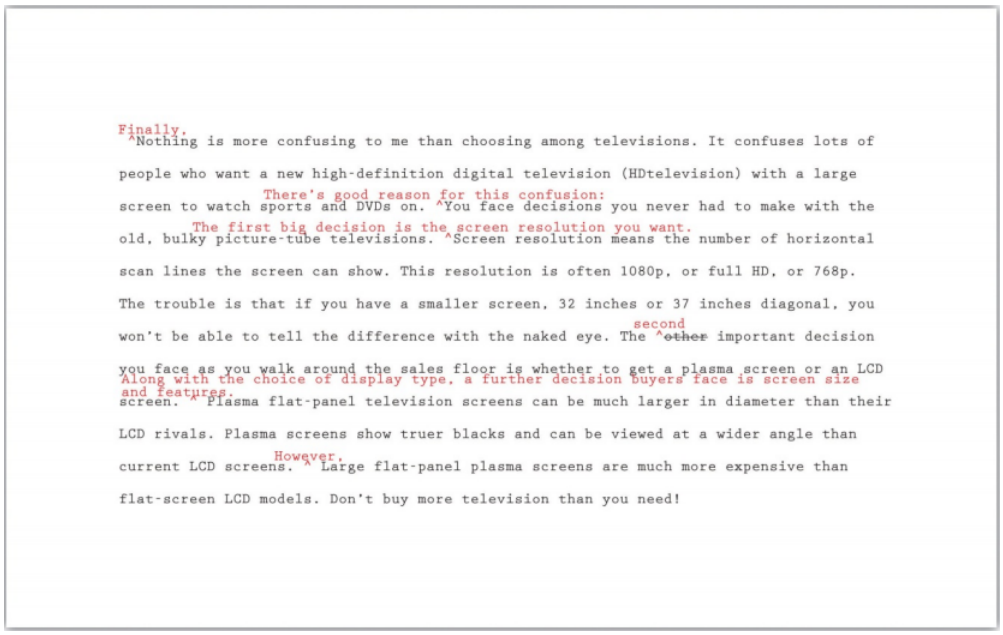
Transitions that Introduce Examples		
for instance	for example	specifically

Transitions That Clarify the Order of Events or Steps		
first, second, third	generally, furthermore, finally	in the first place, also, last
in the first place, finally	likewise, lastly	thus, additionally

Tip

Many writers make their revisions on a printed copy and then transfer them to the version on-screen. They conventionally use a small arrow called a caret (^) to show where to insert an addition or correction.

After Tuyet revised for unity, she next examined her paragraph about televisions to check for coherence. She looked for places where she needed to add a transition or perhaps reword the text to make the flow of ideas clear. In the version that follows, she has already deleted the sentences that were off topic.



Finally,
^Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses lots of people who want a new high-definition digital television (HDtelevision) with a large screen to watch sports and DVDs on. ^You face decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky picture-tube televisions. ^Screen resolution means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often 1080p, or full HD, or 768p.

There's good reason for this confusion:

The first big decision is the screen resolution you want.

The trouble is that if you have a smaller screen, 32 inches or 37 inches diagonal, you won't be able to tell the difference with the naked eye. The ^~~other~~ second important decision you face as you walk around the sales floor is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen. ^ Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma screens show truer blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. ^ Large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. Don't buy more television than you need!

Along with the choice of display type, a further decision buyers face is screen size and features.

However,

Figure 5.1.2

Exercise 5.1.2:

Answer the following questions about Tuyet's revised paragraph.

1. Do you agree with the transitions and other changes that Tuyet made to her paragraph? Which would you keep and which were unnecessary? Explain.
2. What transition words or phrases did Tuyet add to her paragraph? Why did she choose each one?
3. What effect does adding additional sentences have on the coherence of the paragraph? Explain. When you read both versions aloud, which version has a more logical flow of ideas? Explain.

Being Clear and Concise

Some writers are very methodical and painstaking when they write a first draft. Other writers unleash a lot of words in order to get out all that they feel they need to say. Do either of these composing styles match your style? Or is your composing style somewhere in between? No matter which description best fits you, the first draft of almost every piece of writing, no matter its author, can be made clearer and more concise.

If you have a tendency to write too much, you will need to look for unnecessary words. If you have a tendency to be vague or imprecise in your wording, you will need to find specific words to replace any overly general language.

Identifying Wordiness

Sometimes writers use too many words when fewer words will appeal more to their audience and better fit their purpose. Here are some common examples of wordiness to look for in your draft. Eliminating wordiness helps all readers, because it makes your ideas clear, direct, and straightforward.

- **Wordy:** There are two major experiments that the Biology Department sponsors.

  Revised: The Biology Department sponsors two major experiments.

- **Wordy:** Two extremely famous and well-known consumer advocates spoke eloquently in favor of the proposed important legislation.

  Revised: Two well-known consumer advocates spoke in favor of the proposed legislation.

- **Sentences with phrases that add little to the meaning.** Be judicious when you use phrases such as *in terms of*, *with a mind to*, *on the subject of*, *as to whether or not*, *more or less*, *as far as…is concerned*, and similar expressions. You can usually find a more straightforward way to state your point.

  Wordy: As a world leader in the field of green technology, the company plans to focus its efforts in the area of geothermal energy.

  A report as to whether or not to use geysers as an energy source is in the process of preparation.

  Revised: As a world leader in green technology, the company plans to focus on geothermal energy.

  A report about using geysers as an energy source is in preparation.

- **Sentences in the passive voice or with forms of the verb** *to be.* Sentences with passive-voice verbs often create confusion, because the subject of the sentence does not perform an action. Sentences are clearer when the subject of the sentence performs the action and is followed by a strong verb. Use strong active-voice verbs in place of forms of *to be*, which can lead to wordiness. Avoid passive voice when you can.

  Wordy: It might perhaps be said that using a GPS device is something that is a benefit to drivers who have a poor sense of direction.

  Revised: Using a GPS device benefits drivers who have a poor sense of direction.

- **Wordy:** The e-book reader, which is a recent invention, may become as commonplace as the cell phone.

  Revised: The e-book reader, a recent invention, may become as commonplace as the cell phone.

  Wordy: My over-sixty uncle bought an e-book reader, and his wife bought an e-book reader, too.

  Revised: My over-sixty uncle and his wife both bought e-book readers.

Choosing Specific, Appropriate Words

Most college essays should be written in formal English suitable for an academic situation. Follow these principles to be sure that your word choice is appropriate.

- **Avoid slang.** Find alternatives to *bummer*, *kids*, *hanging out*.
- **Avoid language that is overly casual.** Write about "men and women" rather than "girls and guys" unless you are trying to create a specific effect. A formal tone calls for formal language.
- **Avoid contractions.** Use *do not* in place of *don't*, *I am* in place of *I'm*, *have not* in place of *haven't*, and so on. Contractions are considered casual speech.
- **Avoid clichés.** Overused expressions such as *green with envy*, *face the music*, *better late than never*, and similar expressions are empty of meaning and may not appeal to your audience.
- **Be careful when you use words that sound alike but have different meanings.** Some examples are *allusion/illusion*, *complement/compliment*, *council/counsel*, *concurrent/consecutive*, *founder/flounder*, and *historic/historical*. When in doubt, check a dictionary.
- **Choose words with the connotations you want.** Choosing a word for its connotations is as important in formal essay writing as it is in all kinds of writing. Compare the positive connotations of the word *proud* and the negative connotations of *arrogant* and *conceited*.
- **Use specific words rather than overly general words.** Find synonyms for *thing*, *people*, *nice*, *good*, *bad*, *interesting*, and other vague words. Or use specific details to make your exact meaning clear.

Now read the revisions below Tuyet made to make her third paragraph clearer and more concise. She has already incorporated the changes she made to improve unity and coherence.

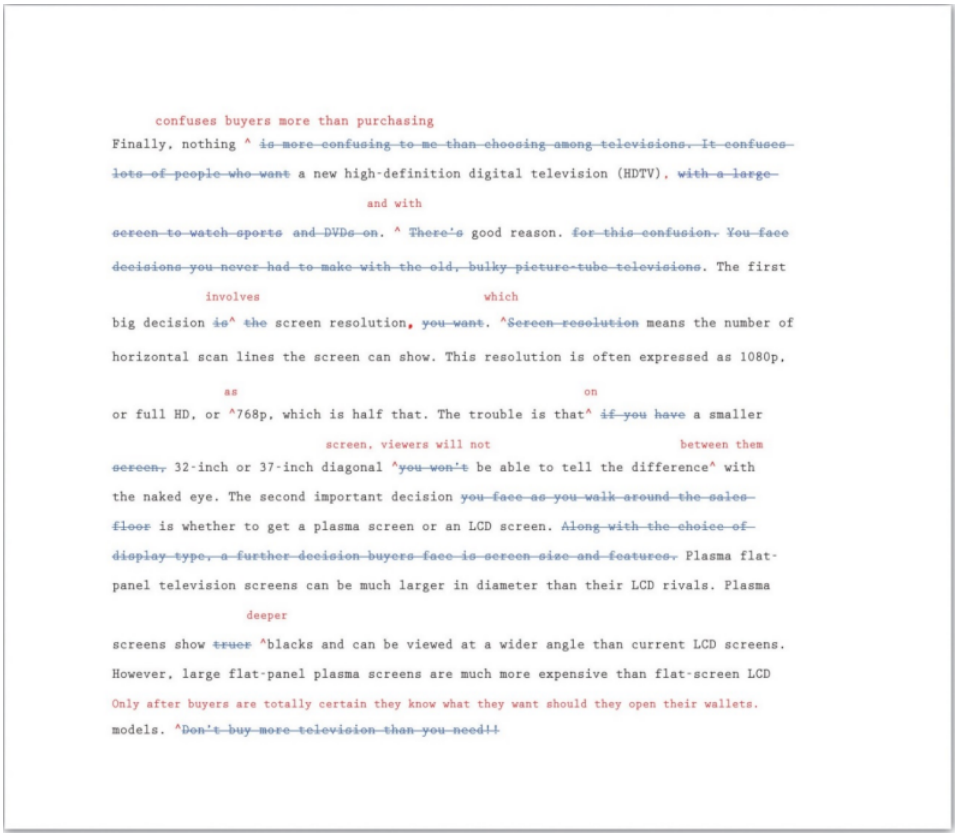

confuses buyers more than purchasing
Finally, nothing ^ ~~is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions. It confuses~~ ~~lots of people who want~~ a new high-definition digital television (HDTV), ~~with a large~~ and with
~~screen to watch sports and DVDs on~~. ^ ~~There's~~ good reason. ~~for this confusion. You face~~ ~~decisions you never had to make with the old, bulky picture-tube televisions~~. The first involves which
big decision ~~is~~^ ~~the~~ screen resolution, ~~you want~~. ^~~Screen resolution~~ means the number of horizontal scan lines the screen can show. This resolution is often expressed as 1080p, as on
or full HD, or ^768p, which is half that. The trouble is that^ ~~if you have~~ a smaller screen, viewers will not between them
~~screen,~~ 32-inch or 37-inch diagonal ^~~you won't~~ be able to tell the difference^ with the naked eye. The second important decision ~~you face as you walk around the sales~~ ~~floor~~ is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen. ~~Along with the choice of~~ ~~display type, a further decision buyers face is screen size and features.~~ Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma deeper
screens show ~~truer~~ ^blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. However, large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD
Only after buyers are totally certain they know what they want should they open their wallets.
models. ^~~Don't buy more television than you need!!~~

Figure 5.1.3

Exercise 5.1.3:

Answer the following questions about Tuyet's revised paragraph:

1. Read the unrevised and the revised paragraphs aloud. Explain in your own words how changes in word choice have affected Tuyet's writing.

2. Do you agree with the changes that Mariah made to her paragraph? Which changes would you keep and which were unnecessary? Explain. What other changes would you have made?
3. What effect does removing contractions and the pronoun *you* have on the tone of the paragraph? How would you characterize the tone now? Is it more academic? Why?

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5.2: Completing a Peer Review

After working so closely with a piece of writing, writers often need to step back and ask for a more objective reader. What writers most need is feedback from readers who can respond only to the words on the page. When they are ready, writers show their drafts to someone, sometimes a classmate, they respect and who can give an honest response about the essay's strengths and weaknesses.

Sooner or later, someone is going to hand you a piece of writing and ask for your opinion. You may be asked to review another student's essay as part of your class work. Perhaps a friend or a younger brother or sister has come to you for help. If you develop a reputation for being a good writer, then the chances are good that even your boss might ask you to look over letters or policy statements and offer your professional opinion. In any case, if you really want to do a good job in these situations, you're going to need reviewing skills. You're going to need to be able to identify problems, suggest alternatives, and, more importantly, support everything you say with reasonable claims. Furthermore, you must do all this in a convincing way that makes the writer want to make the changes you suggest. You must know what's wrong with a document, why it's wrong, and how to fix it.

You've probably heard the saying, "A writer is his own worst critic." Whoever said this undoubtedly suffered from poor self-reviewing skills. After all, it's easier to spot problems in other people's writing because our own ego (or pride) doesn't get in the way. Another problem is that sometimes we get so caught up in what we want to get across in our writing that we don't pay enough attention to how we're expressing it -- a sentence that makes perfect sense to us might be total gibberish to someone else. Thankfully, these are all problems that can be overcome. You can learn to fairly and accurately review your own work. One way you can get better at self-reviewing is to spend time reviewing other people's work. Eventually, you'll develop a knack for spotting errors that will serve you well as you edit and revise your own work.

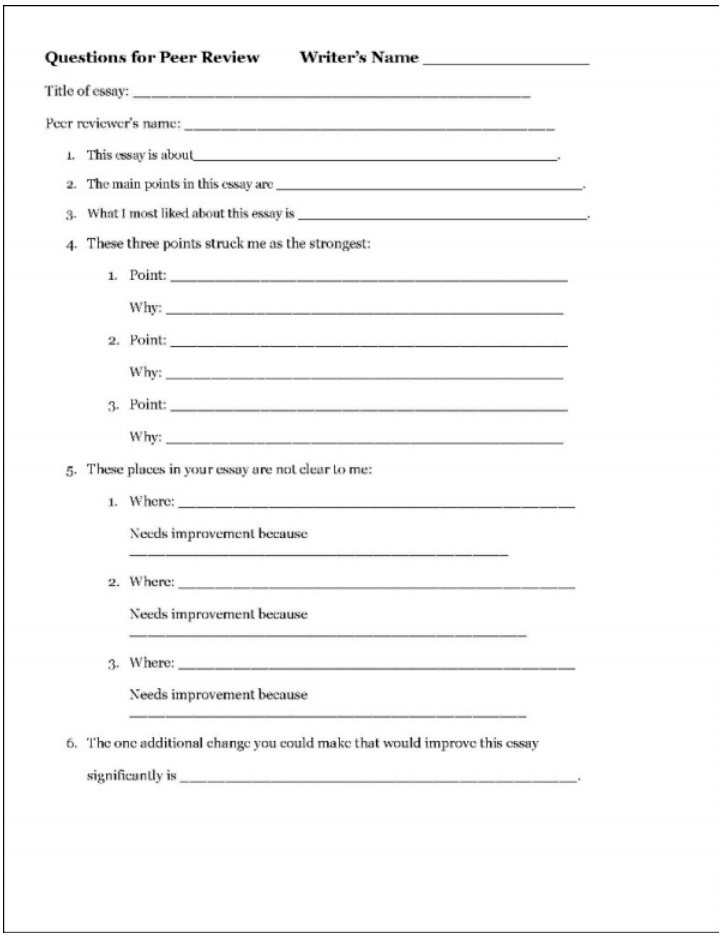
Writers, particularly new writers, often find that letting other writers review their work is tremendously helpful. Most universities have writing centers, where students can have their essays reviewed for free by experienced student writers or tutors. These tutors can work with you one-on-one to help you improve your writing and earn better grades.

You should realize that reviewing your work, like planning, drafting, or revising, is a recursive process. It is not something a writer does just at the end of his work. For instance, you may want to write an introduction to an essay and have it reviewed by a teacher or classmate before trudging forward. If you're on the wrong track, you'd be better off knowing about it sooner rather than later -- especially if a deadline or due date is looming.

You, too, can ask a peer to read your draft when it is ready. After evaluating the feedback and assessing what is most helpful, the reader's feedback will help you when you revise your draft. This process is called **peer review.**

You can work with a partner in your class and identify specific ways to strengthen each other's essays. Although you may be uncomfortable sharing your writing at first, remember that each writer is working toward the same goal: a final draft that fits the audience and the purpose. Maintaining a positive attitude when providing feedback will put you and your partner at ease. The box that follows provides a useful framework for the peer review session.

Questions for Peer Review



Questions for Peer Review **Writer's Name** _____

Title of essay: _____

Peer reviewer's name: _____

1. This essay is about_____.
2. The main points in this essay are _____.
3. What I most liked about this essay is _____.
4. These three points struck me as the strongest:
    1. Point: _____

       Why: _____
    2. Point: _____

       Why: _____
    3. Point: _____

       Why: _____
5. These places in your essay are not clear to me:
    1. Where: _____

       Needs improvement because

       _____
    2. Where: _____

       Needs improvement because

       _____
    3. Where: _____

       Needs improvement because

       _____
6. The one additional change you could make that would improve this essay significantly is _____.

Figure 5.2.1

Another Format for Peer Review

When you're reviewing your own paper or the paper of a friend or classmate, ask yourself a few questions:

ORGANIZATION

1. What are your initial thoughts? What strengths and weaknesses does the paper have? What parts confused you, or might be confusing to other readers? What's the most important thing that the writer is trying to say?
2. How is the paper you're reviewing organized? Again, does it start with the broad and move to specifics? Do all sentences support the paragraph's topic sentence, and do all paragraphs support the thesis? Is there an *Introduction* that draws in the reader, or does it restate the assignment and become redundant? Is the paper organized in a way that will make sense to readers? Does the writer employ transitions effectively? Does the paper flow from beginning to end?

FOCUS AND STYLE

1. Is the paper focused on the assignment? Does it follow the same thought throughout the paper, or does it jump from subject to subject? Do I feel like I'm still learning about/thinking about the same subject at the end of the paper that I was at the beginning of the paper?
2. Try to paraphrase the thesis of the paper as a promise: *In this paper, the writer will...* Does the writer fulfill his/her obligation stated in the thesis?
3. What's the writer's position on the issue? What words does the writer use to indicate his/her position?
4. In what style is the paper written? Does it *work* for the subject matter and assignment? Will the paper appeal to its intended audience? Is the writing at an appropriate level for the target audience?

DEVELOPMENT

1. Does the title indicate what the paper is about? Does it catch your interest? Does the opening paragraph draw you in? If not, can you suggest a different approach to catch the readers' attention?

2. How is the development of the paper carried out? Does it start with a broad subject and then move to something more specific?
3. Does the concluding sentence draw the argument of the paper to a close by bringing together the main points provided in the paper, or does it just end? Does the writer conclude in a memorable way, or does he/she simply trail off? If the ending is too abrupt or too vague, can you suggest some other way to conclude the paper? Does the ending introduce any new topics?

CONVENTIONS

1. Are common or appropriate writing conventions followed?
2. Are grammar, spelling, punctuation and other mechanics observed?

Exercise 5.2.1:

Exchange essays with a classmate and complete a peer review of each other's draft in progress. Remember to give positive feedback and to be courteous, polite, and constructive in your responses. Focus on providing one positive comment and one question for more information to the author.

Using Feedback Objectively

The purpose of peer feedback is to receive constructive criticism of your essay. Your peer reviewer is your first real audience, and you have the opportunity to learn what confuses and delights a reader so that you can improve your work before sharing the final draft with a wider audience (or your intended audience).

It may not be necessary to incorporate every recommendation your peer reviewer makes. However, if you start to observe a pattern in the responses you receive from peer reviewers, you might want to take that feedback into consideration in future assignments. For example, if you read consistent comments about a need for more attention to how your paper holds together, then you may want to consider reviewing a list of transitions and connectors for this paper as well as in future assignments.

Using Feedback from Multiple Sources

You might get feedback from more than one reader as you share different stages of your revised draft. In this situation, you may receive feedback from readers who do not understand the assignment or who lack your involvement with and enthusiasm for it.

You need to evaluate the responses you receive according to two important criteria:

1. Determine if the feedback supports the purpose of the assignment.
2. Determine if the suggested revisions are appropriate to the audience.

Then, using these standards, accept or reject revision feedback. *You may also ask your teacher for advice at this point.*

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5.3: Editing Your Draft for Standard Grammar and Mechanics

If you have been incorporating each set of revisions as Tuyet has, you have produced multiple drafts of your writing. So far, all your changes have been content changes. Perhaps with the help of peer feedback, you have made sure that you sufficiently supported your ideas. You have checked for problems with unity and coherence. You have examined your essay for word choice, revising to cut unnecessary words and to replace weak wording with specific and appropriate wording.

The next step after revising the content is editing. When you edit, you examine the surface features of your text. You examine your spelling, grammar, usage, and punctuation. You also make sure you use the proper format when creating your finished assignment.

Tip

Editing often takes time. Budgeting time into the writing process allows you to complete additional edits after revising. **Editing and proofreading** your writing helps you create a finished work that represents your best efforts. Here are a few more tips to remember about your readers:

- Readers do not notice correct spelling, but they *do* notice misspellings.
- Readers look past your sentences to get to your ideas — unless the sentences are awkward, poorly constructed, and frustrating to read.
- Readers notice when every sentence has the same rhythm as every other sentence, with no variety.
- Readers do not cheer when you use *there*, *their*, and *they're* correctly, but they notice when you do not.
- Readers will notice the care with which you handled your assignment and your attention to detail in the delivery of an error-free document.

The next chapters of this book offer a useful review of word choice, usage, grammar, and mechanics. Use them to help you eliminate major errors in your writing and refine your understanding of the conventions of language. Do not hesitate to ask for help, too, from peer tutors in your academic department or in the college's writing lab.

In the meantime, use the checklist on the next page to help you edit your writing.

Checklist

Editing Your Writing

Grammar

- Are some sentences actually sentence fragments?
- Are some sentences run-on sentences? How can I correct them?
- Do some sentences need conjunctions between independent clauses?
- Does every verb agree with its subject?
- Is every verb in the correct tense?
- Are tense forms, especially for irregular verbs, written correctly?
- Have I used subject, object, and possessive personal pronouns correctly?
- Have I used *who* and *whom* correctly?
- Is the antecedent of every pronoun clear?
- Do all personal pronouns agree with their antecedents?
- Have I used the correct comparative and superlative forms of adjectives and adverbs?
- Is it clear which word a participial phrase modifies, or is it a dangling modifier?
- Have I checked all nouns for number and agreement and for correct article use?

Sentence Structure

- Are all my sentences simple sentences, or do I vary my sentence structure?
- Have I chosen the best coordinating or subordinating conjunctions to join clauses?
- Have I created long sentences with too much information that should be shortened for clarity?
- Do I see any mistakes in parallel structure?

Punctuation

- Does every sentence end with the correct end punctuation?
- Can I justify the use of every exclamation point?
- Have I used apostrophes correctly to write all singular and plural possessive forms?
- Have I used quotation marks correctly?

Mechanics and Usage

- Can I find any spelling errors? How can I correct them?
- Have I used capital letters where they are needed?
- Have I written abbreviations, where allowed, correctly?
- Can I find any errors in the use of commonly confused words, such as *to*/*too*/*two*?
- If my paper is typed, have I followed the correct format that my professor requires?

Tip

Be careful about relying too much on spelling checkers and grammar checkers. A spelling checker cannot recognize that you meant to write *principle* but wrote *principal* instead. A grammar checker often queries constructions that are perfectly correct. The program does not understand your meaning; it makes its check against a general set of formulas that might not apply in each instance. If you use a grammar checker, accept the suggestions that make sense, but consider why the suggestions came up.

Proofreading requires patience; it is very easy to read past a mistake. Set your paper aside for at least a few hours, if not a day or more, so your mind will rest. Some professional proofreaders read a text backward so they can concentrate on spelling and punctuation. Another helpful technique is to slowly read a paper aloud, paying attention to every word, letter, and punctuation mark.

If you need additional proofreading help, ask a reliable friend, a classmate, or a peer tutor to make a final pass on your paper to look for anything you missed.

Formatting

Remember to use proper format when creating your finished assignment. For most academic papers, the appropriate format would be to use 1” margins, “Times New Roman” font in 12 point, and double spaced. It is good to get in the habit of typing all papers that way which will make it easier when you are doing much longer research papers.

Sometimes an instructor, a department, or a college will require students to follow specific instructions on titles, margins, page numbers, or the location of the writer’s name. These requirements may be more detailed and rigid for research projects and term papers, which often observe the American Psychological Association (APA) or Modern Language Association (MLA) style guides, especially when citations of sources are included.

To ensure the format is correct and follows any specific instructions, make a final check before you submit an assignment.

Key Takeaways

- Revising and editing are the stages of the writing process in which you improve your work before producing a final draft.
- During revising, you add, cut, move, or change information in order to improve content.
- During editing, you take a second look at the words and sentences you used to express your ideas and fix any problems in grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure.
- Unity in writing means that all the ideas in each paragraph and in the entire essay clearly belong together and are arranged in an order that makes logical sense.
- Coherence in writing means that the writer’s wording clearly indicates how one idea leads to another within a paragraph and between paragraphs.
- Transitional words and phrases effectively make writing more coherent.
- Writing should be clear and concise, with no unnecessary words.
- Effective formal writing uses specific, appropriate words and avoids slang, contractions, clichés, and overly general words.
- Peer reviews, done properly, can give writers objective feedback about their writing. It is the writer’s responsibility to evaluate the results of peer reviews and incorporate only useful feedback.

- Remember to budget time for careful editing and proofreading. Use all available resources, including editing checklists, peer editing, and your institution's writing lab, to improve your editing skills.

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5.4: Keeping Track of Your Sentence-Level Grammar Errors

The **Error Analysis Checklist** is for you to use when you receive your paper with comments from your instructor.

		Place a checkmark next to EACH error you find in these essays/compositions				
Error Symbol	**Meaning**	**Essay #1**	**Essay #2**	**Essay #3**	**Essay #4**	**Essay #5**
vt	verb tense					
vf	verb form					
ss	sentence structure					
wo	word order					
conj	conjunction / connector					
sv/agr	subject/verb agreement					
art	article					
det	determiner					
s/pl (num)	singular/ plural noun forms					
wc	word choice					
wf	word form					
prep	preposition					
cs	comma splice					
ro	run on					
frag	fragment					
p	punctuation					
sp	spelling					
cap	capitalization					
unclear ????	unclear point or nonidiomatic English					
MW	missing word					
WW	wrong word					
transition	transition missing or wrong					
	indentation missing					
	transpose words					
	Total Error Count:					

Figure 5.4.1: Error Analysis Checklist

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Working with Words - Usage, Form, and Context

6.1: Commonly Confused Words
6.2: Spelling
6.3: Word Choice
6.4: Word Form – Adjectives and Adverbs / Prefixes and Suffixes
6.5: Using Context Clues
6.6: Working with Words (Exercises)

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6.1: Commonly Confused Words

Learning Objectives

1. Identify commonly confused words.
2. Use strategies to avoid commonly confused words.

Just as a mason uses bricks to build sturdy homes, writers use words to build successful documents. Consider the construction of a building. Builders need to use tough, reliable materials to build a solid and structurally sound skyscraper. From the foundation to the roof and every floor in between, every part is necessary. Writers need to use strong, meaningful words from the first sentence to the last and in every sentence in between.

You already know many words that you use every day as part of your writing and speaking vocabulary. You probably also know that certain words fit better in certain situations. Letters, e-mails, and even quickly jotted grocery lists require the proper selection of vocabulary. Imagine you are writing a grocery list to purchase the ingredients for a recipe but accidentally write down cilantro when the recipe calls for parsley. Even though cilantro and parsley look remarkably alike, each produces a very different effect in food. This seemingly small error could radically alter the flavor of your dish!

Having a solid everyday vocabulary will help you while writing, but learning new words and avoiding common word errors will make a real impression on your readers. Experienced writers know that deliberate, careful word selection and usage can lead to more polished, more meaningful work. This chapter covers word choice and vocabulary-building strategies that will improve your writing.

Recognizing Commonly Confused Words in Your Writing

Some words in English cause trouble for speakers and writers because these words share a similar pronunciation, meaning, or spelling with another word. These words are called commonly confused words. For example, read aloud the following sentences containing the commonly confused words *new* and *knew*:

> I liked her *new* sweater.
>
> I *knew* she would wear that sweater today.

These words may sound alike when spoken, but they carry entirely different usages and meanings. *New* is an adjective that describes the sweater, and *knew* is the past tense of the verb *to know*. To read a general word use for adjectives, verbs, and other parts of speech see Chapter 1.

New and *knew* are just two of the words that can be confusing because of their similarities. Familiarize yourself with the following list of commonly confused words. Recognizing these words in your own writing and in other pieces of writing can help you choose the correct word.

Commonly Confused Words

A, An, And

- *A* (article). Used before a word that begins with a consonant.

  a key, **a** mouse, **a** screen

- *An* (article). Used before a word that begins with a vowel.

  an airplane, **an** ocean, **an** igloo

- *And* (conjunction). Connects two or more words together.

  peanut butter **and** jelly, pen **and** pencil, jump **and** shout

Accept, Except

- *Accept* (verb). Means to take or agree to something offered.

  They **accepted** our proposal for the conference.

- *Except* (conjunction). Means only or but.

We could fly there **except** the tickets cost too much.

Affect, Effect

- *Affect* (verb). Means to create a change.

  Hurricane winds **affect** the amount of rainfall.

- *Effect* (noun). Means an outcome or result.

  The heavy rains will have an **effect** on the crop growth.

Are, Our

- *Are* (verb). A conjugated form of the verb *to be*.

  My cousins **are** all tall and blonde.

- *Our* (pronoun). Indicates possession, usually follows the pronoun *we*.

  We will bring **our** cameras to take pictures.

By, Buy

- *By* (preposition). Means next to.

  My glasses are **by** the bed.

- *Buy* (verb). Means to purchase.

  I will **buy** new glasses after the doctor's appointment.

Its, It's

- *Its* (pronoun). A form of *it* that shows possession.

  The butterfly flapped **its** wings.

- *It's* (contraction). Joins the words *it* and *is*.

  It's the most beautiful butterfly I have ever seen.

Know, No

- *Know* (verb). Means to understand or possess knowledge.

  I **know** the male peacock sports the brilliant feathers.

- *No*. Used to make a negative.

  I have **no** time to visit the zoo this weekend.

Loose, Lose

- *Loose* (adjective). Describes something that is not tight or is detached.

  Without a belt, her pants are **loose** on her waist.

- *Lose* (verb). Means to forget, to give up, or to fail to earn something.

  She will **lose** even more weight after finishing the marathon training.

Of, Have

- *Of* (preposition). Means *from* or *about*.

  I studied maps **of** the city to know where to rent a new apartment.

- *Have* (verb). Means to possess something.

  I **have** many friends to help me move.

- *Have* (linking verb). Used to connect verbs.

  I should **have** helped her with that heavy box.

Quite, Quiet, Quit

- *Quite* (adverb). Means *really* or *truly*.

  My work will require **quite** a lot of concentration.

- *Quiet* (adjective). Means not loud.

  I need a **quiet** room to complete the assignments.

- *Quit* (verb). Means to stop or to end.

  I will **quit** when I am hungry for dinner.

Right, Write

- *Right* (adjective). Means proper or correct.

  When bowling, she practices the **right** form.

- *Right* (adjective). Also means the opposite of left.

  The ball curved to the **right** and hit the last pin.

- *Write* (verb). Means to communicate on paper.

  After the team members bowl, I will **write** down their scores.

Set, Sit

- *Set* (verb). Means to put an item down.

  She **set** the mug on the saucer.

- *Set* (noun). Means a group of similar objects.

  All the mugs and saucers belonged in a **set**.

- *Sit* (verb). Means to lower oneself down on a chair or another place

  I'll **sit** on the sofa while she brews the tea.

Suppose, Supposed

- *Suppose* (verb). Means to think or to consider

  I **suppose** I will bake the bread, because no one else has the recipe.

- *Suppose* (verb). Means to suggest.

  Suppose we all split the cost of the dinner.

- *Supposed* (verb). The past tense form of the verb suppose, meaning required or allowed.

  She was **supposed** to create the menu.

Than, Then

- *Than* (conjunction). Used to connect two or more items when comparing

  Registered nurses require less schooling **than** doctors.

- *Then* (adverb). Means next or at a specific time.

  Doctors first complete medical school and **then** obtain a residency.

Their, They're, There

- *Their* (pronoun). A form of *they* that shows possession.

  The dog walker feeds **their** dogs everyday at two o'clock.

- **They're** the sweetest dogs in the neighborhood.
- *There* (adverb). Indicates a particular place.

The dogs'bowls are over **there**, next to the pantry.

- *There* (pronoun). Indicates the presence of something

  There are more treats if the dogs behave.

To, Two, Too

- *To* (preposition). Indicates movement.

  Let's go **to** the circus.

- *To*. A word that completes an infinitive verb.

  to play, **to** ride, **to** watch.

- *Two*. The number after one. It describes how many.

  Two clowns squirted the elephants with water.

- *Too* (adverb). Means *also* or *very*.

  The tents were **too** loud, and we left.

Use, Used

- *Use* (verb). Means to apply for some purpose.

  We **use** a weed whacker to trim the hedges.

- He **used** the lawnmower last night before it rained.
- *Used to*. Indicates something done in the past but not in the present

  He **used to** hire a team to landscape, but now he landscapes alone.

Who's, Whose

- **Who's** the new student? **Who's** met him?
- *Whose* (pronoun). A form of *who* that shows possession.

  Whose schedule allows them to take the new student on a campus tour?

Your, You're

- *Your* (pronoun). A form of *you* that shows possession.

  Your book bag is unzipped.

- **You're** the girl with the unzipped book bag.

The English language contains so many words; no one can say for certain how many words exist. In fact, many words in English are borrowed from other languages. Many words have multiple meanings and forms, further expanding the immeasurable number of English words. Although the list of commonly confused words serves as a helpful guide, even these words may have more meanings than shown here. ***When in doubt, consult an expert: the dictionary!***

Exercise 6.1.1:

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct word.

1. My little cousin turns _____ (to, too, two) years old tomorrow.
2. The next-door neighbor's dog is _____ (quite, quiet, quit) loud. He barks constantly throughout the night.
3. _____ (Your, You're) mother called this morning to talk about the party.
4. I would rather eat a slice of chocolate cake _____ (than, then) eat a chocolate muffin.
5. Before the meeting, he drank a cup of coffee, and _____ (than, then) he brushed his teeth.
6. Do you have any _____ (loose, lose) change to pay the parking meter?
7. Father must _____ (have, of) left his briefcase at the office.
8. Before playing ice hockey, I was _____ (suppose, supposed) to read the contract, but I only skimmed it and signed my name quickly, which may _____ (affect, effect) my understanding of the rules.

9. Tonight she will _____ (set, sit) down and _____(right, write) a cover letter to accompany her résumé and job application.
10. It must be fall, because the leaves _____ (are, our) changing, and _____ (it's, its) getting darker earlier.

Strategies to Avoid Commonly Confused Words

When writing, you need to choose the correct word according to its spelling and meaning in the context. Not only does selecting the correct word improve your vocabulary and your writing, but it also makes a good impression on your readers. It also helps reduce confusion and improve clarity. The following strategies can help you avoid misusing confusing words.

1. **Use a dictionary.** Keep a dictionary at your desk while you write. Look up words when you are uncertain of their meanings or spellings. Many dictionaries are also available online, and the Internet's easy access will not slow you down. Check out your cell phone or smartphone to see if a dictionary app is available.
2. **Keep a list of words you commonly confuse.** Be aware of the words that often confuse you. When you notice a pattern of confusing words, keep a list nearby, and consult the list as you write. Check the list again before you submit an assignment to your instructor.
3. **Study the list of commonly confused words.** You may not yet know which words confuse you, but before you sit down to write, study the words on the list. Prepare your mind for working with words by reviewing the commonly confused words identified in this chapter.

Tip

Commonly confused words appear in many locations, not just at work or at school. Be on the lookout for misused words wherever you find yourself throughout the day. Make a mental note of the error and remember its correction for your own pieces of writing. Also, remember that spellcheck will not usually catch these words because they would be spelled correctly.



Figure 6.1.1: A Commonly Misused Word on a Public Sign

Do you see the mistake? Because this sign was probably created using a computer, you can see that spellcheck would NOT catch this because it is a word – just not the right word!

Writers at Work

All employers value effective communication. From an application to an interview to the first month on the job, employers pay attention to your vocabulary. You do not need a large vocabulary to succeed, but you do need to be able to express yourself clearly and avoid commonly misused words.

When giving an important presentation on the effect of inflation on profit margins, you must know the difference between *effect* and *affect* and choose the correct word. When writing an e-mail to confirm deliveries, you must know if the shipment will arrive in *to* days, *too* days, or *two* days. Confusion may arise if you choose the wrong word.

Consistently using the proper words will improve your communication and make a positive impression on your boss and colleagues.

Exercise 6.1.2:

The following paragraph contains eleven errors. Find each misused word and correct it by adding the proper word.

> The original United States Declaration of Independence sets in a case at the Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom as part of the National Archives in Washington, DC. Since 1952, over one million visitors each year of passed through the Rotunda too snap a photograph to capture they're experience. Although signs state, "No Flash Photography," forgetful tourists leave the flash on, an a bright light flickers for just a millisecond. This millisecond of light may not seem like enough to effect the precious document, but supposed how much light could be generated when all those milliseconds are added up. According to the National Archives dministrators, its enough to significantly damage the historic document. So, now, the signs display quit a different message: "No Photography." Visitors continue to travel to see the Declaration that began are country, but know longer can personal pictures serve as mementos. The administrators'compromise, they say, is a visit to the gift shop for a preprinted photograph.

Key Takeaways

- In order to write accurately, it is important for writers to be aware of commonly confused words.
- Although commonly confused words may look alike or sound alike, their meanings are very different.
- Consulting the dictionary is one way to make sure you are using the correct word in your writing. You may also keep a list of commonly confused words nearby when you write or study the chart in this book.
- Choosing the proper words leaves a positive impression on your readers.

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6.2: Spelling

Learning Objectives

1. Identify common spelling rules.
2. Identify commonly misspelled words.
3. Identify commonly misused homonyms.

One essential aspect of good writing is accurate spelling. With computer spell checkers, spelling may seem simple, but these programs fail to catch every error. Spell checkers identify some errors, but writers still have to consider the flagged words and suggested replacements. Writers are still responsible for the errors that remain.

For example, if the spell checker highlights a word that is misspelled and gives you a list of alternative words, you may choose a word that you never intended even though it is spelled correctly. This can change the meaning of your sentence. It can also confuse readers, making them lose interest. Computer spell checkers are useful editing tools, but they can never replace human knowledge of spelling rules, homonyms, and commonly misspelled words.

Common Spelling Rules

The best way to master new words is to understand the key spelling rules. Keep in mind, however, that some spelling rules carry exceptions. A spell checker may catch these exceptions, but knowing them yourself will prepare you to spell accurately on the first try. You may want to try memorizing each rule and its exception like you would memorize a rhyme or lyrics to a song.

Write *i* before *e* except after *c*, or when pronounced *ay* like “neighbor” or “weigh.”

- achieve, niece, alien
- receive, deceive

When words end in a consonant plus *y*, drop the *y* and add an *i* before adding another ending.

- happy + er = happier
- cry + ed = cried

When words end in a vowel plus *y*, keep the *y* and add the ending.

- delay + ed = delayed

Memorize the following exceptions to this rule: *day*, *lay*, *say*, *pay* =*daily*, *laid*, *said*, *paid*

When adding an ending that begins with a vowel, such as *-able*, *-ence*, *-ing*, or *-ity*, drop the last *e* in a word.

- write + ing = writing
- pure + ity = purity

When adding an ending that begins with a consonant, such as *-less*, *-ment*, or *-ly*, keep the last *e* in a word.

- hope + less = hopeless
- advertise + ment = advertisement

For many words ending in a consonant and an *o*, add *-s* when using the plural form.

- photo + s = photos
- soprano + s = sopranos

Add *-es* to words that end in *s*, *ch*, *sh*, and *x*.

- church + es = churches
- fax + es = faxes

Exercise 6.2.1:

Identify and correct the nine misspelled words in the following paragraph.

Sherman J. Alexie Jr. was born in October 1966. He is a Spokane/Coeur d’Alene Indian and an American writer, poet, and filmmaker. Alexie was born with hydrocephalus, or water on the brain. This condition led doctors to predict that he would likly

suffer long-term brain damage and possibly mental retardation. Although Alexie survived with no mental disabilitys, he did suffer other serious side effects from his condition that plagud him throughout his childhood. Amazingly, Alexie learned to read by the age of three, and by age five he had read novels such as John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. Raised on an Indian reservation, Alexie often felt aleinated from his peers due to his avid love for reading and also from the long-term effects of his illness, which often kept him from socializeing with his peers on the reservation. The reading skills he displaid at such a young age foreshadowed what he would later become. Today Alexie is a prolific and successful writer with several story anthologeis to his credit, noteably *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* and *The Toughest Indian in the World*. Most of his fiction is about contemporary Native Americans who are influenced by pop culture and pow wows and everything in between. His work is sometimes funny but always thoughtful and full of richness and depth. Alexie also writes poetry, novels, and screenplays. His latest collection of storys is called *War Dances*, which came out in 2009.

Commonly Misspelled Words

Below is a list of commonly misspelled words. You probably use these words every day in either speaking or writing. Each word has a segment in bold type, which indicates the problem area of the word that is often spelled incorrectly. If you can, use this list as a guide before, during, and after you write.

Table 6.2.1: Commonly Misspelled Words

a**c**ross	dis**app**oint	in**teg**ration	partic**u**lar	sep**ara**te
a**ddr**ess	disa**pp**rove	in**tell**igent	**per**form	sim**ilar**
ans**w**er	do**es**n't	int**ere**st	**per**haps	**sin**ce
arg**u**ment	eig**hth**	int**er**fere	perso**nn**el	sp**ee**ch
a**thl**ete	emba**rr**ass	jew**el**ry	po**ss**ess	stren**gth**
begi**nn**ing	envir**on**ment	jud**gm**ent	po**ss**ible	su**cc**ess
beha**vi**or	exa**gg**erate	knowle**d**ge	**pre**fer	**sur**prise
cal**e**nda**r**	fam**ili**ar	maint**ain**	pre**jud**ice	**tau**ght
ca**reer**	fina**lly**	math**e**matics	privi**lege**	tempe**ra**ture
cons**cie**nce	gove**rn**ment	me**a**nt	pro**bab**ly	th**orou**gh
crow**ded**	gramm**a**r	ne**ce**ssary	**psy**cholo**gy**	though**t**
def**ini**te	hei**gh**t	nerv**ous**	p**ur**sue	tire**d**
d**es**cribe	**ill**egal	o**cc**asion	ref**er**ence	unt**il**
desp**er**ate	immed**iate**ly	opin**ion**	**rh**yth**m**	weig**ht**
di**ffe**rent	import**ant**	opt**i**mist	ridic**ul**ous	wri**tt**en

Tip

Use the following two tricks to help you master these troublesome words:

1. Copy each word a few times and underline the problem area.
2. Copy the words onto flash cards and have a friend test you.

Exercise 6.2.2:

Identify and correct the ten commonly misspelled words in the following paragraphs.

Brooklyn is one of the five boroughs that make up New York City. It is located on the eastern shore of Long Island directly accross the East River from the island of Manhattan. Its beginings stretch back to the sixteenth century when it was founded by the Dutch who originally called it "Breuckelen." Immedietely after the Dutch settled Brooklyn, it came under British rule.

However, neither the Dutch nor the British were Brooklyn's first inhabitants. When European settlers first arrived, Brooklyn was largely inhabited by the Lenapi, a collective name for several organized bands of Native American people who settled a large area of land that extended from upstate New York through the entire state of New Jersey. They are sometimes referred to as the Delaware Indians. Over time, the Lenapi succumbed to European diseases or conflicts between European settlers or other Native American enemies. Finalley, they were pushed out of Brooklyn completely by the British.

In 1776, Brooklyn was the site of the first importent battle of the American Revolution known as the Battle of Brooklyn. The colonists lost this battle, which was led by George Washington, but over the next two years they would win the war, kicking the British out of the colonies once and for all.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Brooklyn grew to be a city in its own right. The completion of the Brooklyn Bridge was an ocasion for celebration; transportation and commerce between Brooklyn and Manhattan now became much easier. Eventually, in 1898, Brooklyn lost its seperate identity as an independent city and became one of five boroughs of New York City. However, in some people's opinien, the intagration into New York City should have never happened; they though Brooklyn should have remained an independent city.

Tip

Eight Tips to Improve Spelling Skills

1. **Read the words in your assignment carefully, and avoid skimming over the page.** Focusing on your written assignment word by word will help you pay close attention to each word's spelling. Skimming quickly, you may overlook misspelled words.
2. **Use mnemonic devices to remember the correct spelling of words.** Mnemonic devices, or memory techniques and learning aids, include inventive sayings or practices that help you remember. For example, the saying "It is important to be a beautiful person inside and out" may help you remember that *beautiful* begins with "be a." The practice of pronouncing the word *Wednesday* Wed-nes-day may help you remember how to spell the word correctly.
3. **Use a dictionary.** Many professional writers rely on the dictionary — either in print or online. If you find it difficult to use a regular dictionary, ask your instructor to help you find a "poor speller's dictionary."
4. **Use your computer's spell checker.** The spell checker will not solve all your spelling problems, but it is a useful tool. See the introduction to this section for cautions about spell checkers.
5. **Keep a list of frequently misspelled words.** You will often misspell the same words again and again, but do not let this discourage you. All writers struggle with the spellings of certain words; they become aware of their spelling weaknesses and work to improve. Be aware of which words you commonly misspell, and you can add them to a list to learn to spell them correctly.
6. **Look over corrected papers for misspelled words.** Add these words to your list and practice writing each word four to five times each. Writing teachers will especially notice which words you frequently misspell, and it will help you excel in your classes if they see your spelling improve.
7. **Test yourself with flashcards.** Sometimes the old-fashioned methods are best, and for spelling, this tried and true technique has worked for many students. You can work with a peer or alone.
8. **Review the common spelling rules explained in this chapter.** Take the necessary time to master the material; you may return to the rules in this chapter again and again, as needed.

Also, remember to focus on spelling during the editing and revising step of the writing process. Start with the big ideas such as organizing your piece of writing and developing effective paragraphs, and then work your way down toward the smaller — but equally important — details like spelling and punctuation. To read more about the writing process and editing and revising, see Chapter 5.

In today's job market, writing e-mails has become a means by which many people find employment. E-mails to prospective employers require thoughtful word choice, accurate spelling, and perfect punctuation. Employers' inboxes are inundated with countless e-mails daily. If even the subject line of an e-mail contains a spelling error, it will likely be overlooked and someone else's e-mail will take priority.

The best thing to do after you proofread an e-mail to an employer and run the spell checker is to have an additional set of eyes go over it with you; one of your teachers may be able to read the e-mail and give you suggestions for improvement. Most colleges and universities have writing centers, which may also be able to assist you.

Homonyms

Homonyms are words that sound like one another but have different meanings.

Commonly Misused Homonyms

Principle, Principal

- **Principle (noun).** A fundamental concept that is accepted as true.

  The **principle** of human equality is an important foundation for all nations.
- **Principal (noun).** The original amount of debt on which interest is calculated.

  The payment plan allows me to pay back only the **principal** amount, not any compounded interest.
- **Principal (noun).** A person who is the main authority of a school.

  The **principal** held a conference for both parents and teachers.

Where, Wear, Ware

- **Where (adverb).** The place in which something happens.

  Where is the restaurant?
- **Wear (verb).** To carry or have on the body.

  I will **wear** my hiking shoes when go on a climb tomorrow morning.
- **Ware (noun).** Articles of merchandise or manufacture (usually, *wares*).

  When I return from shopping, I will show you my **wares**.

Lead, Led

- **Lead (noun).** A type of metal used in pipes and batteries.

  The **lead** pipes in my homes are old and need to be replaced.
- **Led (verb).** The past tense of the verb *lead*.

  After the garden, she **led** the patrons through the museum.

Which, Witch

- **Which (pronoun).** Replaces one out of a group.

  Which apartment is yours?
- **Witch (noun).** A person who practices sorcery or who has supernatural powers.

  She thinks she is a **witch**, but she does not seem to have any powers.

Peace, Piece

- **Peace (noun).** A state of tranquility or quiet.

  For once, there was **peace** between the argumentative brothers.
- **Piece (noun).** A part of a whole.

  I would like a large **piece** of cake, thank you.

Passed, Past

- **Passed (verb).** To go away or move.

  He **passed** the slower cars on the road using the left lane.
- **Past (noun).** Having existed or taken place in a period before the present.

  The argument happened in the **past**, so there is no use in dwelling on it.

Lessen, Lesson

- **Lessen (verb).** To reduce in number, size, or degree.

  My dentist gave me medicine to **lessen** the pain of my aching tooth.

- **Lesson (noun).** A reading or exercise to be studied by a student.

  Today's **lesson** was about mortgage interest rates.

Patience, Patients

- **Patience (noun).** The capacity of being patient (waiting for a period of time or enduring pains and trials calmly).

  The novice teacher's **patience** with the unruly class was astounding.

- **Patients (plural noun).** Individuals under medical care.

  The **patients** were tired of eating the hospital food, and they could not wait for a home-cooked meal.

Sees, Seas, Seize

- **Sees (verb).** To perceive with the eye.

  He **sees** a whale through his binoculars.

- **Seas (plural noun).** The plural of sea, a great body of salt water.

  The tidal fluctuation of the oceans and **seas** are influenced by the moon.

- **Seize (verb).** To possess or take by force.

  The king plans to **seize** all the peasants' land.

Threw, Through

- **Threw (verb).** The past tense of *throw*.

  She **threw** the football with perfect form.

- **Through (preposition).** A word that indicates movement.

  She walked **through** the door and out of his life.

Exercise 6.2.3:

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct homonym.

1. Do you agree with the underlying _____(principle, principal) that ensures copyrights are protected in the digital age?
2. I like to _____(where, wear, ware) unique clothing from thrift stores that do not have company logos on them.
3. Marjan felt like she was being _____(led, lead) on a wild goose chase, and she did not like it one bit.
4. Serina described _____(witch, which) house was hers, but now that I am here, they all look the same.
5. Seeing his friend without a lunch, Miguel gave her a _____(peace, piece) of his apple.
6. Do you think that it is healthy for mother to talk about the _____(passed, past) all the time?
7. Eating healthier foods will _____(lessen, lesson) the risk of heart disease.
8. I know it sounds cliché, but my father had the _____(patients, patience) of a saint.
9. Daniela _____(sees, seas, seize) possibilities in the bleakest situations, and that it is why she is successful.
10. Everyone goes _____(through, threw) hardships in life regardless of who they are.

Key Takeaways

- Accurate, error-free spelling enhances your credibility with the reader.
- Mastering the rules of spelling may help you become a better speller.
- Knowing the commonly misused homonyms may prevent spelling errors.
- Studying the list of commonly misspelled words in this chapter, or studying a list of your own, is one way to improve your spelling skills.

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6.3: Word Choice

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the reasons why using a dictionary and thesaurus is important when writing.
2. Identify how to use proper connotations.
3. Identify how to avoid using slang, clichés, and overly general words in your writing.
4. Recognize how synonyms improve writing.
5. Identify common antonyms to increase your vocabulary.

Effective writing involves making conscious choices with words. When you prepare to sit down to write your first draft, you likely have already completed some freewriting exercises, chosen your topic, developed your thesis statement, written an outline, and even selected your sources. When it is time to write your first draft, start to consider which words to use to best convey your ideas to the reader.

Some writers are picky about word choice as they start drafting. They may practice some specific strategies, such as using a dictionary and thesaurus, using words and phrases with proper connotations, and avoiding slang, clichés, and overly general words.

Once you understand these tricks of the trade, you can move ahead confidently in writing your assignment. Remember, the skill and accuracy of your word choice is a major factor in developing your writing style. Precise selection of your words will help you be more clearly understood—in both writing and speaking.

As you work with your draft, you will want to pay particular attention to the words you have chosen. Do they express exactly what you are trying to convey? Can you choose better, more effective words? Familiarity with synonyms and antonyms can be helpful in answering these questions.

Using a Dictionary and Thesaurus

Even professional writers need help with the meanings, spellings, pronunciations, and uses of particular words. In fact, they rely on dictionaries to help them write better. No one knows every word in the English language and their multiple uses and meanings, so all writers, from novices to professionals, can benefit from the use of dictionaries.

Most dictionaries provide the following information:

- **Spelling.** How the word and its different forms are spelled.
- **Pronunciation.** How to say the word.
- **Part of speech.** The function of the word.
- **Definition.** The meaning of the word.
- **Synonyms.** Words that have similar meanings.
- **Etymology.** The history of the word.

Look at the following sample dictionary entry and see which of the preceeding information you can identify:

> **myth**, mith, n. [Gr. mythos, a word, a fable, a legend.] A fable or legend embodying the convictions of a people as to their gods or other divine beings, their own beginnings and early history and the heroes connected with it, or the origin of the world; any invented story; something or someone having no existence in fact.—**myth • ic, myth • i • cal**

Like a dictionary, a thesaurus is another indispensable writing tool. A thesaurus gives you a list of synonyms, words that have the same (or very close to the same) meaning as another word. It also lists antonyms, words with the opposite meaning of the word. A thesaurus will help you when you are looking for the perfect word with just the right meaning to convey your ideas. It will also help you learn more words and use the ones you already know more correctly.

> **precocious**, adj, She's such a precocious little girl!: uncommonly smart, mature, advanced, smart, bright, brilliant, gifted, quick, clever, apt.
>
> Ant. slow, backward, stupid.

Using Proper Connotations

A denotation is the dictionary definition of a word. A connotation, on the other hand, is the emotional or cultural meaning attached to a word. The connotation of a word can be positive, negative, or neutral. Keep in mind the connotative meaning when choosing a word.

Scrawny

- **Denotation:** Exceptionally thin and slight or meager in body or size.
- **Word used in a sentence:** Although he was a premature baby and a scrawny child, Martin has developed into a strong man.
- **Connotation:** (Negative) In this sentence the word scrawny may have a negative connotation in the readers' minds. They might find it to mean a weakness or a personal flaw; however, the word fits into the sentence appropriately.

Skinny

- **Denotation:** Lacking sufficient flesh, very thin.
- **Word used in a sentence:** Skinny jeans have become very fashionable in the past couple of years.
- **Connotation:** (Positive) Based on cultural and personal impressions of what it means to be skinny, the reader may have positive connotations of the word skinny.

Lean

- **Denotation:** Lacking or deficient in flesh; containing little or no fat.
- **Word used in a sentence:** My brother has a lean figure, whereas I have a more muscular build.
- **Connotation:** (Neutral) In this sentence, lean has a neutral connotation.

It does not call to mind an overly skinny person like the word scrawny, nor does imply the positive cultural impressions of the word skinny. It is merely a neutral descriptive word. Notice that all the words have a very similar denotation; however, the connotations of each word differ.

Exercise 6.3.1:

In the first column, you will find words with similar denotations. Identify the words'connotations as positive, negative, or neutral by writing the word in the appropriate box. Copy the chart onto your own piece of paper.

	Positive	**Negative**	**Neutral**
curious, nosy, interested			
lazy, relaxed, slow			
courageous, foolhardy, assured			
new, newfangled, modern			
mansion, shack, residence			
spinster, unmarried woman, career woman			
giggle, laugh, cackle			
boring, routine, prosaic			
noted, notorious, famous			
assertive, confident, pushy			

Avoiding Slang

Slang describes informal words that are considered nonstandard English. Slang often changes with passing fads and may be used by or familiar to only a specific group of people. Most people use slang when they speak and in personal correspondences, such as

e-mails, text messages, and instant messages. Slang is appropriate between friends in an informal context but should be avoided in formal academic writing.

Exercise 6.3.2:

Edit the following paragraph by replacing the slang words and phrases with more formal language. Rewrite the paragraph on your own sheet of paper.

> I felt like such an airhead when I got up to give my speech. As I walked toward the podium, I banged my knee on a chair. Man, I felt like such a klutz. On top of that, I kept saying "like" and "um," and I could not stop fidgeting. I was so stressed out about being up there. I feel like I've been practicing this speech 24/7, and I still bombed. It was ten minutes of me going off about how we sometimes have to do things we don't enjoy doing. Wow, did I ever prove my point. My speech was so bad I'm surprised that people didn't boo. My teacher said not to sweat it, though. Everyone gets nervous his or her first time speaking in public, and she said, with time, I would become a whiz at this speech giving stuff. I wonder if I have the guts to do it again.

Avoiding Clichés

Clichés are descriptive expressions that have lost their effectiveness because they are overused. Writing that uses clichés often suffers from a lack of originality and insight. Avoiding clichés in formal writing will help you write in original and fresh ways.

- **Clichéd:** Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes my **blood boil**.
- **Plain:** Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes me really angry.
- **Original:** Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes me want to go to the gym and punch the bag for a few hours.

Tip

Think about all the cliché phrases that you hear in popular music or in everyday conversation. What would happen if these clichés were transformed into something unique?

Exercise 6.3.3:

On your own sheet of paper, revise the following sentences by replacing the clichés with fresh, original descriptions.

1. She is writing a memoir in which she will air her family's dirty laundry.
2. Beth had an ax to grind with Allen, and she planned to confront him at the party.
3. Mr. Nguyen was at his wit's end with the rowdy class of seventh graders.
4. The bottom line is that Joel was fired because he missed too many days of work.
5. Sometimes it is hard to make ends meet with just one paycheck.
6. My brain is fried from pulling an all-nighter.
7. Maria left the dishes in the sink all week to give Jose a taste of his own medicine.
8. While they were at the carnival Janice exclaimed, "Time sure does fly when you are having fun!"
9. Jeremy became tongue-tied after the interviewer asked him where he saw himself in five years.
10. Jordan was dressed to the nines that night.

Avoiding Overly General Words

Specific words and images make your writing more interesting to read. Whenever possible, avoid overly general words in your writing; instead, try to replace general language with particular nouns, verbs, and modifiers that convey details and that bring yours words to life. Add words that provide color, texture, sound, and even smell to your writing.

- **General:** My new puppy is cute.
- **Specific:** My new puppy is a ball of white fuzz with the biggest black eyes I have ever seen.
- **General:** My teacher told us that plagiarism is bad.
- **Specific:** My teacher, Ms. Atwater, created a presentation detailing exactly how plagiarism is illegal and unethical.

Exercise 6.3.4:

Revise the following sentences by replacing the overly general words with more precise and attractive language. Write the new sentences on your own sheet of paper.

1. Adyam got into her car and drove off.
2. I would like to travel to outer space because it would be amazing.
3. Drashty came home after a bad day at the office.
4. I thought Mohamed's essay was fascinating.
5. The dog walked up the street.
6. The coal miners were tired after a long day.
7. The tropical fish are pretty.
8. I sweat a lot after running.
9. The goalie blocked the shot.
10. I enjoyed my Mexican meal.

Synonyms

Synonyms are words that have the same, or almost the same, meaning as another word. You can say an "easy task" or a "simple task" because easy and simple are synonyms. You can say Hong Kong is a "large city" or a "metropolis" because city and metropolis are synonyms.

However, it is important to remember that not all pairs of words in the English language are so easily interchangeable. The slight but important differences in meaning between synonyms can make a big difference in your writing. For example, the words boring and insipid may have similar meanings, but the subtle differences between the two will affectthe message your writing conveys. The word insipid evokes a scholarly and perhaps more pretentious message than boring.

The English language is full of pairs of words that have subtle distinctions between them. All writers, professionals and beginners alike, face the challenge of choosing the most appropriate synonym to best convey their ideas. When you pay particular attention to synonyms in your writing, it comes across to your reader. The sentences become much more clear and rich in meaning.

Writers at Work

Any writing you do at work involves a careful choice of words. For example, if you are writing an e-mail to your employer regarding your earnings, you can use the word pay, salary, or hourly wage. There are also other synonyms to choose from. Just keep in mind that the word you choose will have an effect on the reader, so you want to choose wisely to get the desired effect.

Exercise 6.3.5:

Replace the underlined words in the paragraphs with appropriate synonyms. Write the new paragraph on your own sheet of paper.

> When most people think of the Renaissance, they might think of artists like Michelangelo, Raphael, or Leonardo da Vinci, but they often overlook one of the very important figures of the Renaissance: Filippo Brunelleschi. Brunelleschi was born in Florence, Italy in 1377. He is considered the very best architect and engineer of the Renaissance. His impressive accomplishments are a testament to following one's dreams, persevering in the face of obstacles, and realizing one's vision.
>
> The most difficult undertaking of Brunelleschi's career was the dome of Florence Cathedral, which took sixteen years to construct. A major blow to the progress of the construction happened in 1428. Brunelleschi had designed a special ship to carry the one hundred tons of marble needed for the dome. He felt this would be the most inexpensive way to transport the marble, but the unthinkable happened. The ship went down to the bottom of the water, taking all the marble with it to the bottom of the river. Brunelleschi was really sad. Nevertheless, he did not give up. He held true to his vision of the completed dome. Filippo Brunelleschi completed construction of the dome of Florence Cathedral in 1446. His influence on artists and architects alike was felt strongly during his lifetime and can still be felt in this day and age.

Exercise 6.3.6:

On your own sheet of paper, write a sentence with each of the following words that illustrates the specific meaning of each synonym.

1. leave, abandon
2. mad, insane
3. outside, exterior
4. poor, destitute
5. quiet, peaceful
6. riot, revolt
7. rude, impolite
8. talk, conversation
9. hug, embrace
10. home, residence

Antonyms

Antonyms are words that have the opposite meaning of a given word. The study of antonyms will not only help you choose the most appropriate word as you write; it will also sharpen your overall sense of language. The following table lists common words and their antonyms.

Table 6.3.1: Common Antonyms

Word	Antonym	Word	Antonym
absence	presence	frequent	seldom
accept	refuse	harmful	harmless
accurate	inaccurate	horizontal	vertical
advantage	disadvantage	imitation	genuine
ancient	modern	inhabited	uninhabited
abundant	scarce	inferior	superior
artificial	natural	intentional	accidental
attractive	repulsive	justice	injustice
borrow	lend	knowledge	ignorance
bravery	cowardice	landlord	tenant
create	destroy, demolish	likely	unlikely
bold	timid, meek	minority	majority
capable	incapable	miser	spendthrift
combine	separate	obedient	disobedient
conceal	reveal	optimist	pessimist
common	rare	permanent	temporary
decrease	increase	plentiful	scarce
definite	indefinite	private	public
despair	hope	prudent	imprudent
discourage	encourage	qualified	unqualified

Word	Antonym	Word	Antonym
employer	employee	satisfactory	unsatisfactory
expand	contract	tame	wild
forget	remember	vacant	occupied

Tip

Learning antonyms is an effective way to increase your vocabulary. Memorizing words in combination with or in relation to other words often help

Exercise 6.3.7:

Correct the following sentences by replacing the underlined words with an antonym. Write the antonym on your own sheet of paper.

1. The pilot who landed the plane was a coward because no one was injured.
2. Even though the botany lecture was two hours long, Gerard found it incredibly dull.
3. My mother says it is impolite to say thank you like you really mean it.
4. Although I have learned a lot of information through textbooks, it is life experience that has given me ignorance.
5. When our instructor said the final paper was compulsory, it was music to my ears!
6. My only virtues are coffee, video games, and really loud music.
7. Elvin was so bold when he walked in the classroom that he sat in the back row and did not participate.
8. Maria thinks elephants who live in freedom have a sad look in their eyes.
9. The teacher filled her students' minds with gloomy thoughts about their futures.
10. The guest attended to every one of our needs.

Writing Applicaton

Write a paragraph that describes your favorite dish or food. Use as many synonyms as you can in the description, even if it seems too many. Be creative. Consult a thesaurus, and take this opportunity to use words you have never used before. Be prepared to share your paragraph.

Key Takeaways

- Using a dictionary and thesaurus as you write will improve your writing by improving your word choice.
- Connotations of words may be positive, neutral, or negative.
- Slang, clichés, and overly general words should be avoided in academic writing.
- Synonyms are words that have the same, or almost the same, meaning as another word.
- Antonyms are words that have the opposite meaning of another word.
- Choosing the right synonym refines your writing.
- Learning common antonyms sharpens your sense of language and expands your vocabulary.

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6.4: Word Form – Adjectives and Adverbs / Prefixes and Suffixes

Learning Objectives

1. Identify adjectives and adverbs.
2. Use adjectives and adverbs correctly.
3. Identify the meanings of common prefixes.
4. Become familiar with common suffix rules.

Adjectives and adverbs are descriptive words that bring your writing to life. Using the appropriate word form in your writing shows you understand how word variety and use is important. This also helps your writing be clear to the reader.

The English language contains an enormous and ever-growing number of words. Enhancing your vocabulary by learning new words can seem overwhelming, but if you know the common prefixes and suffixes of English, you will understand many more words. Mastering common prefixes and suffixes is like learning a code. Once you crack the code, you can not only spell words more correctly but also recognize and perhaps even define unfamiliar words.

Adjectives and Adverbs

An adjective is a word that describes a noun or a pronoun. It often answers questions such as *which one*, *what kind*, or *how many?*

- The *green* sweater belongs to Iris.
- She looks *beautiful*.
  - In sentence 1, the adjective *green* describes the noun *sweater*.
  - In sentence 2, the adjective *beautiful* describes the pronoun *she*.

An adverb is a word that describes a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. Adverbs frequently end in-*ly*. They answer questions such as *how*, *to what extent*, *why*, *when*, and *where*.

- Bertrand sings *horribly*.
- My sociology instructor is *extremely* wise.
- He threw the ball *very* accurately.
  - In sentence 3, *horribly* describes the verb *sings*. How does Bertrand sing? He sings *horribly*.
  - In sentence 4, *extremely* describes the adjective *wise*. How *wise* is the instructor? *Extremely* wise.
  - In sentence 5, *very* describes the adverb *accurately*. How *accurately* did he throw the ball? *Very* accurately.

Comparative versus Superlative

Comparative adjectives and adverbs are used to compare two people or things.

1. Jorge is *thin*.
2. Steven is *thinner* than Jorge.
   - Sentence 1 describes Jorge with the adjective *thin.*
   - Sentence 2 compares Jorge to Steven, stating that Steven is *thinner*. So *thinner* is the comparative form of *thin*.

Form comparatives in one of the following two ways:

1. If the adjective or adverb is a one syllable word, add-*er* to it to form the comparative. For example, *big*, *fast*, and *short* would become *bigger*, *faster*, and *shorter* in the comparative form.
2. If the adjective or adverb is a word of two or more syllables, place the word *more* in front of it to form the comparative. For example, *happily*, *comfortable*, and *jealous* would become *more happily*, *more comfortable*, and *more jealous* in the comparative.

Superlative adjectives and adverbs are used to compare more than two people or two things.

1. Fatoumata is the *loudest* cheerleader on the squad.
2. Kenyatta was voted the *most confident* student by her graduating class.
   - Sentence 1 shows that Fatoumata is not just *louder* than one other person, but she is the *loudest* of all the cheerleaders on the squad.

- Sentence 2 shows that Kenyatta was voted the *most confident* student of all the students in her class.

Form superlatives in one of the following two ways:

1. If the adjective or adverb is a one-syllable word, add-*est* to form the superlative. For example, *big*, *fast*, and *short* would become *biggest*, *fastest*, and *shortest* in the superlative form.
2. If the adjective or adverb is a word of two or more syllables, place the word *most* in front of it. For example, *happily*, *comfortable*, and *jealous* would become *most happily*, *most comfortable*, and *most jealous* in the superlative form.

Tip

Remember the following exception: If the word has two syllables and ends in -y, change the -y to an -i and add -est. For example, happy would change to happiest in the superlative form; healthy would change to healthiest.

Exercise 6.4.1:

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the six errors in comparative and superlative adjectives.

> Our argument started on the most sunny afternoon that I have ever experienced. Enis and I were sitting on my front stoop when I started it. I told him that my dog, Jacko, was more smart than his dog, Merlin. I could not help myself. Merlin never came when he was called, and he chased his tail and barked at rocks. I told Enis that Merlin was the most dumbest dog on the block. I guess I was angrier about a bad grade that I received, so I decided to pick on poor little Merlin. Even though Enis insulted Jacko too, I felt I had been more mean. The next day I apologized to Enis and brought Merlin some of Jacko's treats. When Merlin placed his paw on my knee and licked my hand, I was the most sorry person on the block.

Irregular Words: Good, Well, Bad, and Badly

Good, *well*, *bad*, and *badly* are often used incorrectly. Study the following chart to learn the correct usage of these words and their comparative and superlative forms.

Table 6.4.1

		Comparative	Superlative
Adjective	good	better	best
Adverb	well	better	best
Adjective	bad	worse	worst
Adverb	badly	worse	worst

Good versus Well

Good is always an adjective — that is, a word that describes a noun or a pronoun. The second sentence is correct because *well* is an adverb that tells how something is done.

Incorrect: Cecilia felt that she had never done so *good* on a test.

Correct: Cecilia felt that she had never done so *well* on a test.

Well is always an adverb that describes a verb, adverb, or adjective. The second sentence is correct because *good* is an adjective that describes the noun *score*.

Incorrect: Cecilia's team received a *well* score.

Correct: Cecilia's team received a *good* score.

Bad versus Badly

Bad is always an adjective. The second sentence is correct because *badly* is an adverb that tells how the speaker did on the test.

Incorrect: I did *bad* on my accounting test because I didn't study.

Correct: I did *badly* on my accounting test because I didn't study.

Badly is always an adverb. The second sentence is correct because *bad* is an adjective that describes the noun *thunderstorm*.

Incorrect: The coming thunderstorm looked *badly*.

Correct: The coming thunderstorm looked *bad*.

Better and Worse

The following are examples of the use of *better* and *worse*:

Tyra likes sprinting *better* than long distance running.

The traffic is *worse* in Chicago than in Atlanta.

Best and Worst

The following are examples of the use of *best* and *worst*:

Tyra sprints *best* of all the other competitors.

Peter finished *worst* of all the runners in the race.

Tip

Remember better and worse compare two persons or things. Best and worst compare three or more persons or things.

Exercise 6.4.2:

Write good, well, bad, or badly to complete each sentence. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Fasika always felt _____ if she did not see the sun in the morning.
2. The school board president gave a _____ speech for once.
3. Although my dog, Comet, is mischievous, he always behaves _____ at the dog park.
4. I thought my back injury was _____ at first, but it turned out to be minor.
5. Razak was shaking _____ from the extreme cold.
6. Apple crisp is a very _____ dessert that can be made using whole grains instead of white flour.
7. The meeting with my son's math teacher went very _____.
8. Juan has a _____ appetite, especially when it comes to dessert.
9. Magritte thought the guests had a _____ time at the party because most people left early.
10. She _____ wanted to win the writing contest prize, which included a trip to New York.

Exercise 6.4.3:

Write the correct comparative or superlative form of the word in parentheses. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. This research paper is _____ (good) than my last one.
2. Grace likes country music _____ (well) of all.
3. My motorcycle rides _____ (bad) than it did last summer.
4. That is the _____ (bad) joke my father ever told.
5. The hockey team played _____ (badly) than it did last season.
6. Heejoo plays guitar _____ (well) than she plays the piano.
7. It will go down as one of the _____ (bad) movies I have ever seen.
8. The deforestation in the Amazon is _____ (bad) than it was last year.
9. Movie ticket sales are _____ (good) this year than last.
10. My husband says mystery novels are the _____ (good) types of books.

Tip

The irregular words good, well, bad, and badly are often misused along with their comparative and superlative forms better, best, worse, and worst. You may not hear the difference between worse and worst, and therefore type it incorrectly. In a formal or business-like tone, use each of these words to write eight separate sentences. Assume these sentences will be seen and judged by your current or future employer.

Key Takeaways

- Adjectives describe a noun or a pronoun.
- Adverbs describe a verb, adjective, or another adverb.
- Most adverbs are formed by adding -ly to an adjective.
- Comparative adjectives and adverbs compare two persons or things.
- Superlative adjectives or adverbs compare more than two persons or things.
- The adjectives good and bad and the adverbs well and badly are unique in their comparative and superlative forms and require special attention.

Prefixes

A prefix is a word part added to the beginning of a word to create a new meaning. The main rule to remember when adding a prefix to a word is **not** to add letters or leave out any letters. See the following table "Common Prefixes" for examples of this rule.

Table 6.4.2: Common Prefixes

Prefix	Meaning	Example
dis	not, opposite of	dis + satisfied = dissatisfied
mis	wrongly	mis + spell = misspell
un	not	un + acceptable = unacceptable
re	again	re + election = reelection
inter	between	inter + related = interrelated
pre	before	pre + pay = prepay
non	not	non + sense = nonsense
super	above	super + script = superscript
sub	under	sub + merge = submerge
anti	against, opposing	anti + bacterial = antibacterial

Exercise 6.4.4:

Identify the five words with prefixes in the following paragraph, and write their meanings on a separate sheet of paper.

> At first, I thought one of my fuzzy, orange socks disappeared in the dryer, but I could not find it in there. Because it was my favorite pair, nothing was going to prevent me from finding that sock. I looked all around my bedroom, under the bed, on top of the bed, and in my closet, but I still could not find it. I did not know that I would discover the answer just as I gave up my search. As I sat down on the couch in the family room, my Dad was reclining on his chair. I laughed when I saw that one of his feet was orange and the other blue! I forgot that he was color-blind. Next time he does laundry I will have to supervise him while he folds the socks so that he does not accidentally take one of mine!

Exercise 6.4.5:

Add the correct prefix to the word to complete each sentence. Write the word on your own sheet of paper.

1. I wanted to ease my stomach _____comfort, so I drank some ginger root tea.
2. Lenny looked funny in his _____matched shirt and pants.
3. Hang felt _____glamorous at the party because she was the only one not wearing a dress.
4. My mother said those _____aging creams do not work, so I should not waste my money on them.
5. The child's _____standard performance on the test alarmed his parents.
6. When my sister first saw the meteor, she thought it was a _____natural phenomenon.
7. Even though she got an excellent job offer, Mariam did not want to _____locate to a different country.
8. With a small class size, the students get to _____act with the teacher more frequently.
9. I slipped on the ice because I did not heed the _____cautions about watching my step.
10. A _____combatant is another word for civilian.

Suffixes

A suffix is a word part added to the end of a word to create a new meaning. Study the suffix rules in the following boxes.

Rule 1

When adding the suffixes *-ness* and *-ly* to a word, the spelling of the word does not change.

Examples:

- dark + ness = darkness
- scholar + ly = scholarly

Exceptions to Rule 1: When the word ends in y, change the y to i before adding - ness *and* -ly.

Examples:

- ready + ly = readily
- happy + ness = happiness

Rule 2

When the suffix begins with a vowel, drop the silent *e* in the root word.

Examples:

- care + ing = caring
- use + able = usable

Exceptions to Rule 2: When the word ends in ce or ge, keep the silent e if the suffix begins with a or o.

Examples:

- replace + able = replaceable
- courage + ous = courageous

Rule 3

When the suffix begins with a consonant, keep the silent *e* in the original word.

Examples:

- care + ful = careful
- care + less = careless

Exceptions to Rule 3:

Examples:

- true + ly = truly
- argue + ment = argument

Rule 4

When the word ends in a consonant plus *y*, change the *y* to *i* before any suffix not beginning with *i*.

Examples:

- sunny + er = sunnier
- hurry + ing = hurrying

Rule 5

When the suffix begins with a vowel, double the final consonant only if (1) the word has only one syllable or is accented on the last syllable and (2) the word ends in a single vowel followed by a single consonant.

Examples:

- tan + ing = tanning (one syllable word)
- regret + ing = regretting (The accent is on the last syllable; the word ends in a single vowel followed by a single consonant.)
- cancel + ed = canceled (The accent is not on the last syllable.)
- prefer + ed = preferred

Exercise 6.4.6:

On your own sheet of paper, write correctly the forms of the words with their suffixes.

1. refer + ed
2. refer + ence
3. mope + ing
4. approve + al
5. green + ness
6. benefit + ed
7. resubmit + ing
8. use + age
9. greedy + ly
10. excite + ment

Key Takeaways

- A prefix is a word part added to the beginning of a word that changes the word's meaning.
- A suffix is a word part added to the end of a word that changes the word's meaning.
- Learning the meanings of prefixes and suffixes will help expand your vocabulary, which will help improve your writing.

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6.5: Using Context Clues

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the different types of context clues.
2. Practice using context clues while reading.

Context clues are bits of information within a text that will assist you in deciphering the meaning of unknown words. Since most of your knowledge of vocabulary comes from reading, it is important that you recognize context clues. By becoming more aware of particular words and phrases surrounding a difficult word, you can make logical guesses about its meaning. The following are the different types of context clues:

- Brief definition or restatement
- Synonyms and antonyms
- Examples

Brief Definition or Restatement

Sometimes a text directly states the definition or a restatement of the unknown word. The brief definition or restatement is signaled by a word or a punctuation mark. Consider the following example:

> If you visit Alaska, you will likely see many glaciers, or slow moving masses of ice.

In this sentence, the word *glaciers* is defined by the phrase that follows the signal word *or*, which is *slow moving masses of ice*.

In other instances, the text may restate the meaning of the word in a different way, by using punctuation as a signal. Look at the following example:

> Marina was indignant — fuming mad — when she discovered her brother had left for the party without her.

Although *fuming mad* is not a formal definition of the word *indignant*, it does serve to define it. These two examples use signals — the word *or* and the punctuation dashes — to indicate the meaning of the unfamiliar word. Other signals to look for are the words *is*, *as*, *means*, *known as*, and *refers to*.

Synonyms and Antonyms

Sometimes a text gives a synonym of the unknown word to signal the meaning of the unfamiliar word:

> When you interpret an image, you actively question and examine what the image connotes and suggests.

In this sentence the word *suggests* is a synonym of the word *connotes*. The word *and* sometimes signals synonyms.

Likewise, the word *but* may signal a contrast, which can help you define a word by its antonym.

> I abhor clothes shopping, but I adore grocery shopping.

The word *abhor* is contrasted with its opposite: *adore*. From this context, the reader can guess that *abhor* means to dislike greatly.

Example 6.5.1:

Sometimes a text will give you an example of the word that sheds light on its meaning:

> I knew Mark's ailurophobia was in full force because he began trembling and stuttering when he saw my cat, Ludwig, slink out from under the bed.

Although ailurophobia is an unknown word, the sentence gives an example of its effects. Based on this example, a reader could confidently surmise that the word means a fear of cats.

Tip

Look for signal words like such as, for instance, and for example. These words signal that a word's meaning may be revealed through an example.

Exercise 6.5.1:

Identify the context clue that helps define the underlined words in each of the following sentences. Write the context clue on your own sheet of paper.

1. Aisha is very adroit on the balance beam, but Alejandra is rather clumsy.
2. I saw the entomologist, a scientist who studies insects, cradle the giant dung beetle in her palm.
3. Alberto's comments about politics were irrelevant and meaningless to the botanist's lecture on plant reproduction.
4. Before I left for my trip to the Czech Republic, I listened to my mother's sage advice and made a copy of my passport.
5. His rancor, or hatred, for socializing resulted in a life of loneliness and boredom.
6. Azmir was mortified, way beyond embarrassment, when his friends teamed up to shove him into the pool.
7. The petulant four-year-old had a baby sister who was, on the contrary, not grouchy at all.
8. The philosophy teacher presented the students with several conundrums, or riddles, to solve.
9. Most Americans are omnivores, people that eat both plants and animals.
10. Elena is effervescent, as excited as a cheerleader, for example, when she meets someone for the first time.

Exercise 6.5.2:

On your own sheet of paper, write the name of the context clue that helps to define the underlined words.

> Maggie was a precocious child, to say the least. She produced brilliant watercolor paintings by the age of three. At first, her parents were flabbergasted—utterly blown away—by their daughter's ability, but soon they got used to their little painter. Her preschool teacher said that Maggie's dexterity, or ease with which she used her hands, was something she had never before seen in such a young child. Little Maggie never gloated or took pride in her paintings; she just smiled contentedly when she finished one and requested her parents give it to someone as a gift. Whenever people met Maggie for the first time they often watched her paint with their mouths agape, but her parents always kept their mouths closed and simply smiled over their "little Monet."

Tip

In addition to context clues to help you figure out the meaning of a word, examine the following word parts: prefixes, roots, and suffixes.

Also, in spoken language, jargon is a type of communication often used in the workplace. It is the technical language of a special field. Imagine it is your first time working as a server in a restaurant and your manager tells you he is going to "eighty-six" the roasted chicken. If you do not realize that "eighty-six" means to remove an item from the menu, you could be confused. You will definitely encounter jargon that will likely be foreign to you when you begin work. If you cannot understand the jargon based on the context, it is always a good policy to ask.

Key Takeaways

- Context clues are words or phrases within a text that help clarify vocabulary that is unknown to you.
- There are several types of context clues including brief definition and restatement, synonyms and antonyms, and example.

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6.6: Working with Words (Exercises)

1. Proofread the paragraph and correct any commonly confused words and misspelled words.

   Grunge, or the Seattle sound, is a type of rock music that became quiet popular in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It began in Seattle, Washington. Grunge musicians rejected the dramatic an expensive stage productions that were trendy at the time. There music was striped down with an emphasis on distorted electric guitars. Grunge musicians did not ware makeup or sport extravagent hairstyles like many of the day's rock musicians and bands. Many grunge musicians would by they're clothes from secondhand stores. The lyrics too grunge songs were also quit different compared two what was populer at the time. Grunge lyrics are charecterized by dark or socially conscience themes. Grunge music is still admired today buy music lovers of all ages.

2. Complete the following sentences by filling in the blank line with the correct homonym or frequently misspelled word.
   1. William asked me a serious question and _____(then, than) interrupted me when I attempted to answer.
   2. A hot compress will _____(lessen, lesson) the pain of muscle cramps.
   3. Alperen was not a graceful _____(looser, loser) because he knocked his chair over and stormed off the basketball court.
   4. Please consider the _____(effects, affects) of not getting enough green vegetables in your diet.
   5. _____(Except, Accept) for Ajay, we all had our tickets to the play.
   6. I am _____(threw, through) with this magazine, so you can read it if you like.
   7. I don't care _____(whose, who's) coming to the party and _____(whose, who's) not.
   8. Ebru could _____(sea, see) the soaring hawk through her binoculars.
   9. The _____(principal, principle) gave the students a very long lecture about peer pressure.
   10. Dr. Singh nearly lost his _____(patience, patients) with one of his _____(patience, patients).

3. Rewrite the following personal essay by replacing the slang, clichés, and overly general language with stronger, more precise language.

   My biggest regret happened in high school. I had always felt like a fish out of water, so during my sophomore year I was determined to fit in with the cool people. Man, was that an uphill battle. I don't even know why I tried, but hindsight is 20/20 I guess. The first thing I did was change the way I dressed. I went from wearing clothes I was comfortable in to wearing stuff that was so not me. Then I started wearing a ton of makeup, and my brother was all like, "What happened to your face?" Not only did my looks change, my personality changed a lot too. I started to act all stuck up and bossy with my friends, and they didn't know how to respond to this person that used to be me. Luckily, this phase didn't last more than a couple of months. I decided it was more fun to be me than to try to be someone else. I guess you can't fit a square peg in a round hole after all.

4. Write the correct synonym for each word.
   1. lenient _____(relaxed, callous)
   2. abandon _____(vacate, deceive)
   3. berate _____(criticize, encourage)
   4. experienced _____(callow, matured)
   5. spiteful _____(malevolent, mellow)
   6. tame _____(subdued, wild)
   7. tasty _____(savory, bland)
   8. banal _____(common, interesting)
   9. contradict _____(deny, revolt)
   10. vain _____(boastful, simple)

5. Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct comparative or superlative adjective or adverb. Then copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.
   1. Deniz has a (cheerful) _____ outlook on life than her husband.
   2. I don't mean to brag, but I think I am the (good) _____ cook in my family.
   3. Lydia is the (thoughtful) _____ person I know.
   4. Italy experienced the (bad) _____ heat wave in its history last year.
   5. My teacher, Ms. Beckett, is the (strange) _____ person I know, and I like that.
   6. Dang's drawing skills are (good) _____ this semester than last.
   7. My handwriting is the (sloppy) _____ of all my classmates.
   8. Melvin's soccer team played (badly) _____ than it did last season.

9. Josie’s pen writes (smooth) _____ than mine.
10. I felt (lucky) _____ than my sister because I got in to the college of my choice.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

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7.1: Sentence Structure

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the basic structures of sentences.
2. Determine ways to turn sentences into questions.
3. Define adjectives and how they are used.

If your first language is not English, you will most likely need some extra help when writing in Standard, or formal, English. New students of Standard English often make similar kinds of errors. Even when you have been speaking English for a long time, you may not feel as confident in your written English skills. This chapter provides an overview of English grammar and covers the most common errors made by English language learners and helps you avoid similar mistakes in your college writing.

Basic Sentence Structures

The most basic sentence structure in English is a subject plus a verb. A subject performs the action in the sentence, and the verb identifies the action. Keep in mind that in some languages, such as Spanish and Italian, an obvious subject does not always perform the action in a sentence; the subject is often implied by the verb. However, every sentence in English must have a subject and a verb to express a complete thought.

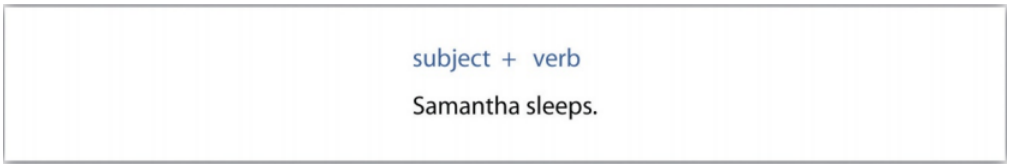


Figure 7.1.1

Not all sentences are as simple as a subject plus a verb. To form more complex sentences, writers build upon this basic structure. Adding a prepositional phrase to the basic sentence creates a more complex sentence. A preposition is a part of speech that relates a noun or a pronoun to another word in a sentence. It also introduces a prepositional phrase. If you can identify a preposition, you will be able to identify a prepositional phrase.



Figure 7.1.2

On is the preposition. On the couch is the prepositional phrase.

Common Prepositions		
about	beside	off
above	between	on
across	by	over
after	during	through
against	except	to
along	for	toward
among	from	under
around	in	until
at	into	up
before	of	with

Common Prepositions		
behind	like	without

Another sentence structure that is important to understand is subject + verb + object. There are two types of objects: direct objects and indirect objects.

A direct object receives the action of the verb.

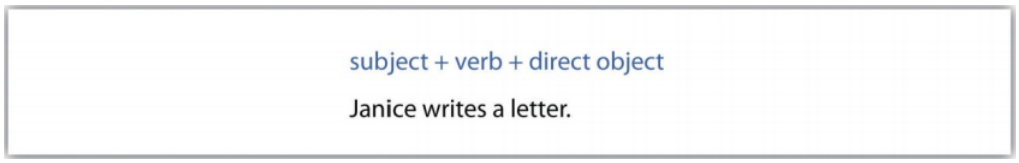


Figure 7.1.3

The letter directly receives the action of the verb writes.

Tip

A quick way to find the direct object is to ask *what?* or *who?*

Sentence: Maurice kicked the ball.

What did Maurice kick? The direct object, *ball*.

Sentence: Maurice kicked Tom by accident.

Who did Maurice kick? The direct object, *Tom*.

An indirect object does not receive the action of the verb.



Figure 7.1.4

The action (writes) is performed for or to the indirect object (me).

Tip

Even though the indirect object is not found after a preposition in English, it can be discovered by asking *to whom?* or *for whom?* after the verb.

Sentence: Dad baked the children some cookies.

For whom did Dad bake the cookies? The indirect object, *children*.

The Structure of Questions

English speakers rely on the following two common ways to turn sentences into questions:

1. Move the helping verb and add a question mark.
2. Add the verb *do*, *does*, or *did* and add a question mark.

Move the helping verb and add a question mark.

Sentence: Sierra can pack these boxes.

Question: Can Sierra pack these boxes**?**

Add the verb *do*, *does*, or *did*, and add a question mark:

Sentence: Jolene skated across the pond.

Question: Did Jolene skate across the pond**?**

Adjectives

An adjective is a kind of descriptive word that describes a noun or a pronoun. It tells*which one*, *what kind*, and *how many*. Adjectives make your writing more lively and interesting. Keep in mind, a common error that English language learners make is misplacing the adjectives in a sentence. It is important to know where to place the adjective in a sentence so that readers are not confused.

If you are using more than one adjective to describe a noun, place the adjectives in the following order before the noun:

1. **Opinion:** an interesting book, a boring movie, a fun ride
2. **Size:** a large box, a tiny turtle, a tall woman
3. **Shape:** a round ball, a long hose, a square field
4. **Age:** a new day, an old horse, a modern building
5. **Color:** an orange sunset, a green jacket, a red bug
6. **Ethnicity:** Italian cheese, French wine, Chinese tea
7. **Material:** silk shirt, wool socks, a cotton dress

Tip

Adjectives can also be placed at the end of a sentence if they describe the subject of a sentence and appear after the verb. This is called a predicate adjective.

Sentence: My English teacher is well-meaning and deliberate.

Key Takeaways

- The most basic sentence structure is a subject plus a verb that expresses a complete thought.
- Adding a prepositional phrase or a direct or indirect object to a sentence makes it more complex.
- English speakers change a sentence into a question in one of the following two ways: moving the helping verb and adding a question mark or adding the verb do, does, or did and adding a question mark.
- Adjectives follow a particular order before the noun they describe. The order is opinion, size, shape, age, color, ethnicity, and material.

Writing Application

Write a paragraph about a memorable family trip. Use at least two adjectives to describe each noun in your paragraph. Proofread your paragraph, and then exchange papers with a classmate. Check your classmate's use of adjectives to make sure they are correct.

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7.2: Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

Learning Objectives

1. Identify modifiers.
2. Learn how to correct misplaced and dangling modifiers.

A modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that clarifies or describes another word, phrase, or clause. Sometimes writers use modifiers incorrectly, leading to strange and unintentionally humorous sentences. The two common types of modifier errors are called misplaced modifiers and dangling modifiers. If either of these errors occurs, readers can no longer read smoothly. Instead, they become stumped trying to figure out what the writer meant to say. A writer's goal must always be to communicate clearly and to avoid distracting the reader with strange sentences or awkward sentence constructions. The good news is that these errors can be easily overcome.

Misplaced Modifiers

A misplaced modifier is a modifier that is placed too far from the word or words it modifies. Misplaced modifiers make the sentence awkward and sometimes unintentionally humorous.

Incorrect: She wore a bicycle helmet on her head *that was too large*.

Correct: She wore a bicycle helmet *that was too large* on her head.

- Notice in the incorrect sentence it sounds as if her head was too large! Of course, the writer is referring to the helmet, not to the person's head. The corrected version of the sentence clarifies the writer's meaning.

Look at the following two examples:

Incorrect: They bought a kitten for my brother *they call Shadow*.

Correct: They bought a kitten *they call Shadow* for my brother.

- In the incorrect sentence, it seems that the brother's name is *Shadow*. That's because the modifier is too far from the word it modifies, which is *kitten*.

Incorrect: The patient was referred to the physician *with stomach pains*.

Correct: The patient *with stomach pains* was referred to the physician.

- The incorrect sentence reads as if it is the physician who has stomach pains! What the writer means is that the patient has stomach pains.

Tip

Simple modifiers like only, almost, just, nearly, and barely often get used incorrectly because writers often stick them in the wrong place.

Confusing: Padam *almost* found fifty cents under the sofa cushions.

Repaired: Padam found *almost* fifty cents under the sofa cushions.

- How do you *almost* find something? Either you find it or you do not. The repaired sentence is much clearer.

Exercise 7.2.1:

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentences to correct the misplaced modifiers.

1. The young lady was walking the dog on the telephone.
2. I heard that there was a robbery on the evening news.
3. Uncle Sayed bought a running stroller for the baby that he called "Speed Racer."
4. Rolling down the mountain, the explorer stopped the boulder with his powerful foot.
5. We are looking for a babysitter for our precious six-year-old who doesn't drink or smoke and owns a car.
6. The teacher served cookies to the children wrapped in aluminum foil.

7. The mysterious woman walked toward the car holding an umbrella.
8. We returned the wine to the waiter that was sour.
9. Emmanuel spotted a stray puppy driving home from work.
10. I ate nothing but a cold bowl of noodles for dinner.

Dangling Modifiers

A dangling modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that describes something that has been left out of the sentence. When there is nothing that the word, phrase, or clause can modify, the modifier is said to dangle.

Incorrect: *Riding in the sports car*, the world whizzed by rapidly.

Correct: As Priya was *riding in the sports car*, the world whizzed by rapidly.

- In the incorrect sentence, *riding in the sports car* is dangling. The reader is left wondering who is riding in the sports car. The writer must tell the reader!

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7.3: Negative Statements

Learning Objectives

1. Identify a negative statement.
2. Write negative statements.

Negative statements are the opposite of positive statements and are necessary to express an opposing idea. The following charts list negative words and helping verbs that can be combined to form a negative statement.

Negative Words		
never	no	hardly
nobody	none	scarcely
no one	not	barely
nowhere		rarely

Common Helping Verbs		
am	is	are
was	were	be
being	been	have
has	had	do
does	did	can
could	may	might
must	will	should
would	ought to	used to

The following examples show several ways to make a sentence negative in the present tense.

1. A helping verb used with the negative word *not*.

   Sentence: My guests are arriving now.

   Negative: My guests **are not** arriving now.

2. **Sentence:** Minh has money.

   Negative: Minh **has no** money.

3. **Sentence:** Yen misses her mom.

   Negative: Yen **doesn't** miss her mom.

4. **Sentence:** I always go to the gym after work.

   Negative: I **rarely** go to the gym after work.

5. **Sentence:** Everybody gets the day off.

   Negative: **Nobody** gets the day off.

The following sentences show you the ways to make a sentence negative in the past tense.

Sentence: Huong called me yesterday.

Negative: Huong **did not** call me yesterday.

Sentence: Ning went to the grocery store.

Negative: Ning **never went** to the grocery store.

Sentence: Pia laughed when she saw the huge pile of laundry.

Negative: Pia **did not laugh** when she saw the huge pile of laundry.

Notice that when forming a negative in the past tense, the helping verb *did* is what signals the past tense, and the main verb *laugh* does not have an-*ed* ending.

Exercise 7.3.1:

Rewrite the following paragraph by correcting the errors in the past-tense negative sentences.

> Gifty no did call me when she reached North Carolina. I was worried because she not drove alone before. She was going to meet her friend, Backary, who lived in a town called Asheville, North Carolina. I did never want to worry, but she said she was going to call when she reached there. Finally, four hours later, she called and said, "Mom, I'm sorry I did not call. I lost track of time because I was so happy to see my friend Backary!" I was relieved.

Double Negatives

Double negatives are two negatives used in the same phrase or sentence. They are considered incorrect in Standard English. You should avoid using double negatives in all formal writing. If you want to say something negative, use only one negative word in the sentence. Return to the beginning of this section for a list of negative words, and then study the following examples.

Double negative (incorrect)	Single negative (correct)
neg. + neg. I couldn't find no paper.	neg. I couldn't find any paper.
neg. + neg. I don't want nothing.	neg. I don't want anything.

Figure 7.3.1

Tip

Ain't is considered a contraction of am not. Although some may use it in everyday speech, it is considered incorrect in Standard English. Avoid using it when speaking and writing in formal contexts.

Exercise 7.3.2:

On your own sheet of paper, correct the double negatives and rewrite the following sentences.

1. Jose didn't like none of the choices on the menu.
2. Luiza can't make no friends with nobody.
3. The Southwest hardly had no rain last summer.
4. My kids never get into no trouble.
5. I could not do nothing about the past.

Key Takeaways

- Negatives are usually formed using a negative word plus a helping verb.
- Double negatives are considered incorrect in Standard English.
- Only one negative word is used to express a negative statement.

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7.4: Count and Noncount Nouns and Articles

Learning Objectives

1. Define and use count and noncount nouns.
2. Recognize and use definite and indefinite articles.

Nouns are words that name things, places, people, and ideas. Right now, you may be surrounded by desks, computers, and notebooks. These are called count nouns because you can count the exact number of desks, computers, and notebooks—three desks, one computer, and six notebooks, for example.

On the other hand, you may be carrying a small amount of money in your wallet and sitting on a piece of furniture. These are called noncount nouns. Although you can count the pieces of furniture or the amount of money, you cannot add a number in front of *money* or *furniture* and simply add *-s* to the end of the noun. Instead, you must use other words and phrases to indicate the quantity of money and furniture.

Incorrect: five moneys, two furnitures, three sugars

Correct: some money, two pieces of furniture, two teaspoons of sugar

Count and Noncount Nouns

A count noun refers to people, places, and things that are separate units. You make count nouns plural by adding *-s*.

Table 7.4.1: Table of Count Nouns

Count Noun	Sentence
Quarter	It takes six quarters to do my laundry.
Chair	Make sure to push in your chairs before leaving class.
Candidate	The two candidates debated the issue.
Adult	The three adults in the room acted like children.
Comedian	The two comedians made the audience laugh.

A noncount noun identifies a whole object that cannot separate and count individually. Noncount nouns may refer to concrete objects or abstract objects. A concrete noun identifies an object you can see, taste, touch, or count. An abstract noun identifies an object that you cannot see, touch, or count. There are some exceptions, but most abstract nouns cannot be made plural, so they are noncount nouns. Examples of abstract nouns include anger, education, melancholy, softness, violence, and conduct.

Table 7.4.2: Table of Types of Noncount Nouns

Type of Noncount	Noun	Examples Sentence
Food	sugar, salt, pepper, lettuce, rice	Add more sugar to my coffee, please.
Solids	concrete, chocolate, silver, soap	The ice cream was covered in creamy chocolate.
Abstract Nouns	peace, warmth, hospitality, information	I need more information about the insurance policy.

Exercise 7.4.1:

On a separate sheet of paper, identify whether the italicized noun in the sentence is a count or noncount noun by writing C or NC above the noun.

1. The amount of traffic on the way home was terrible.
2. Forgiveness is an important part of growing up.
3. I made caramel sauce for the organic apples I bought.

4. I prefer film cameras instead of digital ones.
5. My favorite subject is history.
6. “Freedom is just another word for nothing left to lose.”

Definite and Indefinite Articles

The word *the* is a definite article. It refers to one or more specific things. For example, *the woman* refers to not any woman but a particular woman. The definite article *the* is used before singular and plural count nouns.

The words *a* and *an* are indefinite articles. They refer to one nonspecific thing. For example, *a woman* refers to any woman, not a specific, particular woman. The indefinite article *a* or *an* is used before a singular count noun.

Definite Articles (*The*) and Indefinite Articles (*A/An*) with Count Nouns

I saw **the** concert. (singular, refers to a specific concert)

I saw **the** concerts. (plural, refers to more than one specific concert)

I saw **the** U2 concert last night. (singular, refers to a specific concert)

I saw **a** concert. (singular, refers to any nonspecific concert)

Two Article Rules – Reminders

The following rules will help to determine when and what kind of article needs to beused.

Rule 1: A singular count noun needs an article or a determiner.

Choose *a* or *an* if the noun is indefinite. Choose *the* if the noun is definite

Rule 2: A plural or non-count noun does not need an article unless it is definite.

Exercise 7.4.2:

On a separate sheet of paper, write the correct article in the blank for each of the following sentences. Write OK if the sentence is correct.

1. (A/An/The) camel can live for days without water. _____
2. I enjoyed (a/an/the) pastries at the Bar Mitzvah. _____
3. (A/An/The) politician spoke of many important issues. _____
4. I really enjoyed (a/an/the) actor’s performance in the play. _____
5. (A/An/The) goal I have is to run a marathon this year. _____

Exercise 7.4.3:

Correct the misused or missing articles and rewrite the paragraph:

> Stars are large balls of spinning hot gas like our sun. The stars look tiny because they are far away. Many of them are much larger than sun. Did you know that a Milky Way galaxy has between two hundred billion and four hundred billion stars in it? Scientists estimate that there may be as many as five hundred billion galaxies in an entire universe! Just like a human being, the star has a life cycle from birth to death, but its lifespan is billions of years long. The star is born in a cloud of cosmic gas and dust called a nebula. Our sun was born in the nebula nearly five billion years ago. Photographs of the star-forming nebulas are astonishing.

Key Takeaways

- You can make count nouns plural by adding -s.
- Count nouns are individual people, places, or things that can be counted, such as politicians, deserts, or candles.
- Noncount nouns refer to whole things that cannot be made plural, such as salt, peace, or happiness.
- The is a definite article and is used to refer to a specific person, place, or thing, such as the Queen of England.
- A and an are indefinite articles, and they refer to nonspecific people, places, or things, such as an apple or a bicycle.

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7.5: Pronouns

Learning Objectives

1. Recognize subject and object pronouns.
2. Identify possessive pronouns.
3. Determine common pronoun errors.

A **pronoun** is a word that can be used in place of the noun. We use pronouns so we do not have to repeat words. For example, imagine writing the following sentence: Afrah put her scarf on because Afrah was cold. The sentence sounds a bit strange because Afrah is named twice; however, if you use a pronoun, the sentence will be shorter and less repetitive. You might rewrite the sentence to something similar to the following: Afrah put her scarf on because she was cold. She refers to Afrah, so you do not have to write the name twice.

Types of Pronouns

Subject pronouns are often the subject of a sentence —"who" and "what" the sentence is about.

Sentence: She loves the desserts in France.

She is the subject.

Sentence: By lunch time, **they** were hungry.

They is the subject.

Object pronouns are often the object of the verb — "who" or "what" was acted upon.

Sentence: Beza's thoughtfulness touched **him**.

Him is the object of the verb *touched*.

Sentence: We lifted **it**.

It is the object of the verb *lifted*.

Tip

The masculine subject pronoun is he, and the masculine object pronoun is him. The feminine subject pronoun is she, and the feminine object pronoun is her.

A pronoun that shows possession or ownership is called a possessive pronoun.

Sentence: The teacher took **her** apple and left.

The pronoun *her* shows the teacher owns the apple.

Sentence: The hikers spotted **their** guide on the trail.

The pronoun *their* shows the hikers follow the guide who was assigned to the hikers.

Table 7.5.1: Table of Pronoun Types

Subject Pronouns	I, you, he, she, it, we, they
Object Pronouns	me, you, him, her, it, us, them
Possessive Pronouns	my (mine), your(s), his, hers, its, our(s), their(s)
Relative Pronouns	who, whose, whom, which, that

Exercise 7.5.1:

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by circling the correct pronoun.

1. Unfortunately, the house was too expensive for (we, us, they).
2. I completed (mine, my, your) research paper, and she completed (his, hers, theirs).
3. My dog Buster is old, but (he, it, them) is very playful.
4. That ring belongs to my father, so it is (hers, his, theirs).
5. I cannot find my textbook, so I think (they, it, he) is lost.

Common Pronoun Errors

English language learners often make the same errors when using pronouns. The following examples illustrate common errors.

Incorrect: Me and Daniela went to the restaurant for lunch.

This sentence is incorrect because an object pronoun (*me*) is used instead of a subject pronoun.

Correct: Daniela and **I** went to the restaurant for lunch.

This sentence is now correct because a subject pronoun (*I*) is used.

Incorrect: Marco put her grocery bag on the counter.

This sentence is incorrect because the pronoun *her* refers to a female, and Marco is a male.

Correct: Marco put **his** grocery bag on the counter.

This sentence is now correct because the male pronoun *his* refers to the male person, *Marco*.

Incorrect: The woman she went to work earlier than usual.

This sentence is incorrect because the subject *the woman* is repeated by the pronoun *she*. Sometimes this is a feature of oral speech, but never of written text.

Correct: The woman went to work earlier than usual. **OR**

Correct: She went to work earlier than usual.

These sentences are now correct because the unnecessary repeated subject has been removed.

Exercise 7.5.2:

On a separate sheet of paper, correct the following sentences that have pronoun errors. If the sentence is correct as it is, write OK.

1. Us are going to the county fair this weekend.
2. Mohamed did not want to see a movie because she had a headache.
3. The teacher congratulated Maria and me.
4. The eighth grade students they were all behaving mysteriously well.
5. Dominique and he received the best grade on the grammar test.

Relative Pronouns

A relative pronoun is a type of pronoun that helps connect details to the subject of the sentence and may often combine two shorter sentences. The relative pronouns are *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *which* or *that* and sometimes *when* and *where.*

Sentence: A relative pronoun is a type of pronoun.

The subject of this sentence is *a relative pronoun*. The clause *is a type of pronoun* gives some information about the subject.

The relative pronoun *that* may be added to give more details to the subject.

Sentence using a relative pronoun: A relative pronoun is a type of pronoun **that** helps connect details to the subject of the sentence.

Tip

Remember the following uses of relative pronouns:

- Who, whom, and whose refer only to people.
- Which refers to things.
- That refers to people or things.

The following examples show how a relative pronoun may be used to connect two sentences and to connect details to the subject.

Sentence 1: Gossip is a form of communication.

Sentence 2: It is a waste of time and energy.

Combination of 1 and 2: Gossip is a form of communication **that** is a waste of time and energy.

Notice how the relative pronoun *that* replaces the subject *it* in sentence 2.

That is called a relative pronoun because it connects the details (*is a waste of time and energy*) to the subject (*Gossip*).

Sentence 1: My grandmother is eighty years old.

Sentence 2: She collects seashells.

Combination of 1 and 2: My grandmother, **who** is eighty years old, collects seashells.

Notice how the relative pronoun *who* replaces the subject *she* in sentence 2.

Who is called a relative pronoun because it connects the details (*is eighty years old*) to the subject (*My grandmother*).

Exercise 7.5.3:

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by selecting the correct relative pronoun.

1. He showed me a photo (who, that) upset me.
2. Soccer is a fast moving game (who, that) has many fans worldwide.
3. Juan is a man (which, who) has high standards for everything.
4. Jamaica is a beautiful country (that, who) I would like to visit next year.
5. My mother only eats bananas (who, that) are green.

Exercise 7.5.4:

On a separate sheet of paper, combine the two sentences into one sentence using a relative pronoun.

1. Sayed is a dependable person. He will never let you down.
2. I rode a roller coaster. It was scary.
3. At the beach, I always dig my feet into the sand. It protects them from the hot sun.
4. Sova is trying not to use so many plastic products. They are not good for the environment.
5. My Aunt Cynthia is teaching me how to drive. She has never been in accident or gotten a ticket.

Key Takeaways

- A pronoun is used in place of a noun.
- There are several types of pronouns, including subject and object pronouns, possessive pronouns, and relative pronouns.
- Subject pronouns are the “who” and “what” the sentence is about.
- Object pronouns are the “who” and “what” that receives the action.
- A possessive pronoun is a pronoun showing ownership.
- Common pronoun errors include mixing up subject, object, and gender pronouns, and repeating the subject of a sentence with a pronoun.
- Relative pronouns help combine two separate sentences.

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7.6: Pronoun Agreement

Learning Objectives

1. Identify pronouns and their antecedents.
2. Use pronouns and their antecedents correctly.

If there were no pronouns, all types of writing would be quite tedious to read. We would soon be frustrated by reading sentences like Bob said that Bob was tired or Christina told the class that Christina received an A. Pronouns help a writer avoid constant repetition. Knowing just how pronouns work is an important aspect of clear and concise writing.

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of (or refers back to) a noun or another pronoun. The word or words a pronoun refers to is called the antecedent of the pronoun.

1. Lani complained that she was exhausted.
   - She refers to Lani.
   - Lani is the antecedent of she.
2. Hieu left the party early, so I did not see him until Monday at work.
   - Him refers to Hieu.
   - Jeremy is the antecedent of him.
3. Ansam and Sherry have been best friends ever since they were freshman in high school.
   - They refers to Ansam and Sherry.
   - Ansam and Sherry is the antecedent of they.

Pronoun agreement errors occur when the pronoun and the antecedent do not match or agree with each other. There are several types of pronoun agreement.

Agreement in Number

If the pronoun takes the place of or refers to a singular noun, the pronoun must also be singular.

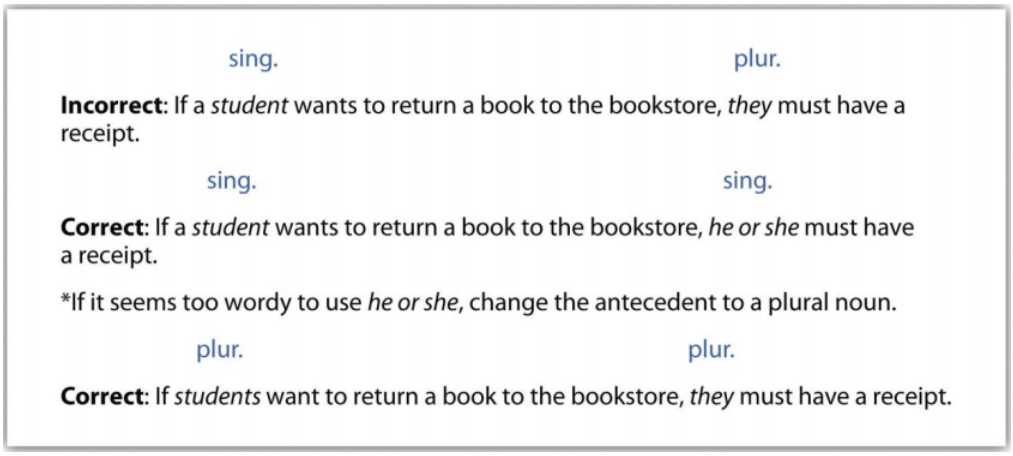


Figure 7.6.1

Agreement in Person

	Singular Pronouns			Plural Pronouns		
First Person	I	me	my (mine)	we	us	our (ours)
Second Person	you	you	your (yours)	you	you	your (your)
Third Person	he, she, it	him, her, it	his, her, its	they	them	their (theirs)

If you use a consistent person, your reader is less likely to be confused.

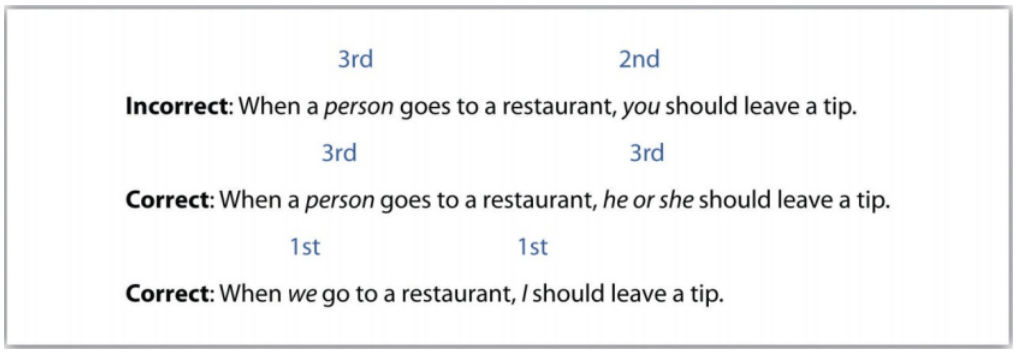


Figure 7.6.2

Exercise 7.6.1:

Edit the following paragraph by correcting pronoun agreement errors in number and person.

> Over spring break I visited my older cousin, Diana, and they took me to a butterfly exhibit at a museum. Diana and I have been close ever since she was young. Our mothers are twin sisters, and she is inseparable! Diana knows how much I love butterflies, so it was their special present to me. I have a soft spot for caterpillars too. I love them because something about the way it transforms is so interesting to me. One summer my grandmother gave me a butterfly growing kit, and you got to see the entire life cycle of five Painted Lady butterflies. I even got to set it free. So when my cousin said they wanted to take me to the butterfly exhibit, I was really excited!

Indefinite Pronouns and Agreement

Indefinite pronouns do not refer to a specific person or thing and are usually singular. Note that a pronoun that refers to an indefinite singular pronoun should also be singular. The following are some common indefinite pronouns.

Common Indefinite Pronouns				
all	each one	few	nothing	several
any	each other	many	one	some
anybody	either	neither	one another	somebody
anything	everybody	nobody	oneself	someone
both	everyone	none	other	something
each	everything	no one	others	anyone

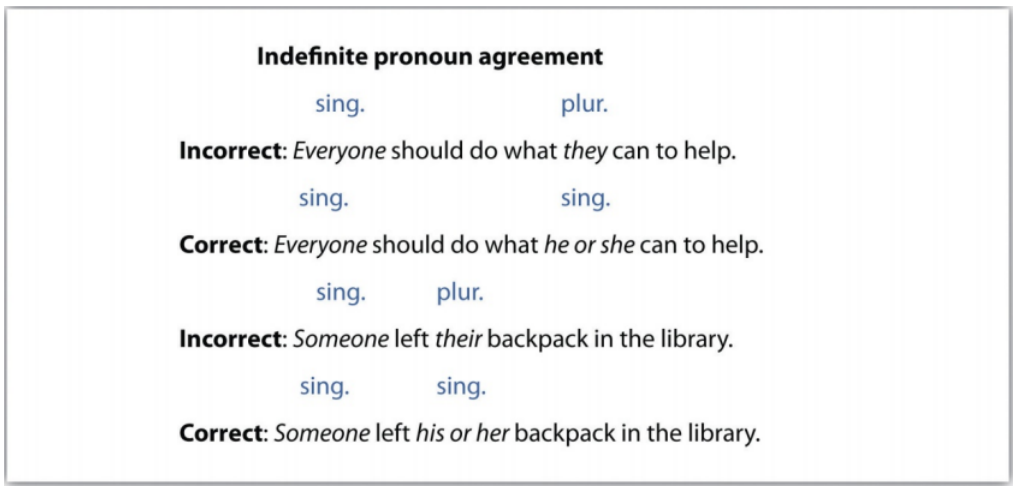


Figure 7.6.3

Collective Nouns

Collective nouns suggest more than one person but are usually considered singular. Look over the following examples of collective nouns.

Common Collective Nouns					
audience	faculty	public	company	jury	tribe
band	family	school	committee	group	team
class	government	society			

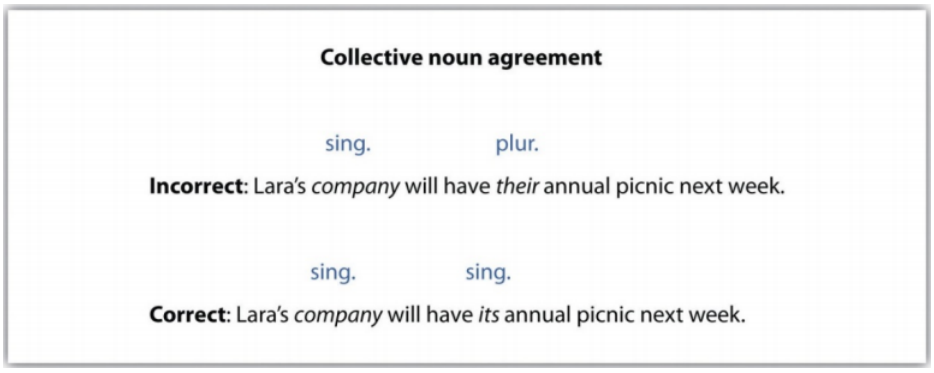


Figure 7.6.4

Exercise 7.6.2:

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct pronoun. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper. Then circle the noun the pronoun replaces.

1. In the current economy, nobody wants to waste _____ money on frivolous things.
2. If anybody chooses to go to medical school, _____ must be prepared to work long hours.
3. The plumbing crew did _____ best to repair the broken pipes before the next ice storm.
4. If someone is rude to you, try giving _____ a smile in return.
5. My family has _____ faults, but I still love them no matter what.
6. The school of education plans to train _____ students to be literacy tutors.
7. The commencement speaker said that each student has a responsibility toward _____.
8. My mother's singing group has _____ rehearsals on Thursday evenings.
9. No one should suffer _____ pains alone.
10. I thought the flock of birds lost _____ way in the storm.

Subject and Object Pronouns

Subject pronouns function as subjects in a sentence. Object pronouns function as the object of a verb or of a preposition.

Singular Pronouns		Plural Pronouns	
Subject	**Object**	**Subject**	**Object**
I	me	we	us
you	you	you	you
he, she, it	him, her, it	they	them

The following sentences show pronouns as subjects:

1. She loves the Blue Ridge Mountains in the fall.

2. Every summer, they picked up litter from national parks.

The following sentences show pronouns as objects:

1. Marie leaned over and kissed him.
2. Barbara moved it to the corner.

Note that a pronoun can also be the object of a preposition.

> Near them, the children played.

My mother stood between us.

The pronouns us and them are objects of the prepositions near and between. They answer the questions near whom? And between whom?

Compound subject pronouns are two or more pronouns joined by a conjunction or a preposition that function as the subject of the sentence.

The following sentences show pronouns with compound subjects:

Incorrect: Me and Harriet visited the Grand Canyon last summer.

Correct: Harriet and I visited the Grand Canyon last summer.

Correct: Jenna accompanied Harriet and me on our trip.

Tip

Note that object pronouns are never used in the subject position. One way to remember this rule is to remove the other subject in a compound subject, leave only the pronoun, and see whether the sentence makes sense. For example, me visited the Grand Canyon last summer sounds immediately incorrect.

Compound object pronouns are two or more pronouns joined by a conjunction or a preposition that function as the object of the sentence.

> **Incorrect:** I have a good feeling about Debra and I.
>
> **Correct:** I have a good feeling about Debra and me.

It is correct to write Debra and me, as opposed to me and Debra. Just remember it is more polite to refer to yourself last.

Tip

In casual conversation, people sometimes mix up subject and object pronouns. For instance, you might say, “Me and Donnie went to a movie last night.” However, when you are writing or speaking at work or in any other formal situation, you need to remember the distinctions between subject and object pronouns and be able to correct yourself. These subtle grammar corrections will enhance your professional image and reputation.

Exercise 7.6.3:

Revise the following sentences in which the subject and object pronouns are used incorrectly. Copy the revised sentence onto your own sheet of paper. Write a C for each sentence that is correct.

1. Meera and me enjoy doing yoga together on Sundays.
2. She and him have decided to sell their house.
3. Between you and I, I do not think Jeffrey will win the election.
4. They and I met while on vacation in Mexico.
5. Napping on the beach never gets boring for Alice and I.
6. New Year’s Eve is not a good time for she and I to have a serious talk.
7. You exercise much more often than me.
8. I am going to the comedy club with Yolanda and she.
9. The cooking instructor taught her and me a lot.

Who versus Whom

Who or whoever is always the subject of a verb. Use who or whoever when the pronoun performs the action indicated by the verb.

> Who won the marathon last Tuesday?
>
> I wonder who came up with that terrible idea!

On the other hand, whom and whomever serve as objects. They are used when the pronoun does not perform an action. Use whom or whomever when the pronoun is the direct object of a verb or the object of a preposition.

> Whom did Frank marry the third time? (direct object of verb)
>
> From whom did you buy that old record player? (object of preposition)

Tip

If you are having trouble deciding when to use who and whom, try this trick. Take the following sentence:

> Who/Whom do I consider my best friend?

Reorder the sentence in your head, using either he or him in place of who or whom.

> I consider him my best friend.
>
> I consider he my best friend.

Which sentence sounds better? The first one, of course. So the trick is, if you can use him, you should use whom.

Exercise 7.6.4:

Complete the following sentences by adding who or whom. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. _____ hit the home run?
2. I remember _____ won the Academy Award for Best Actor last year.
3. To _____ is the letter addressed?
4. I have no idea _____ left the iron on, but I am going to find out.
5. _____ are you going to recommend for the internship?
6. With _____ are you going to Hawaii?
7. No one knew _____ the famous actor was.
8. _____ in the office knows how to fix the copy machine?
9. From _____ did you get the concert tickets?
10. No one knew _____ ate the cake mom was saving.

Key Takeaways

- Pronouns and their antecedents need to agree in number and person.
- Most indefinite pronouns are singular.
- Collective nouns are usually singular.
- Pronouns can function as subjects or objects.
- Subject pronouns are never used as objects, and object pronouns are never used as subjects.
- Who serves as a subject of a verb.
- Whom serves as an object of a sentence or the object of a preposition.

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7.7: Overview of Verb Forms

Learning Objectives

1. Use the correct regular verb forms in basic sentences.
2. Use the correct irregular verb forms in basic sentences.
3. Use the correct gerund or infinitive form in sentences.

Regular Verb Forms

Verbs in English can change forms in five basic ways:

Table 7.7.1: Regular Verbs

BASE	PAST	PAST PARTICIPLE	3rd PERSON SINGULAR	PROGRESSIVE
TALK	TALKED	TALKED	TALKS	TALKING
JUMP	JUMPED	JUMPED	JUMPS	JUMPING

Verbs also can indicate actions or states of being in the past, present, or future using tenses. Regular verbs follow regular patterns when shifting from the present to past tense. For example, to form a past-tense or past-participle verb form, add -ed or -d to the end of a verb. You can avoid mistakes by understanding this basic pattern.

Verb tense identifies the time of action described in a sentence. Verbs take different forms to indicate different tenses. Verb tenses indicate

- an action or state of being in the present,
- an action or state of being in the past,
- an action or state of being in the future.

Helping verbs, such as be and have, also work to create verb tenses, such as the future tense.

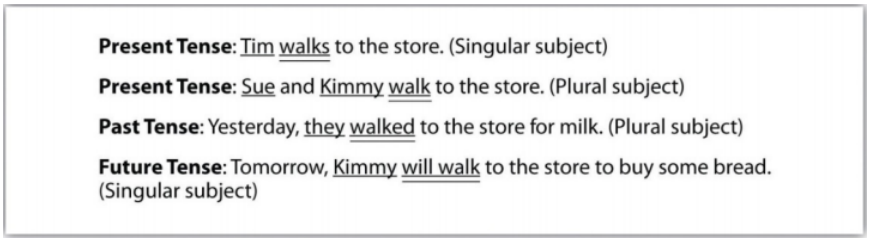


Figure 7.7.1

Irregular Verb Forms

The past tense of irregular verbs is not formed using the patterns that regular verbs follow. Study the chart below which lists the most common irregular verbs.

The best way to learn irregular verbs is to memorize them. With the help of a classmate, create flashcards of irregular verbs and test yourselves until you master them.

Table 7.7.2: Irregular Verbs

Simple Present	Past	Simple Present	Past
be	was, were	lose	lost
become	became	make	made
begin	began	mean	meant
blow	blew	meet	met

Simple Present	Past	Simple Present	Past
break	broke	pay	paid
bring	brought	put	put
build	built	quit	quit
burst	burst	read	read
buy	bought	ride	rode
catch	caught	ring	rang
choose	chose	rise	rose
come	came	run	ran
cut	cut	say	said
dive	dove (dived)	see	saw
do	did	seek	sought
draw	drew	sell	sold
drink	drank	send	sent
drive	drove	set	set
eat	ate	shake	shook
fall	fell	shine	shone (shined)
feed	fed	shrink	shrank (shrunk)
feel	felt	sing	sang
fight	fought	sit	sat
find	found	sleep	slept
fly	flew	speak	spoke
forget	forgot	spend	spent
forgive	forgave	spring	sprang
freeze	froze	stand	stood
get	got	steal	stole
give	gave	strike	struck
go	went	swim	swam
grow	grew	swing	swung
have	had	take	took
hear	heard	teach	taught
hide	hid	tear	tore
hold	held	tell	told
hurt	hurt	think	thought
keep	kept	throw	threw

Simple Present	Past	Simple Present	Past
know	knew	understand	understood
lay	laid	wake	woke
lead	led	wear	wore
leave	left	win	won
let	let	wind	wound

Here we see the irregular verb in the past tense.

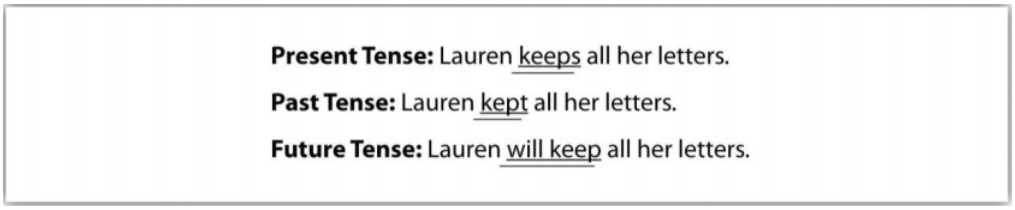


Figure 7.7.2

Exercise 7.7.1:

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct form of the irregular verb in simple present, simple past, or simple future tense. Copy the corrected sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Marina finally (forgived, forgave, will forgive) her sister for snooping around her room.
2. The house (shook, shaked, shakes) as the airplane rumbled overhead.
3. I (buyed, bought, buy) several items of clothing at the thrift store on Wednesday.
4. She (put, putted, puts) the lotion in her shopping basket and proceeded to the checkout line.
5. The prized goose (layed, laid, lay) several golden eggs last night.
6. Mr. Batista (teached, taught, taughted) the class how to use correct punctuation.
7. I (drink, drank, will drink) several glasses of sparkling cider instead of champagne on New Year's Eve next year.
8. Although Hector (growed, grew, grows) three inches in one year, we still called him "Little Hector."
9. Yesterday our tour guide (lead, led, will lead) us through the maze of people in Times Square.
10. The rock band (burst, bursted, bursts) onto the music scene with their catchy songs.

Gerunds

A gerund is a form of a verb that is used as a noun. All gerunds end in -ing. Since gerunds function as nouns, they occupy places in a sentence that a noun would, such as the subject, direct object, and object of a preposition.

You can use a gerund in the following ways:

1. **Traveling** is Cynthia's favorite pastime.
2. I enjoy **jogging**.
3. The librarian scolded me for **laughing**.

Often verbs are followed by gerunds. Study for examples.

Table 7.7.3: Gerunds and Verbs

Gerund Verb	Followed by a Gerund
moving	Delilah **considered moving** to Paris.
cleaning	I **hate cleaning** the bathroom.
winning	Longa **imagines winning** an Oscar one day.
worrying	Mom says she has **stopped worrying**.

Gerund Verb	Followed by a Gerund
taking	She **admitted taking** the pumpkin

Infinitives

An infinitive is a form of a verb that comes after the word to and acts as a noun, adjective, or adverb.

to + verb = infinitive

Examples of infinitives include the following: to move, to sleep, to look, to throw, to read, and to sneeze.

Often verbs are followed by infinitives.

Table 7.7.4: Infinitives and Verbs

Infinitive	Verb Followed by Infinitive
to help	Preeti **offered to help** her move.
to arrive	Sonia **expects to arrive** early.
to win	Sunita **wants to win** the writing contest.
to close	He **forgot to close** the curtains.
to eat	She **likes to eat** late.

You may wonder which verbs can be followed by gerunds and which verbs can be followed by infinitives. With the following verbs, you can use either a gerund or an infinitive.

Table 7.7.5: Infinitives and Gerund Verbs

Base Form of Verb	Sentences with Verbs Followed by Gerunds and Infinitives
begin	1. Juanita **began crying**.
	2. Juanita **began to cry**.
hate	1. Marie **hated talking** on the phone.
	2. Marie **hated to talk** on the phone.
forget	1. Wendell **forgot paying** the bills.
	2. Wendell **forgot to pay** the bills.
like	1. I **liked leaving** messages.
	2. I **liked to leave** messages.
continue	1. He **continued listening** to the news.
	2. He **continued to listen** to the news.
start	1. I will **start recycling** immediately.
	2. I will **start to recycle** immediately.
try	1. Mikhail will **try climbing** the tree.
	2. Mikhail will **try to climb** the tree.
prefer	1. I **prefer baking**.
	2. I **prefer to bake**.
love	1. Joshua **loves diving**.
	2. Joshua **loves to dive**.

Exercise 7.7.2:

On your own sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by choosing the correct infinitive or gerund.

1. I meant _____ (to kiss, kissing) my kids before they left for school.
2. The children hoped (to go, going) to a restaurant for dinner.
3. Do you intend _____ (to eat, eating) the entire pie?
4. Crystal postponed _____ (to get dressed, getting dressed) for the party.
5. When we finish _____ (to play, playing) this game, we will go home.

Key Takeaways

- Regular verbs follow regular patterns when shifting from present to past tense.
- Irregular verbs do not follow regular, predictable patterns when shifting from present to past tense.
- Forms of Irregular Verbs must be practiced and memorized.

Writing Application

Tell a family story. You likely have several family stories to choose from, but pick the one that you find most interesting to write about. Use as many details as you can in the telling. As you write and proofread, make sure your all your verbs are correct and the tenses are consistent.

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7.8: Verb Tenses

Learning Objectives

1. Identify simple verb tenses.
2. Recognize to be, to have, and to do verbs.
3. Use perfect verb tenses.
4. Apply progressive verb tenses.
5. Define gerunds and infinitives.

You must always use a verb in every sentence you write. Verbs are parts of speech that indicate actions or states of being. The most basic sentence structure is a subject followed by a verb.

Simple Verb Tenses

Verb tenses tell the reader when the action takes place. The action could be in the past, present, or future.

Table 7.8.1

Past	← Present →	Future
Yesterday I **jumped**.	Today I **jump**.	Tomorrow I **will jump**.

Simple present verbs are used in the following situations:

1. When the action takes place now

   I drink the water greedily.

2. When the action is something that happens regularly

   I always cross my fingers for good luck.

3. When describing things that are generally true

   College tuition is very costly.

Table 7.8.2: Regular Simple Present Tense Verbs

Verb	I/You/We/They	He/She/It
ask	ask	asks
bake	bake	bakes
cook	cook	cooks
cough	cough	coughs
clap	clap	claps
dance	dance	dances
erase	erase	erases
kiss	kiss	kisses
push	push	pushes
wash	wash	washes

When it is he, she, or it doing the present tense action, remember to add -s, or -es to the end of the verb or to change the y to -ies.

Simple past verbs are used when the action has already taken place and is now finished:

- I **washed** my uniform last night.

- I **asked** for more pie.
- I **coughed** loudly last night.

Table 7.8.3: Regular Simple Past Tense Verbs

Verb	Past Tense
ask	asked
bake	baked
cook	cooked
cough	coughed
clap	clapped
dance	danced
erase	erased
kiss	kissed
push	pushed
wash	washed

When he, she, or it is doing the action in the past tense, remember to add -d or -ed to the end of regular verbs.

Simple future verbs are used when the action has not yet taken place:

- I **will work** late tomorrow.
- I **will kiss** my boyfriend when I see him.
- I **will erase** the board after class.

Table 7.8.4: Regular Simple Future Tense Verbs

Verb	**Future Tense**
ask	will ask
bake	will bake
cook	will cook
cough	will cough
clap	will clap
dance	will dance
erase	will erase
kiss	will kiss
push	will push
wash	will wash

Going to can also be added to the main verb to make it future tense:

- I am **going to** go to work tomorrow.

Exercise 7.8.1:

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct form of the verb in simple present, simple past, or simple future tenses. Write the corrected sentence on your own sheet of paper.

1. The Dust Bowl (is, was, will be) a name given to a period of very destructive dust storms that occurred in the United States during the 1930s.
2. Historians today (consider, considered, will consider) The Dust Bowl to be one of the worst weather of events in American history.
3. The Dust Bowl mostly (affects, affected, will affect) the states of Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico.
4. Dust storms (continue, continued, will continue) to occur in these dry regions, but not to the devastating degree of the 1930s.
5. The dust storms during The Dust Bowl (cause, caused, will cause) irreparable damage to farms and the environment for a period of several years.
6. When early settlers (move, moved, will move) into this area, they (remove, removed, will remove) the natural prairie grasses in order to plant crops and graze their cattle.
7. They did not (realize, realized, will realize) that the grasses kept the soil in place.
8. There (is, was, will be) also a severe drought that (affects, affected, will affect) the region.
9. The worst dust storm (happens, happened, will happen) on April 14, 1935, a day called Black Sunday.
10. The Dust Bowl era finally came to end in 1939 when the rains (arrive, arrived, will arrive).
11. Dust storms (continue, continued, will continue) to affect the region, but hopefully they will not be as destructive as the storms of the 1930s.

Exercise 7.8.2:

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by adding the verb in the correct simple tense.

1. Please do not (erase, erased, will erase) what I have written on the board.
2. They (dance, danced, will dance) for hours after the party was over.
3. Hong (wash, washed, will wash) his laundry after several weeks had passed.
4. Yesterday Mom (ask, asked, will ask) me about my plans for college. 5. I (bake, baked, will bake) several dozen cookies for tomorrow's bake sale.

Exercise 7.8.3:

Correct the verb tense mistakes in the following paragraph.

> Last summer, I walk around Walden Pond. Walden Pond is in Concord, Massachusetts. It is where the philosopher Henry David Thoreau will live during the mid-nineteenth century. During his time there, he wrote a book called Walden. Walden is a book of Thoreau's reflections on the natural environment. It will be consider a classic in American literature. I did not know that Walden Pond is consider the birthplace of the environmental movement. It was very relaxing there. I will listen to birds, frogs, and crickets, not to mention the peaceful sound of the pond itself.

To Be, To Do, and To Have

There are some irregular verbs in English that are formed in special ways. The most common of these are the verbs to be, to have, and to do.

Table 7.8.5: Verb Forms of To Be, To Do, and To Have

Base Form	Present Tense Form	Past Tense Form	Future Tense Form
be	am/is/are	was/were	will be
do	do/does	did	will do
have	have/has	had	will have

Tip

Memorize the present tense forms of to be, to do, and to have. A song or rhythmic pattern will make them easier to memorize.

Review these examples of to be, to do, and to have used in sentences.

Past	← Present →	Future
To Be		
Yesterday I **was** angry.	Today I **am** not angry.	Tomorrow I **will be** angry.
To Do		
I **did** my best yesterday.	I **do** my best every day.	Tomorrow I **will do** my best.
To Have		
Yesterday I **had** ten dollars.	Today I **have** ten dollars.	Tomorrow I **will have** ten dollars.

Remember the following uses of to be, to have and to do:

To Be

- I → am/was/will be
- you/we/they → are/were/will be
- he/she/it → is/was/will be

To Have

- I/you/we/they → have/had/will have
- he/she/it → has/had/will have

To Do

- I/you/we/they → do/did/will do
- he/she/it → does/did/will do

Tip

Remember, if you have a compound subject like Marie and Jennifer, think of the subject as they to determine the correct verb form.

- Maria and Luis (they) have a house on Bainbridge Island.

Similarly, single names can be thought of as he, she, or it.

- LeBron (he) has scored thirty points so far.

Exercise 7.8.4:

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by circling the correct form of the verbs to be, to have, and to do in the three simple tenses.

1. Stefano always (do, does, will do) his taxes the day before they are due.
2. We (are, is, was) planning a surprise birthday party for my mother.
3. Turtles (have, had, has) the most beautiful patterns on their shells.
4. I always (do, did, will do) my homework before dinner, so I can eat in peace.
5. You (is, are, was) so much smarter than you think!

Perfect Verb Tenses

Up to this point, we have covered the three simple verb tenses—simple present, simple past, and simple future. Now we will add three more tenses, which are called perfect tenses. They are present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect. These are the three

basic tenses of English. A past participle is often called the -ed form of a verb because it is formed by adding -d or -ed to the base form of regular verbs. Past participles can also end in -t or -en. Keep in mind, however, the past participle is also formed in various other ways for irregular verbs. The past participle can be used to form the present perfect tense.

The present perfect tense has a connection with the past and the present.

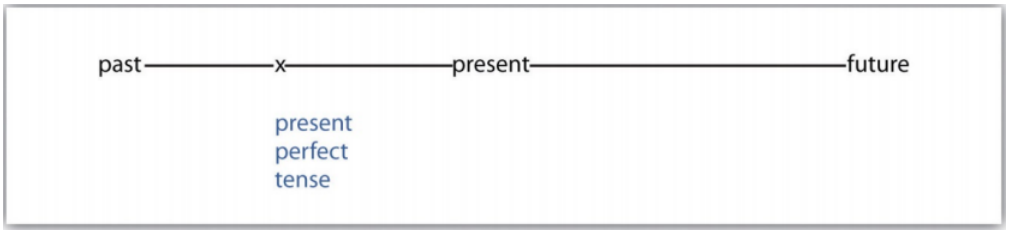


Figure 7.8.1

Use the present perfect tense to describe a continuing situation and to describe an action that has just happened.

- I **have worked** as a caretaker since June.

  This sentence tells us that the subject has worked as a caretaker in the past and is still working as a caretaker in the present.

- Dmitri **has** just **received** an award from the Dean of Students.

  This sentence tells us that Dmitri has very recently received the award. The word just emphasizes that the action happened very recently.

Study the following basic formula for the past perfect tense:

Subject + had or have + past participle

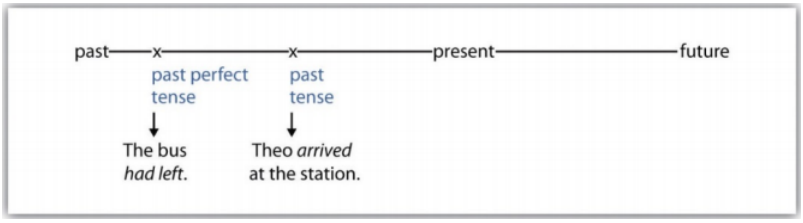


Figure 7.8.2

- The bus **had left** by the time Theo **arrived** at the station.

  Notice that both actions occurred entirely in the past, but one action occurred before the other. At some time in the past, Theo arrived (simple past tense) at the station, but at some time before that, the bus had left (past perfect).

Look at the following basic formula for the future perfect tense:

Subject + will have + past participle

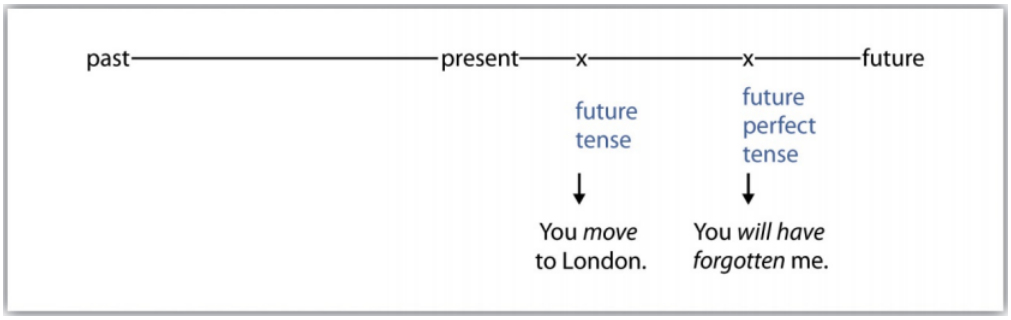


Figure 7.8.3

The future perfect tense describes an action from the past in the future, as if the past event has already occurred. Use the future perfect tense when you anticipate completing an event in the future, but you have not completed it yet.

- You **will have forgotten** me after you **move** to London.

Notice that both actions occur in the future, but one action will occur before the other. At some time in the future, the subject (you) will move (future tense) to London, and at some time after that, the subject will have forgotten (future perfect tense) the speaker, me.

Exercise 7.8.5:

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by using the correct perfect verb tense for the verb in parentheses.

1. I plan to start a compost bin because I _____ (to want) one for a long time now.
2. My brother told me he _____ (to argue) with his friend about politics.
3. By the time we reach the mountain top the sun _____ (to set).
4. Beza _____ (to walk) several miles in the past three hours.
5. His mother _____ (to offer) to pay him to work in her office.

Progressive Verb Tenses

Progressive verb tenses describe a continuing or unfinished action, such as I am going, I was going, or I will be going.

The present progressive tense describes an action or state of being that takes place in the present and that continues to take place.

To make verbs in the present progressive tense, combine these two parts:

Present tense form of to be + -ing (present participle)

You should use the present progressive tense to describe a planned activity, to describe an activity that is recurring right now, and to describe an activity that is in progress, although not actually occurring at the time of speaking:

- Preeti **is starting** school on Tuesday.

  This sentence describes a planned activity.

- Janetta **is getting** her teeth cleaned right now.

  This sentence describes an activity that is occurring right now.

- I **am studying** ballet at school.

  This sentence describes an activity that is in progress but not actually occurring at the time of speaking.

The past progressive tense describes an action or state of being that took place in the past and that continues to take place.

To make verbs in the past progressive tense, combine these two parts:

Past tense form of to be + -ing (present participle)

You should use the past progressive tense to describe a continuous action in the past, to describe a past activity in progress while another activity occurred, or to describe two past activities in progress at the same time:

- Elena and I **were planning** a vacation.

  This sentence describes a continuous action in the past.

- I **was helping** a customer when I smelled delicious fried chicken.

  This sentence describes a past activity in progress while another activity occurred.

- While I **was finishing** my homework, my wife **was talking** on the phone.

  This sentence describes two past activities in progress at the same time.

The future progressive tense describes an action or state of being that will take place in the future and that will continue to take place. The action will have started at that future moment, but it will not have finished at that moment.

To make verbs in the future progressive tense, combine these parts:

Future tense form of to be + -ing (present participle)

Use the future progressive tense to describe an activity that will be in progress in the future:

- Samantha and I will be dancing in the school play next week.
- Tomorrow Anita will be reading two of her poems.

Exercise 7.8.6:

On a separate sheet of paper, revise the following sentences, written in simple tenses, using the progressive tenses indicated in parentheses.

1. He prepared the food while I watched. (past progressive tense)
2. Yusuf Mohammed will speak at the conference. (future progressive)
3. Josie traveled to Egypt last July. (past progressive tense)
4. My foot aches, so I know it will rain. (present progressive tense)
5. Micah will talk a lot when I see him. (future progressive)
6. I yawn a lot because I feel tired. (present progressive tense)

Similar to the present perfect tense, the present perfect progressive tense is used to indicate an action that was begun in the past and continues into the present. However, the present perfect progressive is used when you want to stress that the action is ongoing.

To make verbs in the present perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts: Present tense

form of to have + been + -ing (present participle)

- She **has been talking** for the last hour.

  This sentence indicates that she started talking in the past and is continuing to talk in the present.

- I **have been feeling** tired lately.

  This sentence indicates that I started feeling tired in the past, and I continue to feel tired in the present. Instead of indicating time, as in the first sentence, the second sentence uses the adverb lately. You can also use the adverb recently when using the present perfect progressive tense.

Similar to the past perfect tense, the past perfect progressive tense is used to indicate an action that was begun in the past and continued until another time in the past. The past perfect progressive does not continue into the present but stops at a designated moment in the past.

To make verbs in the past perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

Past tense form of to have + been + -ing (present participle)

- The employees **had been talking** until their boss arrived.

  This sentence indicates that the employees were talking in the past and they stopped talking when their boss arrived, which also happened in the past.

- I **had been working** all day. This sentence implies that I was working in the past.

  The action does not continue into the future, and the sentence implies that the subject stopped working for unstated reasons.

The future perfect progressive tense is rarely used. It is used to indicate an action that will begin in the future and will continue until another time in the future.

To make verbs in the future perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

Future tense form of to have + been + -ing (present participle)

- By the end of the meeting, I **will have been hearing** about mortgages and taxes for eight hours.

  This sentence indicates that in the future I will hear about mortgages and taxes for eight hours, but it has not happened yet. It also indicates the action of hearing will continue until the end of the meeting, something that is also in the future.

Maintaining Consistent Verb Tense

Consistent verb tense means the same verb tense is used throughout a sentence or a paragraph. As you write and revise, it is important to use the same verb tense consistently and to avoid shifting from one tense to another unless there is a good reason for

the tense shift. In the following box, see whether you notice the difference between a sentence with consistent tense and one with inconsistent tense.

Inconsistent tense:

The crowd starts cheering as Melina approached the finish line.

Consistent tense:

The crowd started cheering as Melina approached the finish line.

Consistent tense:

The crowd starts cheering as Melina approaches the finish line.

Figure 7.8.4

Tip

In some cases, clear communication will call for different tenses. Look at the following example:

When I was a teenager, I wanted to be a fire fighter, but now I am studying computer science.

Figure 7.8.5

If the time frame for each action or state is different, a tense shift is appropriate.

Exercise 7.8.7:

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the inconsistent verb tense. Copy the corrected paragraph onto your own sheet of paper.

In the Middle Ages, most people lived in villages and work as agricultural laborers, or peasants. Every village has a "lord," and the peasants worked on his land. Much of what they produce go to the lord and his family. What little food was leftover goes to support the peasants' families. In return for their labor, the lord offers them protection. A peasant's day usually began before sunrise and involves long hours of backbreaking work, which includes plowing the land, planting seeds, and cutting crops for harvesting. The working life of a peasant in the Middle Ages is usually demanding and exhausting.

Writers at Work

Read the following excerpt from an e-mail:

I would like to highlight an important concern that comes up after our meeting last week. During the meeting, we agree to conduct a series of interviews over the next several months in which we hired new customer service representatives. Before we do that, however, I would like to review your experiences with the Customer Relationship Management Program. Please suggest a convenient time next week for us to meet so that we can discuss this important matter.

Figure 7.8.6

The inconsistent tense in the e-mail will very likely distract the reader from its overall point. Most likely, your coworkers will not correct your verb tenses or call attention to grammatical errors, but it is important to keep in mind that errors such as these do have a subtle negative impact in how you present yourself in public.

Key Takeaways

- Verb tenses tell the reader when the action takes place.
- Actions could be in the past, present, or future.
- There are some irregular verbs in English that are formed in special ways. The most common of these irregular verbs are the verbs to be, to have, and to do.
- There are six main verb tenses in English: simple present, simple past, simple future, present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect.
- It is important to maintain consistent verb tense in a text and insert time markers when you are changing tenses.

Writing Application

Write about a lively event that is either remembered or imagined. Ask yourself the following three questions: What happened during the event? What happened after the event? Looking back, what do you think of the event now? Answer each question in a separate paragraph to keep the present, past, and future tense verbs separate.

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7.9: Modal Auxiliaries

Learning Objectives

1. Define and identify modal auxiliaries.
2. Learn how and when to use modal auxiliaries.

We all need to express our moods and emotions, both in writing and in our everyday life. We do this by using modal auxiliaries.

Modal Auxiliaries

Modal auxiliaries are a type of helping verb that are used only with a main verb to help express its mood.

The following is the basic formula for using a modal auxiliary:

Subject + modal auxiliary + main verb

There are ten main modal auxiliaries in English.

Table 7.9.1: Modal Auxiliaries

Modal Auxiliary	Use	Modal Auxiliary + Main Verb
can	Expresses an ability or possibility	I can lift this forty-pound box. (ability)
		We can embrace green sources of energy. (possibility)
could	Expresses an ability in the past; a present possibility; a past or future permission	I could beat you at chess when we were kids. (past ability)
		We could bake a pie! (present possibility)
		Could we pick some flowers from the garden? (future permission)
may	Expresses uncertain future action; permission; ask a yes-no question	I may attend the concert. (uncertain future action)
		You may begin the exam. (permission)
		May I attend the concert? (yes-no questions)
might	Expresses uncertain future action	I might attend the concert (uncertain future action—same as may)
shall	Expresses intended future action	I shall go to the opera. (intended future action)
should	Expresses obligation; ask if an obligation exists	I should mail my RSVP. (obligation, same as ought to)
		Should I call my mother? (asking if an obligation exists)
will	Expresses intended future action; ask a favor; ask for information	I will get an A in this class. (intended future action)
		Will you buy me some chocolate? (favor)
		Will you be finished soon? (information)
would	States a preference; request a choice politely; explain an action; introduce habitual past actions	I would like the steak, please. (preference)
		Would you like to have breakfast in bed? (request a choice politely)

Modal Auxiliary	Use	Modal Auxiliary + Main Verb
		I would go with you if I didn't have to babysit tonight. (explain an action)
		He would write to me every week when we were dating. (habitual past action)
must	Expresses obligation	We must be on time for class.
ought to	Expresses obligation	I ought to mail my RSVP. (obligation, same as may)

Use the following format to form a yes-no question with a modal auxiliary:

Modal auxiliary + subject + main verb

Be aware of these four common errors when using modal auxiliaries:

1. Using an infinitive instead of a base verb after a modal:

   Incorrect: I can to move this heavy table.

   Correct: I **can move** this heavy table.

2. Using a gerund instead of an infinitive or a base verb after a modal:

   Incorrect: I could moving to the United States.

   Correct: I **could move** to the United States.

3. Using two modals in a row:

   Incorrect: I should must renew my passport.

   Correct: I **must renew** my passport.

   Correct: I **should renew** my passport.

4. Leaving out a modal:

   Incorrect: I renew my passport.

   Correct: I **must renew** my passport.

Exercise 7.9.1:

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the common modal auxiliary errors.

> I may to go to France on vacation next summer. I shall might visit the Palace of Versailles. I would to drive around the countryside. I could imagining myself living there; however, I will not move to France because my family should miss me very much.

Modals and Present Perfect Verbs

In the previous section, we defined present perfect verb tense as describing a continuing situation or something that has just happened.

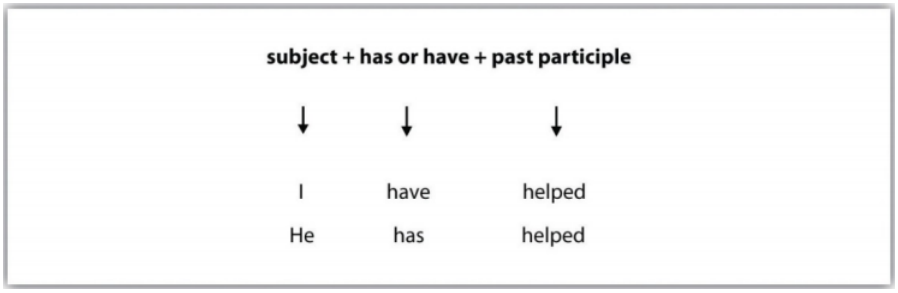


Figure 7.9.1

Remember, when a sentence contains a modal auxiliary before the verb, the helping verb is always have.

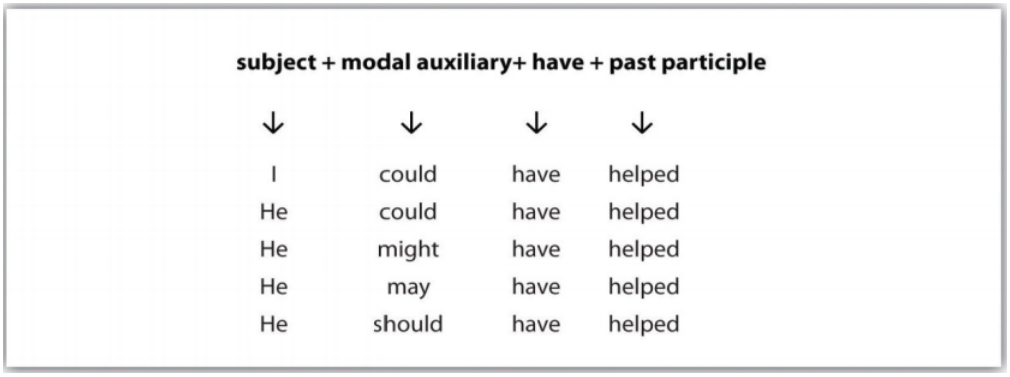


Figure 7.9.2

Be aware of the following common errors when using modal auxiliaries in the present perfect tense:

1. Using had instead of have

   Incorrect: Jamie would had attended the party, but he was sick.

   Correct: Jamie **would have attended** the party, but he was sick.

2. Leaving out have

   Incorrect: Jamie would attended the party, but he was sick.

   Correct: Jamie **would have attended** the party, but he was sick.

Exercise 7.9.2:

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by changing the given verb form to a modal auxiliary in present perfect tense.

1. The man _____ (laugh).
2. The frogs _____ (croak).
3. My writing teacher _____ (smile).
4. The audience _____ (cheer) all night.
5. My best friend _____ (giggled).

Key Takeaways

- The basic formula for using a modal auxiliary is subject + modal auxiliary + main verb
- There are ten main modal auxiliaries in English: can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must, and ought to.
- The four common types of errors when using modals include the following: using an infinitive instead of a base verb after a modal, using a gerund instead of an infinitive or a base verb after a modal, using two modals in a row, and leaving out a modal.
- In the present perfect tense, when a sentence has a modal auxiliary before the verb, the helping verb is always have.
- The two common errors when using modals in the present perfect tense include using had instead of have and leaving out have.

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7.10: Subject-Verb Agreement

Learning Objectives

1. Define subject-verb agreement.
2. Identify common errors in subject-verb agreement.

Subject-verb agreement is one of the most common errors that people make. Having a solid understanding of this concept is critical when making a good impression, and it will help ensure that your ideas are communicated clearly.

Agreement

Agreement in speech and in writing refers to the proper grammatical match between words and phrases. Parts of sentences must agree, or correspond with other parts, in number, person, case, and gender.

- **Number**. All parts must match in singular or plural forms.
- **Person**. All parts must match in first person (I), second person (you), or third person (he, she, it, they) forms.
- **Case**. All parts must match in subjective (I, you, he, she, it, they, we), objective (me, her, him, them, us), or possessive (my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, their, theirs, our, ours) forms.
- **Gender**. All parts must match in male or female forms.

Subject-verb agreement describes the proper match between subjects and verbs.

Because subjects and verbs are either singular or plural, the subject of a sentence and the verb of a sentence must agree with each other in number. That is, a singular subject belongs with a singular verb form, and a plural subject belongs with a plural verb form.

Singular: The cat jumps over the fence.

Plural: The cats jump over the fence.

Figure 7.10.1

Regular Verbs and Agreement

Regular verbs follow a predictable pattern. For example, in the third person singular, regular verbs always end in -s. Other forms of regular verbs do not end in -s. Study the following regular verb forms in the present tense.

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I live.	We live.
Second Person	You live.	You live.
Third Person	He/She/It lives.	They live.

Add an -es to the third person singular form of regular verbs that end in -sh, -x, -ch, and -s. (I wish/He wishes, I fix/She fixes, I watch/It watches, I kiss/He kisses.)

Singular: I read every day.

Plural: We read every day.

Figure 7.10.2

In these sentences, the verb form stays the same for the first person singular and the first person plural.

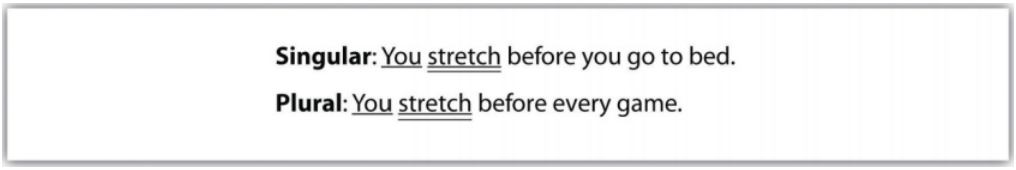


Figure 7.10.3

In these sentences, the verb form stays the same for the second person singular and the second person plural. In the singular form, the pronoun you refers to one person. In the plural form, the pronoun you refers to a group of people, such as a team.

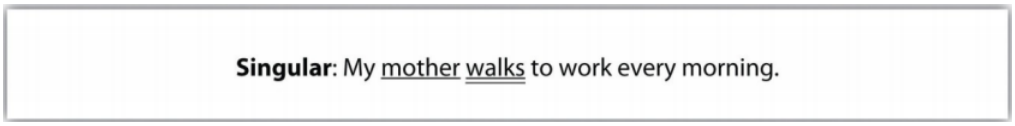


Figure 7.10.4

In this sentence, the subject is mother. Because the sentence only refers to one mother, the subject is singular. If you replaced the word “mother” with a pronoun, it would be “she” which would take the third person singular form. Therefore, the verb in this sentence must be in the third person singular form.

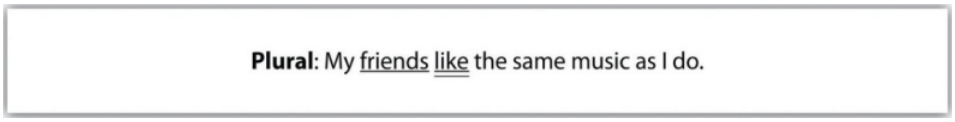


Figure 7.10.5

In this sentence, the subject is friends. Because this subject refers to more than one person, the subject is plural. The verb in this sentence must be in the third person plural form.

Many singular subjects can be made plural by adding an -s. Most regular verbs in the present tense end with an -s in the third person singular. This does not make the verbs plural.

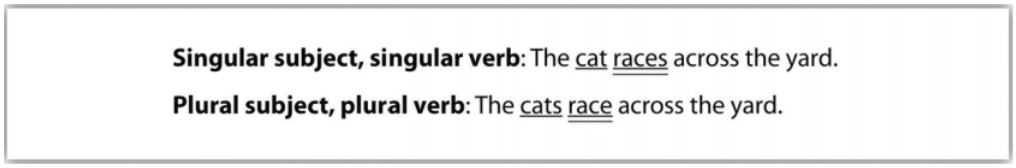


Figure 7.10.6

Exercise 7.10.1:

On your own sheet of paper, write the correct verb form for each of the following sentences.

1. I (brush/brushes) my teeth twice a day.
2. You (wear/wears) the same shoes every time we go out.
3. He (kick/kicks) the soccer ball into the goal.
4. Juana (watch/watches) foreign films.
5. Karina (hide/hides) behind the door.
6. We (want/wants) to have dinner with you.
7. You (work/works) together to finish the project.
8. They (need/needs) to score another point to win the game.
9. It (eat/eats) four times a day.
10. David (fix/fixes) his own motorcycle.

Verbs: Be, Have, and Do

Not all verbs follow a predictable pattern. These verbs are called irregular verbs. Some of the most common irregular verbs are be, have, and do. Learn the forms of these verbs in the present tense to avoid errors in subject-verb agreement.

Be

Study the different forms of the verb to be in the present tense.

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I am.	We are.
Second Person	You are.	You are.
Third Person	He/She/It is.	They are.

Have

Study the different forms of the verb to have in the present tense.

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I have.	We have.
Second Person	You have.	You have.
Third Person	He/She/It has.	They have.

Do

Study the different forms of the verb to do in the present tense.

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I do.	We do.
Second Person	You do.	You do.
Third person	He/She/It does.	They do.

Exercise 7.10.2:

Complete the following sentences by writing the correct present tense form of be, have, or do. Use your own sheet of paper to complete this exercise.

1. I _____ sure that you will succeed.
2. They _____ front-row tickets to the show.
3. She _____ a great Shakira impersonation.
4. We _____ so excited to meet you in person!
5. She _____ a fever and a sore throat.
6. You _____ not know what you are talking about.
7. You _____ all going to pass this class.
8. He _____ not going to like that.
9. It _____ appear to be the right size.
10. They _____ ready to take this job seriously.

Errors in Subject-Verb Agreement

Errors in subject-verb agreement may occur when

- a sentence contains a compound subject;
- the subject of the sentence is separate from the verb;
- the subject of the sentence is an indefinite pronoun, such as anyone or everyone;
- the subject of the sentence is a collective noun, such as team or organization;
- the subject appears after the verb.

Recognizing the sources of common errors in subject-verb agreement will help you avoid these errors in your writing. This section covers the subject-verb agreement errors in more detail.

Compound Subjects

A compound subject is formed by two or more nouns and the coordinating conjunctions and, or, or nor. A compound subject can be made of singular subjects, plural subjects, or a combination of singular and plural subjects.

Compound subjects combined with and take a plural verb form.

Two singular subjects: Alicia and Miguel ride their bikes to the beach.

Two plural subjects: The girls and the boys ride their bikes to the beach.

Singular and plural subjects: Alicia and the boys ride their bikes to the beach.

Figure 7.10.7

Compound subjects combined with or and nor are treated separately. The verb must agree with the subject that is nearest to the verb.

Two singular subjects: Neither Elizabeth nor Rianna wants to eat at that restaurant.

Two plural subjects: Neither the kids nor the adults want to eat at that restaurant.

Singular and plural subjects: Neither Elizabeth nor the kids want to eat at that restaurant.

Plural and singular subjects: Neither the kids nor Elizabeth wants to eat at that restaurant.

Figure 7.10.8

Figure 7.10.9

Tip

If you can substitute the word they for the compound subject, then the sentence takes the third person plural verb form.

Separation of Subjects and Verbs

As you read or write, you may come across a sentence that contains a phrase or clause that separates the subject from the verb. Often, prepositional phrases or dependent clauses add more information to the sentence and appear between the subject and the verb. However, the subject and the verb must still agree.

Tip

If you have trouble finding the subject and verb, cross out or ignore the phrases and clauses that begin with prepositions or dependent words. The subject of a sentence will never be in a prepositional phrase or dependent clause.

The following is an example of a subject and verb separated by a prepositional phrase:

The students with the best grades win the academic awards.

The puppy under the table is my favorite.

Figure 7.10.10

The following is an example of a subject and verb separated by a dependent clause:



Figure 7.10.11

Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns refer to an unspecified person, thing, or number. When an indefinite pronoun serves as the subject of a sentence, you will often use a singular verb form.

To determine whether to use a singular or plural verb with an indefinite pronoun, consider the noun that the pronoun would refer to. If the noun is plural, then use a plural verb with the indefinite pronoun. View the chart to see a list of common indefinite pronouns and the verb forms they agree with.

Indefinite Pronouns That Always Take a Singular Verb	Indefinite Pronouns That Can Take a Singular or Plural Verb
anybody, anyone, anything	All
Each	Any
everybody, everyone, everything	None
Much	Some
Many	
nobody, no one, nothing	
somebody, someone, something	

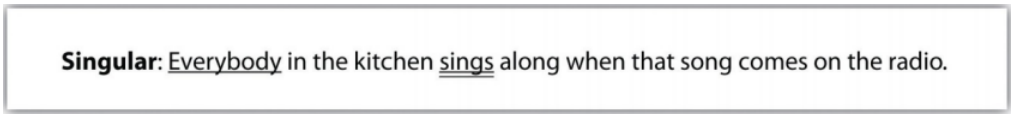


Figure 7.10.12

The indefinite pronoun everybody takes a singular verb form because everybody refers to a group performing the same action as a single unit.

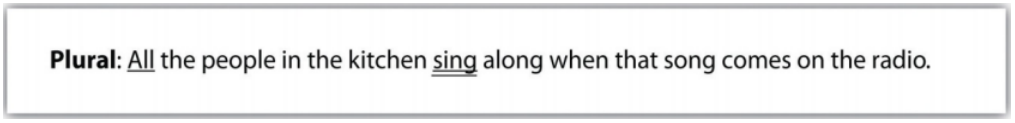


Figure 7.10.13

The indefinite pronoun all takes a plural verb form because all refers to the plural noun people. Because people is plural, all is plural.

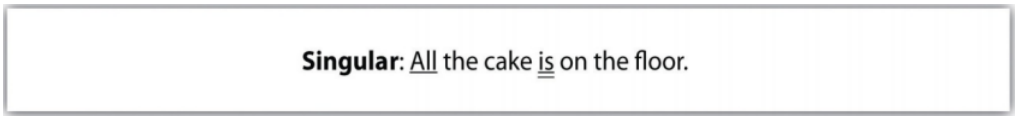


Figure 7.10.14

In this sentence, the indefinite pronoun all takes a singular verb form because all refers to the singular noun cake. Because cake is singular, all is singular.

Collective Nouns

A collective noun is a noun that identifies more than one person, place, or thing and considers those people, places, or things one singular unit. Because collective nouns are counted as one, they are singular and require a singular verb. Some commonly used collective nouns are group, team, army, flock, family, and class.

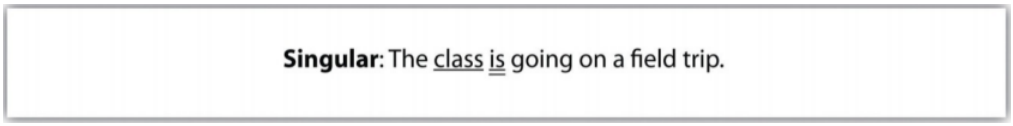


Figure 7.10.15

In this sentence, class is a collective noun. Although the class consists of many students, the class is treated as a singular unit and requires a singular verb form.

The Subject Follows the Verb

You may encounter sentences in which the subject comes after the verb instead of before the verb. In other words, the subject of the sentence may not appear where you expect it to appear. To ensure proper subject-verb agreement, you must correctly identify the subject and the verb.

Here or There

In sentences that begin with here or there, the subject follows the verb.



Figure 7.10.16

If you have trouble identifying the subject and the verb in sentences that start with here or there; it may help to reverse the order of the sentence so the subject comes first.

Figure 7.10.17

Questions

When you ask questions, a question word (who, what, where, when, why, or how) appears first. The verb and then the subject follow.

Whom are the people you are related to?

When am I going to go to the grocery store?

Tip

If you have trouble finding the subject and the verb in questions, try answering the question being asked.



Figure 7.10.18

Exercise 7.10.3:

Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following sentences. If there are no errors in subject-verb agreement, write OK. Copy the corrected sentence or the word OK on your own sheet of notebook paper. 1. My dog and cats chases each other all the time. 2. The books that are in my library is the best I have ever read. 3. Everyone are going to the concert except me. 4. My family are moving to California. 5. Here is the lake I told you about. 6. These is the newspapers I was supposed to deliver. 7. Which room is bigger? 8. When are the movie going to start?9.My sister and brother cleans up after themselves. 10. Some of the clothes is packed away in the attic.

Exercise 7.10.4:

Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following paragraph. Copy the paragraph on a piece of notebook paper and make corrections.

Dear Hiring Manager,

I feels that I am the ideal candidate for the receptionist position at your company. I has three years of experience as a receptionist in a company that is similar to yours. My phone skills and written communication is excellent. These skills, and others that I have learned on the job, helps me understand that every person in a company helps make the business a success. At my current job, the team always say that I am very helpful. Everyone appreciate when I go the extra mile to get the job done right. My current employer and coworkers feels that I am an asset to the team. I is efficient and organized. Is there any other details about me that you would like to know? If so, please contact me. Here are my résumé. You can reach me by e-mail or phone. I looks forward to speaking with you in person.

Thanks,

Vy Nguyen

Writing at Work

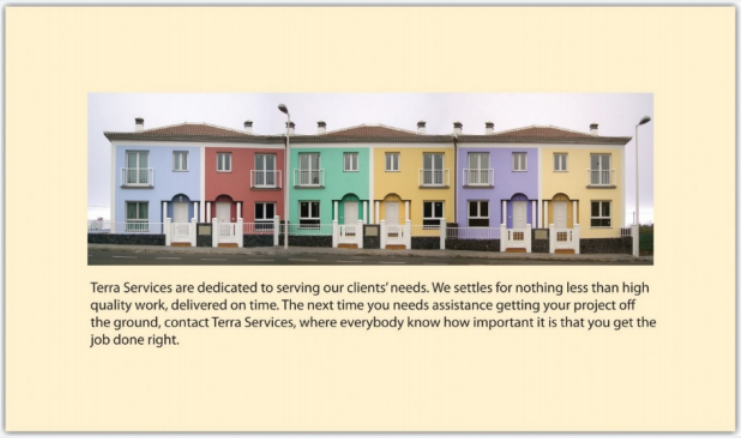


Figure 7.10.19:Advertisement

Imagine that you are a prospective client and that you saw this ad online. Would you call Terra Services to handle your next project? Probably not! Mistakes in subject-verb agreement can cost a company business. Paying careful attention to grammatical details ensures professionalism that clients will recognize and respect.

Key Takeaways

- Parts of sentences must agree in number, person, case, and gender.
- A verb must always agree with its subject in number. A singular subject requires a singular verb; a plural subject requires a plural verb.
- Irregular verbs do not follow a predictable pattern in their singular and plural forms. Common irregular verbs are to be, to have, and to do.
- A compound subject is formed when two or more nouns are joined by the words and, or, or nor.
- In some sentences, the subject and verb may be separated by a phrase or clause, but the verb must still agree with the subject.
- Indefinite pronouns, such as anyone, each, everyone, many, no one, and something, refer to unspecified people or objects. Most indefinite pronouns are singular.
- A collective noun is a noun that identifies more than one person, place, or thing and treats those people, places, or things one singular unit. Collective nouns require singular verbs.
- In sentences that begin with here and there, the subject follows the verb.
- In questions, the subject follows the verb.

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7.11: Preposition Use

Learning Objectives

1. Identify prepositions.
2. Learn how and when to use prepositions.

A preposition is a word that connects a noun or a pronoun to another word in a sentence. Most prepositions such as above, below, and behind usually indicate a location in the physical world, but some prepositions such as during, after, and until show location in time.

In, At, and On

The prepositions in, at, and on are used to indicate both location and time, but they are used in specific ways. Review the tables below to learn when to use each one.

Preposition	Time	Example	Place	Example
in	year	in 1942	country	in Zimbabwe
	month	in August	state	in California
	season	in the summer	city	in Chicago
	time of day (not with night)	in the afternoon		

Preposition	Time	Example	Place	Example
on	day	on Monday	surfaces	on the table
	date	on May 23	streets	on 124th Street
	specific days/dates	on Monday	modes of transportation	on the bus

Preposition	Time	Example	Place	Example
at	time	at five o'clock	addresses	at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
	with night	at night	location	at Rooney's Grill

Exercise 7.11.1:

Edit the following letter from a resident to her landlord by correcting errors with in, at, and on.

Dear Mrs. Salazar,

I am writing this letter to inform you that I will be vacating apartment 2A in 356 Maple Street at Wednesday, June 30, 2010. I will be cleaning the apartment at the Monday before I leave. I will return the keys to you on 5 p.m., sharp, at June 30. If you have any questions or specific instructions for me, please contact me in my office. I have enjoyed living at Austin, Texas, but I want to explore other parts of the country now.

Sincerely,

Milani Davis

Prepositions after Verbs or Phrasal Verbs

Prepositions often follow verbs to create expressions with distinct meanings. These expressions are sometimes called prepositional verbs. It is important to remember that these expressions cannot be separated.

Table 7.11.1: Verbs and Prepositions

Verb + Preposition	Meaning	Example
agree with	to agree with something or someone	My husband always agrees with me.
apologize for	to express regret for something, to say sorry about something	I apologize for being late.
apply for	to ask for something formally	I will apply for that job.
believe in	to have a firm conviction in something; to believe in the existence of something	I believe in educating the world's women.
care about	to think that someone or something is important	I care about the health of our oceans.
hear about	to be told about something or someone	I heard about the teachers' strike.
look after	to watch or to protect someone or something	Will you look after my dog while I am on vacation?
talk about	to discuss something	We will talk about the importance of recycling.
speak to, with	to talk to/with someone	I will speak to his teacher tomorrow.
wait for	to await the arrival of someone or something	I will wait for my package to arrive.

Tip

It is a good idea to memorize these combinations of verbs plus prepositions. Write them down in a notebook along with the definition and practice using them when you speak.

Exercise 7.11.2:

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by writing the correct preposition after the verb.

1. Adomako does not _____ (apologize for, believe in) aliens or ghosts.
2. It is impolite to _____ (hear about, talk about) people when they are not here.
3. Manuel said he was going to _____ (believe in, apply for) the internship.
4. Jonas would not _____ (talk about, apologize for) eating the last piece of cake.
5. I _____ (care about, agree with) the environment very much.

Prepositions after Adjectives

Similar to prepositions after verbs, prepositions after adjectives create expressions with distinct meanings unique to English. Remember, like prepositional verbs, these expressions also cannot be separated.

Table 7.11.2:Adjectives and Prepositions

Adjective + Preposition	Meaning	Example
angry at, about	to feel or show anger toward (or about) someone or something	I am angry about the oil spill in the ocean.

Adjective + Preposition	Meaning	Example
confused about	to be unable to think with clarity about someone or something.	Shawn was confused about the concepts presented at the meeting.
disappointed in, with	to feel dissatisfaction with someone or something	I was disappointed in my husband because he voted for that candidate.
dressed in	to clothe the body	He was dressed in a pin-striped suit.
happy for	to show happiness for someone or something	I was happy for my sister who graduated from college.
interested in	giving attention to something, expressing interest	I am interested in musical theater.
jealous of	to feel resentful or bitter toward someone or something (because of their status, possessions, or ability)	I was jealous of her because she always went on vacation.
thankful for	to express thanks for something	I am thankful for my wonderful friends.
tired of	to be disgusted with, have a distaste for	I was tired of driving for hours without end.
worried about	to express anxiety or worry about something	I am worried about my father's health.

Exercise 7.11.3:

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by writing the correct preposition after the verb.

1. Meera was deeply _____ (interested in, thankful for) marine biology.
2. I was _____ (jealous of, disappointed in) the season finale of my favorite show.
3. Jordan won the race, and I am _____ (happy for, interested in) him.
4. The lawyer was _____ (thankful for, confused about) the details of the case.
5. Chloe was _____ (dressed in, tired of) a comfortable blue tunic.

Tip

The following adjectives are always followed by the preposition at:

- Good

  She is really good at chess.
- Excellent

  Henry is excellent at drawing.
- Brilliant

  Mariana is brilliant at playing the violin.

Key Takeaways

- The prepositions in, at, and on are used to indicate both location and time, but they are used in specific ways.
- The preposition in is used when expressing the following: year, month, season, time of day (not with night), country, state, and city.
- The preposition on is used to express day, date, and specific days or dates and surfaces, streets, and transportation modes.
- The preposition at is used for expressions of time, with night, and with addresses and locations.
- Prepositions often follow verbs to create expressions with distinct meanings that are unique to English.
- Prepositions also follow adjectives to create expressions with distinct meanings that are unique to English.

Writing Application

Write about a happy childhood memory using as many prepositions followed by verbs and adjectives as you can. Use at least ten. When you are finished, exchange papers with a classmate and correct any preposition errors you find.

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7.12: Overview of English Grammar (Exercises)

1. Each sentence contains an error in subject-verb agreement, irregular verb form, or consistent verb tense. Identify the type of error. Then, on your own sheet of paper, rewrite the sentence correctly.
    1. Maria and Thien meets me at the community center for cooking classes on Tuesdays.
    2. John’s ability to laugh at almost anything amaze me.
    3. Samantha and I were walking near the lake when the large, colorful bird appears.
    4. I builded my own telescope using materials I bought at the hardware store.
    5. My mother freezed the remaining tomatoes from her garden so that she could use them during the winter.
    6. Jankiben asked the stranger sitting next to him for the time, and she says it was past midnight.
    7. My mother and brother wears glasses, but my father and sister do not.
    8. We held our noses as the skunk runs away.
    9. Neither Sorana nor Ana are excited about the early morning swim meet.
    10. My hands hurted at the thought of transcribing all those notes.
    11. The police questioned the suspect for hours but she gives them no useful information.
    12. Terry takes short weekend trips because her job as a therapist was very emotionally draining.
    13. She criticize delicately, making sure not to hurt anyone’s feelings.
    14. Manisa winded the old clock and set it atop her nightstand.
    15. Cherie losed four poker hands in a row before realizing that she was playing against professionals.
    16. James and Juan describes their trip to the Amazon in vivid detail.
    17. You should decides for yourself whether or not to reduce the amount of processed foods in your diet.
    18. The oil rig exploded and spills millions of gallons of oil into the ocean.
    19. The handsome vampire appeared out of nowhere and smiles at the smitten woman.
    20. The batter swinged at the ball several times but never hit it.
2. On a separate sheet of paper, create questions from the following sentences.
    1. My daughter will have to think about her college options.
    2. Otto is waiting in the car for his girlfriend.
    3. The article talks about conserving energy.
    4. We need to reduce our needs.
    5. Rusha is always complaining about her work.
3. Underline the prepositional phrase in each of the following sentences.
    1. Monica told us about her trip.
    2. I hope we have sunshine throughout the summer.
    3. The panther climbed up the tree.
    4. The little boy was standing behind his mother’s legs.
    5. We stayed awake until dawn.
4. Place the following sets of adjectives in the correct order before the noun.
    1. eyes: black, mesmerizing
    2. jacket: vintage, orange, suede
    3. pineapple: ripe, yellow, sweet
    4. vacation: fun, skiing
    5. movie: hilarious, independent
5. On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the positive sentences as negative sentences. Be sure to keep the sentences in the present tense.
    1. Sometimes I work on Saturdays.
    2. The garden attracts butterflies and bees.
    3. He breathes loudly at night.
    4. I chew on blades of grass in the summer time.
    5. I communicate well with my husband.
6. On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the following paragraph by correcting the double negatives.

That morning it was so hot Forrest felt like he couldn’t hardly breathe. Ain’t nothing would get him out the door into that scorching heat. Then he remembered his dog, Zeus, who started whining right then. Zeus was whining and barking so much that Forrest didn’t have no choice but to get off the couch and face the day. That dog didn’t do nothing but sniff around the bushes and try to stay in the shade while Forrest was sweating in the sun holding the leash. He couldn’t not wait for winter to come.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Punctuation and Capitalization

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8.1: Commas

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of commas.
2. Correctly use commas in sentences.

One of the punctuation clues to reading you may encounter is the comma. The comma is a punctuation mark that indicates a pause in a sentence or a separation of things in a list. Commas can be used in a variety of ways. Look at some of the following sentences to see how you might use a comma when writing a sentence.

- Introductory word(s): Personally, I think the practice is helpful.
- Lists: The barn, the tool shed, and the back porch were destroyed by the wind.
- Coordinating adjectives: He was tired, hungry, and late.
- Conjunctions in compound sentences: The bedroom door was closed, so the children knew their mother was asleep.
- Interrupting words: I knew where it was hidden, of course, but I wanted them to find it themselves.
- Dates, addresses, greetings, and letters: The letter was postmarked December 8, 1945.

Commas after an Introductory Word(s) or Phrase(s)

You may notice a comma that appears near the beginning of the sentence, usually after a word or phrase. This comma lets the reader know where the introductory word or phrase ends and the main sentence begins.

> Without spoiling the surprise, we need to tell her to save the date.

In this sentence, without spoiling the surprise is an introductory phrase, while we need to tell her to save the date is the main sentence. Notice how they are separated by a comma. When only an introductory word appears in the sentence, a comma also follows the introductory word.

> Ironically, she already had plans for that day.

Exercise 8.1.1:

Look for the introductory word or phrase(s). On your own sheet of paper, copy the sentence and add a comma to correct the sentence.

1. Suddenly the dog ran into the house.
2. In the blink of an eye the kids were ready to go to the movies.
3. Confused he tried opening the box from the other end.
4. Every year we go camping in the woods.
5. Without a doubt green is my favorite color.
6. Hesitating she looked back at the directions before proceeding.
7. Fortunately the sleeping baby did not stir when the doorbell rang.
8. Believe it or not the criminal was able to rob the same bank three times.

Commas in a List of Items

When you want to list several nouns in a sentence, you separate each word with a comma. This allows the reader to pause after each item and identify which words are included in the grouping. When you list items in a sentence, put a comma after each noun, then add the word and before the last item. However, you do not need to include a comma after the last item.

> We'll need to get flour, tomatoes, and cheese at the store.

> The pizza will be topped with olives, peppers, and pineapple chunks.

Commas and Coordinating Adjectives

You can use commas to list both adjectives and nouns. A string of adjectives that describe a noun are called coordinating adjectives. These adjectives come before the noun they modify and are separated by commas. One important thing to note, however, is that unlike listing nouns, the word and does not always need to be before the last adjective.

It was a bright, windy, clear day.

Our kite glowed red, yellow, and blue in the morning sunlight.

Exercise 8.1.2:

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned so far about comma use to add commas to the following sentences.

1. Monday Tuesday and Wednesday are all booked with meetings.
2. It was a quiet uneventful unproductive day.
3. We'll need to prepare statements for the Trumps Kardasians and Clintons before their portfolio reviews next week.
4. Donald Kim and Hillary finished their report last Tuesday.
5. With cold wet aching fingers he was able to secure the sails before the storm.
6. He wrote his name on the board in clear precise delicate letters.

Commas before Conjunctions in Compound Sentences (FANBOYS)

Commas are sometimes used to separate two independent clauses. The comma comes after the first independent clause and is followed by a conjunction. We call those coordinating conjunctions "Fanboys" which stands for for, and, nor, but, or, yet and so.

He missed class today, and he thinks he will be out tomorrow, too.

He says his fever is gone, but he is still very tired.

Exercise 8.1.3:

On your own sheet of paper, create a compound sentence by combining the two independent clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

1. The presentation was scheduled for Monday. The weather delayed the presentation for four days.
2. He wanted a snack before bedtime. He ate some fruit.
3. The patient is in the next room. I can hardly hear anything.
4. We could go camping for vacation. We could go to the beach for vacation.
5. I want to get a better job. I am taking courses at night.
6. I've got to get this paper done. I have class in ten minutes.
7. The weather was clear yesterday. We decided to go on a picnic.
8. I have never dealt with this client before. I know Leonardo has worked with them. Let's ask Leonardo for his help.

Commas before and after Interrupting Words

In conversations, you might interrupt your train of thought by giving more details about what you are talking about. In a sentence, you might interrupt your train of thought with a word or phrase called interrupting words. Interrupting words can come at the beginning or middle of a sentence. When the interrupting words appear at the beginning of the sentence, a comma appears after the word or phrase.

If you can believe it, people once thought the sun and planets orbited around Earth.

Luckily, some people questioned that theory.

When interrupting words come in the middle of a sentence, they are separated from the rest of the sentence by commas. You can determine where the commas should go by looking for the part of the sentence that is not essential for the sentence to make sense.

An Italian astronomer, Galileo, proved that Earth orbited the sun.

We have known, for hundreds of years now, that the Earth and other planets exist in a solar system.

Exercise 8.1.4:

On your own sheet of paper, copy the sentence and insert commas to separate the interrupting words from the rest of the sentence.

1. I asked my neighbors the retired couple from Florida to bring in my mail.

2. Without a doubt his work has improved over the last few weeks.
3. Our professor Mr. Alamut drilled the lessons into our heads.
4. The meeting is at noon unfortunately which means I will be late for lunch.
5. We came in time for the last part of dinner but most importantly we came in time for dessert.
6. All of a sudden our network crashed and we lost our files.
7. Alex hand the wrench to me before the pipe comes loose again.

Commas in Dates, Addresses, and the Greetings and Closings of Letters

You also use commas when you write the date, such as in cover letters and e-mails. Commas are used when you write the date, when you include an address, and when you greet someone.

If you are writing out the full date, add a comma after the day and before the year. You do not need to add a comma when you write the month and day or when you write the month and the year. If you need to continue the sentence after you add a date that includes the day and year, add a comma after the end of the date.

The letter is postmarked May 4, 2001.

Her birthday is May 5.

He visited the country in July 2009.

I registered for the conference on March 7, 2010, so we should get our tickets soon.

You also use commas when you include addresses and locations. When you include an address in a sentence, be sure to place a comma after the street and after the city. Do not place a comma between the state and the zip code. Like a date, if you need to continue the sentence after adding the address, simply add a comma after the address.

We moved to 4542 Boxcutter Lane, Hope, Missouri 70832.

After moving to Boston, Massachusetts, Eric used public transportation to get to work.

Greetings are also separated by commas. When you write an e-mail or a letter, you add a comma after the greeting word or the person's name. You also need to include a comma after the closing, which is the word or phrase you put before your signature.

Hello,

I would like more information about your job posting.

Thank you,

Anita Al-Sayf

Dear **Mrs. Al-Sayf,**

Thank you for your letter. Please read the attached document for details.

Sincerely,

Jack Fromont

Exercise 8.1.5:

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned about using commas to edit the following letter.

March 27 2010

Alexa Marché

14 Taylor Drive Apt. 6

New Castle Maine 90342

Dear Mr. Timmons

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. I am available on Monday the fifth. I can stop by your office at any time. Is your address still 7309 Marcourt Circle #501? Please get back to me at your earliest convenience.

Thank you

Alexa

Exercise 8.1.6:

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned about comma usage to edit the following paragraphs.

1. My brother Nathaniel is a collector of many rare unusual things. He has collected lunch boxes limited edition books and hatpins at various points of his life. His current collection of unusual bottles has over fifty pieces. Usually he sells one collection before starting another.
2. Our meeting is scheduled for Thursday March 20. In that time we need to gather all our documents together. Alice is in charge of the timetables and schedules. Tom is in charge of updating the guidelines. I am in charge of the presentation. To prepare for this meeting please print out any e-mails faxes or documents you have referred to when writing your sample.
3. It was a cool crisp autumn day when the group set out. They needed to cover several miles before they made camp so they walked at a brisk pace. The leader of the group Garth kept checking his watch and their GPS location. Isabelle Raoul and Maggie took turns carrying the equipment while Carrie took notes about the wildlife they saw. As a result no one noticed the darkening sky until the first drops of rain splattered on their faces.
4. Please have your report complete and filed by April 15 2010. In your submission letter please include your contact information the position you are applying for and two people we can contact as references. We will not be available for consultation after April 10 but you may contact the office if you have any questions. Thank you HR Department.

Commas to Introduce a Quote

You can use a comma to introduce a quote.

Mark Twain said it best, “When in doubt, tell the truth.”

If a quote is longer than 40 words (or some say four lines), skip a line after the comma and indent the left margin of the quote five spaces. Because longer quotations use line spacing and indentation to indicate a quote, quotation marks are not necessary. For example:

My father always said that Mark Twain described people the best when he said,

> There are basically two types of people. People who accomplish things, and people who claim to have accomplished things. The first group is less crowded.

Tip

Long quotations, which are forty words or more, are called block quotations. Block quotations frequently appear in longer essays and research papers.

Key Takeaways

- Punctuation marks provide visual cues to readers to tell them how to read a sentence. Punctuation marks convey meaning.
- Commas indicate a pause or a list in a sentence.
- A comma should be used after an introductory word to separate this word from the main sentence.
- A comma comes after each noun in a list. The word and is added before the last noun, which is not followed by a comma.
- A comma comes after every coordinating adjective except for the last adjective.
- Commas can be used to separate the two independent clauses in compound sentences as long as a conjunction follows the comma.
- Commas are used to separate interrupting words from the rest of the sentence.
- When you write the date, you add a comma between the day and the year. You also add a comma after the year if the sentence continues after the date.
- When they are used in a sentence, addresses have commas after the street address, and the city. If a sentence continues after the address, a comma comes after the zip code.
- When you write a letter, you use commas in your greeting at the beginning and in your closing at the end of your letter.
- A comma can separate the speaker from the quotation as shown above.

- For a longer quotation, you can introduce it with a comma before the block quotation begins.

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8.2: Semicolons

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of semicolons.
2. Properly use semicolons in sentences.

Another punctuation mark that you will encounter is the semicolon (;). Like most punctuation marks, the semicolon can be used in a variety of ways. The semicolon indicates a break in the flow of a sentence, but functions differently than a period or a comma. When you encounter a semicolon while reading aloud, this represents a good place to pause and take a breath.

Semicolons to Join Two Independent Clauses

Use a semicolon to combine two closely related independent clauses. Relying on a period to separate the related clauses into two shorter sentences could lead to choppy writing. Using a comma would create an awkward run-on sentence.

> **Correct:** Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview; appearances are important.
>
> **Choppy:** Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview. Appearances are important.
>
> **Incorrect:** Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview, appearances are important.

In this case, writing the independent clauses as two sentences separated by a period is correct. However, using a semicolon to combine the clauses can make your writing more interesting by creating a variety of sentence lengths and structures while preserving the flow of ideas.

Semicolons to Join Items in a List

You can also use a semicolon to join items in a list when the items in the list already require commas. Semicolons help the reader distinguish between items in the list.

> **Correct:** The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey; green, brown, and black; or red, green, and brown.
>
> **Incorrect:** The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey, green, brown, and black, or red, green, and brown.

By using semicolons in this sentence, the reader can easily distinguish between the three sets of colors.

Takeaways

Use semicolons to join two main clauses. Do not use semicolons with coordinating conjunctions (Fanboys) such as and, or, and but.

Exercise 8.2.1:

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding semicolons. If the sentence is correct as it is, write OK.

1. I did not notice that you were in the office I was behind the front desk all day.
2. Do you want turkey, spinach, and cheese roast beef, lettuce, and cheese or ham, tomato, and cheese?
3. Please close the blinds there is a glare on the screen.
4. Unbelievably, no one was hurt in the accident.
5. I cannot decide if I want my room to be green, brown, and purple green, black, and brown or green, brown, and dark red.
6. Let’s go for a walk the air is so refreshing.

Key Takeaways

- Use a semicolon to join two independent clauses.
- Use a semicolon to separate items in a list when those items already require a comma.

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8.3: Colons

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of colons.
2. Properly use colons in sentences.

The colon (:) is another punctuation mark used to indicate a full stop. Use a colon to introduce lists, quotes, examples, and explanations. You can also use a colon after the greeting in business letters and memos.

Dear Hiring Manager:

To: Human Resources

From: Deanna Dean

Colons to Introduce a List

Use a colon to introduce a list of items. Introduce the list with an independent clause.

The team will tour three states: New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.

I have to take four classes this semester: Composition, Statistics, Ethics, and Italian.

Colons to Introduce Examples or Explanations

Use a colon to introduce an example or to further explain an idea presented in the first part of a sentence. The first part of the sentence must always be an independent clause; that is, it must stand alone as a complete thought with a subject and verb. Do not use a colon after phrases like such as or for example.

Correct: Our company offers many publishing services: writing, editing, and reviewing.

Incorrect: Our company offers many publishing services, such as: writing, editing, and reviewing.

Tip

Capitalize the first letter following a colon for a proper noun, the beginning of a quote, or the first letter of another independent clause. Do NOT capitalize if the information following the colon is not a complete sentence.

Proper noun: We visited three countries: Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Beginning of a quote: My mother loved this line from Hamlet: “To thine own self be true.”

Two independent clauses: There are drawbacks to modern technology: My brother’s cell phone died and he lost a lot of phone numbers.

Incorrect: The recipe is simple: Tomato, basil, and avocado.

Exercise 8.3.1:

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding semicolons or colons where needed. If the sentence does not need a semicolon or colon, write OK.

1. Don’t give up you never know what tomorrow brings.
2. Our records show that the patient was admitted on March 9, 2010 January 13, 2010 and November 16, 2009.
3. Allow me to introduce myself I am the greatest ice-carver in the world.
4. Where I come from there are three ways to get to the grocery store by car, by bus, and by foot.
5. Listen closely you will want to remember this speech.
6. I have lived in Sedona, Arizona Baltimore, Maryland and Knoxville, Tennessee.
7. The boss’s message was clear Lateness would not be tolerated.
8. Next semester, we will read some more contemporary authors, such as Vonnegut, Miller,
9. My little sister said what we were all thinking “We should have stayed home.”
10. Trust me I have done this before.

Key Takeaways

- Use a colon to introduce a list, quote, or example.
- Use a colon after a greeting in business letters and memos.

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8.4: Quotes

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of quotes.
2. Correctly use quotes in sentences.

Quotation marks (“ ”) set off a group of words from the rest of the text. Use quotation marks to indicate direct quotations of another person’s words or to indicate a title. Quotation marks always appear in pairs.

Direct Quotations

A direct quotation is an exact account of what someone said or wrote. To include a direct quotation in your writing, enclose the words in quotation marks. An indirect quotation is a restatement of what someone said or wrote. An indirect quotation does not use the person’s exact words. You do not need to use quotation marks for indirect quotations.

Direct quotation: Carly said, “I’m not ever going back there again.”

Indirect quotation: Carly said that she would never go back there.

Writers at Work

Most word processing software is designed to catch errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. While this can be a useful tool, it is better to be well acquainted with the rules of punctuation than to leave the thinking to the computer. Properly punctuated writing will convey your meaning clearly. Consider the subtle shifts in meaning in the following sentences:

- The client said he thought our manuscript was garbage.
- The client said, “He thought our manuscript was garbage.”

The first sentence reads as an indirect quote in which the client does not like the manuscript. However, did he actually use the word “garbage”? (This would be alarming!) Or has the speaker paraphrased (and exaggerated) the client’s words?

The second sentence reads as a direct quote from the client, but who is “he” in this sentence? Is it a third party?

Word processing software would not catch this because the sentences are not grammatically incorrect. However, the meanings of the sentences are not the same. Understanding punctuation will help you write what you mean, and in this case, could save a lot of confusion around the office!

Punctuating Direct Quotations

Quotation marks show readers another person’s exact words. Often, you will want to identify who is speaking. You can do this at the beginning, middle, or end of the quote. Notice the use of commas and capitalized words.

Beginning: Madison said, “Let’s stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.”

Middle: “Let’s stop at the farmers market,” Madison said, “to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.”

End: “Let’s stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner,” Madison said.

Speaker not identified: “Let’s stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.”

Always capitalize the first letter of a quote even if it is not the beginning of the sentence. When using identifying words in the middle of the quote, the beginning of the second part of the quote does not need to be capitalized.

Use commas between identifying words and quotes. Quotation marks must be placed after commas and periods. Place quotation marks after question marks and exclamation points only if the question or exclamation is part of the quoted text.

Question is part of quoted text: The new employee asked, “When is lunch?”

Question is not part of quoted text: Did you hear her say you were “the next Picasso”?

Exclamation is part of quoted text: My supervisor beamed, “Thanks for all of your hard work!”

Exclamation is not part of quoted text: He said I “single-handedly saved the company thousands of dollars”!

Quotations within Quotations

Use single quotation marks (‘ ’) to show a quotation within in a quotation.

> Theresa said, “I wanted to take my dog to the festival, but the man at the gate said, ‘No dogs allowed.’”
>
> “When you say, ‘I can’t help it,’ what exactly does that mean?”
>
> “The instructions say, ‘Tighten the screws one at a time.’”

Titles

Use quotation marks around titles of short works of writing, such as essays, songs, poems, short stories, and chapters in books. Usually, titles of longer works, such as books, magazines, albums, newspapers, and novels, are italicized or underlined depending on whether typed or handwritten.

Short Work:

> “Annabelle Lee” is one of my favorite romantic poems.

Newspaper:

> The New York Times has been in publication since 1851.
>
> The New York Times has been in publication since 1851.

Writers at Work

In many businesses, the difference between exact wording and a paraphrase is extremely important. For legal purposes, or for the purposes of doing a job correctly, it can be important to know exactly what the client, customer, or supervisor said. Sometimes, important details can be lost when instructions are paraphrased. Use quotes to indicate exact words where needed, and let your readers know the source of the quotation (client, customer, peer, etc.).

Exercise 8.4.1:

Copy the following sentences onto your own sheet of paper, and correct them by adding quotation marks where necessary. If the sentence does not need any quotation marks, write OK.

1. Yasmin said, I don’t feel like cooking. Let’s go out to eat.
2. Where should we go? said Russell.
3. Yasmin said it didn’t matter to her.
4. I know, said Russell, let’s go to the Two Roads Juice Bar.
5. Perfect! said Yasmin.
6. Did you know that the name of the Juice Bar is a reference to a poem? asked Russell.
7. I didn’t! exclaimed Yasmin. Which poem?
8. The Road Not Taken, by Robert Frost Russell explained.
9. Oh! said Yasmin, Is that the one that starts with the line, Two roads diverged in a yellow wood?
10. That’s the one said Russell.

Key Takeaways

- Use quotation marks to enclose direct quotes and titles of short works.
- Use single quotation marks to enclose a quote within a quote.
- Do not use any quotation marks for indirect quotations.

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8.5: Apostrophes

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of apostrophes.
2. Correctly use apostrophes in sentences.

An apostrophe (’) is a punctuation mark that is used with a noun to show possession or to indicate where a letter has been left out to form a contraction.

Possession

An apostrophe and the letter s indicate who or what owns something. To show possession with a singular noun, add apostrophe s (’s).

Jen**’s** dance routine mesmerized everyone in the room.

The dog**’s** leash is hanging on the hook beside the door.

Jess**’s** sister is also coming to the party.

Notice that singular nouns that end in s still take the apostrophe s (’s) ending to show possession.

To show possession with a plural noun that ends in s, just add an apostrophe (’). If the plural noun does not end in s, add an apostrophe and an s (’s).

Plural noun that ends in s: The drummers’ sticks all moved in the same rhythm, like a machine.

Plural noun that does not end in s: The people’s votes clearly showed that no one supported the management decision.

Contractions

A contraction is a word that is formed by combining two words. In a contraction, an apostrophe shows where one or more letters have been left out. Contractions are commonly used in informal writing but not in formal writing.

I do not like ice cream.

I don’t like ice cream.

Notice how the words do and not have been combined to form the contraction don’t. The apostrophe shows where the o in not has been left out.

We will see you later.

We’ll see you later.

Look at the chart for some examples of commonly used contractions.

aren’t	are not
can’t	cannot
doesn’t	does not
don’t	do not
isn’t	is not
he’ll	he will
I’ll	I will
she’ll	she will
they’ll	they will
you’ll	you will

it’s	it is, it has
let’s	let us
she’s	she is, she has< /td>
there’s	there is, there has
who’s	who is, who has

Tip

Be careful not to confuse it’s with its. It’s is a contraction of the words it and is. Its is a possessive pronoun.

> It’s cold and rainy outside. (It is cold and rainy outside.)
>
> The cat was chasing its tail. (Shows that the tail belongs to the cat.)

When in doubt, substitute the words it is in a sentence. If sentence still makes sense, use the contraction it’s.

Exercise 8.5.1:

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding apostrophes. If the sentence is correct as it is, write OK.

1. “What a beautiful child! She has her mothers eyes.”
2. My brothers wife is one of my best friends.
3. I couldnt believe it when I found out that I got the job!
4. My supervisors informed me that I wouldnt be able to take the days off.
5. Each of the students responses were unique. 6. Wont you please join me for dinner tonight?

Key Takeaways

- Use apostrophes to show possession. Add ’s to singular nouns and plural nouns that do not end in s. Add ’ to plural nouns that end in s.
- Use apostrophes in contractions to show where a letter or letters have been left out.

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8.6: Parentheses

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of parentheses.
2. Properly use parentheses in sentences.

Parentheses ( ) are punctuation marks that are always used in pairs and contain material that is secondary to the meaning of a sentence. Parentheses must never contain the subject or verb of a sentence. A sentence should make sense if you delete any text within parentheses and the parentheses.

Attack of the Killer Tomatoes has to be the worst movie I have seen (so far).

Your spinach and garlic salad is one of the most delicious (and nutritious) foods I have ever tasted!

Exercise 8.6.1:

On your own sheet of paper, clarify the following sentences by adding parentheses. If the sentence is clear as it is, write OK.

1. Are you going to the seminar this weekend I am?
2. I recommend that you try the sushi bar unless you don’t like sushi.
3. I was able to solve the puzzle after taking a few moments to think about it.
4. Please complete the questionnaire at the end of this letter.
5. Has anyone besides me read the assignment?
6. Please be sure to circle not underline the correct answers.

Key Takeaways

- Parentheses enclose information that is secondary to the meaning of a sentence.
- Parentheses are always used in pairs.

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8.7: Dashes

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of dashes.
2. Correctly use dashes in sentences.

A dash (—) is a punctuation mark used to set off information in a sentence for emphasis. You can enclose text between two dashes, or use just one dash. To create a dash in Microsoft Word, type two hyphens together. Do not put a space between dashes and text.

Arrive to the interview early—but not too early.

Any of the suits—except for the purple one—should be fine to wear.

Exercise 8.7.1:

On your own sheet of paper, clarify the following sentences by adding dashes. If the sentence is clear as it is, write OK.

1. Which hairstyle do you prefer short or long?
2. I don't know I hadn't even thought about that.
3. Guess what I got the job!
4. I will be happy to work over the weekend if I can have Monday off.
5. You have all the qualities that we are looking for in a candidate intelligence, dedication, and a strong work ethic.

Tip

- Dashes indicate a pause in text.
- Dashes set off information in a sentence to show emphasis.

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8.8: Hyphens

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of hyphens.
2. Properly use hyphens in sentences.

A hyphen (-) looks similar to a dash but is not as long as a dash and used in different ways.

Hyphens between Two Adjectives That Work as One

Use a hyphen to combine words that work together to form a single description.

> The fifty-five-year-old athlete was just as qualified for the marathon as his younger opponents.
>
> My doctor recommended against taking the medication, since it can be habit-forming.
>
> My study group focused on preparing for the mid-year review.

Hyphens When a Word Breaks at the End of a Line

Use a hyphen to divide a word across two lines of text. You may notice that most wordprocessing programs will do this for you. If you have to manually insert a hyphen, place the hyphen between two syllables. If you are unsure of where to place the hyphen, consult a dictionary or move the entire word to the next line.

> My supervisor was concerned that the team meeting would conflict with the client meeting.

Key Takeaways

- Hyphens join words that work as one adjective.
- Hyphens break words across two lines of text.

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8.9: Capitalization

Learning Objectives

1. Learn the basic rules of capitalization.
2. Identify common capitalization errors.

Text messages, casual e-mails, and instant messages often ignore the rules of capitalization. In fact, it can seem unnecessary to capitalize in these contexts. In other, more formal forms of communication, however, knowing the basic rules of capitalization and using capitalization correctly gives the reader the impression that you choose your words carefully and care about the ideas you are conveying.

Capitalize the First Word of a Sentence

Incorrect: the museum has a new butterfly exhibit.

Correct: The museum has a new butterfly exhibit.

Incorrect: cooking can be therapeutic.

Correct: Cooking can be therapeutic.

Figure 8.9.1

Capitalize Proper Nouns

Proper nouns—the names of specific people, places, objects, streets, buildings, events, or titles of individuals—are always capitalized.

Incorrect: He grew up in harlem, new york.

Correct: He grew up in Harlem, New York.

Incorrect: The sears tower in chicago has a new name.

Correct: The Sears Tower in Chicago has a new name.

Figure 8.9.2

Tip

Always capitalize nationalities, races, languages, and religions. For example, American, African American, Hispanic, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and so on.

Do not capitalize nouns for people, places, things, streets, buildings, events, and titles when the noun is used in general or common way. See the following chart for the difference between proper nouns and common nouns.

Common Noun	Proper Noun
museum	The Art Institute of Chicago
theater	Apollo Theater
country	Malaysia
uncle	Uncle Javier
doctor	Dr. Jackson
book	Pride and Prejudice

Common Noun	Proper Noun
college	Smith College
war	the Spanish-American War
historical event	The Renaissance

Exercise 8.9.1:

On your own sheet of paper, write five proper nouns for each common noun that is listed. The first one has been done for you.

Common noun: river

1. Nile River
2.
3.
4.
5.

Common noun: musician

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Common noun: magazine

1.
2.
3.
4.

Capitalize Days of the Week, Months of the Year, and Holidays

Incorrect: On wednesday, I will be traveling to Austin for a music festival.

Correct: On Wednesday, I will be traveling to Austin for a music festival.

Incorrect: The fourth of july is my favorite holiday.

Correct: The Fourth of July is my favorite holiday.

Figure 8.9.3

Capitalize Titles

Incorrect: The play, *fences*, by August Wilson is one of my favorites.

Correct: The play, *Fences*, by August Wilson is one of my favorites.

Incorrect: The president of the united states will be speaking at my university.

Correct: The President of the United States will be speaking at my university.

Figure 8.9.4

Tip

Computer-related words such as “Internet” and “World Wide Web” are usually capitalized; however, “e-mail” and “online” are never capitalized.

Exercise 8.9.2:

Edit the following sentences by correcting the capitalization of the titles or names.

1. The prince of england enjoys playing polo.
2. “Ode to a nightingale” is a sad poem.
3. My sister loves to read magazines such as the new yorker.
4. The house on Mango street is an excellent novel written by Sandra Cisneros.
5. My physician, dr. alvarez, always makes me feel comfortable in her office.

Exercise 8.9.3:

Edit the following paragraphs by correcting the capitalization.

> david grann’s the lost City of Z mimics the snake-like winding of the amazon River. The three distinct Stories that are introduced are like twists in the River. First, the Author describes his own journey to the amazon in the present day, which is contrasted by an account of percy fawcett’s voyage in 1925 and a depiction of James Lynch’s expedition in 1996. Where does the river lead these explorers? the answer is one that both the Author and the reader are hungry to discover.
>
> The first lines of the preface pull the reader in immediately because we know the author, david grann, is lost in the amazon. It is a compelling beginning not only because it’s thrilling but also because this is a true account of grann’s experience. grann has dropped the reader smack in the middle of his conflict by admitting the recklessness of his decision to come to this place. the suspense is further perpetuated by his unnerving observation that he always considered himself A Neutral Witness, never getting personally involved in his stories, a notion that is swiftly contradicted in the opening pages, as the reader can clearly perceive that he is in a dire predicament—and frighteningly involved.

Writers at Work

Did you know that, if you use all capital letters to convey a message, the capital letters come across like shouting? In addition, all capital letters are actually more difficult to read and may annoy the reader. To avoid “shouting” at or annoying your reader, follow the rules of capitalization and find other ways to emphasize your point.

Key Takeaways

- Learning and applying the basic rules of capitalization is a fundamental aspect of good writing.
- Identifying and correcting errors in capitalization is an important writing skill.

Writing Application

Write a one-page autobiography. Make sure to identify people, places, and dates and use capitalization correctly.

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8.10: End-of-Chapter (Exercise)

Learning Objectives

1. Use the skills you have learned in this chapter.
2. Work collaboratively with other students.

Punctuation Exercises

1. Each sentence contains a punctuation error. On your own sheet of paper, correct each sentence by adding the correct punctuation. The headings will let you know which type of punctuation mistakes to look for. If the sentence does not need corrections, write OK.

Commas

1. The wedding will be July 13 2012.
2. The date by the way is the anniversary of the day that they met.
3. The groom the bride and their parents are all planning the event.
4. Actually all of their friends and relatives are involved in the planning.
5. The bride is a baker so she will be making the wedding cake herself.
6. The photographer the caterer and the musician will all be friends.

Semicolons

1. Some people spend a lot of money hiring people for wedding services they are lucky to have such talented friends.
2. The flowers will be either roses, daisies, orchids, or tulips it will depend on which flowers are in season.

Colons

1. There will be three colors for the wedding: white, black, and gold.
2. They’ve finally narrowed down the dinner choices salmon, steak, and a vegan stew.
3. Their wedding invitations contained the following quote from the Roman poet Ovid If you want to be loved, be lovable.

Quotes

1. The invitations said that the wedding would be “outdoor casual.”
2. “What exactly does ‘outdoor casual’ mean?” I asked the bride.
3. She told me to dress comfortably and wear shoes that do not sink into the ground.

Apostrophes

1. On the day of the wedding, were going to rent a limo.
2. My brothers wife will make the arrangements.
3. Shes a great party organizer.

Parentheses

1. On the day of the wedding, the bride looked more beautiful than ever and I’ve known her for fifteen years.
2. All the details were perfect in my opinion.

Dashes

1. Everyone danced at the wedding except my mother.
2. It was to be expected she just had hip surgery.

Hyphens

1. The groom danced with his new mother in law.
2. It was a spectacular, fun filled day for everyone.

2. Each sentence contains a punctuation error. On your own sheet of paper, correct each sentence by adding commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, parentheses, hyphens, and dashes as needed.
    1. My mothers garden is full of beautiful flowers.

2. She has carefully planted several species of roses peonies and irises.
3. She is especially proud of her thirty year old Japanese maple tree.
4. I am especially proud of the sunflowers I planted them!
5. You should see the birds that are attracted to the garden hummingbirds, finches, robins, and sparrows.
6. I like to watch the hummingbirds they are my favorite.
7. We spend a lot of time in the garden planting weeding and just enjoying the view.
8. Each flower has its own personality some seem shy and others seem bold.
9. Arent gardens wonderful?
10. You should come visit sometime Do you like to garden?

3. The following paragraph contains errors in punctuation. On your own sheet of paper, correct the paragraph by adding commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, parentheses, hyphens, and dashes as needed. There may be more than one way to correct the paragraph.

    May 18 2011

    Dear Hiring Manager

    Allow me to introduce myself in my previous position I was known as the King of Sales. I hope to earn the same title within your company. My name is Frances Fortune. I have thirteen years experience in corporate sales and account management. I have been the top rated seller for two years in a row in my previous position. Clients recognize me as dependable honest and resourceful. I have a strong work ethic and great interpersonal skills. I excel at goal setting and time management. However you don't have to take my word for it I will be happy to provide personal and professional references upon request. Youre welcome to contact my previous employer to inquire about my work performance. I look forward to speaking with you in person in the near future.

    Sincerely

    Frances Fortune

4. Read the following paragraph. Edit by adding apostrophes, parentheses, dashes, and hyphens where needed. There may be more than one correct way to edit some sentences. Consider how the punctuation you choose affects the meaning of the sentence.

    I was a little nervous about the interview it was my first in years. I had to borrow my roommates suit, but it fit me well. A few days ago, I started to research the companys history and mission. I felt like I was well qualified for the job. When I arrived, I shook hands with the interviewer she had a strong grip! It nearly caught me off guard, but I did my best to smile and relax. I was a little distracted by all the books in the womans office she must have had a hundred books in that tiny room. However, I think my responses to her questions were good. Ill send her an e-mail to thank her for her time. Hopefully shell call me soon about the position.

Capitalization Exercises

1. Read the following paragraph. Edit by fixing the capitalization where needed.

    Life topics excite me to write about. life has been very good to me, So I have plenty of wonderful experiences. There are plenty of Things that i can't live without. The most important would be love. My mom always tells me that Love is life. The Bible also speaks about three main thing we need in life, and The most important out of all three is Love. Love is Everything in my opinion. Love is very important to me because It makes me happy.

2. Each sentence contains a capitalization error. There may be more than one. Correct each sentence by fixing as needed.
    1. Marc came to the united states from Uganda.
    2. She has carefully planted several species of flowers from japan.
    3. I am especially proud of the Sunflowers I planted.
    4. This summer, Elizabeth is travelling to Montreal, quebec, canada.
    5. I like to eat ethnic food such as ethiopian.

3. Correct the capitalization errors in the following fictional story. Copy the corrected paragraph onto your own sheet of paper.

    lance worthington signed a Recording Contract with Capitol records on june 15, 2007. Despite selling two million copies of his Debut Album, nothing to lose, lance lost quite a bit as his tax returns from the irs revealed. lance did not think it was fair that the Record Company kept so much of his earnings, so he decided to hire robert bergman, a prominent music

Attorney with a Shark-like reputation. bergman represented lance all the way to the supreme court, where lance won the case against capitol records. Lance worthington was instrumental in changing intellectual property rights and long standing Record Company practices. All artists and musicians can thank him for his brave stance against record companies. Lance subsequently formed his own independent record label called worthy records. worthy is now a successful Label based out of chicago, illinois, and its Artists have appeared on well known shows such as The tonight show and Saturday night live. Lance worthington is a model for success in the do-it-yourself World that has become the Music Industry.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9: Good Writing - Models and Samples

9.1: Qualities of Good Writing

9.2: Samples of Good Paragraph Writing

9.3: Samples of Good Essay Writing

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9.1: Qualities of Good Writing

One common concern is to simply address the question, what is good writing? As we progress through our study of written communication, we'll try to answer it. But recognize that while the question may be simple, the answer is complex. Writer Edward P. Bailey offers several key points to remember.

Good college writing:

- follows certain academic rules,
- is easy to read and is engaging,
- attracts the reader.

Let's examine these qualities in more depth.

Bailey's first point is one that generates a fair amount of debate. What are the rules? Do "the rules" depend on audience expectations or industry standards, what your English teacher taught you, or are they reflected in the amazing writing of authors you might point to as positive examples? The answer is "all of the above," with a point of clarification. You may find it necessary to balance audience expectations with particular standards for a certain kind of paper and may need to find a balance or compromise. Bailey points to common sense as one basic criterion of good writing, but common sense is a product of experience. When searching for balance, reader understanding is the deciding factor. The correct use of a semicolon may not be what is needed to make a sentence work. Your reading audience should carry extra attention in everything you write because, without them, you won't have many more writing assignments.

When we say that good writing follows the rules, we don't mean that a writer cannot be creative. Just as an art student needs to know how to draw a scene in correct perspective before he can "break the rules" by "bending" perspective, so a writer needs to know therules of language. Being well versed in how to use words correctly, form sentences with proper grammar, and build logical paragraphs are skills the writer can use no matter what the assignment. Even though some academic settings may call for conservative writing, there are other areas where creativity is not only allowed but mandated. By following the rules of language and correct writing, a writer can express creative ideas in a form that comes through clearly and promotes understanding.

Similarly, writing that is easy to read is not the same as "dumbed down" or simplistic writing. What is easy to read? For a young audience, you may need to use straightforward, simple terms, but to ignore their use of the language is to create an artificial and unnecessary barrier. An example referring to Miley Cyrus may work with one reading audience and fall flat with another.

The truly excellent writer is one who can explain complex ideas in a way that the reader can understand. Sometimes ease of reading can come from the writer's choice of a brilliant illustrative example to get a point across. In other situations, it can be the writer's incorporation of definitions into the text so that the meaning of unfamiliar words is clear. It may also be a matter of choosing dynamic, specific verbs that make it clear what is happening and who is carrying out the action.

Bailey's third point concerns the interest of the reader. Will they want to read it? This question should guide much of what you write. We increasingly gain information from our environment through visual, auditory, and multimedia channels, from YouTube to streaming audio, and to watching the news online. Some argue that this has led to a decreased attention span for reading, meaning that writers need to appeal to readers with short, punchy sentences and catchy phrases. Your audience, --your college peers as well as your college teachers, -- will be hoping to see more than just catchy phrases and short sentences!

Perhaps the most universally useful strategy in capturing your reader's attention is to state how your writing can meet the reader's needs. If your paper provides information to answer a question, solve a problem, argue a point, contrast two opposing views, you may want to state this in the beginning. By opening with a "what's in it for me" strategy, you give your audience a reason to be interested in what you've written.

More Qualities of Good Writing

To the above list from Bailey, let's add some additional qualities that define good writing.

Good writing:

- meets the reader's expectations,
- is clear and concise,
- is efficient and effective.

To meet the reader's expectations, the writer needs to understand who the intended reader is. In some situations, you are writing just to one person: a classmate or your English professor! If you know the person well, it may be as easy for you to write to him or her as it is to write a note to your parent or roommate. If you don't know the person, you can at least make some reasonable assumptions about his or her expectations.

In other situations, you may be writing a paper to be read by the whole class. How can you anticipate their **expectations** and tailor your writing accordingly? Naturally you want to learn as much as you can about your likely audience. How much you can learn and what kinds of information will vary with the situation. Beyond learning about your audience, your clear understanding of the writing assignment and its purpose will help you to meet reader expectations.

Our addition of the fifth point concerning **clear and concise writing** reflects the increasing tendency in all kinds of writing to eliminate error. Errors can include those associated with production, from writing to editing, and reader response. Your twin goals of clear and concise writing point to central goals across communication: honesty and authenticity. This involves our goal of accurately communicating all the intended information with a minimum of signal or message breakdown or misinterpretation.

This leads our discussion to **efficiency**. There are only twenty-four hours in a day and we are increasingly asked to do more with less, with shorter deadlines almost guaranteed. As a writer, how do you meet ever-increasing expectations? Each writing assignment requires a clear understanding of the goals and desired results, and when either of these two aspects is unclear, the efficiency of your writing can be compromised.Rewrites require time, but that is part of the writing process.

Our sixth point reinforces this idea with an emphasis on **effectiveness**. What is effective writing? It is writing that succeeds in accomplishing its purpose. Understanding the purpose, goals, and desired results of your writing assignment will help you achieve this success. If you meet both goals, your writing is approaching effectiveness. Here, effectiveness is qualified with the word "approaching" to point out that **writing is both a process and a product**, and your writing will continually require effort and attention to revision and improvement.

Key Takeaways

Good writing is characterized by correctness, ease of reading, and attractiveness; it also meets reader expectations and is clear, concise, efficient, and effective.

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9.2: Samples of Good Paragraph Writing

You may find some minor errors in these sample paragraphs, but they were exactly as the student wrote them.

Sample Introductory Paragraph

A happy family is a beautiful dream with everybody in the world. What is a happy family? In my opinion, my family is a happy family because we usually spend a lot of time for together activities on special day such as my mother birthday or Lunar New Years. There are two activities that are special in my family on Lunar New Years such as cooking traditional cakes and décor my house.

Credit: My Dinh (Vietnam)

Sample Concluding Paragraph

In conclusion, everyone has different way to remove stress. Everyone should find the best way, and the way that make him/her more comfortable to remove stress and to be relax. Some people do not try to remove stress, and they just keep it inside them. These people are more possible to have high blood pressure, so everyone should find a way to remove stress and never keep it inside them.

Credit: Faisal Alduwaik (Palestine)

Sample Paragraph/Composition #1

I came to the United States when I was nice at that time everthing was new to me. One of the things that surpised me was football. It took me a few weeks to learn it on that time I was ten years old. I do not understand why they hit each other in football until my Uncle told me how they play. I was even more surprised when I started playing for my high school and middle school. I remember my first game it was hard for me because I started making mistakes a lot. After half-time, my offense coach told me if I make one more mistake, he will put me out of the same. After that I start doing ok in ever game. Since 2011, I started playing very good until my back and shoulder gotten an injured in my 11th grade. I always remember my football injured, and I ask myself what happened and what did I do wrong? Now I am testing myself so I can start playing football. The one thing that surprised me in the United States was football.

Credit: Robel Aberra (Ethiopia)

Sample Paragraph/Composition #2

I lived in Vietnam for 14 years with my family before I came to the United States. After five years, I still remember my first feeling when I arrived in the U.S. A lot of things surprised me like cars and American's lifestyle. First, the roads in the United States are bigger and cleaner than Vietnam. It was really weird to me because trash is everywhere in Vietnam. It can be a bottle, plastic bag, or anything. All American are obeying the rules while they drive; in addition, there are less car accidents on the roads. On the other hand, especially in Vietnam, every minute will have at least one person die because of the car accident. As a result, driving in the United States is safer than driving in Vietnam. Next, the second thing that surprised me is American's greeting. They are doing handshakes, hugs, and kisses to others when they meet, or they even just smile with a stranger. I felt happy, welcome, and I smile to them because I did not know what to do. Finally, all of these things above suprised me when I arrived in the U.S.

Credit: Huong Dang (Vietnam)

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9.3: Samples of Good Essay Writing

You may find some minor errors in these sample essays, but they were exactly as the student wrote them.

Sample Essay #1

I have a small and happy family. Everyone in the house loves each other. But I know that inside the heart of each family member, there are small broken pieces. About ten years ago, my mom and my dad divorced. Everyone had a hard time especially my mom. It was a big change that my family has gone through.

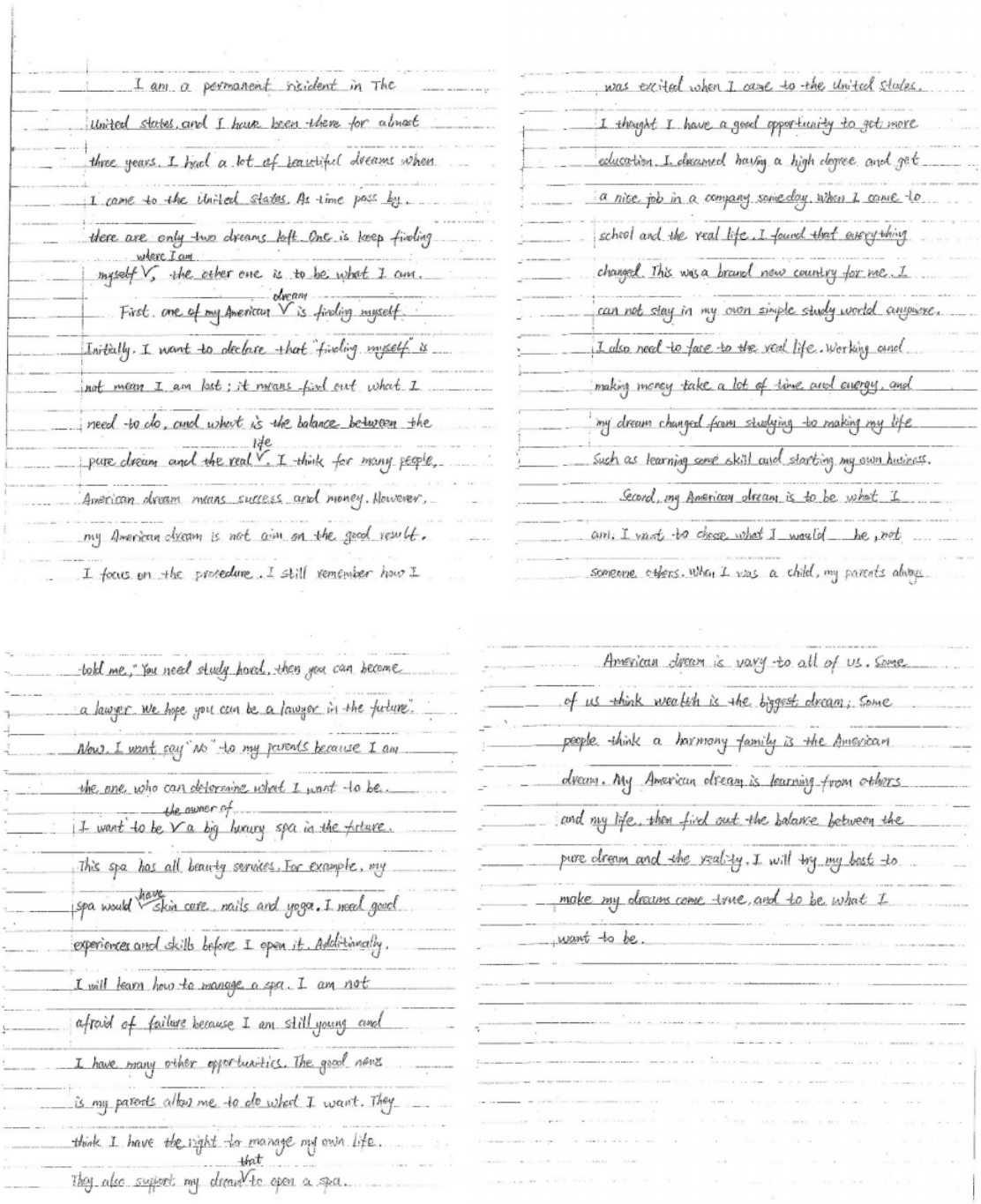
Before they divorced, I thought my family was the happiest in the world. Every day, my dad took me to school. He gave me a big hug with his lovely eyes and a big smile. I loved him so much. My brother and my sister were both older than me so they took care of everything of mine. They helped me wash my clothes, dishes and cleaned up my room. I was the only one who just sat down with a cup cake in my hand and enjoyed watching cartoons. My mom would do everything else in the house. She was not going to work, but she was always busy with all the house work. I felt like twenty four hours a day is not enough for her to do all that work. My house was not too big, but it was full of laughing and loving every day. I would never have thought my parents decided to divorce.

After they divorced, my dad got married with a new girl and moved far away from us. He left my mom who did not have any job and three children who were still in school. I could not believe my house was like a hell. Every day, my mom moved from place to place to work. Her job was to clean up the house for old people for a small amount of money. My brother and sister now had to find a part time job to help my mom. They did not have time for me anymore, so I had to take care of myself and even the house too. Many things left over my house when my dad left us were bills, tears and sadness.

My family lived like that for a few year. Finally, my mom found a job at a small company and has good money. My brother and sister all graduated and have jobs. My small family now has come back with laughter and love that I never thought it would be again. I am so proud of my mom who always stands by her kids even when she was broke and lost. She never left us alone. (420 words)

Credit: Hanh Nguyen (Vietnam)

Sample Essay #2



I am a permanent resident in The United states, and I have been there for almost three years. I had a lot of beautiful dreams when I came to the United states. As time pass by, there are only two dreams left. One is keep finding myself where I am, the other one is to be what I am. First, one of my American dream is finding myself. Initially, I want to declare that "finding myself" is not mean I am lost; it means find out what I need to do, and what is the balance between the pure dream and the real life. I think for many people, American dream means success and money. However, my American dream is not aim on the good result, I focus on the procedure. I still remember how I was excited when I came to the United states. I thought I have a good opportunity to get more education. I dreamed having a high degree and get a nice job in a company someday. When I came to school and the real life, I found that everything changed. This was a brand new country for me. I can not stay in my own simple study world anymore. I also need to face to the real life. Working and making money take a lot of time and energy, and my dream changed from studying to making my life. Such as learning some skill and starting my own business. Second, my American dream is to be what I am. I want to chose what I would be, not someone others. When I was a child, my parents always told me, "You need study hard, then you can become a lawyer. We hope you can be a lawyer in the future". Now, I want say "no" to my parents because I am the one who can determine what I want to be. I want to be the owner of a big luxury spa in the future. This spa has all beauty services. For example, my spa would have skin care, nails and yoga. I need good experiences and skills before I open it. Additionally, I will learn how to manage a spa. I am not afraid of failure because I am still young and I have many other opportunities. The good news is my parents allow me to do what I want. They think I have the right to manage my own life. They also support my dream that to open a spa. American dream is vary to all of us. Some of us think wealth is the biggest dream; Some people think a harmony family is the American dream. My American dream is learning from others and my life, then find out the balance between the pure dream and the reality. I will try my best to make my dreams come true, and to be what I want to be.

Figure 9.3.1

Credit: Jie Gao (China)

Sample Essay #3

There are so many people in this world and we each have many different characteristics. Some people may be negative. Others may be very energetic. A persons character is very important to become successful. In my opinion, the most important characteristics to become successful are positivity, loving, and goal oriented.

To begin with, having a positive character can help you in your road to success. For example, Most people know that when a person is trying to become successful, there will be many challenges. During that time, having a positive character is very important because if you decide to state negative statements towards the challenge your bringing yourself down. One day

I was in baseball practice, and I was getting ready for a game. I accidently stepped on a ball, and hurt my ankle. Although I hurt my ankle, I remained positive, wrapped my ankle, and continued to practice for the game. As a result, my team and I won the game.

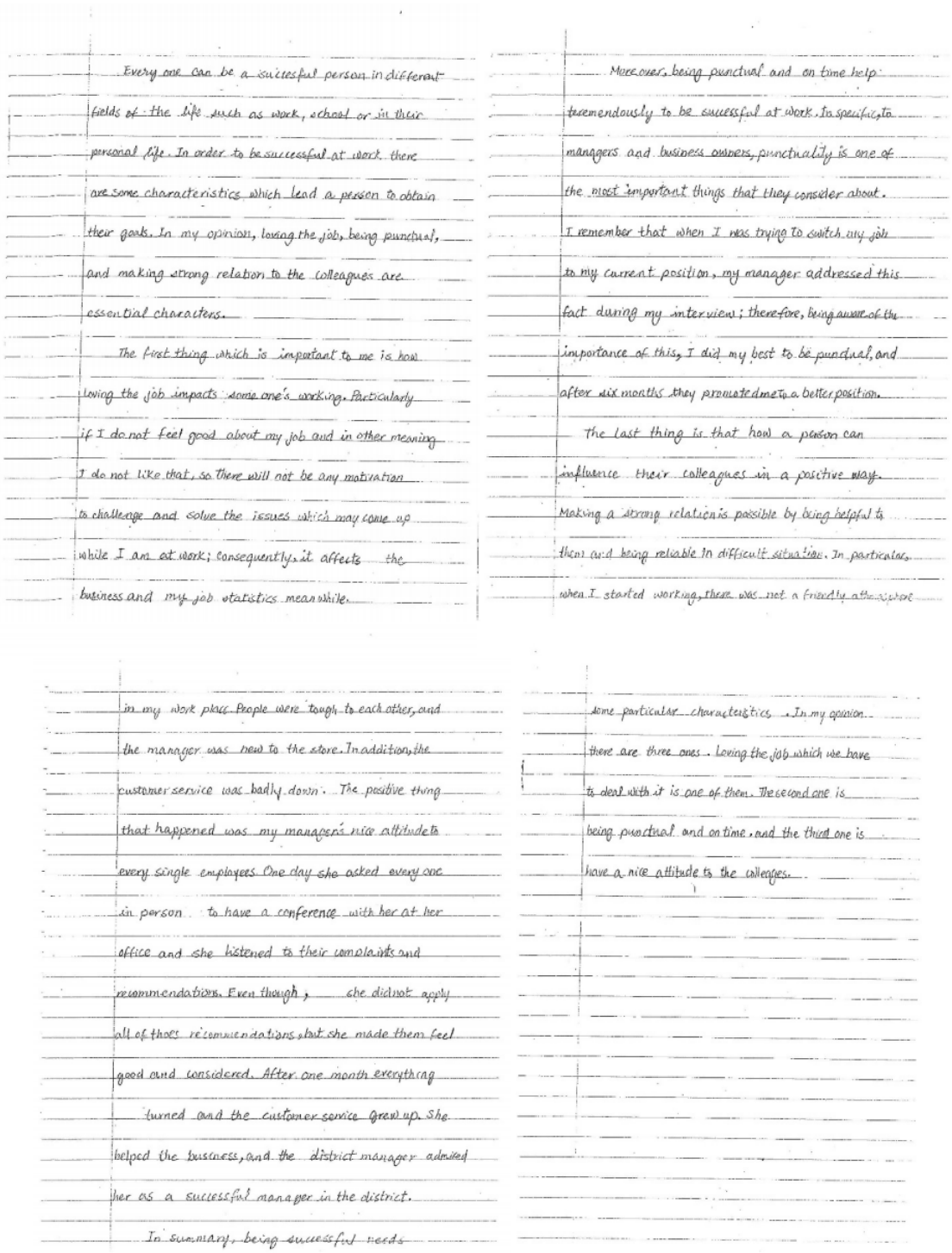
Another characteristic that's important to becoming successful is loving. When I work, I show people love by encouraging them and giving them a helping hand. Since I do these actions, people always want to repay me back in some way. For example, I needed support for my mission trip to Thailand. When I asked my co-workers for support, they supported me. This shows how when you love, you set yourself up for success.

People who have a goal oriented characteristic become very successful. My friend is a track star, and he is trying to prepare himself for the olympics. Therefore, he made it to the olympic trails and won one of the races. Because my friend was so goal oriented, he won the race.

In conclusion, It is very important to have positive, loving, and goal oriented characteristics to become successful. (303 words)

Credit: Gregory Hernandez (Dominican Republic)

Sample Essay #4



Every one can be a successful person in different fields of the life such as work, school or in their personal life. In order to be successful at work there are some characteristics which lead a person to obtain their goals. In my opinion, loving the job, being punctual, and making strong relation to the colleagues are essential characters.

The first thing which is important to me is how loving the job impacts some one's working. Particularly if I do not feel good about my job and in other meaning I do not like that, so there will not be any motivation to challenge and solve the issues which may come up while I am at work; consequently, it affects the business and my job statistics meanwhile.

Moreover, being punctual and on time help tremendously to be successful at work. To specific, to managers and business owners, punctuality is one of the most important things that they consider about. I remember that when I was trying to switch my job to my current position, my manager addressed this fact during my interview; therefore, being aware of the importance of this, I did my best to be punctual, and after six months they promoted me to a better position.

The last thing is that how a person can influence their colleagues in a positive way. Making a strong relation is possible by being helpful to them and being reliable in difficult situation. In particular, when I started working, there was not a friendly atmosphere in my work place. People were tough to each other, and the manager was new to the store. In addition, the customer service was badly down. The positive thing that happened was my manager's nice attitude to every single employees. One day she asked every one in person to have a conference with her at her office and she listened to their complaints and recommendations. Even though, she did not apply all of those recommendations, but she made them feel good and considered. After one month everything turned and the customer service grew up. She helped the business, and the district manager admired her as a successful manager in the district.

In summary, being successful needs some particular characteristics. In my opinion, there are three ones. Loving the job which we have to deal with it is one of them. The second one is being punctual and on time, and the third one is have a nice attitude to the colleagues.

Figure 9.3.2

Credit: Negar Dadgostar (Iran)

Sample Essay #5

When in Rome

Every country has a unique culture. Each individual is proud of distinct beauties of his or her culture. We want to preserve those features and introduce them to friends all over the world. However, behavior norms differ from region to region. Behavior patterns that are standard in one country may not be standard in another country. In certain instances, it can be unacceptable. As an international student, I sometimes encounter this situation. To avoid awkward moments, I bear in my mind the useful expression:

"When in Rome, do as the Romans do." From my understanding, the saying means when in foreign country, we should learn to adapt to coincide with the native population.

I was born and grew up in Vietnam. Like other children, I was taught several common codes of behaviors: to greet older people respectfully by bowing, to believe that the elderly and teachers were always right, and to eat with chopsticks. Nevertheless, things are different in the U.S. I don't need to bow to show respect. I simply say "hello, how are you?" with a smile. One difference that I found to my liking is the ability to freely ask questions and carry on a discussion with the elderly and professors. On the other hand, a challenging task has been to replace the chopsticks with silverware and learn how to use forks and spoons properly.

There are not only differences in behavior but also conflicts in body language. For example, the gesture to call a friend over to you in Vietnam is the same as calling a dog over in the U.S and vice versa. A sign of friendliness in Vietnamese is interpreted as insulting here. Another instance is, in my country, people do not have the habit of holding the door open for others whereas it is considered basic courtesy here. I, along with my international friends in ESL classes experienced cultural shock for the first few months here because of adjusting to these cultural norms.

Listed above are a small list if examples of contrasting differences among cultures, but the tip of the iceberg. Still, cultural shock is an issue that can be avoided if we are well prepared. Although we all want to be sociable civilized, the standards of behavior and good manners vary country from country. It is important for an individual to broaden their knowledge of diverse cultures and be willing to adjust to fall into line with the native culture. The expression "When in Rome, do as the Romans do," or "nhập gia tùy tục" in Vietnamese is a reminder for to act accordingly. (436 words)

Credit: Tuyet Nguyen (Vietnam)

Sample Essay #6

Everyone has a dream. Many people have dreams that they think one day it will come true. On the other hand, some people think it will just stay dreams. In most cases our dreams one day it will come true if we work hard and do our best to make it happen. In the United States many people work hard for the American Dream. Everyone has his own American Dream. The American dream for some people is to have your own home. However, the American dream for me is to finish my education, open my own business and buy a home for my family.

First, finishing my education is the most important dream for me. Education is my American dream because after finishing my education my life will become much easier. For example, I am in college and I do not have a job that rains money on me. For that reason, I have to work hard to get my degree and find a job that can make my life easier. However, finishing my education is not the only dream I have.

Second, opening my own business is my American dream too. By owning a business, I do not have to be stress every few years to find a better job. Also, I do not have to take orders from anyone because I will be the boss. Furthermore, I do not have to ask anyone for a day off. For example, If I want a vacation from the job, I do not have to ask anyone for it. However, finishing my education and having my own business are not my only American Dream.

Third, buying a home for my family is not my dream only, it is my family's dream too. My family face a stress every month to pay our home morgage. Paying off the mortgage on my family's home will take off the stress from them. Also, they will not have to be worried about the monthly payment. This is not my family's dream only, it is the dream of most Americans.

In conclusion, finishing my education is my most important American dream. Also, opening my own business will make my life easier. Furthermore, buying a home for my family will take off the stress from their life. (380 words)

Credit: Rami Abusaada (Palestine)

Sample Essay #7

"Pay attention! Smallest mistake could ruin your whole career." My grandfather said this in front of his children on his 72nd birthday. I was there with my father, and I was only six years old at that time. However, I still remember it because when words are spoken out from a person who has lived 72 years, these words will be meaningful. Therefore, I'm still thinking about them everyday, and I not only just think about my career, but I also think about my life, and about things that happened and changed my whole life. The latest thing that changed my life in a positive way is about the house I am living in now and about Mrs. Lee who is the owner of the house.

I'm an international student from Vietnam. The day I came here, I knew it would be hard for me because I didn't have any relative or friend or person that I knew in this country. Therefore, nobody helped me to find shelter, and I didn't know anyone to call for

help. At that time, I was panicked, but I calmed myself and asked anybody I saw at the airport when I arrived for help, and a nice lady gave me Mrs. Lee's phone number. I was so happy, but I did not have a phone to call her. I was panicked again because a lot of questions appeared in my head at that moment such as "What should I do now?" and How can I contact her?" Then an idea flashed in my head and showed me how to solve that problem. Because of that idea, I met Mrs. Lee, and she changed my life forever.

The idea that flashed in my head that day was borrowing the nice lady's phone to call Mrs. Lee, and I did that. I still remember that moment when she picked up the phone because her voice sounded like my grandma's voice, and she is Vietnamese too. She said, "I will let you stay in my house, but it's not free, and if you don't be nice, I will kick you out!" I was so happy, and I did not care much about the cost. I only needed a place to live, and she gave it to me. Now, I am still living at her house, but I don't have to pay Mrs. Lee money anymore. I just need to pay my bills and food, and she treats me like her son, and I treat her like the way I treat my mother. It's a long story. However, this story changed my life from a panicked young boy without shelter to the person I have become.

In conclusion, good things happen to us all the time, and the good things that Mrs. Lee gave me changed my life forever. I will never be able to thank her enough. (480 words)

Credit: Khoa Nguyen (Vietnam)

Sample Essay #8

Arthur: That was his name. He was a light-skinned black African American man. He was so sweet, and a kind hearted person. Arthur Scott was a perfect man whom I met when I came to America. Meeting him is one of the good things that has happened to me because of the following reasons: he boosted my self-confidence, and also he is a great source of inspiration to me.

To begin with, I was a shy and a nervous person when I first came to America in 2012. I was easily intimidated by people before I met Arthur. He helped me build my self-confidence and my self-esteem. He made me understand how indifferent humans are; that is, though we might come from different countries with different cultures, at the end of the day, we are still all the same. Also, he made me understand that I am smarter than most people born and raised in American, and being born an American is not so extraordinary. I got to build my confidence in talking to Americans without having to feel that they would laugh at me because of my accent, and that has had a positive impact on me. Now I have confidence within myself and believe that nobody is totally different from me, and I should not get intimidated.

Moreover, when I started school, I did not know how to write essays, and I was scared to take a math class because I felt it was too difficult. Arthur, the motivator and the inspiration, told me to believe in myself. He told me I can do anything I set my mind to do, and he make me have "Yes, I can" as my motto in times of difficulties. He always told me that I was a good writer and a storyteller. Anytime I am with him, he makes me write anything I have on my mind on paper.

Gradually, I found passion in writing, and now I feel proud when I write, and my instructors give me positive comments. I successfully completed College Algebra with an A when I thought I couldn't do it. He always makes me feel I am stronger than I believe I am!

In brief, good things happen all the time, but meeting Arthur has positively impacted my life in many ways. Now I have become a very optimistic person in all circumstances, and I value that. (401 words)

Credit: Adomako Cobbina (Ghana)

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

10: Suggested Writing Topics and Grading Rubrics

10.1: Suggested Writing Topics
10.2: Sample Grading Rubrics

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10.1: Suggested Writing Topics

These are possible topics that could be used in an academic writing course. This list contains topics that were used throughout the years by the Authors, but they are not currently used.

1. Discuss some of the things that make people choose a big city as their home.
2. Which do you think has the greatest impact on college-age people: family or friends? Why?
3. In order for you to be happy in a future job, what will you need or expect from your job?
4. Discuss some aspects of your home culture that you always want to keep in your life.
5. What is your favorite form of entertainment or recreation? Explain why.
6. Explain what you look for in people whom you want to be your friends.
7. What do you think helps a marriage to be strong, healthy, and long-lasting?
8. What is one value or tradition of your own country or culture that some people misunderstand? Explain.
9. What strategies can we use to make a good first impression? Explain.
10. In your opinion, does television tend to influence people positively or negatively? Explain the reasons for your opinion.
11. As a manager, what characteristics or actions would cause you to fire an employee? Explain.
12. What are some good ways to deal with stress and minimize its negative impact on our lives?
13. What do you think are the main reasons why so many students never finish their first year in college? Explain.
14. Do you think this is a good idea for teenagers to have jobs while they are still students? Explain why or why not.
15. Is it a good or bad thing for a culture to encourage children to be very competitive? Explain why or why not.
16. Discuss the biggest problems you have faced as a non-native student in an American college.
17. What do people gain and what do they lose by moving away from their parents' home after the age of 18 or 19?
18. What impact has attending college had on your relationships with others (your family and or friends) and on your life in general?
19. In choosing a place to live (an apartment or house) what are the characteristics you look for?
20. What is the most important thing you hope to someday give your children?
21. If you could have a conversation with a famous person (living or dead), who would it be, and what would you talk about?
22. Should all students, regardless of their major, be required to take courses in computers as part of their college education? Explain why or why not.
23. Should teachers evaluate students according to their achievement (grades, or test scores) or according to their effort (how much time and effort they spend on the work)? Explain.
24. Should schools have rules about clothes and appearance? Why or why not?
25. What are the advantages and the disadvantages of living in the United States?
26. Do you think college students should be required to attend class? Why or why not?
27. Explain some of the problems presented by cell phones.
28. What advice would you give someone considering entering college?
29. Why are many people afraid of growing old? Explain.
30. The 21st century has begun. What changes do you think this century will bring? Use specific reasons and details to support your answer.
31. Should a college education be available to all students or just to good students? Explain why.
32. In the future, students may have the choice of studying at home by using technology such as computers or of studying at traditional schools. Which would you prefer? Explain why.
33. Write about a person who has influenced your life in a significant way.
34. If someone discovered a formula that would allow us to live forever, do you think that would be a good or bad thing? Explain.
35. Should a parent be a child's disciplinarian or a child's best friend? Explain.
36. Do you learn better by doing things, reading things, or listening to people talk about things? Use specific examples to support your choice.
37. Should students spend the whole school day on academic studies, or should physical exercise be a required part of every school day? Use specific examples to support your choice.
38. Why are some people attracted to dangerous sports or other activities?
39. Is it better for children to begin formal schooling at an early age or to spend more time playing?
40. How can college students improve their leadership skills?
41. What changes would make Georgia Perimeter College a better institution?

42. Computers are important in most people's lives, but they also have negative aspects. What are some?
43. Choose a profession whose members make a worthwhile contribution to society and discuss the benefits that society receives from members of this profession.
44. If you were asked to make a fair evaluation of your teachers, what criteria would you use for the evaluation? Discuss
45. Each year, many teenagers run away from home. What do you think are the main causes?

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10.2: Sample Grading Rubrics

The following pages show a variety of sample grading rubrics. We have also included a rubric from Freshman Composition to give you an idea of what may be expected in your college-level writing course.

Sample Rubric #1 - High Intermediate/Advanced Academic Writing Courses

Name: _____ Draft #1 - _____/12 = _____%

WRITING ASSIGNMENT: _____ Final Draft - _____/12 = _____%

	1= minimal	2=adequate	3= strong	4= excellent
Development	The essay does not respond to the topic or may not be sufficiently focused.	The main idea is addressed with a thesis but it may be imprecisely worded or insufficiently focused.	Addresses assignment with clear thesis.	The main idea is clearly addressed with a strong thesis.
Organization	There is minimal organization. There is no clear introduction, conclusion or topic sentences.	Essay is passably organized but the support details are thin at times. There are some topic sentences and a weak introduction and/or conclusion.	Essay is generally well organized and uses effective details to support thesis. The introduction and/or conclusion are good and the topic sentences are appropriate.	The essay is well organized. It uses appropriate and effective details and analysis to support the thesis. Both the conclusion and introduction are excellent and the topic sentences are strong.
Mechanics	Many spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors.These errors get in the way of understanding the paper.	Some spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors. At times, these errors get in the way of understanding the paper.	Few spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors. These errors occasionally get in the way of understanding the paper.	Hardly any spelling, grammar, and punctuation errors. These errors rarely get in the way of understanding the paper.

Comments:_____

_____

Credit: Beth Wallace, Assistant Professor, Georgia State University Perimeter College

Sample Rubric #2 - High Intermediate/Advanced Academic Writing Courses

Advanced ESL Writing Name_____

Essay Scoring Guidelines

Criteria				**Essays**			
	Exceeds Expectations	**Meets Expectations**	**Needs Improvement**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**

Criteria				Essays			
Content and Organization	(10 points) Well-developed with excellent thesis Well-organized	(7 points) Adequate development Adequate Thesis Adequately organized	(4 points) Minimum amount of development or offtopic. Inadequate or Missing Thesis Problems with organization	(Max=7)			
Grammar/ Mechanics	(25 points) Very few grammar and mechanical errors	(19 points) Average number of grammar and mechanical errors	(15 points) Numerous grammar and mechanical errors	(Max=18)			
Format (5 points)	Double spaced, Written in ink, Appropriate Indentation, Appropriate capitalization Correct Length			(Max=5)			

Totals: (Essay #1=30 points, Essays #2,3,4=40 points)	
	Instructor Comments
Diagnostic Essay	
Essay #2	
Essay #3	
Essay #4	

Credit: Lynne Bost, Associate Professor, Georgia State University Perimeter College

Sample Rubric #3 – Freshman Composition Courses

English 1101 Guidelines for Writing Standards

Note: These guidelines for first-year English composition at Georgia Perimeter College reflect the writing standards currently followed by other major institutions in the University System of Georgia. An individual instructor's criteria for a particular assignment may be more detailed or extensive.

COMPETENT ESSAY: All papers must meet these basic competency standards. A competent paper earns a C (70-79).

1. **Clarity and Organization of Central Purpose**
   - The essay has a clear and controlling purpose—a well-considered thesis—around which the paper revolves.
   - The essay flows smoothly from the introduction through the body paragraphs to the conclusion, transitioning from one supporting idea to the next without digressing from the central purpose.
2. **Developing Details, Analysis, and Explanation**
   - The essay presents appropriate and relevant details, examples, and evidence.
   - Specific details and concrete evidence are used in support of claims rather than general opinions or vague commentary. The essay avoids factual inaccuracies and major logical fallacies.
   - The writer clearly distinguishes his or her ideas from outside source material, and correctly cites all outside source material in MLA style (or assigned standard bibliographic form).
3. **Presentation and Audience Reception**
   - The writer is aware of his or her audience and uses appropriate language and diction.
   - The essay is relatively free of errors in Standard English grammar, punctuation, usage, and documentation.
   - The essay meets the instructor's stated requirements for length and/or format.

BEYOND COMPETENT: A skillfully crafted paper exceeds all competency requirements by demonstrating insightful understanding of key concepts, a strong and distinctive voice, and careful consideration of opposing viewpoints. An essay that goes beyond competency will earn a grade of B (80-89).

4. **Fluency & Coherence**
   - The writer expresses clear understanding of the major premises of the thesis.
   - The writer varies sentence structure and length to hold readers' interest and to create emphasis.
   - The essay examines the topic from a fresh perspective, and, when necessary, integrates direct quotes, summaries, and paraphrases from outside source materials.
5. **Forceful and Stimulating Writing**
   - The writer demonstrates audience awareness by addressing the rhetorical appeals to logos, ethos, and pathos.
   - The essay is forceful without being dogmatic, provocative without being inflammatory, and stimulating without being glib, patronizing, or contrived.

EXCEPTIONAL: An exceptional paper distinguishes itself from a skillfully crafted paper by demonstrating mastery of several characteristics of superior writing. An exceptional paper earns the grade of A (90-100).

6. **Superior Writing:** The essay exhibits more than one of the following characteristics:
   - original and insightful analysis
   - clear and refined discussion of complex ideas
   - sophisticated rhetorical stance
   - unique and compelling voice
   - fresh, innovative, and textured style

UNSUCCESSFUL: An unsuccessful essay has several minor problems with **Clarity and Organization of Central Purpose; Developing Details, Analysis, and Explanation;** and **Presentation and Audience Reception;** or it has major problems in one of these areas. The unsuccessful essay will earn a grade of D (60-69) or F (<60). The writer should schedule a conference with his or her instructor immediately.

Figure 10.2.1

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