MODULE 1

THE READING/WRITING CONNECTION

Introduction

Reading and writing are linked. When you read, you get ideas about what to write and how to write it. When you write, crafting sentences and paragraphs often ends up improving your reading skills, too.

In this module, you will focus on how to get more from your reading and how to use what you read to improve your writing skills.

Lesson 1.1: Active Reading

Lesson 1.1 Introduction

Reading will benefit your writing in a number of ways. But how can you get the most out of your reading to make sure you will reap all of these benefits? You must learn to become an active reader. What do active readers do that makes them more successful at comprehending and retaining information?

• Active readers do more than just run their eyes over the text in front of them.

• Active readers interact with the text and think as they read.

• Active readers read with a pen or pencil in hand, marking key words or ideas or jotting notes in the margins.

• Active readers reread the text if necessary and consciously try to connect the information in the text to their own experiences and beliefs.

The techniques that active readers use are essential to understanding and remembering ideas and information, especially those in more challenging reading selections.

In this lesson, you will learn some tried-and-true techniques of the active reader.

Preview the Text

The first step in reading any selection involves previewing, or surveying, the text. To preview means to obtain a preliminary sample of something. When you preview a reading selection, you skim or glance over it to try to get a sense of the piece's content and organization. You are not looking for specific details or information; instead, you skim a reading selection to get an idea of the author's subject, main point, overall focus, or purpose.

Here are some tips for previewing a text:

• To get this sense of the "big picture," you should read the title of the selection, which will usually state the subject and sometimes even indicates the main point.

• Then try to find the thesis statement, or main point, of the selection. The thesis, which is the idea the author wants you to know or to believe by the time you finish reading, usually appears somewhere near the beginning of the selection, and often in the first paragraph.

• Also, glance over the headings in the selection, which function as "minititles" for the different sections. If there are no headings to guide you, read the first sentences of the paragraphs to get some idea of the topics they address.

• Read the titles of any visual aids, such as graphs or charts, that are included with the text.

• Read over any introductory material—such as a brief summary paragraph—that may offer clues about the main point of the selection.

Your goal in previewing the text is to get an overview of its topics, main idea, and overall organization. This overview will allow you to assemble a rough mental framework of the whole selection. Then, as you read more thoroughly later on, you will be able to fit the specific ideas and information into this framework as you go. You will have a better understanding of how the specific details relate to one another. As a result, your comprehension while reading will increase.

Formulate Questions and Read for Answers

A second proven active reading technique involves formulating questions and then reading for the answers to these questions. Completing this step helps to keep readers focused on finding certain kinds of information in a text, so it often improves concentration and, therefore, comprehension.

To formulate questions, simply turn the title, headings, or topic sentences of a selection into questions before you read the text. For example, if the title of a selection is "The Benefits of Exercise," you could turn it into "What are the benefits of exercise?" Then, as you read, you can search for the answers to that question. If the heading is "Walking versus Jogging," you could turn it into "How are jogging and walking alike and different?" or "Which is better: walking or jogging?" If you own the text you are reading, actually write your questions in the margins. If you have borrowed the text and cannot write in it, consider making a photocopy of it and then writing your questions in the margins of that photocopy. Or you can take notes on a separate sheet of paper by writing your questions and leaving a blank space for each of the answers, which you will fill in later as you read.

Underline and Highlight Key Words and Phrases

A third tried-and-true technique for active reading is underlining and/or highlighting key words and phrases in a text with your pen or highlighter marker. This method is valuable for two reasons. First, it encourages you to look for important information while you are reading, which helps to keep you focused on the main points or information. Second, it makes a review of the information more efficient because you can scan the important words you have already identified rather than reread the entire text.

What do you highlight or underline in a text? The following is a list of information that is usually worth marking:

- **Any words or phrases in distinctive typeface**. If an author has put key terms in bold print or color, highlight them to make them stand out even more.

- **The answers to the questions you formulated from headings or topic sentences.** Read with the question in mind, and every time you discover an answer (or part of the answer), highlight it.

- **Words or phrases referring to major details that develop the idea stated in each paragraph's topic sentence.** Look for and underline or highlight the main reasons, examples, or other kinds of the details provided to explain the point of the topic sentence.

The key to effective highlighting is to avoid overdoing it. Highlighting whole sentences or paragraphs is pointless, for the major ideas will not stand out when you go back to the text again later. Instead, you will end up unnecessarily rereading long sections of the text. Also, highlighting whole passages will not help you focus on finding the most essential information. So concentrate on marking only those words that will help you quickly piece together the general gist or essence of the text when you are reviewing it later.

Take Notes on the Text

One final effective active reading technique involves taking notes. Taking notes means recording in writing the major information and ideas in a text. You might choose to take these notes in the margins of the text itself (which is called annotating), in a notebook, or on separate sheets of paper.

Regardless of where you write them, notes offer two important benefits. First of all, good notes often increase comprehension of the text. Taking notes requires you to think more about what you are reading, so you wind up understanding it better. Second, writing down information and ideas helps you remember them better. For many people, taking the extra time to hand-write the main points helps implant them in their memory more securely.

Good notes always begin with highlighting or underlining main ideas or key terms. When you write notes, they might take one or more of the following forms:

- **A list of the main ideas in all of the paragraphs.** Put these ideas in your own words and condense them whenever possible. Do not try to include all of the details, just the most important points.

- **A summary of the chapter or article.** In your own words, write a paragraph or two describing the main ideas of the selection.

- **An outline.** Outlines not only list the major and minor details of a reading selection, but they also reveal the relationships among those details. You can use a Roman numeral outline, but the notes are usually for your eyes only, so you could also adopt or create a more informal system. No matter what kind of outline you use, though, make sure it clearly demonstrates the general and specific relationships among the ideas.

Lesson 1.2: Critical Reading

Lesson 1.2 Introduction

Critical reading does not mean reading a text with the purpose of criticizing or finding fault with it. Instead, critical reading is the process of determining whether a text is valid and then deciding whether you agree with the ideas it presents.

The ultimate goal of critical reading is critical thinking, an important skill in all areas of life, not just in your academic courses. Critical thinkers do not just believe everything they hear or read. Instead, they approach new ideas and information with a healthy skepticism. They have learned how to analyze texts and ideas not only to understand them better, but also to decide whether they should accept those ideas, reject them, or think about them further. College students, in particular, are expected to read critically. Professors assign textbook chapters, journal articles, and other readings not just to have you memorize facts, but also to encourage you to think about the texts so you can expand and refine your ideas.

In this chapter, you will learn some strategies for critical reading and thinking.

Critical Reading and Thinking

Critical reading, of course, begins with active reading. In order to evaluate an author's ideas or information, you need to completely understand them, and practicing active reading techniques will increase your comprehension of the material. After actively reading a text, a critical reader thinks in depth about what he or she has read. Thinking critically about a reading selection involves all of the following:

• Evaluating the evidence given in support of the thesis and main idea. Does it seem to be adequate? Does it seem to be accurate?

• Scrutinizing the author's conclusions. Do they arise logically from the evidence presented? Does the author exhibit any bias—in other words, does he or she obviously have certain opinions or prejudices?

• Comparing the ideas and information to your own experiences and observations.

You can choose to agree or disagree with the author after doing all of the preceding. The following activities can help you read and think critically:

• As you read, you can **annotate, or write brief comments in the margin of the text or in a reading journal if you cannot use the actual text**. These comments can include your reactions to specific points or details and your questions about those points and details. They can take the form of words or phrases (such as "true," "seems exaggerated," and so on) or even symbols (such as writing an exclamation point next to a sentence that surprises you or writing a question mark in the margin when you are confused). Annotation is a valuable skill for critical thinking because it can become a kind of dialogue between you and the author as the author tries to convince you to accept his or her ideas.

• You can also **answer the questions that may follow a text**. In textbooks, in particular, authors provide a list of questions that help you focus on the most important information or even begin to apply the information to your own life. Even if your instructor does not assign these questions, think about how you would answer them.

• Finally, you can **discuss the text with others**. Participate in class discussions about reading selections, and suggest to your classmates that you discuss texts more informally as well. By talking about what you read with others, you will confirm your understanding of the text, and you will get the opportunity to compare your reactions to the thoughts of other critical readers. These conversations will help all of you decide whether the text is valid.

Lesson 1.3: The Reading/Writing Connection

Lesson 1.3 Introduction

When you have to write something, do you enjoy it? If you are like many people, you probably answered that you dislike writing. You might find writing distasteful because you struggle with it, or because your previous efforts have been unrewarding in terms of grades or feedback from others. Yet you know by now that you have to write. You will have to write papers in your academic courses and in your working life, in the form of business documents like reports, memos, letters, and e-mail.

Think of good writing skills as an opportunity. It can be an opportunity to express yourself effectively and share what you think and feel with others. Writing is also a valuable tool for increasing your understanding of your own ideas. It can lead to new insights and discoveries through intense focus on a topic, and it can even improve your critical thinking.

Practicing your writing and gaining valuable feedback from others will help improve your writing skills, but another valuable way to improve your writing is by studying the writing of others. As you've learned in this course already, reading and writing are linked, and each skill strengthens the other. You learn many new and different techniques and writing concepts by determining what works (and what does not work) in the writing of others.

In this lesson, you will study the benefits of good writing skills, and learn how reading can help improve your writing.

Benefits of Writing

If writing has always been difficult or unrewarding for you, then you might need to increase your knowledge about the process of writing and the essential features of a successful finished product. Developing your writing, and practicing it, are opportunities to become more than just a better writer. Good writing skills can help you:

- **Express yourself.** You probably like to discuss your ideas, beliefs, and feelings with friends or family members. You may like to express yourself creatively, perhaps by playing music, dancing, painting, or even writing poetry or stories. Writing is yet another tool for self-expression. Even the academic papers you write give you a chance to share your thoughts about important subjects with others.

- **Expand your understanding.** Have you ever noticed that your thoughts and feelings always become clearer to you when you talk about them with others or write them down? That is because talking and writing require you to find words to express ideas that tend to be vague and half-formed before you try to communicate them. The act of finding language to share your thoughts helps you clarify in your own mind what you think and believe. Therefore, writing is a valuable tool for increasing your understanding of your own ideas. Writing is also a valuable tool for learning. When you write, you must think extensively about your subject. This lengthier, deeper, and more intense thought often leads to new insights and discoveries about the topic; as a matter of fact, when you write, you are likely to make new connections that you may not have made if you had not written about the subject. Thus, writing leads you to expand your knowledge and understanding of your subject matter.

- **Improve crucial thinking skills.** As mentioned previously, writing requires many different kinds of thinking skills, including logical reasoning, analysis, synthesis, creativity, and organization. These are the same thinking skills that you will need in many different areas of

your academic, professional, and personal lives. Think of each new writing assignment as an opportunity to develop and strengthen the crucial thinking skills that will help you succeed in life.

You must practice writing if you are going to improve your writing skills. Take advantage of valuable opportunities to get feedback on what you write. The comments and suggestions that you get from others will help you identify your strengths as a writer, along with areas that need improvement. Get in the habit of carefully considering the feedback you get. Formulate a plan for improving less successful areas so you do not repeat the same mistakes.

Reading to Improve Your Writing

Reading goes hand-in-hand with practice to improve your writing skills. One important benefit of reading is the opportunity to study the writing of others and get models of successful essays that can help you when you create your own documents. Thus, the more you critically read—especially if you try to read the writings of capable and talented authors—the more exposure you will get to the different ways to organize and develop a topic. They will also provide you with ideas for your own compositions. They will give you information you can use to support your ideas. Finally, they will encourage you to strengthen your critical thinking skills.

MODULE 2

THE WRITING PROCESS

Introduction

Writing can be viewed as a series of five main steps. Chances are good that as you write, you are already completing all or most of these steps to some extent. However, you may not be devoting enough time and effort to each one, or you may be trying to complete two or more of the steps at the same time. If you are neglecting or combining the steps, though, you are probably making the writing process more difficult, more time consuming, and less rewarding for yourself.

The five main steps of writing introduced in this module include:

- **Step 1: Prewriting.** Discover your topic and generate ideas about it.

- **Step 2: Organizing and Outlining.** Use logic to determine the order in which you should present ideas and create a plan for your paper.

- **Step 3: Writing**. Using your outline as a guide, write the sentences and paragraphs that clearly state and develop your ideas.

- **Step 4: Revising.** Reevaluate your paper's organization and development of ideas and make the necessary improvements.

- **Step 5: Editing and Preparing the Final Draft.** Correct any grammatical, punctuation, or spelling errors, and generate a final copy that is ready to be submitted.

You reduce the overall quality of your writing when you do not give adequate attention to each separate stage. To make the writing process easier, faster, and more rewarding, always take the time to complete all of the five stages separately. While you work, return to previous stages as necessary.

Lesson 2.1: Prewriting

Lesson 2.1 Introduction

Everyone has important ideas, thoughts, feelings, and beliefs about the world we live in. In other words, everyone has something significant to say. You may not agree, of course, if you tend to experience writer's block, the state of being unable to think of ideas whenever you sit down to write. It is indeed frustrating to be faced with a blank sheet of paper or a blank computer screen and be unable to think of anything to say. You can use certain techniques to help yourself get started and to begin coaxing those ideas out of hiding. These techniques are known as **prewriting**.

Prewriting is useful for generating ideas prior to writing. In addition, it can be an effective method for preparing your mind to concentrate on tasks other than writing. Prewriting is a useful technique for clearing your mind of distracting thoughts. You might try freewriting for ten minutes before a test, for instance. While you are doing it, devote your full attention to whatever worries, plans, daydreams, or other thoughts might be on your mind. The act of writing about them will sweep them away temporarily, allowing you to concentrate on the test more easily. You can try this prior to any activity that requires your attention and concentration. You can also use prewriting techniques to help you solve personal or work-related problems. Try talking or brainstorming, for example, to generate some possible solutions.

Benefits of Prewriting

Prewriting is a valuable first step in the writing process. It breaks through writer's block, getting the ideas flowing and helping you find a starting point. As a result, it reduces the anxiety and frustration that you might have felt in the past as you began writing.

Prewriting is an important tool for writers because it has four uses:

1. **Prewriting can help you find a topic to write about.** On those occasions when you can write your paper about a topic of your own choice, prewriting can help you think of one.

2. **Prewriting can help you narrow a topic or find some interesting aspect of it.** If you are writing on an assigned topic, as is often the case in academic courses, you may need to narrow it down. Even a longer piece of writing, like a research paper, could not do justice to a subject as broad as the Civil War or abnormal psychology. You will need to find a more specific aspect on which to focus, and prewriting can help you narrow, or limit, your topic to one that is more manageable for the assignment. In addition, prewriting can help you discover an aspect of the topic that is interesting to you. When you write about a topic that interests you, you will be more enthusiastic about the paper. As a result, you will be more likely to write a better paper.

3. **Prewriting can help you remember or discover what you already know about a topic.** You can prewrite to discover a topic, and you can also prewrite to find out what you *already know* about a topic. You probably have some knowledge or thoughts about most topics, and prewriting can help you unlock this information from where it is stored in your mind. At the same time, prewriting allows you to get a better understanding of what you *do not know* about a topic. Then you can determine what you will need to find out— through reading and research—before you begin to write.

4. **Prewriting can help you decide what you want to say about your topic.** Once you have decided on a topic and explored what you know about it, you can use prewriting techniques to help you formulate the idea or opinion you want to express about that topic. In addition, you can use prewriting as a tool to help you begin to sort through your thoughts about the topic so that you can determine which of those thoughts you want to include in your paper.

Prewriting Techniques

Prewriting is useful for generating ideas prior to writing. In addition, it can be an effective method for preparing your mind to concentrate on tasks other than writing by helping you clear your mind of distracting thoughts.

Following is a brief description of five effective prewriting techniques:

1. **Talking:** Have you ever noticed that after you talk about a subject with someone for the first time, you understand more clearly what you yourself think about that topic? The act of putting your ideas and feelings into language helps make them clearer and helps you understand it better. The next time you need to generate ideas for a paper, try starting an oral or written conversation (in person, via e-mail, or in an Internet chat room) with a fellow student, friend, relative, or coworker. Tell the other person what you know or what you think about the topic, and use the discussion as an opportunity to learn more.

2. **Freewriting:** The goal of freewriting is to generate ideas by recording, as quickly as you can, the flow of thoughts going through your mind. You simply consider a topic and write down what you are thinking about that topic. At this stage, though, you do not censor or reject any thoughts, nor do you try to organize them. You do not bother to cross out or correct anything—that comes later. You also do not pause to think about where to place a comma or to determine exactly the right word. In fact, you do not pause at all; instead, you write nonstop, and if you run out of ideas, you continue writing something, such as "my mind is blank my mind is blank my mind is blank…" until another thought comes to mind. Then you record that thought. Do not worry about neatness, because freewriting is for your eyes only; it is a tool for the writer to get some ideas flowing, and readers will never see it.

3. **Brainstorming:** Whereas freewriting involves recording ideas in the form of sentences, brainstorming involves writing down just the words and phrases that spring to mind when you think about a subject. You can write these words and phrases in rows and columns, or you can just write them all over the page. Like freewriting, brainstorming is most effective when you decide to spend a certain minimum amount of time—such as ten minutes—generating all the ideas you can. Do not pause to evaluate the worth of an idea, and do not censor any ideas.

4. **Clustering:** Clustering is like brainstorming in that you write down words or phrases that occur to you when you think about a topic. However, when you cluster, you loosely group ideas as trains of thought, recording them on the page in the order in which they occur to you. Clustering is based on the idea that one thought leads to another. Clustering can be especially useful for generating descriptive details about a subject.

5. **Asking Questions:** Another way to generate ideas is by asking—and then finding answers to—questions about your topic. The best place to start is by posing the six questions journalists ask when they are collecting information for a news story: who, what, when, where, why, and how. These questions will help you narrow down a broad topic.

Lesson 2.2: Organizing and Outlining

Lesson 2.2 Introduction

While prewriting helps you discover your topic and what you want to say, organizing and outlining helps you find the best framework for arranging your thoughts about your main idea. To do this, you will need to go through a process to decide what information to include and how to organize that information. After you've organized your thoughts, creating an outline will help you determine the order in which you should present ideas and create a plan for whatever you are writing.

Outlines come in different forms, but regardless of their form, they all provide the writer with a guide to follow as he or she writes.

This lesson briefly reviews the benefits of organizing and outlining before starting a draft.

Benefits of Organizing and Outlining

When you are generating ideas, those ideas rarely occur to you in an organized manner. Nor should they. When you prewrite, you free your creative mind to let ideas flow without worrying about their order. However, before you write, you must organize your thoughts. When you read something, you expect the author to have grouped his or her ideas together, divided them into paragraphs, and linked thoughts together so that you can follow them. Likewise, the readers of your writing will expect the same of you. If you offer your readers a collection of disorderly, random thoughts, they are likely to become confused about what you are trying to say. They are also likely to miss important connections you want them to make.

Determining the right order for ideas can be a challenging task because there are often several different ways to arrange your thoughts. To find the most effective pattern, you might have to think of several different possibilities before deciding which is best. It is important to devote some time and attention to examining all the pieces and figuring out how to fit them together, for your organizational structure (or the lack of it) can make or break your paper.

Prewriting should include the creation of a main idea statement that will keep your writing focused on just one point. Next, you will need to determine the best framework for arranging your thoughts about your main idea. You begin to create this framework when you examine your main idea statement and your prewriting (brainstorming, freewriting, cluster, or whatever you used) and go through a three-step process to decide on what information to include and what order to put it in:

- Step 1: Circle ideas and information that match your main idea statement, and ignore or cross out ideas that seem irrelevant.

- Step 2: Group similar ideas and information together.

- Step 3: Decide on the best way to put these groups of ideas in order.

Creating an outline of your ideas before you write will help you keep the overall big picture in mind as you concentrate on the smaller details. It will also prevent you from:

- straying from your main point and including information or ideas that are irrelevant

- rambling or jumping from thought to thought in a manner that confuses the reader

- mixing different kinds of information together

- discussing an idea in the wrong place

There are different types of outline. When you think of an outline, you may picture one that includes Roman numerals. A formal outline uses some combination of Roman numerals, letters, and/or Arabic numbers. If an outline is not required for your assignment, and you are creating one as a tool for yourself, then you are free to use a less formal method. Informal types of outlines can take the form of brief lists of ideas in the order in which you want to discuss them.

When people object to creating an outline prior to writing, their argument is usually along the lines of this: they think they will save time by skipping the outline and just working out their organization as they write. But failing to outline actually *adds* time. When you do not spend time determining and writing down a plan of organization before you start, you force your brain to juggle two challenging mental tasks (organizing and composing) at the same time.

Lesson 2.3: Components of an Essay

Lesson 2.3 Introduction

The next step in the writing process is composing the essay draft. An essay is a multiparagraph composition that develops one idea or opinion, which is called the thesis. Like a paragraph, an essay focuses on one point and includes details that support that point. However, an essay is not just an expanded paragraph. For one thing, the thesis usually expresses an idea that requires more development than the idea expressed in a paragraph's topic sentence. Therefore, an essay is broader in scope and thus needs to be longer.

An essay has three main parts: an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. The introduction gives readers background information, gets them interested, and provides the thesis statement. The body is composed of several paragraphs that include all of the evidence that explains or proves the thesis. The conclusion provides a satisfying ending to the essay.

This lesson briefly reviews the three parts of an essay.

Parts of an Essay

Introduction

The thesis statement generally appears in the introduction, or opening, of your essay. In addition to stating the thesis, the introductions of the essays you write should fulfill two additional purposes.

Every introduction you write should get the attention of your readers and provide them with necessary background information. In attention to grabbing their attention, it should get them interested in the essay's topic and the points you make about that topic.

Another purpose of the introduction is to provide readers with necessary background information about the topic. After you have gotten readers interested in what you have to say, you need to provide some facts or explanation about your topic so they will understand the point you make in your thesis. Do not assume that readers will know all about your topic. Provide a brief orientation so you are sure they have the information they need to understand your ideas.

To review, an introduction must fulfill three purposes: state the thesis, interest the reader, and provide necessary background information. However, an introduction may not necessarily fulfill these three purposes in the order in which they have been presented.

Body

The body of an essay supplies all the ideas and information that explain or prove the point made in the thesis statement. The body consists of several body paragraphs—one for each separate idea or reason that supports the thesis. Each idea or reason is usually stated in a clear topic

sentence. Then the rest of the paragraph develops this topic sentence with details such as facts, examples, observations, or other kinds of support.

Conclusion

In a brief essay, the conclusion is the very last paragraph. It is usually unnecessary to repeat or summarize all the ideas just presented. Instead, think of the purpose of the conclusion as providing closure, or a satisfying ending, for the reader. View the conclusions you write as opportunities to wrap up your essay and to suggest how your readers might respond to it. Write your conclusion under the assumption that you have convinced your readers that the idea or opinion in your thesis is true. Now that they agree with you, what should happen next?

Lesson 2.4: Revising and Editing

Lesson 2.4 Introduction

Even after a draft is written, you are still not quite finished. The fourth step of the process is revising and the fifth step is editing. Revising and editing are not the same thing, and it is best to accomplish revision and editing as two separate, distinct steps.

When you revise, you are evaluating and improving, if necessary, the way your whole essay or individual paragraphs are organized or developed. You will need to consider completeness, cohesiveness, and coherence when revising your work.

When you edit your writing, you proofread, or search for errors at the sentence and word levels. In other words, you comb through the paper carefully, searching for grammatical and spelling errors and making adjustments to sentences to improve your overall style. Editing involves making these necessary corrections. After locating and fixing any errors, you prepare your final draft for submission.

This lesson briefly reviews the criteria for revising and editing.

Revising vs. Editing

Take a moment and think about the word *revision*. Notice that it includes the prefix *re-,* meaning "back or again," and the root word -*vision*, which means revision literally means "to look at again." Once you have written an essay, you need to look at it again to make sure you have successfully explained your main idea to your readers.

Revising and editing are different steps. When you revise a paragraph, you are looking for and then correcting paragraph-level problems. In other words, you are evaluating and improving, if necessary, the way your whole paragraph is organized or developed. Editing involves examining the paragraph at the sentence and word levels and correcting errors in sentence construction, grammar, word choice, and spelling.

It is best to accomplish revision and editing as two separate, distinct steps, for each process involves looking at different aspects of each paragraph.

Criteria for Revision

To revise a paragraph, you will need to evaluate it for the three Cs: completeness, cohesiveness, and coherence.

- **Completeness.** When you are examining a paragraph to make sure it is complete, or adequately developed, you are evaluating its layers of development. A layer of development provides more specific information about a general idea in the sentence that came before it. It anticipates and answers readers' questions about more general statements, so it increases their understanding. To determine whether you have provided enough development, consider the following techniques.

  - **Use different colors of highlighter markers to identify the layers in your paragraph**. Use one color to highlight the topic sentence, which is the most general sentence in the paragraph. Use another color to highlight the second sentence, which should develop the first sentence. If the third sentence develops the second sentence, use yet another color to highlight it. If the third sentence develops the first sentence, highlight it with the same color you used for the second sentence. Follow this same procedure for all sentences in the paragraph. Then, after you have highlighted every sentence, see how colorful your paragraph is. In general, paragraphs that contain more colors are probably developing the main idea with sufficient details. A paragraph that is highlighted with only two colors, however, may need the addition of more specific information and examples.

  - **Count the sentences in your paragraphs.** There is no magic minimum or maximum number of sentences for a paragraph. The number of sentences a paragraph contains will depend on the main idea and supporting information. However, if a paragraph contains only three or four sentences, it may be incomplete because it is not adequately developed. Get in the habit of scrutinizing shorter paragraphs in particular to make sure that they include enough layers of development.

  - **Scan your drafts for the phrase *for example*.** This phrase often appears at the beginning of sentences that really help readers grasp your ideas. If you never begin sentences this way, you may not be including the specific information your reader needs in order to understand your thoughts on a topic.

- **Cohesiveness.** After you determine that your paragraph includes enough layers of development, the next step is to make sure that every sentence in it relates to the idea in your topic sentence. If a paragraph is cohesive, all of its sentences "stick together" to support one main idea. To determine whether you have included a sentence that prevents cohesiveness, try these two techniques:

  - **Count the sentences in your paragraph.** When you evaluate a paragraph for completeness, you become more aware of which ones are particularly brief. When you evaluate for cohesiveness, you pay more attention to especially long paragraphs. A relatively long paragraph might be trying to develop too many different ideas, so it may not be cohesive. It may need to be divided up into smaller, more unified units.

  - **Read the sentences of your paragraph backward, beginning with the last sentence.** After you read each sentence, reread the topic sentence. Decide whether each individual sentence truly relates to the main idea.

- **Coherence.** In addition to being complete and cohesive, a paragraph needs to be coherent. If a paragraph is coherent, it makes sense because it offers a clear progression of thought. In other words, readers can easily follow the writer's ideas from sentence to sentence. Evaluating a paragraph's coherence involves examining its overall organization and its transitions, as well as repetition of key words and ideas. Specifically, you should review the following areas:

  - o **Organization and transitions.** The ideas in paragraphs are often presented in certain types of order that are familiar to readers. For example, paragraphs that relate a series of events or explain the steps in a process are organized in *time order*. In other words, the events or steps are presented in chronological order, or the order in which they happened. A second common type is *order of importance*. Using this order, a series of ideas or reasons may be presented either the most important item either given first or saved until last.

  - o **Repetition of key words and ideas.** Another feature of coherent paragraphs is the repetition of key words and ideas, which link the sentences of the paragraph together. Repeating the words that name the topic, along with synonyms and pronouns that either rename or refer to the topic, causes the whole paragraph to "stick together."

Criteria for Proofreading and Editing

During the editing step, you will improve the essay's style and correct major sentence errors, as well errors in grammar, mechanics, and spelling.

- **Style.** The style of writing refers to the words the writer has chosen and the way sentences are constructed. There are many different writing styles, and you will surely develop your own style as you continue to improve your overall writing skills. Right now, however, you should concentrate on choosing words and constructing sentences in such a way that your writing is interesting, clear, and easy to read.

  - o **Sentence length**: Writing that is composed mostly of very short sentences usually seems dull and monotonous to readers. If readers are bored by your sentences, they will find it harder to concentrate on your meaning. Also, short sentences may not make important connections, so readers may not fully understand your ideas.

  - o **Sentence types**: Another way to achieve a style of writing that is interesting is to vary not only the length but also the type of sentence you write. If you see that you are relying too heavily on simple, short sentences, combine some of them to add more variety. There are four types of sentences:

    - A *simple* sentence contains just one independent clause (one subject–verb relationship). *The cashier counted the money in the drawer.*

    - A *compound* sentence contains two independent clauses. Each contains at least one subject and one verb and could stand alone as a complete sentence. *My aunt likes cats, but my uncle is allergic to them.*

    - A *complex* sentence contains a dependent clause and an independent clause. *If I am going to make an A on the exam, I will have to study.*

- A *compound–complex* sentence includes a dependent clause and two independent clauses. *As the final buzzer sounded, Mike shot the ball, and it went into the basket.*

  o **Diction:** Diction refers to the individual words you choose. These words affect your style. In particular, you should evaluate:

    - the appropriateness of your words' level of formality, specificity, emotion, and originality. To determine whether a word is appropriate or not, you must consider your readers and decide if the word is suitable for them.

    - whether your words are specific enough. Specific words help readers form clear images in their minds so that they can grasp your meaning more easily. Using general or more vague terms makes it harder for readers to understand your ideas.

    - the emotion conveyed through the words you have chosen. Some words, like cat, are relatively neutral. That is, they carry no particular emotional suggestion. But compare cat with the word kitty, which indicates affection for that animal.

    - whether your word choices are original. In other words, you should find and eliminate any clichés, or overused expressions that everyone has heard before.

- **Major sentence errors.** In addition to proofreading your drafts for sentence variety, appropriate language, and wordiness, you will need to find and eliminate major errors in sentence structure. These errors include *sentence fragments, run-on sentences, dangling or misplaced modifiers,* and *faulty parallelism.*

- **Grammar and mechanics.** You will also need to check your writing for many other kinds of grammatical and mechanical errors, including *subject-verb agreement errors, errors in verb tense,* and *capitalization and punctuation errors*.

- **Spelling.** Your final draft should always be free of spelling errors. There are three ways to identify and correct errors in spelling. First, whenever you have the slightest doubt whether a word is spelled correctly, look it up in a dictionary. Second, you can use spell-checking software. Finally, you can ask someone else to proofread your draft for spelling errors.

MODULE 3

WRITING EFFECTIVE PARAGRAPHS

Introduction

Imagine that the books or articles you read present thoughts and information to you in no particular order, leaving you to try to make sense of them all. Reading such a book or article would be a confusing and unpleasant task. Just as you expect writers to have grouped their sentences into related units of thought, known as paragraphs, the readers of your writing will expect you to have done the same with your own ideas.

Previously, you were introduced to the writing process, including prewriting strategies and the importance of organizing and outlining your ideas. Next, you will focus on the third step of the writing process, composing a draft. Specifically, it covers what elements are needed to create well-written paragraphs and reviews the components of a paragraph, strategies for writing effective topic sentences, and what details are involved in creating paragraphs with layers of development and transitions.

Lesson 3.1 Introduction

A paragraph can be defined as a group of sentences that all support or develop one particular idea about a topic. A paragraph can stand alone, or it can be combined with other paragraphs to form a longer piece of writing, such as an essay.

Writing well-developed paragraphs is part of the third step of the writing process, composing a draft, and it is a crucial part of writing. This lesson reviews what a paragraph is, and what components are needed to write a good one.

What is a Paragraph

The purpose of a paragraph, particularly in a longer piece of writing, is to **group related sentences together so that readers can clearly understand the writer's ideas.**

What does a paragraph look like? The following diagram shows the form of a paragraph in a typical academic essay. The first sentence of a paragraph is indented five spaces, or tabbed, from the left margin. The remaining sentences follow each other with only two spaces between them, and blank space follows the last word of the last sentence.

First sentence indented 5 spaces

_____

_____   *Sentences two spaces apart*

_____

_____

Left side lines up along margin line

_____   *Line blank after last word of last sentence*

_____.

Paragraphs can vary in length from just a few sentences to many sentences, but they should always have two main parts: a topic sentence and a body. **The topic sentence states the paragraph's main idea, and the remaining sentences—the body—develop that idea with more information and explanation.**

In a well-written paragraph, the topic sentence will be apparent. It will be the most general statement in the paragraph, and all of the other sentences will clearly develop the point that it makes. A topic sentence is often the first sentence of the paragraph, but it does not have to be. It can appear anywhere in the paragraph: at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end. It is not too broad or too narrow, and it takes into account the topic, audience, and purpose of the paragraph.

The body of the paragraph includes all of the sentences that support, explain, or prove the idea expressed in the topic sentence. These sentences should provide all of the evidence the reader will need in order to accept the main idea as true.

Lesson 3.2: Topic Sentences

Lesson 3.2 Introduction

Earlier modules reviewed strategies for generating a main idea statement as part of the prewriting step. This main idea statement becomes the **topic sentence**, **the sentence in the paragraph that states the main idea**.

The term *topic sentence* might seem a little misleading, for **the topic sentence also states the writer's point about that topic.** If you try to begin writing with only a topic in mind, you will probably not produce a coherent and well-developed paragraph. When you are unsure about exactly what you mean to say, your paragraph will probably ramble aimlessly. Make sure that before you begin to write, you have a complete topic sentence that includes both your topic and your point.

This section reviews the strategies for creating an effective topic sentence and strategies for revising an ineffective one.

Effective Topic Sentences

When you write topic sentences for paragraphs of your own, remember that **an effective topic sentence** has three essential characteristics:

- It is a complete sentence that includes both a topic and a point.
- It is not too broad or too narrow.

- It takes into account not just the topic, but also the audience and purpose of the paragraph.

First of all, **a topic sentence has two parts: it states the topic of the paragraph, and it also states the writer's point about that topic.** Notice how each of the following topic sentences contains both a topic and an idea about that topic:

Topic	**Point**
My hobby	offers me several different benefits.
Friends	should not try to resolve a conflict via e-mail.
My mother	is the person I admire most.

In addition to being complete, **a topic sentence must also be appropriately specific.** If an idea is too broad or too vague, it will not keep you properly focused as you write. For example, consider the following examples:

Too broad: Summer activities are a lot of fun.

Too vague: Something should be done about the traffic in this city.

Neither of these statements expresses one clear idea, so each would probably lead to rambling when it came time to write. To improve these two statements, rewrite them to narrow the topic and/or the idea.

Swimming at the lake is my family's favorite summertime activity.

Expanding and improving bus service would help reduce city traffic.

On the other hand, though, you do not want to make your topic sentence so specific or limited that you cannot develop it at all.

Too specific: The temperature rose to 98 degrees last week.

Because this sentence states a fact, there is not much more you can say about it. To improve it, broaden the topic and the idea:

Last week's 98-degree heat caused a number of serious problems.

Be aware that your topic sentence may not be perfect on your first try. You may have to work on it until it says exactly what you want to express by experimenting with the wording and perhaps even rewriting it.

Revising Topic Sentences

So far, you have learned that effective topic sentences are complete and appropriately specific. A **good topic sentence also takes into account the audience and purpose of the paragraph.** When you are composing your topic sentence, you will not only want to consider what you want to say, but also why and to whom you want to say it.

So, in addition to the topic, there are **two other factors—audience and purpose**—that affect how you express your topic sentence.

- **Audience or readers**: Who is going to read your writing? What does this audience need or want to know about the topic? Your topic sentence should take into account this audience's needs and desires.

- **Purpose:** Do you want to entertain your readers? Do you want to inform them about your topic so they can learn something new? Or do you want to persuade them to believe what you believe about the topic? Your topic sentence should clearly reflect this purpose.

For example, consider this topic sentence: "Massage has several important health benefits." The writer intends to explain to someone who is interested in health how massage affects the body in positive ways.

But notice how the purpose of this next statement differs: "You should get a cardiovascular workout at least three times a week." Although the audience is probably the same, the words "you should" indicate that the writer's purpose is persuasive.

If the first topic sentence were changed to have a persuasive purpose, it might read: "If you want to feel great and improve your health, you must get regular massages."

Lesson 3.3: Supporting Details

Lesson 3.3 Introduction

After writing an effective topic sentence, you will need to write the body of the paragraph. The body includes all of the sentences **that support, explain, or prove the idea expressed in the topic sentence**. These need to be the right kinds of supporting ideas, and they should be listed in the right order. Every time you write a sentence, ask yourself this question: *Is there some idea here that I should explain more by giving another fact, detail, or example?*

Equally important is that you will need to connect these sentences together smoothly with the help of transition words and phrases. The word *transition* comes from the Latin prefix *trans*, which means "across." **Transitions bridge the gaps across sentences and paragraphs and reveal how they are related**.

This module reviews what types of supporting evidence you can include to support your topic sentence, as well as techniques to transition between these supporting sentences.

Supporting the Topic Sentence

As you write, you might want to consider using your outline (which will be covered later). After you have made the final adjustments to your outline, you are ready to begin writing the body sentences of your paragraph. The body of the paragraph includes all of the sentences that support, explain, or prove the idea expressed in the topic sentence. These sentences provide all of the evidence the reader will need in order to accept the main idea as true, and this evidence can take a variety of different forms, including:

- facts
- statistics and other data
- examples
- stories
- reasons
- comparisons
- descriptive details

Using your outline as a guide, write about the first group of ideas you have listed. Then write about the second group, and so on. As you write, think of using layers of development to explain each of your ideas. **A layer of development provides more specific information about a general idea in the sentence that came before it**. So a layer of development anticipates and answers questions that pop into readers' heads as they read and may use evidence to support those answers.

For example, suppose you write the sentence "Joe is a very neat person." The word *neat* is relatively general and could mean a lot of different things. As your readers read this sentence, they will probably immediately think, *What do you mean by "neat"?* or *How is Joe a neat person?* Instead of going on to another new idea, you need to add some information—a layer of development—to answer these questions. In other words, you need to explain what you mean. So you might add this sentence:

> *For example, all of Joe's CDs and books are tidy and organized.*

This sentence helps the reader better understand what *neat* means in this context. However, you should ask yourself, *Will readers have any questions about this sentence?* They might be asking, for instance, *What do you mean by "tidy and organized"? or What do his CDs and books look like?* You might add another layer of development to answer these questions.

> *They are all lined up in alphabetical order on dust-free shelves.*

By adding these two sentences, you have made it very clear to readers how neat Joe is.

There is no rule about how many layers of development or how much evidence should be included in a paragraph. The number of layers you include will always depend on the idea or information in each sentence you write. But if you get in the habit of wondering whether you just wrote something that might need further development, you will be less likely to leave readers guessing about what you really mean. Your ideas will be clear.

Transitions

To help your readers see how sentences are related to each other, add transitional words to your sentences. Transitional words and phrases show the relationships between thoughts and ideas. Following are some common types of transitional words, with a few examples of each type.

Transitional words that signal addition:

Also

Too

Second

Furthermore

And

In addition

First

Third

Finally

Another

Transitional words that show time order:

Now

Today

Soon

Finally

Eventually

Then

Next

Later

Previously

Meanwhile

Transitional words that indicate causes or consequences:

So

As a result

Hence

Thus

Therefore

Consequently

Because

For this reason

Transitional words that signal examples:

For example

In one case

To illustrate

For instance

As an illustration

Transitional words that signal comparisons:

Also

Likewise

However

Yet

On the other hand

Too

Similarly

But

In contrast

Lesson 3.4: Patterns of Development

Lesson 3.4 Introduction

Once you have written your topic sentence and decided what evidence you will use to support it, the next step is to reevaluate your outline to make sure it still matches the idea expressed in the topic sentence. You will want to evaluate each sentence and make sure it truly fits your topic sentence, and that the sentences are in the right order. You must be sure to use evidence in the most persuasive way. This lesson will help you reevaluate your outline and consider common strategies for organizing your ideas.

You will have the opportunity to put your skills into practice and write a paragraph of your own combining all the elements you have learned about so far in this module: components of a paragraph, effective topic sentences, appropriate supporting details, transitions, and organizing ideas.

Organizing Supporting Details

Before proceeding, you must reexamine your outline to make sure that it still matches the idea in the topic sentence, and make any necessary adjustments to your outline before you begin writing.

Consider, for example, the following topic sentence and existing outline by a writer named Luisa.

My scuba diving trip to the Florida Keys was interesting.

> – *saw fascinating fish and underwater plant life*
> – *improved my scuba skills*
> – *brought back interesting souvenirs*
> – *met people and made some new friends*

Luisa then revised her topic sentence to read:

> *My scuba diving trip contributed to my personal development.*

The topic sentence and outline no longer seem to match because Luisa's topic sentence revisions focus more specifically on her personal development. So Luisa made a few changes to her outline:

> *My scuba diving trip contributed to my personal development.*

> – *improved my scuba skills*
> – *challenged myself by diving deeper than I thought I could*
> – *learned to cope with several of my fears*

After Luisa revised her outline, it seemed more appropriate for the topic sentence she planned to develop.

As part of this step, you will want to **consider the common strategies for organizing ideas**. The list that follows provides a brief description of each, along with examples of clue words in topic sentences that often suggest a certain pattern:

- **Narration**. Tell a story from your own or someone else's experience. Examples include: *several events, a number of developments, over time*
- **Description**. Provide details about people, places, and things so that readers can picture them in their minds. Examples include: *features, characteristics*
- **Process**. Explain the steps of a procedure. Examples include: *three steps, several stages, process, procedure*
- **Illustration**. Provide specific examples that illustrate the main idea. Examples include: *for example, e.g.*

- **Classification**. Group items in categories. Examples include: *types, categories, groups, classes, kinds*
- **Division**. Examine the parts of something. Examples include: *parts, pieces, sections*
- **Comparison and contrast**. Examine how two things are alike and/or different (points of comparison). Examples include: *similarities, differences, likenesses, comparisons, contrasts*
- **Cause and effect**. Explain why something occurred, or examine the results or outcomes. Examples include: *causes, effects, consequences, reasons*
- **Definition**. Explain the meaning of a term. Examples include: *defined, definition, is*
- **Argument**. Present a series of reasons to convince. Example: *reasons*

Often, your topic sentence will either dictate or suggest how to organize your paragraph according to one or more of these patterns. For example, the topic sentence "Moving to a new town when I was sixteen years old resulted in a number of good and bad effects" indicates that the essay will discuss effects. Therefore, the paragraph's supporting details should be the various effects of moving. The thesis statement "My new home is much different from the town where I spent my childhood" indicates comparison and contrast, and the supporting details should be in the form of points of comparison.

PREWRITING STRATEGIES

Introduction

Prewriting is useful for generating ideas and for clearing your mind of distracting thoughts prior to writing. You can also use prewriting strategies to help you solve personal or work-related problems.

You have already been introduced to the benefits of prewriting, but here we will briefly review the top reasons why prewriting is useful to the writing process:

- It can help you find a topic to write about.
- It can help you narrow a topic or find some interesting aspect of it.
- It can help you remember or discover what you already know about a topic.
- It can help you decide what you want to say about your topic.

Prewriting is especially useful if you tend to experience **writer's block, the state of being unable to think of ideas when you sit down to write**. It is indeed frustrating to be faced with a blank sheet of paper or a blank computer screen and be unable to think of anything to say.

Next, you will learn how to use the following prewriting strategies:

- Freewriting
- Brainstorming
- Clustering
- Asking questions

Then, you will learn how to turn topic ideas into a main idea for your draft.

You may have found that one of the prewriting methods listed above seems particularly effective, and if so, you should use that method to generate ideas for your papers. However, be aware that different strategies may be more suitable for different kinds of topics. You might want to consider using at least two different prewriting strategies each time you need to generate ideas. Using a combination of methods may yield the best, most comprehensive results.

Lesson 4.1: Prewriting Strategy: Freewriting

Lesson 4.1 Introduction

Freewriting is a great prewriting strategies to start with because you simply consider the topic and write down what you are thinking about it. You do not judge what you are writing. During freewriting, you do not censor or reject any thoughts, nor do you try to organize them. You do not

bother to cross out or correct anything. You do not need to worry about grammar or spelling. You write nonstop, keeping your pen moving, and if you run out of ideas, you continue writing something, such as "my mind is blank my mind is blank my mind is blank…" until another thought comes to mind.

The goal of **freewriting** is **to generate ideas. You do this by recording, as quickly as you can, the flow of thoughts going through your mind as described above**. Freewriting can help you discover what you already know about a topic, find a topic, or narrow a topic. There is no pressure during this prewriting activity because it is for your eyes only. Freewriting is a tool for the writer to get some ideas flowing, and readers do not see it.

Next, you will see freewriting in action and will learn tips for effective freewriting.

How to Freewrite

When you freewrite:

- It is useful to time yourself. Set a timer for 10 minutes and do not stop writing until the timer goes off. Doing so will encourage you to write longer than you might ordinarily write, helping you generate more ideas. You can of course choose any other amount of time, such as 15 or 20 minutes, depending on the project.
- Do not censor or reject any thoughts. Do not try to organize them. Do not edit or revise them.
- Do not pause at all; instead, write nonstop.

Consider the below freewriting example, which one student wrote when she considered the topic "underage drinking":

Underage Drinking

Underage drinking has been a problem for a long time. I think I heard that about three-quarters of all high school students have tried alcohol by the time they graduate and for both h.s. and college students fake i.d.s are too easy to get—several of my friends have one and they use them at bars and in convenence stores to buy beer. So I think that business owners should be more skeptical when young people come in, even if they have an i.d. because they drink and get into auto accidents, one girl at our school was driving while drunk and rolled her car which killed her and the other person with her. It was very sad but it seems as though you can't be a member of the cool crowd if your not drinking The commercials on TV are partly to blame because they perpetuate the idea that drinking is fun and sexy. Its hard to resist those messages especially when everyone else is doing it.

You probably noticed as you read this freewriting sample that although it is written in full sentences, it contains errors, such as misspellings and missing punctuation. That is fine, however, because the point of freewriting is to explore thoughts without worrying about the mechanics of writing. By completing this freewriting exercise about underage drinking, this student touched on several different causes of the problem, and she is well on her way to creating an essay that will examine the reasons why underage drinking is so prevalent.

Freewriting is also useful for finding a topic to write about and for narrowing a topic. If you are in search of a topic to write about, you can freewrite about "things that anger me" or "topics

that interest me." Once you have generated several topic possibilities, pick one or two of the most promising ones and freewrite about each of them. Similarly, if you need to narrow a broad topic, freewrite about different aspects of it in order to find one that interests you.

Lesson 4.2: Prewriting Strategy: Brainstorming and Clustering

Lesson 4.2 Introduction

Freewriting can be a useful strategy, but some people favor brainstorming and clustering because of the way these strategies make writers record and sift through ideas. Whereas freewriting involves recording ideas in the form of sentences, **brainstorming involves writing down just the words and phrases that spring to mind when you think about a subject**. A similar strategy, clustering, is like brainstorming in that you write down words or phrases that occur to you when you think about a topic. However, when **you cluster, you loosely group ideas as chains of thought, recording them on the page in the order in which they occur to you**.

Next, you will review tips for brainstorming and clustering and examples of each.

Brainstorming

Like freewriting, **brainstorming is most effective when you decide to spend a certain minimum amount of time**—such as 10 minutes—generating all the ideas you can. Do not pause to evaluate the worth of an idea, and do not censor any ideas. Later, you will go back and reconsider the value of each idea, but while you brainstorm, you simply write them all down. Just focus on the topic and record everything that pops into your head as quickly as possible. Because brainstorming is a tool for only you, the writer, do not worry about spelling, organization, or neat penmanship, for no one else needs to see it. An example of one student's brainstorm, about the topic of stress, is shown below.

insomnia

pressure to succeed

work

studying   home

bills

STRESS

test anxiety

interpersonal conflicts

responsibilities

anger

misunderstandings

headaches

irritable

tension

ulcers

Brainstorming can be useful to help you find a subject to write about. For example, you could write "things that make me angry" in the middle of a piece of paper and then fill up the page with your pet peeves.

In addition, **brainstorming is an effective tool for narrowing a subject**. Write down a broad subject and then record all of the specific aspects of it that occur to you. If you already have a topic, you can use brainstorming to generate ideas about it. For instance, you might write down "reasons why students choose community colleges over universities" and then fill up the page with all of the reasons you can think of.

Clustering

Clustering is based on the idea that one thought leads to another. If you were to create a cluster of ideas about the beach, you might begin by jotting down one particular train (or chain) of thought:

BEACH

sand

sandcastles

children

buckets and pails
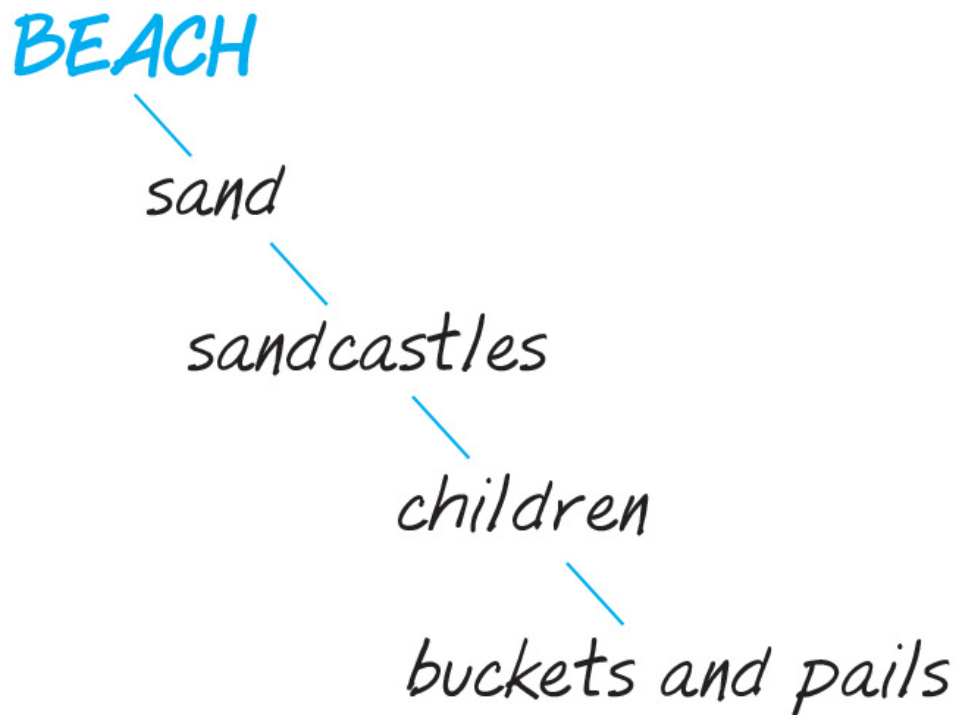
Then you would add another thought chain:

BEACH

dangerous   sand

undertow   sandcastles

drowning   children

lifeguards   buckets and pails

rescue
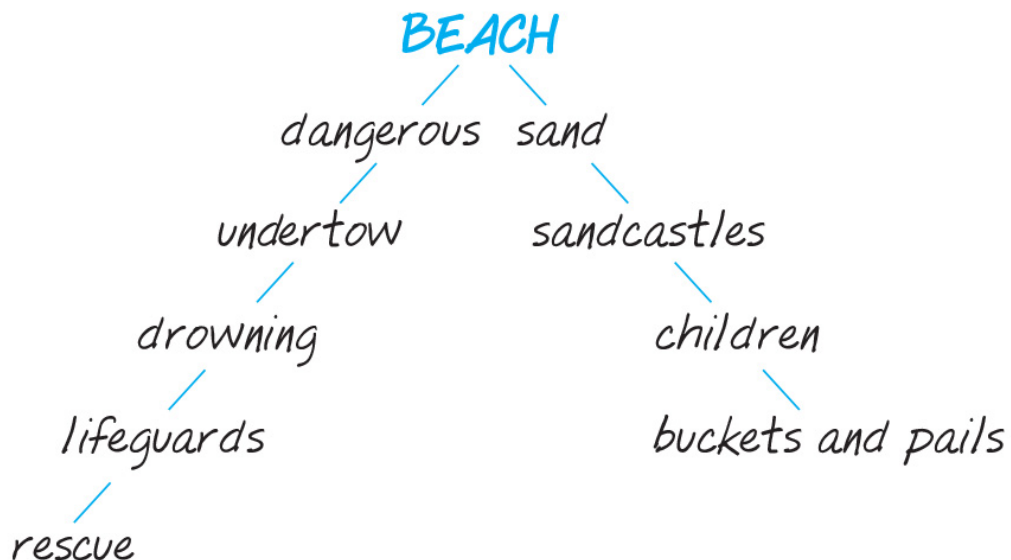
You exhaust one chain of thought before beginning another, and add new clusters that branch out from the main topic until you cannot think of any more ideas.

Clustering can be especially useful for generating descriptive details about a subject. You can guide yourself toward coming up with information related to each of the five senses by focusing each chain of thought on one sense. For example, a chain for the sense of hearing related to the beach could include waves, seagulls, a lifeguard's whistle, and children playing. You would complete this cluster by extending the thought chains for sights, smells, tastes, and physical sensations (touch), as shown below.

blue sky

waves

SIGHTS

suntan lotion

salt

SMELLS

BEACH

PHYSICAL
SENSATIONS

TASTES

wind

SOUNDS

gritty sand

warm sun

waves

seagulls

lifeguard's
whistle

children
playing
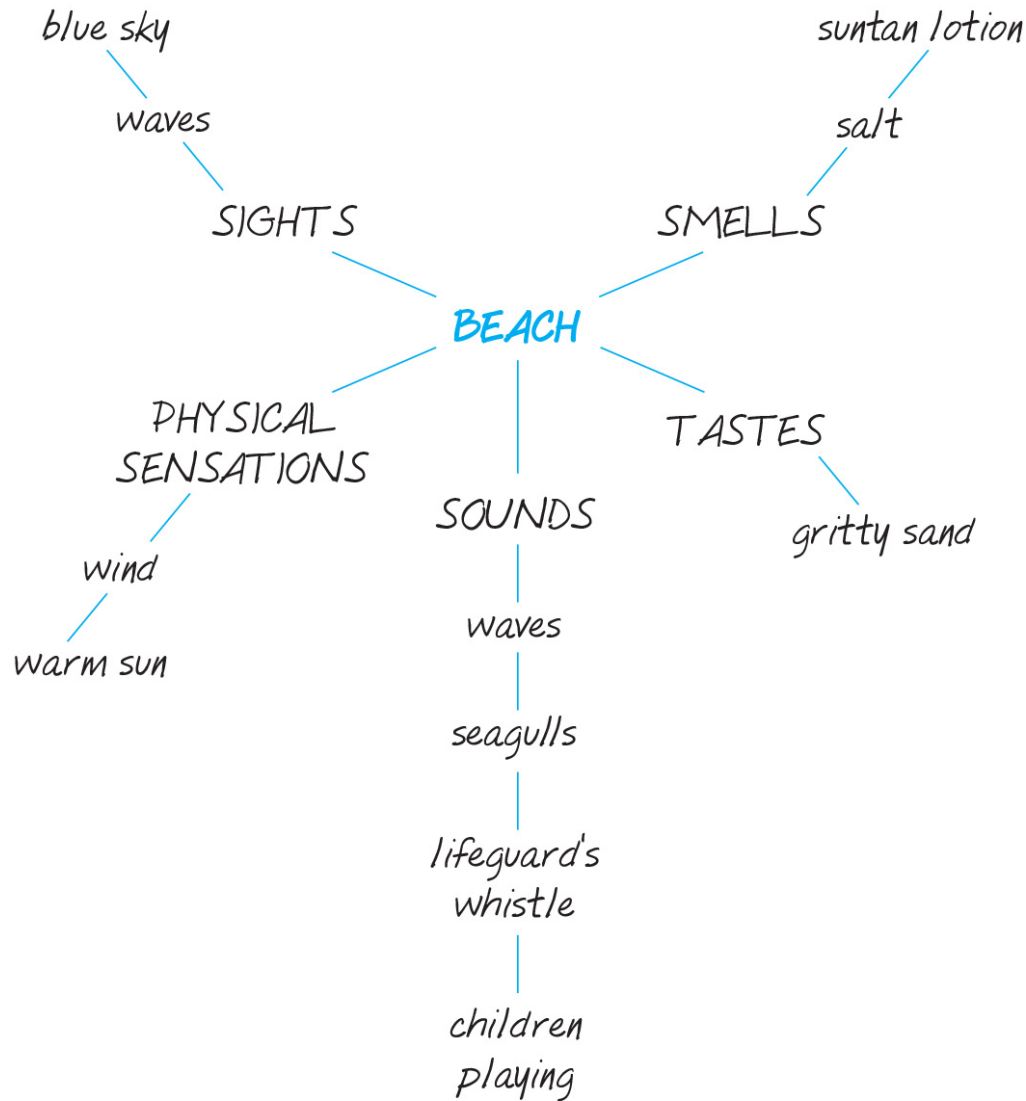
Lesson 4.3: Prewriting Strategy: Asking Questions

Lesson 4.3 Introduction

Prewriting does not only help you discover what you already know about a topic; it also reveals what you do not know. When you realize what you do not know about the topic, you can make a list of facts and other information that you will need to find for your paragraph or essay. The method of asking questions will, in particular, reveal gaps in your knowledge.

You will often be able to provide the answers to some of these questions without too much effort, but for others, you will probably need to do some research. Asking these questions can lead you to create a "shopping list" of the details and information you need, and you can then use this list as a guide when you begin your research.

Next, you will review strategies for asking questions to help generate ideas for your writing.

Asking Questions

Another way to **generate ideas is by asking—and then finding answers to—questions about your topic.** The best place to start is by **posing the six questions journalists ask when they are collecting information for a news story:** *Who? What? When? Where? Why?* and *How?*

These questions will help you narrow a broad topic. For example, a student who was assigned to write a paper about modern zoos wrote the following questions:

> **Zoos**
> *Who works in a zoo today?*
> *What are modern zoos like?*
> *What distinguishes modern zoos from zoos of the past?*
> *What are the goals of the modern zoo?*
> *When did zoos begin to evolve?*
> *Where are today's state-of-the-art zoos?*
> *Why have zoos changed?*
> *How do zoos function?*
> *How do zoo employees care for so many different animals?*

These questions allowed the student to see different aspects of the topic on which she could focus, and they helped her discover that she was most interested in the goals of modern zoos. She then created a new round of questions about that more specific topic.

> **Goals of Modern Zoos**
>
> *Who are the people who formulated the goals of modern zoos?*
>
> *What are these goals?*
>
> *When did these goals begin to change?*
>
> *Where are the zoos that illustrate these new goals?*
>
> *Why have these goals changed?*
>
> *How do the goals of today's zoos differ from the goals of zoos in the past?*

The student can now choose the questions that interest her most and then use one of the other prewriting strategies—such as freewriting or brainstorming—to identify the answers to these questions.

Lesson 4.4: From Topic to Main Idea

Lesson 4.4 Introduction

You have learned that one use for prewriting is to help you figure out what you want to say about a topic. After you decide on a topic and explore your ideas about that topic, the next step in the process is to determine your main idea, the point that you want to make. In order to write a coherent paragraph or essay, you must begin with a very clear understanding of this main idea, so it is important to spend some time working on it until it expresses exactly what you want to communicate.

Next, we will review main idea statements and see an example of the writing process that goes from prewriting to forming the main idea.

Topics and Main Ideas

A main idea has two components: the topic and the point you intend to make about it.
Usually, your main idea statement will begin with the topic and then go on to state the intended point. Following are several examples of different main idea statements:

> **Topic:** *Dating*
>
> **Point:** *has changed significantly over the last 25 years.*

> **Topic:** *Breakfast*
>
> **Point:** *is the most important meal of the day.*

> **Topic:** *Wind*
>
> **Point:** *is a valuable alternative energy source.*

Remember, a topic alone cannot be a main idea. The main idea includes both the topic and what you want to say about that topic.

> **Topic:** *Sleep*
>
> **Main Idea:** *Adequate sleep is important to good health.*

> **Topic:** *Emily Dickinson*
>
> **Main Idea:** *Emily Dickinson was one of the most talented poets who ever lived.*

> **Topic:** *Drunk-driving laws*
>
> **Main Idea:** *Drunk-driving laws must be made even stricter.*

For a demonstration of the writing process, see the example of a student named Maya who wrote a paragraph about student success for her English class. Maya began by prewriting, generated ideas, and decided on her main idea.

Maya decided to brainstorm about the topic first. She came up with the following ideas:

concentration

keep up with reading

stay focused

STUDENT SUCCESS

study groups

get organized

set goals

persevere

avoid procrastination

study skills

attendance

campus resources

Maya looked over the results of her brainstorming exercise and decided that she was most interested in writing about getting organized. She knew that she had good organizational skills to help keep up with her academic responsibilities, so she thought she might be able to share some tips that other students would find valuable. She decided to delve into the prewriting process again, this time using freewriting, to generate more ideas:

> *I think that getting and staying organized is essential to being a good student. If your not organized then things can get away from you and you'll miss deadlines and you won't be prepared for class or tests. That's why I use a monthly calendar to record all due dates and test dates. Some of my friends really need to get better organized. Emily and Frank never know where anything is. I keep separate notebooks for each class so things don't get mixed up. Studying in several sessions is important too. I write down tasks I need to complete on certain days to stay current. Like study for math test. And I write it on my To Do list for that day. I check off each thing as I finish it. I can just glance at the calendar and get a picture of my responsibilities for the whole month. On the same calendar, I write my work schedule too and my softball practice times. And I carry my calendar everywhere so I can update it right away.*

Based on this freewriting exercise, Maya realized that she uses several essential tools to keep herself organized. She then wrote down a main idea:

Student success depends on being organized.

Then Maya decided to revise her main idea statement, as she realized that she could make it more specific.

Student success depends on using tools that will help you organize your responsibilities and your materials.

ORGANIZING AND OUTLINING

Introduction

Now that you have learned how to use prewriting techniques to generate ideas, the next step of the writing process is to organize those ideas and prepare an outline to follow as you write.

Determining the right order for ideas can be a challenging task because there are often several different ways to arrange your thoughts. When determining the most effective pattern for you, you might have to think about several different possibilities before deciding which one is best. It is important to devote some time and attention to examining all of the pieces and figuring out how to fit them together, for your organization (or lack of it) can make or break your paper.

This section covers strategies for outlining and organizing, including:

- A three-step process to group and order relevant ideas
- Natural and logical organization
- Formal and informal outlines

Lesson 5.1: Organizing Ideas

Lesson 5.1 Introduction

When you are generating ideas in prewriting, those ideas probably will not occur to you in an organized manner. Nor should they. When you prewrite, you want to free your creative mind and let the ideas flow without worrying about their order. However, before you write, you must bring some organization to these thoughts by building a framework for outlining. If you offer your readers a collection of disorderly, random thoughts, they are likely to become confused about what you are trying to say. They are also likely to miss important connections that you want them to make. A framework helps you create your most effective argument.

You will now review why organizing and outlining your ideas are important steps.

Benefits of Organizing and Outlining

It is essential to organize your ideas and prepare an outline to follow as you write. Creating an outline of your ideas before you write will help you keep the overall big picture in mind as you concentrate on the smaller details. It will also prevent you from:

- straying from your main point and including information or ideas that are irrelevant
- rambling or jumping from thought to thought in a manner that confuses the reader
- mixing different kinds of information together
- discussing an idea in the wrong place

Besides helping clarify your argument, your outline for your paragraph or essay will help you know what information you will need to gather about your topic. When you create your outline,

you can add notes about needed pieces of information. One student, for example, created the following informal outline for a paragraph about the benefits of learning a foreign language:

> *1. Helps improve overall academic performance*
>
> > *– Find studies of children who are learning foreign languages*
> >
> > *– Get SAT statistics*
>
> *2. Good skill for job market*
>
> > *– What is the percentage of jobs for which speaking a foreign language is an asset?*
>
> *3. Helps kids understand other cultures leads to tolerance and world peace*
>
> > *– Find examples of real kids learning languages*

Under each group in this outline, the student listed the pieces of information he will need. As a next step, he can begin to locate those facts and examples.

In your academic life, or later in your career, you may have to create slide presentations using

Microsoft PowerPoint or some other slide-based program. A series of slides that summarizes your main points can be a very effective audiovisual tool to help your audience follow your presentation and remember more of it when it is over.

Learning how to organize and outline your ideas is critical to delivering a successful PowerPoint presentation. Many of your slides will include main points and will indicate how those points are related to one another, just as an outline does. An outline of a speech often *becomes* the slide show; in fact, the PowerPoint application even allows you to transform an outline into an entire slide presentation in just a few steps.

Lesson 5.2: Creating a Framework

Lesson 5.2 Introduction

You have learned that prewriting helps you figure out what topic you want to cover and what you want to say about that topic. Prewriting also helps you create a main idea statement that will keep your writing focused on just one point.

Once you figure out what your main idea statement is, you need to determine the best framework for arranging your thoughts about your main idea. You begin to create this framework by examining your main idea statement and your prewriting exercise, whether it is brainstorming, freewriting, cluster, or whatever other method used, and going through a three-step process to decide what to include and how to order that information:

- Step 1: Circle ideas and information that match your main idea statement and ignore or cross out ideas that seem irrelevant.
- Step 2: Group similar ideas and information together.
- Step 3: Decide on the best way to put these groups of ideas in order.

Determining a Framework – Step 1

Step 1 involves re-examining the ideas you collected when prewriting with your main idea statement in mind: you evaluate each thought or piece of information by asking yourself if it relates to or supports the point in your main idea statement. Then you circle, highlight, or otherwise mark these relevant ideas. At the same time, you either ignore or cross out the ideas and information that do not relate to the point in your main idea. Do not erase these ideas, as you might decide later that one or two of them are useful.

For example, a student, Kyla, was asked to write a paragraph about a famous person who she thought was admirable. Kyla decided to freewrite about television talk-show host Oprah Winfrey, and she came up with the following main idea statement:

Oprah Winfrey is an admirable celebrity.

When Kyla reviewed her freewriting sample for ideas that matched this point, she identified some key words and phrases.

I just love Oprah. Her show is great. Always very informative yet it touches your heart too. She has interesting guests and topics. Things that real people want to know about. She's been going strong for many years and she's recognized all over the country. And she is so far above those other trashy talk shows that encourage people to fight and scream at each other about their personal problems. Oprah wants her show to do good not be sleazy entertainment. And her magazine gives people good advice. Oprah is a very spiritual person she encourages people to remember their higher purpose and I admire her for that. She wants to help people and she supports many charities. She especially helps girls and women realize their full potential. She's a very real person. You can tell that she genuinely cares about her fellow human beings and that she wants to use her life to make the world a better place. Personally, she's a great role model for young women—strong and independent and goal-oriented and smart. She travels all over sharing with people what she's learned.

Kyla looked for reasons why she admires Oprah Winfrey and characteristics Oprah possesses that are worthy of admiration. She circled those reasons and characteristics and ignored those that did not focus on why she admires Oprah.

As you complete this first step of the organizing process, you should honestly evaluate the quantity of your ideas. Did your prewriting exercise generate enough ideas, or did you come up with only a few? If the number of ideas you have generated seems skimpy, go back to the prewriting stage, this time perhaps selecting another technique, and try to come up with more.

Determining a Framework – Step 2

After you have identified relevant ideas in Step 1, you are ready to go on to Step 2, which involves grouping similar things together. Consider how you would do this with common household items. Say you plan to organize your kitchen cabinets by putting similar things together in the same place. You have the following items laid out on your kitchen table:

three cans of soup	*forks*	*plastic containers*
dish detergent	*salt and pepper*	*glass bowls*
plates	*drinking glasses*	*boxes of macaroni and cheese*
knives	*scouring powder*	*a ladle*
a box of cereal	*sponges*	*tea bags*

If you mix all of these items up, it might be more difficult to locate something when you need to find it. Therefore, you should group them together logically. But how? You could group the soup, cereal, macaroni and cheese, and tea bags together because they are all food items. The salt

and pepper could go in this group, too. You might put the silverware and utensils (forks, knives, ladle) together in another group, and the dishware (plates, bowls, glasses) in yet another. The cleaning items (dish detergent, scouring powder, and sponges) probably belong in a different group, and so on. This is not the only method for grouping these items, but it is probably the most common one because it makes the most sense to the most people.

But how would you group this next set of items?

paper clips	*a watch*	*a napkin*	*the sun*
a football field	*leaves*	*a pencil*	*a ring*
a dollar bill	*a mailbox*	*a radio*	*green beans*
a basket	*a dime*	*cake*	

Different groupings are possible for this set of items. For example, you could group them according to shape (some of these things are round, and some are square or rectangular), function (some of these things relate to food or eating, for example), color (several of these things are green), material (some of these things are made of metal), or some other criteria. As you can see, these things can be grouped in a number of different ways. The same is true of the ideas you generate for writing. Sometimes, the right grouping will be immediately apparent to you. At other times, you may have to experiment with different ways to group thoughts together.

Now you can apply this same procedure to ideas generated in a prewriting exercise. When you were circling key words and phrases in Step 1, you probably circled some things that go together or say the same thing in different words.

For example, look back at Kyla's freewriting sample about Oprah Winfrey. Which of the circled phrases seem to belong together? Several of the phrases relate to Oprah's interest in helping people:

wants her show to do good	*gives people good advice*
wants to help people	*supports many charities*
genuinely cares	*makes the world a better place*

If you examine this list further, you might realize that some of the things in Kyla's list are desires and goals, and some are actions:

Desires/Goals	**Actions**
wants her show to do good	*gives people good advice*
wants to help people	*supports many charities*
genuinely cares	
makes the world a better place	

Other circled words and phrases in the freewriting sample relate to Oprah's personal qualities:

Personal Qualities

spiritual   *great role model*   *strong*

independent   *goal-oriented*   *smart*

When you sort the items into groups, you can see three different aspects of Oprah that are admirable: her desires and goals, her actions, and her personal qualities.

Of course, this is not the only way to group these thoughts. You could, for instance, group these things according to how Oprah helps people. The freewriting sample mentions her show, her magazine, and her travels, during which she shares what she has learned with others. It is also possible to group these ideas according to the different people she has helped: television show audiences, charities, and girls and women. There may be other possibilities as well.

Determining a Framework – Step 3

After you have determined possible groupings for relevant items, Step 3 involves deciding on the order in which you should present these groups to your reader. Sometimes, the groups will naturally organize themselves, as you will see in the next section. For those topics that do not naturally order themselves, you will have to use logic, letting the relationships between the groups suggest the best arrangement.

When you are deciding on the best order for your ideas, you will have to decide whether to use natural organization or logical organization. Some topics organize themselves, so they are arranged with natural organization. When you tell a story, for instance, or write a set of directions to explain how to do something, you will give your readers the events or steps chronologically, in the order in which they occur.

However, many more topics do not naturally organize themselves. For these topics, you will have to use logical organization. In other words, you will have to evaluate the groups you created and apply logic to decide whether they are related to each other in some way. These relationships may indicate a certain order. For example, the items in one of the groups may be the cause of the items in another group.

Recall, for example, the three groups of admirable things about Oprah Winfrey: her desires and goals, her actions, and her personal qualities. Do some of these things cause other things? You could say that her personal qualities and her desires and goals lead her to act in certain ways. As a result, you might want to present her actions last, after you have explained the other two admirable aspects. Should you present her desires and goals first, or should you discuss her personal qualities first? You could argue that it is her personal qualities that give rise to her goals, so you might cover her personal qualities first. Once again, this is not the only way to arrange these groups, but it seems logical when we consider how one thing leads to another.

When you examine your groups, you might decide that some are more important than others. Order of importance may affect how you arrange your ideas. Sometimes it is best to present the most important information first, and sometimes it is best to save it for last. In either case, though, consider whether you should order groups by their relative importance.

One common mistake that you should avoid as you work on organizing ideas is trying to use natural organization when logical organization is more appropriate. It is not advisable, for example, to present your ideas to the reader in the order in which you thought of them. If you do that, you will have skipped Steps 1 and 2 of the organization process. Nor do you want to try to use a story form to present information about a topic that is not really a story. For example, telling a story about the time you were in the audience of Oprah Winfrey's show and mentioning here and there the things about her you admire is probably not the best way to address why she is an admirable person.

Lesson 5.3: Informal and Formal Outlines

Lesson 5.3 Introduction

During or after you complete the three steps of the organization process, you should create an outline of your ideas. Outlines come in different forms, but they all list the ideas or information you will present in the order in which you will present them. The best outlines also indicate how ideas are related to one another. Regardless of their form, they all provide the writer with a guide to follow as he or she writes.

People often argue that they can save time by skipping the outline step. But in truth, failing to outline adds time to the effort. When you do not spend time determining and writing down a plan of organization before you begin writing, you force your brain to juggle two challenging mental tasks (organizing and composing) at the same time. Because doing this is more complicated, the writing usually takes longer.

And though an outline might not match the final paper, it is your best determination of your composition's overall structure. It is not carved in stone, and you may find better ways to organize your thoughts as you write. Altering your original plan does not mean that it was not useful to help you get started.

Remember, creating an outline will help prevent you from:

- straying from your main point and including information or ideas that are irrelevant
- rambling or jumping from thought to thought in a manner that confuses the reader
- mixing different kinds of information together
- discussing an idea in the wrong place
- The next reading reviews strategies for completing formal and informal outlines.

The next reading reviews strategies for completing formal and informal outlines.

Formal Outlines

When you think of an outline, you may picture one that includes Roman numerals. A formal outline uses some combination of Roman numerals, letters, and/or Arabic numbers. One common type of formal outline, for example, uses all three:

> *I. Main idea*
> *A. Supporting detail*
> *1. Statistic*
> *2. Example*
> *B. Supporting detail*
> *1. Expert opinion*
> *2. Data*

In this type of outline, the Roman numerals correspond to the main ideas, whereas the letters and Arabic numbers indicate supporting information. This type of outline is usually a required part of longer assignments, such as research papers, for it serves as a kind of table of contents.

However, creating a formal outline is worthwhile even if it is not a required part of an assignment. This format is useful for showing the order of your ideas and also serves another valuable purpose: it clearly indicates the relationships among your ideas. Thus, as you write, glancing at this outline can help you keep in mind your overall structure for the entire paper, allowing you to stay organized and make important connections for your reader. Obviously, it takes some time to create a detailed outline like this, but the time and effort are worth it, for it often hastens the composition process and yields a more successful finished product.

Informal Outlines

If an outline is not required for your assignment and if you are creating one just as a tool for yourself, you are free to use a less formal method. Informal outlines can be brief lists of ideas in the order in which you want to discuss them. For example, the following sketch is an informal outline:

Main idea: *Planning a large wedding can be very stressful.*

1. Many decisions, preparations
– dress, wedding party, reception, invitations
2. Worrying about observing proper etiquette
– invitations, procession, seating at reception
3. Anxiety about things going wrong
– weather, saying or doing something embarrassing during
ceremony, flowers wrong, cake ruined

An informal outline can also take the form of branching. This form looks a lot like the clustering prewriting technique. It starts with a topic and then draws "branches" of subtopics and details that radiate from that central topic. Here is an example of branching:

Main idea: *A fish aquarium is worth the effort it takes to clean and maintain it.*
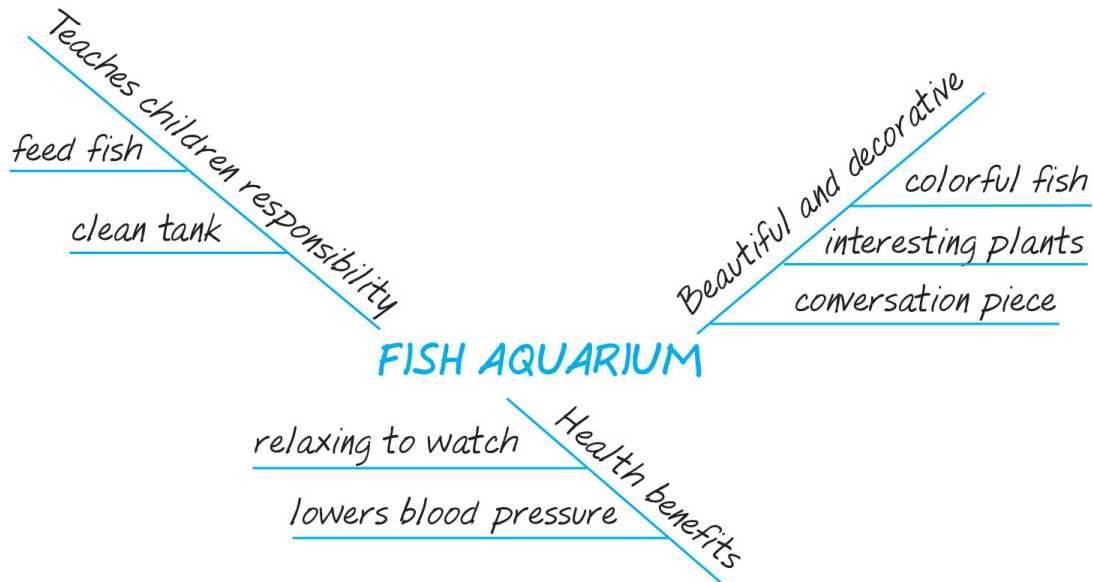
PARTS OF SPEECH

Introduction

As you begin writing, and then revising and editing, you will need to understand how words are put together to form sentences and the eight different parts of speech.

Every word in every sentence you write functions as a particular part of speech. A word can be a different part of speech depending on its context, or the other words around it. For example, the word *left* can be a noun, verb, adjective, or adverb:

> Turn *left* at the stop sign. (adverb)
>
> She writes with her *left* hand. (adjective)
>
> I *left* her a message. (verb)
>
> I live in the first house on the *left*. (noun)

In each sentence, the context determines the part of speech of this particular word.

In this section, you will learn about parts of speech so that you will understand key terms as you work on improving your sentences. Then, you will learn about the basic elements that form a sentence so that you can begin to understand how to make your own sentences interesting, sophisticated, and grammatically correct.

Lesson 6.1: Parts of Speech

Lesson 6.1 Introduction

Before writing and revising your sentences, you need to know the eight parts of speech. We will look at their functions in this section so that you can define and identify each part of speech in a sentence.

1. **Nouns:** Word that names a person, place, thing, or idea.
2. **Pronouns:** Word that is used in the place of a noun.
3. **Adjectives:** Words that modify (describe or limit) either nouns or pronouns.
4. **Verbs:** Words that express either the action or state of being of the sentence's subject.
5. **Adverbs:** Words that modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs.
6. **Prepositions:** Words or groups of words that show how a noun or pronoun called an object is related to the rest of the sentence.
7. **Conjunctions:** Words that connect and show relationships between words, phrases, or clauses.
8. **Interjections:** Words or phrases that express emotion or surprise.

Nouns and Pronouns

A noun is a word that names a person, place, thing, or idea: *nurse, school, nut, love*. **Nouns are either common or proper.** Common nouns refer to general people, places, or things: boy, store, art. Proper nouns name one specific person, place, thing, or idea, so they are capitalized:

> Abraham Lincoln

Yellowstone National Park

Mercedes Benz

Collective nouns are those that refer to a group of people or things (*team, class, crowd, group, company, audience, family, jury, gang, faculty*). To identify nouns in a sentence, ask yourself if a word names a person, place, thing, or idea.

common noun common noun

Oranges are juicy **fruits**.

proper noun   common noun

Thomas Jefferson is **my hero.**

Also, look for the words *a, an,* and *the*, which always precede a noun.

common noun, common noun

The **monkey** ate a **banana**.

proper noun, common noun

A **Porsche** is a fast **car**.

NOTE: Adjectives, like the word *fast* in the second sentence, will often separate *a, an,* or *the* from the noun.

Nouns can be individual words, or they can be phrases. For example, read the following sentences:

Cleaning the bathroom is the chore I hate most.

She wants *to go to Mexico*.

These phrases function as nouns. In the first sentence, the phrase *Cleaning the bathroom* is a noun phrase that functions as the subject of the sentence. In the second example, *to go to Mexico* is a noun phrase that functions as the direct object.

A pronoun is a word that is used in the place of a noun. For example, if you write one sentence that says, "Sally left the theater," the next sentence you write could substitute a pronoun instead of repeating the name Sally: "*She* did not like the movie." *She* is the pronoun used in place of the name *Sally*.

There are different kinds of pronouns. One kind refers to one or more specific persons or things:

I	you	she	they
me	yourself	her	them
myself	yourselves	herself	themselves
it	we	he	
itself	us	him	
	ourselves	himself	

We took **them** to see **him**.

She did **it herself**.

I, he, she, it, we, you, and *they* are the **personal pronouns.**

Other **pronouns are called indefinite** because they do not refer to any particular person, place, or thing:

all	both	many	someone
any	everybody	one	something
anybody	everyone	no one	several
anyone	everything	nothing	some
anything	few	somebody	

No one is sure what will happen.

She longs to tell someone her secret.

Another kind of pronoun points out specific things by referring to a certain noun; these are called **demonstrative pronouns**:

this

that

these

those

That is the best meal I have ever eaten.

This is my phone number.

NOTE: The pronouns *this, that, these*, and *those* also function as adjectives when they precede and point out a particular noun. For example, in the sentence "*These* boots belong to Susan," the word *these* is an adjective that answers the question *Which boots?*

Some **pronouns introduce questions**:

who	what
whom	whose
which	

What is the right answer?

Who is coming to dinner?

And finally, still other pronouns introduce dependent clauses. These are the **relative pronouns**:

that	whose
what	whoever
which	whichever
who	whatever
whom	

She is the one **who** loves to dance.

You know **that I will** be there.

Adjectives

Adjectives modify (describe or limit) either nouns or pronouns. They tell *how many, what kind,* or *which one*:

> **four** friends
>
> **blue** ribbon
>
> **those** balloons
>
> **snowy** day
>
> **few** people

Some **adjectives introduce questions**:

> **Which** one do you want?
>
> **Whose** ring is this?

An adjective can appear before or after the noun or pronoun it modifies:

> I will have **another** cup of **hot** tea.
>
> He is a man **possessed**.
>
> She is **tall** and **thin**.

One special class of adjectives includes the words *a, an,* and *the*, which are **called articles**. These words precede and point out specific people, places, or things:

> She ate **a** piece of cake.
>
> Tell me **the** truth.
>
> She took **an** aspirin to reduce the pain.

Like nouns, **adjectives can be individual words, or they can be phrases**:

> He made the decision **to go to Mexico**. (The phrase *to go to Mexico* modifies the word *decision* by answering the question *Which decision*?)
>
> **Trying to run**, she tripped and fell. (The phrase *trying to run* describes *she*.)

Verbs and Adverbs

Verbs express either the action or state of being of the sentence's subject:

> The girl **jumped** into the pool. (action verb)
>
> They **understood** the directions. (action verb)
>
> **I am** a cheerleader. (being verb)
>
> He **was** twenty years old. (being verb)

Verbs can be in the present tense, expressing that the action or state of being is occurring now:

> He **loves** to eat hotdogs.
>
> They **are** excited about the trip.
>
> She **teaches** third grade.

Verbs can also be in the past tense, expressing that the action or state of being occurred in the past:

> He **loved** to eat hot dogs.

They **were** excited about the trip.

She **taught** third grade.

Sometimes we indicate the *past tense* by adding *–d* or *–ed* to the end of the verb. For other verbs (like break/broke and fly/flew), the form of the word changes.

To express a verb's tense, one or more helping verbs are added to create verb phrases:

is	were	will
are	has	shall
am	had	could
be	have	would
was	might	may

She **has written** to him three times.

We **might be going** to France.

They **will have been** in college for one year this August.

Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs by telling *when, where, how*, or *to what degree* an action occurred. Many adverbs end in *–ly* (certainly, hungrily, really), but not all of them do. Adverbs can appear anywhere in a sentence:

She **cheerfully** does her chores. (does *how*?)

He is **very** sick today. (*how* sick?)

We are going **tomorrow**. (are going *when*?)

You should go **home**. (go *where*?)

They were **completely** surprised. (surprised *to what degree*?)

Adverbs can be phrases as well as individual words:

We threw her **into the pond**. (threw *where*?)

I want an answer **by Monday**. (want *when*?)

NOTE: Answers to the question *What?* are direct objects, not adverbs.

direct object	*adverb*
She stubbed her *toe*	**on the sidewalk**.

The question stubbed *what?* is answered by *toe*, which is the direct object. The question stubbed *where?* is answered by *on the sidewalk*, which is the adverb.

Prepositions, Conjunctions, and Interjections

Prepositions are words or groups of words that show how a noun or pronoun, called an object, is related to the rest of the sentence. Many prepositions show position or time orientation:

about	before	but	into	over
above	behind	by	like	past
across	below	despite	near	through
after	beneath	down	of	to
against	beside	during	off	toward
along	between	except	on	under
among	beyond	for	onto	underneath
around	in	unlike	until	up
from	on	upon	at	with
without	out	outside		

Others are phrases:

according to	ahead of	along with
as far as	as well	as aside from
because of	in back of	in case of
in front of	in spite of	instead of
on account of	together with	with respect to

A prepositional phrase consists of a preposition, its object (which is always a noun or a pronoun), and the object's modifiers. For example, look at this prepositional phrase:

preposition	*modifiers*	*object*
behind	the tall	tree

In sentences, prepositional phrases can function as either adjectives or adverbs:

Adverb: It broke **into two pieces**. (broke *how*?)

Adjective: The woman **with the flowers** is my mother. (*which* woman?)

Conjunctions connect and show relationships between words, phrases, or clauses. The seven conjunctions that can link any type of elements together are:

and

yet

but

so

or

for

nor

this **and** that (words)

by land **or** by sea (phrases)

We are out of money, **so** we cannot go to the movies. (clauses)

Some conjunctions come in pairs. They are called the **correlative conjunctions**:

both/and

just as/so

neither/nor

whether/or

either/or

not only/but also

Both the teacher **and** the students look forward to summer break.

Either you go with us, **or** you ride with them.

Other **conjunctions link dependent clauses to independent clauses**. A **clause** is a group of words with a subject and a verb. An independent clause can stand alone as a complete sentence, but a dependent clause cannot. The following list contains conjunctions that link dependent and independent clauses and show their relationship to one another. They are called **subordinating conjunctions**:

conjunction

While I waited,	she ran into the store.
Dependent clause	*independent clause*

conjunction

We canceled the picnic	**because** it was raining.
independent clause	*dependent clause*

NOTE: You probably noticed that some of the words in the list of conjunctions can also be prepositions. To tell them apart, determine whether the word is part of a phrase or a clause:

She finished **before** lunch. (preposition)

She had finished **before** we ate lunch. (conjunction)

Interjections are words or phrases that express emotion or surprise:

Oh, you scared me.

Drat! We lost again.

Wow! He looks great.

Because of their informality, interjections are rarely appropriate in academic and professional writing.

Lesson 6.2: Parts of a Sentence

Lesson 6.2 Introduction

Now that you have learned the eight parts of speech, you will learn about the parts of a sentence. We will start with a basic sentence, known as a simple sentence. A **simple sentence is defined as one independent clause only**. **An independent clause** is a group of words that can stand alone as a separate sentence because it contains both a **subject** (a noun or pronoun that causes the action or is in some state of being) and a **verb**. A simple sentence can also contain other parts of speech, such as adverbs or prepositions, but it includes just one subject-verb relationship.

subject   *verb*

We   **ate** beans.

subject   *verb*

The **actor**   **walked** across the stage.

In this section, we will learn about the roles of subjects, verbs, objects, modifiers, and appositives in a simple sentence.

Subjects

The **subject of a sentence is always a noun or pronoun**, so when you are trying to identify the subject, find all of the nouns and pronouns first. Next, find the verb, the word or words that express action or state of being. Then, ask yourself*, Who or what is performing the action or expressing some state of being*? For example, look at the following sentence:

> She called her father on his cell phone.

There are two nouns and one pronoun in this sentence.

> *pronoun*   *noun*   *noun*
> **She** called her **father** on his cell **phone**.

Therefore, the subject of the sentence is either *she, father*, or *phone*. Now, what is the action being performed? The past tense verb in this sentence is *called*. Who is doing this calling? It is *she*, so *she* is the subject of the sentence.

Can you identify the subjects in the following sentences?

> The lawnmower broke yesterday.
> History is my favorite subject.
> I cannot find my sock.

In the previous sentences, the subjects are *lawnmower, history*, and *I*.

Locations of Subjects
You have probably noticed that subjects often appear at or near the beginning of sentences. However, they can also follow the verb:

verb subject

Here **is** an **example**. (In this sentence, *here* is an adverb, not the subject.)

verb   subject

In the car **sat** the **suspect**.

In questions, too, the subject may follow the verb or part of the verb:

verb   subject verb
Can   you   go with us tomorrow?

To determine the subject in questions, you can mentally rearrange the sentence so that it is a statement:

subject verb

You   can go with us tomorrow.

Now it is easier to see that the subject is *you*.

In sentences that make commands or requests, the subject may not be stated. Instead, it is implied:

Go get my shoes.

Please come home.

The subject of both these sentences is *you*. Although the word does not appear in either sentence, it is understood that the person to whom the sentence is directed is to perform the action.

Simple and Complete Subjects

So far, you have been identifying just the simple subject of a sentence. The **simple subject is a single noun or pronoun**. A **complete subject, on the other hand, is the subject along with all of its modifiers** (the articles and adjectives that limit or describe).

Our wonderful vacation included a trip to SeaWorld.

In this sentence, *vacation* is the simple subject, and *our wonderful vacation* is the complete subject.

A desire to help people led him to become a firefighter.

In the previous sentence, *desire* is the simple subject, and *a desire to help people* is the complete subject.

Do not forget that a noun phrase can be the subject of a sentence:

Going to the moon was an incredible achievement.

Compound Subjects

A **compound subject is defined as two or more subjects joined** by the words *and, or*, or *nor*.

subject   subject

The doctor and **her husband** are going to Spain.

Jack   or   **I** will pick you up.

subject   subject

Neither the **ostrich** nor **the penguin** can fly.

Subjects Versus Objects of Prepositions

Often, it can be easy to confuse a subject with the object of a preposition. The object of a preposition cannot be the subject of a sentence, so you might want to identify all prepositional phrases before you decide what the subject is.

One of the students in the class is on the football team.

The nouns in this sentence are *one, students, class*, and *team*. To identify the ones that are objects of prepositions, draw parentheses around all of the prepositional phrases.

One (of the students) (in the class) is (on the football team).

Now it is much easier to see that *one* is the simple subject of the sentence.

Other Elements in a Sentence

A simple sentence must contain both a subject (which we have already looked at) and a verb. It can also include a direct object, an indirect object, modifiers, and an appositive.

Verbs

A **verb is a word or phrase that expresses action or a state of being**. Verbs will be discussed further later on. Note, however, that verbs—like subjects—can be compound.

They **ate** a picnic lunch and **played** Frisbee.

In this sentence, the subject, *They*, is performing two actions, so there are two verbs.

Direct Objects

A simple sentence may or may not include a direct object. A **direct object is a noun or pronoun that answers the question *whom* or *what* for an action verb**.

verb   direct object

He lost **his keys**. (lost *what?*)

To find the direct object in a sentence, you will need to locate the verb first.

She typed the message with tears in her eyes.

In this sentence, the verb is *typed*. Now ask the question typed *what?* The answer is *message*, which is the direct object.

We thanked her for the gift.

In this sentence, the verb is *thanked*. Ask the question thanked *whom?* The answer is *her*, which is the direct object.

Direct objects can be compound, just as subjects and verbs can:

direct object, direct object

He wrote   **poems** and **plays**.

She set   **the groceries** and **the mail** on the table.

Indirect Objects

A simple sentence may or may not include an indirect object. An **indirect object answers the question *to whom, for whom, to what*, or *for what* for an action verb.**

indirect object

He sent **his friend** an e-mail. (sent *to whom?*)

To find the indirect object, locate the verb first.

My sister gave me her truck.

In this sentence, the verb is *gave*. To find the direct object, you ask, *gave what?* The answer is *truck*. To find the indirect object, ask, *gave to whom?* The answer is *me*, which is the indirect object.

Like direct objects, indirect objects can be compound:

indirect object   *indirect object*

My grandfather left **his grandchildren** and **his nephew** all of his money.

Modifiers

A simple sentence may include modifiers, which are adjectives or adverbs. Adjectives, which modify nouns or pronouns, can be single words or phrases:

adjective

She broke up with her **unfaithful** boyfriend. (*Unfaithful* describes the noun *boyfriend*.)

adjective

The cast **of the show** took a bow. (The prepositional phrase *of the show* answers the question *which cast?)*

Adverbs, which modify verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs, can also be single words or phrases:

adverb

He can run **fast**. (The adverb *fast* answers the question *can run how*?)

adverb

She studied **until dawn**. (The prepositional phrase *until dawn* answers the question *studied when?*)

adverb

He was **very** sick. (*Very* is an adverb that modifies the adjective *sick*.)

Appositives

Simple sentences might include appositives. **An appositive is a noun or noun phrase that follows a noun or pronoun and renames it.**

appositive

Our neighbor, **Mrs. Jones**, rides a motorcycle. (*Mrs. Jones* renames *neighbor*.)

An appositive phrase includes the appositive and all of its modifiers:

appositive

John, **the best player on our team**, just broke his leg.

In this sentence, *player* is the appositive that renames *John*, and the other words in the phrase modify the word *player*.

Lesson 6.3: Verbs, Adjectives, and Adverbs

Lesson 6.3 Introduction

You have learned that a verb is the word (or words) in a sentence that expresses the subject's action or state of being. Now you will examine in more detail the various features of verbs, including types of verbs—such as action, linking, helping, irregular, and verbals—and verb tense. Knowing how to use verbs correctly will strengthen your writing significantly.

You will also explore both kinds of modifiers, adjectives and adverbs, in more detail and practice how to use them correctly. Some topics we'll cover include punctuating adjectives, comparative and superlative forms of adjectives, misplaced and dangling modifiers, and avoiding double negatives.

Verb Tenses

Verbs always express time, which is called tense. Two of the basic tenses, or **simple tenses**, are **present tense and past tense**. Present tense verbs indicate that the action or state of being is occurring now or is ongoing:

> **I am** hungry.
> They **adore** green beans.
> He **wants** to marry her.
> She **cooks** dinner every night.

The form of a present tense verb often changes based on whether the subject is singular (meaning that it refers to just one person or thing) or plural (referring to more than one thing):

Singular	*Plural*
I stop	we stop
you stop	you stop
he, she, it stops	they stop

Notice that the singular form that goes with *he*, *she*, and *it* has an *–s* on the end. The other forms do not. This is the case with many verbs that are regular, or conform to predictable patterns. Here are a few more regular verbs that add an *–s* to certain forms:

> I love, he loves
> You trade, she trades
> I jump, it jumps

Past tense verbs indicate that the action or state of being happened completely in the past:

> I **was** hungry.

> They **adored** green beans.

> He **wanted** to marry her.

> She **cooked** dinner every night.

To form the past tense of regular verbs, you add *–ed, –d,* or *–ied*, depending on how the base form ends. Here are some examples:

Base Form	Past Tense
learn	learned
bat	batted
cope	coped
worry	worried

When the base form of the word ends in a consonant, you will usually add –*ed* to form the past tense:

Base Form	Past Tense
track	tracked
rest	rested
lean	leaned

Sometimes forming the past tense requires doubling the verb's final consonant and then adding –*ed*:

Base Form	Past Tense
jog	jogged
stop	stopped
rub	rubbed

For regular verbs that end in e, you will usually add just a –*d*:

Base Form	Past Tense
like	liked
hope	hoped
change	changed
file	filed

For regular verbs that end in –*y*, you will usually drop the –*y* and add –*ied*:

Base Form	*Past Tense*
cry	cried
carry	carried
satisfy	satisfied

Action, Linking, Helping, and Irregular Verbs

Action Verbs and Linking Verbs

There are two kinds of verbs, action verbs and linking verbs. Action verbs express action of some kind:

She **read** the magazine.

He **thought** about her night and day.

They **surfed** in Hawaii.

Linking verbs express some state of being:

am	appear
is	seem
are	become
was	grow
were	remain

I am lucky. (*lucky* describes *I*)

That man **is** a vacuum cleaner salesman. (*salesman* renames *man*)

They **appear** exhausted after the long trip. (*exhausted* describes *they*)

NOTE: The verbs *am, is*, *are, was,* and *were* can also be helping verbs that accompany action verbs.

Linking verbs can also relate to the senses:

look	sound
smell	feel
taste	

Her perfume **smells** terrible.

I **feel** lonesome tonight.

The chocolate cake **tastes** good.

Helping Verbs

Past and present are two of the basic tenses. A third basic tense is the **future tense, which indicates that the action or state of being will occur in the future.** To indicate the future tense, as well as more specific types of the other two simple tenses, **helping verbs** are added to the main verb. The helping verbs are:

is	be	may	would
am	can	might	has
are	could	must	have
was	do	shall	
were	does	should	
been	did	will	

The following adds the future tense to the lists:

Base Form	*Past Tense*	*Future Tense*
like	liked	will like
hope	hoped	will hope
change	changed	will change
file	filed	will file
cry	cried	will cry
carry	carried	will carry
satisfy	satisfied	will satisfy

Different combinations of helping verbs and main verbs allow speakers of English to indicate different times and qualities of verbs. In particular, some of these helping verbs allow speakers to express 12 different verb tenses, which are summarized in the following table.

Tense	Conjugation
Present	I work
	He works
	They work
Past	I worked
	He worked
	They worked

Tense	Conjugation
Future	I **will** work
	He **will** work
	They **will** work
Present Perfect	I **have** worked
	He **has** worked
	They **have** worked
Past Perfect	I **had** worked
	He **had** worked
	They **had** worked
Future Perfect	I **will have** worked
	He **will have** worked
	They **will have** worked
Present Progressive	I **am** working
	He **is** working
	They **are** working
Past Progressive	I **was** working
	He **was** working
	They **were** working
Future Progressive	I **will be** working
	He **will be** working
	They **will be** working
Present Perfect Progressive	I **have been** working
	He **has been** working
	They **have been** working
Past Perfect Progressive	I **had been** working
	He **had been** working
	They **had been** working
Future Perfect Progressive	I **will have been** working
	He **will have been** working
	They **will have been** working

Other helping verbs express different qualities of the action (such as ability, possibility, or necessity) or are used to form questions:

> She **can work** tomorrow.

> They **do** not **work** as hard as she does.

> **Do** you **work** on Tuesdays?

> He **could be** at work.

> You **should have been working**.

> **May I work** with you?

The main verb along with its helping verb is called a verb phrase.

Irregular Verbs

So far, you have focused only on regular verbs, the verbs that change forms according to predictable patterns. However, there is another category of verbs called irregular verbs. **Irregular verbs are those verbs that change form in different tenses and when forming the past participle, the form of the verb that is used with the helping verbs *has, have*, or *had*.** Whereas the past participle form of regular verbs is usually the same as the past tense form (He worked; he has worked), the past participle form of irregular verbs differs from the past tense form (It flew; it has flown). The following list includes many common irregular verbs:

Base Form	Present Tense	Past Tense	Past Participle
arise	arises	arose	arisen
be	is	was/were	been
bear	bears	bore	borne
begin	begins	began	begun
bite	bites	bit	bitten/bit
blow	blows	blew	blown
break	breaks	broke	broken
bring	brings	brought	brought
buy	buys	bought	bought
catch	catches	caught	caught
choose	chooses	chose	chosen
come	comes	came	come
creep	creeps	crept	crept
dive	dives	dived/dove	dived
do	does	did	done

Base Form (cont.)	Present Tense (cont.)	Past Tense (cont.)	Past Participle (cont.)
draw	draws	drew	drawn
dream	dreams	dreamed/dreamt	dreamt
drink	drinks	drank	drunk
drive	drives	drove	driven
eat	eats	ate	eaten
fall	falls	fell	fallen
fight	fights	fought	fought
fly	flies	flew	flown
forget	forgets	forgot	forgotten
forgive	forgives	forgave	forgiven
freeze	freezes	froze	frozen
get	gets	got	got/gotten
give	gives	gave	given
go	goes	went	gone
grow	grows	grew	grown
hang	hangs	hung	hung
hide	hides	hid	hidden
know	knows	knew	known
lay	lays	laid	laid
lead	leads	led	led
lie	lies	lay	lain
light	lights	lit	lit
lose	loses	lost	lost
prove	proves	proved	proved/proven
ride	rides	rode	ridden

Base Form (cont.)	Present Tense (cont.)	Past Tense (cont.)	Past Participle (cont.)
ring	rings	rang	rung
rise	rises	rose	risen
run	runs	ran	run
see	sees	saw	seen
seek	seeks	sought	sought
set	sets	set	set
shake	shakes	shook	shaken
sing	sings	sang	sung
sink	sinks	sank	sunk
sit	sits	sat	sat
speak	speaks	spoke	spoken
spring	springs	sprang	sprung
steal	steals	stole	stolen
sting	stings	stung	stung
strike	strikes	struck	struck/stricken
swear	swears	swore	sworn
swim	swims	swam	swum
swing	swings	swung	swung
take	takes	took	taken
tear	tears	tore	torn
throw	throws	threw	thrown
wake	wakes	woke/waked	woken/waked/woke
wear	wears	wore	worn
write	writes	wrote	written

Adjectives

Adjectives are words that describe or limit nouns. They tell how many, what kind, or which one:

> **red** shoes   *(what kind?)*
>
> **fifth** chapter   *(which one?)*
>
> **that** team   *(which one?)*
>
> **six** dollars   *(how many?)*
>
> **several** people   *(how many?)*

The **articles**—*a, an,* and *the*—are special kinds of adjectives that point out nouns:

> **the** window
> **a** cat
> **an** octagon

Adjectives can come before the noun, or, in a sentence with a linking verb, they can follow the verb:

> She looks **beautiful**.
> He is **tall**, **dark**, and **handsome**.

Adjectives can be single words, or they can be phrases. Prepositional phrases can function as adjectives:

> the man **in the photo**   *(the phrase describes* man*)*
>
> fudge **with nuts**   *(the phrase describes* fudge*)*
>
> the quilt **on the bed**   *(the phrase describes* quilt*)*

Participial phrases, too, function as adjectives in sentences. A participle is a verb that ends in *–ed* or *–ing*:

> **Limping slowly**, the player headed for the bench.
>
> The hotdog**, topped with cheese and chili**, was delicious.
>
> The dog **barking its head off** belongs to me.

Notice that phrases that function as adjectives can come before or after the nouns they modify.

Most adjectives have two additional forms. **One of them, the comparative form, is used to compare two things. The other, the superlative form, is used to compare three or more things:**

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
pretty	prettier	prettiest
young	younger	youngest
smart	smarter	smartest
dull	duller	dullest
hungry	hungrier	hungriest

Thus, we would say, for example, that the rose is prettier than the daisy. But we would say that the rose is the prettiest flower in the whole bouquet.

As you can see in the previous list, we usually add –*er* to the end of the adjective to form the comparative form. We add –*est* to the end to form the superlative form. However, other adjectives stay the same and add the word *more* to form the comparative and *most* to form the superlative:

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
grateful	more grateful	most grateful
foolish	more foolish	most foolish
determined	more determined	most determined
gorgeous	more gorgeous	most gorgeous

Still other adjectives are irregular and change forms altogether:

Adjective	Comparative	Superlative
good	better	best
bad	worse	worst
little	less	least
much, many, some	more	most
far	farther	farthest

Adverbs

Adverbs are words that describe or limit verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs. They tell where, when, how, and to what degree:

Please put it **there**.   *(put where?)*

They will arrive **tomorrow**.   *(will arrive when?)*

She screamed **loudly**.   *(screamed how?)*

It is **very** beautiful.   *(beautiful to what degree?)*

Many adverbs end in *–ly* (*gracefully, terribly, poorly*), but others do not (*soon, later, so, here*). Adverbs can appear anywhere in a sentence:

Recently I gave blood.
He is **usually** punctual.
I picked up the broken glass **carefully**.

Adverbs, like adjectives, can be single words, or they can be prepositional phrases:

The party begins **at six o'clock**.   *(begins when?)*

He walked **around the block**.   *(walked where?)*

She danced **with joy**.   *(danced how?)*

Like adjectives, **some adverbs can have comparative and superlative forms**. Usually we add the word *more* to form the comparative and *most* to form the superlative:

Adverb	*Comparative*	*Superlative*
bravely	more bravely	most bravely
quick	more quickly	most quickly
rudely	more rudely	most rudely

Of all the soldiers, John behaved **most bravely**.
This plant blooms **more quickly** than that plant does.

Issues with Verbs in Sentences

Verbals

As you are learning to identify verbs in sentences, you will need to watch for words called **verbals that look like verbs but function as other parts of speech in sentences**. There are three kinds of verbals: **infinitives, gerunds, and participles**.

An infinitive is composed of the word *to* plus a verb. Infinitives often act as nouns in sentences:
　　He wanted **to fish**. (The infinitive *to fish* is a direct object that answers the question *wanted what*?)
　　To win was her only desire. (*To win* is the subject of the sentence.)

Infinitive phrases include the infinitive along with its modifiers, objects, and/or complements:
　　He wanted **to fish all day long**.
　　To win the contest was her only desire.

A **gerund**, which is a verb with *–ing* on the end, functions as a noun:
　　Choosing wasn't easy. (*Choosing* is the subject of this sentence.)
　　He loved **going**. (*Going* is the direct object.)

A gerund phrase includes the gerund along with its modifiers, objects, and/or complements:
　　Choosing just one dessert was not easy.
　　He loved **going on safari**.

Participles are verbs that end in *–ed* or *–ing*. They function as adjectives in sentences:
　　Slipping, he fell and broke his leg. (*Slipping* is an adjective that describes he.)
　　I caught her **lying**. (*Lying* is an adjective that describes her.)
　　He was a fugitive **wanted** in three states. (*Wanted* is an adjective that modifies fugitive.)

As you see in the last example, a participial phrase consists of a participle along with its modifiers, objects, and/or complements. Modifiers in participial phrases can be prepositional phrases:
　　Slipping on the ice, he fell and broke his leg.
　　I caught her **lying about her age**.

Passive Versus Active Voice

We can write sentences in either of two basic ways. The first uses **active voice, in which the subject of the sentence is the performer of the action**:

subject	*verb*	*direct object*
Aiko	mowed	the lawn.

The active voice, which shows the subject performing an action, is clear and direct. **In passive voice sentences, on the other hand, the receiver of the action (the direct object in the active voice sentence), instead of the performer, is the subject.** The performer of the action is now the object of the preposition.

subject	*verb*	*object of preposition*
The lawn	was mowed by	Aiko.

In this version, the reader has to wait until the end of the sentence to find out who performed the action. This type of sentence is less interesting and less energetic than an active voice sentence. It also tends to include unnecessary words.

There are some occasions when the passive voice is appropriate. If you do not know who the performer of the action is, the passive voice permits you to leave out that information.

The window was broken sometime during the night.

In addition, if you need to omit the subject to conceal who was responsible for an action, the passive voice may be appropriate.

The hospital agreed that mistakes had been made.

The point is that the passive voice should be used intentionally rather than accidentally. In most instances, if the subject is known, the active voice is the better, more interesting choice.

Consistency in Verb Tense

As you write, you will want to make sure that you use verb tenses consistently. Mixing past and present tenses inappropriately is confusing to readers. Note the shift in verb tense in the following sentence:

present tense   *past tense*

We go to the store today, and **I asked** for a refund.

The first verb, *go*, should be in the past tense, *went*. We may shift tenses like this in casual conversation, but we should not write this way. If you start out in the past tense, remain in the past tense throughout the sentence and/or paragraph. If you start out in the present tense, remain in the present tense.

Strong Verbs Versus Weak Verbs

Clear, interesting writing always includes strong action verbs. The more descriptive the verb, the sharper the image it produces in the reader's mind. Compare these next two sets of examples:

Weak: At our bake sale, we **will have** free samples.

Strong: At our bake sale, we **will give away** free samples.

Weak: He **comes** in every morning.

Strong: He **saunters** in every morning.

In the second sentence of the first set of examples, a more action-oriented verb brings more vitality to the sentence. In the second sentence of the second set of examples, a more specific verb conveys more information about how the subject moves.

As you write, you may tend to choose weaker verbs because they may be the first ones that occur to you. Using *to be* and *to have* verbs, in particular, often drains the life from a sentence:

Weak: He **was** sick to his stomach.

Strong: He **vomited** on the rug.

Weak: He **has** a great fondness for redheads.

Strong: He **adores** redheads.

Notice how the second sentence of each pair conveys the same information as the first sentence but does so with more action and energy. Also avoid writing too many sentences that begin with *There is/are* or *It is*. Although this can sometimes be an appropriate way to begin a sentence, the sentence will automatically include a weak *to be* verb. Notice how each of the following revisions improves the sentence:

Weak: There are many reasons why I am leaving.

Strong: I am leaving for many reasons.

Weak: It is important that we stop spending so much money.

Strong: We must stop spending so much money.

When you see sentences in your own writing that begin with *There is/are* or *It is*, try to rewrite them to eliminate those phrases and substitute stronger verbs.

As you are evaluating the strength of your verbs, be aware that the best verb can be lurking elsewhere in the sentence as another part of speech:

We **have been having** quite a few calls of complaint.

This sentence relies on a weak *to have* verb. But notice the word *calls*, which is functioning as the direct object, as well as the word *complaint*, which is hiding in a prepositional phrase at the very end of the sentence. Either one of these words is a better verb for this sentence, which needs a little rewriting:

People **are calling** often to complain.

Callers **are complaining** often.

Now look at the sentence that follows. Which word in this sentence would actually be the best verb?

We will have a short meeting to get organized.

If you said that the word *meeting* should be the verb, you are right. We could rewrite this sentence to read:

We will meet briefly to get organized.

Also, ask yourself if you are overusing adjectives and adverbs in place of strong verbs. For example, read the next sentence:

He walked quickly into the room.

The adverb *quickly* tells how he walked, but you could replace the phrase *walked quickly* with one strong verb, such as *strode, jogged,* or *trotted*. Here is another example:

Her hair was very pretty and shiny in the sunlight.

You could substitute strong verbs for the weak verb *was* and the adjectives *pretty* and *shiny*:

Her hair shone and sparkled in the sunlight.

Issues with Adjectives & Adverbs in Sentences

Avoiding Sentence Fragments
Prepositional and participial phrases cannot stand alone; they must be attached to an independent clause or they become sentence fragments. For example, read the following sentences:
sentence fragment
Dialing the phone slowly. Joe attempted to remember the number.

sentence fragment
She sat beside her ailing husband. **All through the day.**

Both of these sets of sentences must be combined to eliminate the fragments.

Misplaced or Dangling Modifiers

In a sentence, an adjective modifier must be placed next to the word it describes. If a **modifier is not next to the word it describes, it is called a misplaced modifier**, and it can cause confusion:

> **Lying in a puddle,** George saw his morning newspaper.

In this sentence, the phrase *lying in a puddle* modifies George because that is the closest word to the phrase. Therefore, this sentence is saying that George was lying in a puddle. Actually, though, it was the newspaper that was in a puddle. To correct this sentence, rewrite it so that the modifier is next to the word it modifies:

> George saw his morning newspaper **lying in a puddle**.

Misplaced modifiers can be phrases or single words. The word *only*, for example, is commonly misplaced:

> She **only** brought chips to the party.

In this sentence, the word *only* is modifying the verb, but it should be modifying the word *chips*. Thus, it needs to be moved:

> She brought **only** chips to the party.

If the word the modifier is supposed to be describing is not in the sentence at all, the error is called a dangling modifier:

> **Walking home yesterday**, the rain came down hard.

> **At age six**, my parents divorced.

In the first sentence, the modifier *walking home yesterday* is incorrectly describing *rain*. It is not the rain that walked home but rather the person or people who made the journey. In the second sentence, the modifier *at age six* is incorrectly describing *my parents*. It is not the parents who were six years old but rather the speaker of the sentence. To correct these errors, rewrite the sentences to add the missing information:

> Walking home yesterday, **Sharon and Marge** were drenched by a hard rain.

> At age six, **I** experienced my parents' divorce.

Punctuating Adjectives

When you describe a noun with more than one adjective, you may need to separate the adjectives with a comma:

> She gazed out at the **calm, blue** sea.

> The **tall, thin** tree swayed in the breeze.

However, no comma is necessary in this sentence:

> We should get some **delicious Thai** food.

To decide whether or not to include a comma, mentally insert the word *and* between the two adjectives. If the sentence still makes sense, you need to add a comma.

> She gazed out at the calm **and** blue sea.

> The tall **and** thin tree swayed in the breeze.

Both of these sentences require a comma between the two adjectives.

You can also try to reverse the two adjectives. If the sentence still makes sense, insert a comma:

> She gazed out at the **blue, calm** sea.

Notice that the adjectives in this sentence cannot be reversed; thus, no comma is added:

> We should get some **Thai delicious** food.

Avoiding Double Negatives

Certain adverbs, those which express the negative, should not be used together in the same sentence. These words include:

no	never
not	hardly
none	barely
nothing	scarcely

Notice how double negatives are corrected in the following sentences:

Double negative:	I have **hardly never** been sick.
Corrections:	I have hardly ever been sick.
	I am never sick.

Double negative:	There is **not no** butter for the bread.
Corrections:	There is not any butter for the bread.
	There is no butter for the bread.

Using Adjectives and Adverbs Correctly

Certain adjectives and adverbs are easily confused if you are unsure which is which. The words *good* and *well*, *bad* and *badly*, and *real* and *really* are the three pairs that are most often misused in sentences.

The adverbs in these pairs are *well, badly*, and *really*. The last two are easy enough to remember because they both end in –*ly*, like many other adverbs:

You sang **well** last night.	*(not* you sang good*)*
He dances **badly**.	*(not* he dances bad*)*
She is **really** tired.	*(not* she is real tired*)*

The adjectives are *good, bad*, and *real*. They all describe nouns, but they are often misused with linking verbs:

He feels **bad** today. *(not* he feels badly*)*

The soup tastes **good**. *(not* the soup tastes well*)*

Notice how the meaning changes in the following sentences, depending on whether you use an adjective or an adverb:

He smells bad.
He smells badly.

In the first sentence, the adjective *bad*, which follows a linking verb, communicates that the subject is the source of a foul odor. In the second sentence, the word *smells* is an action verb, and the word *badly* is an adverb. Therefore, the sentence indicates that the subject's nose is not functioning properly.

Lesson 6.4 Subject-Verb Agreement

Lesson 6.4 Introduction

A basic sentence contains both a subject and a verb. This **subject and verb must agree in number**; that is, if the subject is singular (one person, place, thing, or idea), the verb in the sentence must be in its singular form. If the subject is plural (more than one person, place, thing, or idea), the verb in the sentence must be in its plural form:

singular   *singular*

The **bell**   **rings** at noon.

plural   *plural*

The **bells**   **ring** at noon.

The third person singular forms of regular verbs end in *–s*:
     She **sings**.
     The flag **waves**.
     The audience **claps**.
Irregular verbs (such as the *to be* and *to have* verbs) have different singular and plural forms:
     I **am**.
     They **are**.

He **has**.
We **have**.

Basic subject-verb agreement is relatively straightforward. However, you will be writing sentences that will present you with trickier subject-verb agreement situations. They might be tricky because the subject is more difficult to find. Or they may be tricky because you are not sure if the subject is singular or plural. Next, you will look at the kinds of sentences that will make choosing the correct verb a little more challenging.

Prepositional Phrases, Inverted Word Order, and Indefinite Pronouns

Intervening Prepositional Phrases

Sometimes a prepositional phrase separates the subject and the verb of a sentence, causing confusion about what the subject of such a sentence really is. As you learned, the object of a preposition cannot be the subject of a sentence. Therefore, before you attempt to determine the right verb, you may want to physically or mentally cross out the prepositional phrase or phrases that intervene between the subject and the verb.

One of the boys eats pizza every day.

In this example, it might be tempting to conclude that *boys* is the subject of the sentence. But *boys* is the object in a prepositional phrase, and *One* is actually the subject. If you use the plural form of the verb (*eat*) to make it agree with boys, your sentence will contain a subject-verb agreement error. The singular subject *One* must be matched with the singular verb *eats*.

Cross out the intervening prepositional phrases in the following sentences and decide whether or not the verbs agree:

People with experience is exactly what we need.
The lines on her face makes her look wise.
Men in uniform are very handsome.

In the first sentence, the subject is *People* (not *experience*, which is the object of the preposition). The subject is plural and the verb *is* is singular, so the sentence contains a subject-verb agreement error. The verb should be *are*. In the second sentence, *lines* is the subject and *face* is the object of the preposition. The singular verb *makes* does not agree with the plural subject, so it should be changed to *make*. In the last sentence, both the subject (*men*) and the verb (*are*) are plural, so the sentence is correct.

Inverted Word Order

Another type of sentence that makes the subject more difficult to discern is one with inverted word order. In a sentence with inverted word order, the subject comes after the verb. In sentences that begin with *there* or *here*, for example, the subject follows the verb:

verb   *subject*

Here **are** two   **dollars** for your lunch.

The subject of this sentence is the plural *dollars*. The word *Here* is an adverb, and the word *lunch* is the object of a preposition. Therefore, if you were to write *Here is two dollars for your lunch*, the sentence would be incorrect.

In questions, too, inverted word order can make determining the subject more challenging:

verb   *subject*

Where **are**   my **shoes**?

In this sentence, the verb (*are*) must agree with the plural subject *shoes*. *Where* is an adverb. Therefore, writing *Where is my shoes?* would be incorrect.

Finally, there are other cases of inverted word order:

<div align="center">verb   subject</div>

In the boat   **were**   two **fish** on ice.

In the boat and *on ice* are prepositional phrases, so cross them out. Then you can see that *fish* (plural) is the subject, so the verb must be plural, too.

Indefinite Pronouns

In the remaining tricky sentences, the subject is not necessarily difficult to find, but you might not be sure whether it is singular or plural. For example, you may wonder whether some of the indefinite pronouns are singular or plural. Indefinite pronouns do not refer to any particular person, place, or thing:

Everybody loves ice cream.

Something is going to happen.

The indefinite pronouns become more specific when a prepositional phrase is added:

One of my friends won the tournament.

No one in the class is prepared for the test.

However, each indefinite pronoun is either singular or plural, regardless of the phrase that modifies it. The singular indefinite pronouns are:

one	nobody	nothing	each
anyone	anybody	anything	either
someone	somebody	something	neither
everyone	everybody	everything	

singular   *singular*

Each of my classes   **challenges** me in a different way.

singular   *singular*

Everyone in the United States   **attends** elementary school.

The indefinite pronouns that are plural include:

both

many

few

several

plural   *plural*

Both of my legs **were** broken.

plural   *plural*

Several of his reasons   **are** good ones.

But perhaps the trickiest of the indefinite pronouns are the ones that can be singular or plural, depending on the noun or pronoun to which they refer. These pronouns are:

all

most

any

more

some

Notice the difference in the following examples:

       singular   *singular*

Most of the **cake**   **is** gone.

       plural   *plural*

Most of my **friends**   **know** how to dance.

       singular   *singular*

All of the **book**   **is** interesting.

       plural   *plural*

All of her **relatives**   **plan** to attend the reunion.

Compound Subject and Singular, Collective, and Proper Nouns

Compound Subjects

A compound subject consists of two or more subjects joined by a coordinating conjunction (*and, or, either/or, neither/nor*). This conjunction determines whether you use the singular form of the verb or the plural form of the verb. If the word *and* joins the two subjects, they are plural, and you use the plural form of the verb:

The stars *and* the moon are beautiful tonight.

My son *and* I like to ride skateboards.

If the subjects are joined by *or, either/or,* or *neither/nor*, the verb agrees with the subject that is closest to the verb:

singular subject   *plural subject*

The **babysitter** *or*   the **children**   always eat the ice cream.

singular subject   *plural subject*

Either **Jay** *or* **his sisters** clean the pool every day.

plural subject   singular subject

Neither the **stars** *nor* **the moon** is visible tonight.

Singular Nouns That End in –s

Some nouns end in *–s* like plural nouns, but they are nevertheless considered singular because they refer to a single thing. The following list includes some examples of these words:

physics

series

news

politics

economics

measles

The news **is** not good.

The series **starts** tonight on public television.

Collective Nouns

Collective nouns are those that refer to a group of people or things (*team, class, crowd, group, company, audience, family, jury, gang, faculty*). If the subject of the sentence is a collective noun and the group is acting together as one unit, use a singular verb:

The team **practices** every day.

The audience always **laughs** at that joke.

However, if the members of the group are acting individually, use a plural verb:

The team **disagree** about the new uniforms.

The family **go** their separate ways after dinner.

Sums of money and measurements are also considered to be singular when they are one unit:

Two dollars for a tasty lunch **is** a good deal.

Fourteen blocks **is** the length of the island.

Titles and Other Proper Nouns

Titles of poems, novels, short stories, plays, films, and other works are always considered to be singular:

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn **is** Mark Twain's best book.

"The Flintstones" **is** my favorite cartoon.

A proper noun, such as the name of a person, place, or thing, is also considered to be singular:

McDonald's **is** open until midnight.

The southern United States **lies** in the hurricane's path.

Warner Brothers **is** releasing the film this summer.

Lesson 6.5: Pronoun Agreement

Lesson 6.5 Introduction

You have already learned that a pronoun is a word that is used in the place of a noun. In this section, you will learn how to choose the correct pronouns for your sentences. We'll cover:

- Case
- Consistency
- Clear reference
- Agreement

Pronoun Case

The **case** of a pronoun refers to its function in a sentence. **A pronoun that functions as a subject or refers back to the subject is in the subjective case.** The subjective pronouns are:

I

he

she

it

you

we

they

who

whoever

In the following sentences, the subjective pronouns are functioning as subjects:

You and **I** should have lunch.

We hope to win the lottery.

Who is on the phone?

A subjective pronoun can also follow the word *than* or *as* in a comparison:

You are stronger than **I**. (The word *am* is implied after the word *I*.)

We are as knowledgeable about the subject as **they**. (The word *are* is implied after the word *they*.)

We do not usually speak this way, though, so you will often hear, "You are stronger than me." However, this usage is incorrect in writing.

In the next set of examples, the pronouns are referring to the subject, so they, too, are subjective:

We players are collecting money.

The rest of us—Jim, Jose, and **I**—will gather firewood.

The **objective pronouns function as direct objects, indirect objects, or objects of prepositions, or they refer back to objects.** The objective pronouns are:

me

him

her

it

us

you

them

whom, whomever

direct object

I saw **him** in class this morning.

indirect object

The baby gave **me** a big smile.

object of preposition

Give the tickets to **her**.

object of preposition

To **whom** did you send the letter?

refers to direct object

They sent **us** boys to Room 101.

Therefore, if you figure out the part of speech of a pronoun, you can determine whether you should use the subjective or objective case. For example, look at the following sentence. What function does the pronoun in question serve?

Mr. Smith and (I, me) presented the information to the team.

This sentence has a compound subject, and the pronoun is the second half of that subject. Therefore, we must choose the subjective case pronoun, *I*. Now read another example:

For (he, him) and (I, me), this is a dream come true.

In this sentence, the two pronouns are objects of the preposition *for*. Thus, we must use the objective case pronouns, him and me. Here is one final example:

(We, Us) students want to go home early.

In this sentence, the pronoun refers to the subject *students*, so it must be the subjective *We*. If you pretend the word *students* is not there, you can see that "We want to go home early" is correct.

Of all of these pronouns, *who* and *whom* tend to be two of the most confusing.

The **possessive pronouns indicate possession, or ownership**. The possessive pronouns are:

> my
>
> mine
>
> your
>
> yours
>
> his
>
> her
>
> hers
>
> its
>
> our
>
> ours
>
> your
>
> yours
>
> their
>
> theirs

> Julie has finished writing **her** paper.
>
> Hernando gave me **his** granola bar, and I gave him my pear.

Pronoun Consistency and Clear Reference

Pronoun Consistency

When you write, you take a certain **point of view, or perspective**. In **first person** point of view, you use the pronouns *I* and *we* because you describe the events from your own perspective. In **second person** point of view, you use the pronoun *you* because you are usually directing the reader to do something. In instructions, for example, you would write "You do this" and "You do that." In **third person** point of view, you use *he, she, they,* and *it*, and you avoid the first and second person pronouns.

If you start out in one point of view, remain consistently within that point of view, and do not shift from one to the other. Notice how the point of view changes in the following sentences:

> *first person*   *second person*
>
> When **I** registered for classes, **you** had to stand in line for hours.

> *first person*   *first person*   *second person*
>
> Although **we** dislike getting sweaty, **we** signed up for P.E. because **you** have to take it.

> *second person*   *first person*
>
> **You** do not want to pet a dog until **we** find out if it is friendly.

To remain consistent, change the *you* to *I* in the first sentence and the *you* to *we* in the second sentence. In the third sentence, you can change the *you* to *we* or the *we* to *you*.

Clear Pronoun Reference

Another pronoun problem is unclear reference. A pronoun always refers to a noun, and this noun is called an antecedent. If a pronoun's antecedent is not clear, confusion can result:

> Bob told his father that **he** had behaved like a fool.

In this sentence, does the pronoun *he* refer to Bob or to his father? Is Bob criticizing his father's behavior, or is Bob assessing his own actions? Because there are two possible antecedents for the pronoun, the meaning of this sentence is in question. To correct it, you would probably have to rewrite the sentence:

> Bob said to his father, "I behaved like a fool."

Here is another sentence that contains an unclear reference:

> The boy on the bicycle ran into the stop sign, but **it was** barely scratched.

In this sentence, the pronoun *it* could refer to the bicycle or the stop sign. To correct the unclear reference, rewrite the sentence: The boy ran into the stop sign, but his bicycle was barely scratched.

Possessive pronouns, too, can be unclear:

> She let her daughter wear **her** dress to the dance.

Does the dress belong to the mother or daughter? The pronoun *her* does not make the meaning clear. Here is one way to correct the problem:

> She wore her mother's dress to the dance.

Be aware, too, of including a pronoun that has no antecedent at all:

> I took my car to be repaired, and they said I need a new transmission.

Who is *they* in this sentence? We can infer that this pronoun refers to the mechanics who examined the car, but we cannot be sure. To correct the unclear reference, rewrite the sentence, eliminating the unclear pronoun altogether if necessary:

> I took my car to be repaired, and the mechanics said I need a new transmission.

Pronoun Agreement

A pronoun must agree with, or match, the gender and the number of its antecedent. Gender refers to whether the antecedent is masculine (he/him/his), feminine (she/her/her), or neutral (it/it/its). In the following sentences, notice how the gender of the pronoun matches the gender of the italicized antecedent:

> His *wife* gave **her** solemn promise.

> The *man* driving the bus said that **he** was tired.

> The *horse* bruised **its** leg when it tried to jump the fence.

Number refers to whether the antecedent is singular or plural. If the antecedent is singular, use a singular pronoun, and if the antecedent is plural, use a plural pronoun:

> *singular*　　　　　*singular*

> The **teacher** dropped **his** book.

> *plural*　　　　　　*plural*

The **women** are packing **their** bags right now.

singular   *singular*

Her **hair** has lost **its** shine.

Basic pronoun agreement is relatively straightforward. However, you will be writing sentences that will present you with trickier pronoun agreement situations. They are usually tricky because you may not be sure if the antecedent is singular or plural. The remainder of this chapter covers the kinds of sentences that will make choosing the correct pronoun a little more challenging.

Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns can make subject-verb agreement more tricky. When an indefinite pronoun is an antecedent, choosing the pronoun that agrees with it is more challenging. However, you can apply what you have already learned about indefinite pronouns to pronoun agreement.

Most of the indefinite pronouns are singular:

one	nobody	nothing	each
anyone	anybody	anything	either
someone	somebody	something	neither
everyone	everybody	everything	

Therefore, you will use a singular pronoun to match an antecedent that is one of the indefinite pronouns in the previous list. When you know the gender of the antecedent, choose the appropriate singular pronoun:

Each of the men flexed **his** muscles.

Neither of the girls knows where **she** stands.

To avoid gender bias when the gender of the indefinite pronoun is either unknown or mixed, writers often use the phrases *he or she* and *his or her*:

Everyone thinks **he or she** would love to win the lottery.

One of the students forgot to write **his or her** name on the paper.

In spoken conversation, you often hear (and say), "Each of the men flexed *their* muscles" and "Everybody paid *their* dues on time." However, both of these sentences contain pronoun-agreement errors, so we do not write this way. If you think that writing *he or she* or *his or her* is cumbersome, rewrite the sentence to have a plural subject. Then you can use *they* or *their* as the pronoun:

All **people** think **they** would love to win the lottery.

The indefinite pronouns that are plural include:

both

many

few

several

You use plural pronouns with these subjects:

Both of the ladies wore **their** red boots.

Few remembered what **they** were supposed to be doing.

Finally, remember that some indefinite pronouns can be singular or plural, depending on the noun or pronoun to which they refer. These pronouns are:

all

most

any

more

some

Most of the **books** are missing their covers.

Most of the **soil** had lost its ability to support plant life.

Compound Subjects

As with subject-verb agreement, if the word *and* joins two antecedents, they are plural, and you use the plural form of the pronoun:

Todd **and** the rest of the class brought in presents for **their** teacher.

The doctor **and** the nurse looked at **their** watches.

If the antecedents are joined by *or, either/or*, or *neither/nor*, the pronoun agrees with the antecedent that is closest to it:

plural antecedent	*singular antecedent*	*singular pronoun*
Neither **the macaws** *nor*	the **parrot**	would stop **its** squawking.

Collective Nouns

Collective nouns are those that refer to a group of people or things (team, class, crowd, group, company, audience, family, jury, gang, faculty). If the antecedent is a collective noun and the group is acting together as one unit, use a singular pronoun:

The **herd** fixed **its** attention on the busload of tourists.

However, if the members of the group are acting individually, use a plural pronoun:

The **herd** scattered **in** different directions to save their own skins.

MODULE 7

SENTENCE SKILLS

Introduction

To make the necessary connections for your readers, to reduce wordiness, and to increase the overall sophistication of your writing, you will want to vary the length and types of your sentences. Learning to use compound and complex sentences correctly will help you elevate the complexity and sophistication of your writing.

You have already worked on mastering the simple sentence, an independent clause with only one subject-verb relationship. You will now will focus on the compound sentence, which has two or more subject-verb relationships and links related ideas together to make their relationships clearer to readers. After you've mastered compound sentences, you will learn about creating complex sentences, which are combinations of dependent and independent clauses. As you write, you will need to make sure that words, phrases, and clauses are all parallel—the elements must be in the same form or have the same structure.

Correct punctuation is important in sentences. The proper punctuation marks help readers read more easily, and these marks also prevent confusion and misreading. You will review the rules for the major punctuation marks and learn to recognize two serious errors—the comma splice and the run-on sentence—that occur when compound sentences are not correctly punctuated.

You will learn how to combine two sentences. Combining sentences involves not simply linking but also blending them together. As you revise and edit your writing, you can experiment with six different ways to turn one sentence into an element of another sentence.

Lesson 7.1: Sentence Types

Lesson 7.1 Introduction

Within a basic sentence, you will encounter various kinds of **compound elements**. Compound means more than one. Thus, subjects are compound if there are two or more nouns or pronouns performing the action or existing in some state of being. A verb is compound if the subject is performing more than one action. Likewise, direct objects, indirect objects, antecedents of pronouns, and other elements can be compound. You will now see how sentences can be compound, and you will learn to distinguish **compound sentences** from **compound elements** in a simple sentence.

You will also learn about **complex sentences** which combine independent and dependent clauses. An **independent clause** is a group of words that can stand alone as a separate sentence because it contains both a subject and a verb, along with their modifiers and objects. Likewise, **a dependent clause** is a group of words that contains both a subject and a verb and their modifiers and objects. However, a dependent clause cannot stand alone; in order to make sense, it must be attached to an independent clause. Hence a dependent clause depends upon an independent clause to complete its meaning.

Compound Elements Versus Compound Sentences

Compound Sentences

Compound sentences contain at least two different subject-verb relationships:

> *subject verb*   *subject verb*
>
> The **piranha bit** his finger, so **he threw** it back into the river.
>
> *subject verb*   *subject verb*
>
> **He proposed** to her; **she said** yes.
>
> *subject verb*   *subject verb*
>
> **She dislikes** rap music; however, **she went** to the concert anyway.

A group of words that can stand alone as a complete sentence because it contains a subject and a verb is called an **independent clause**. A compound sentence contains at least two independent clauses.

Because there are two separate independent clauses, a compound sentence can form two complete sentences that could each stand alone:

> The piranha bit his finger. He threw it back into the river.
>
> He proposed to her. She said yes.
>
> She dislikes rap music. However, she went to the concert anyway.

However, the two independent clauses are combined to form one longer compound sentence because there is some relationship between the two of them. In the first previous example, for instance, the first event is the cause of the second event, so they are linked together with a coordinating conjunction (so) to indicate this relationship. We could separate these two independent clauses and write them as two simple sentences, but linking them together increases the sophistication of the writing. It also prevents readers from having to determine on their own if or how the two clauses are related.

There are **three ways to form compound sentences**. You can join independent clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction, with a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb, or with a semicolon only.

Compound Elements

In the introduction, you reviewed compound elements such as compound subjects, compound verbs, and compound direct objects. As you learn to write compound sentences, you can practice distinguishing them from a basic, or simple, sentence with a compound element. Knowing the difference will ensure that you punctuate your sentences correctly.

Notice the difference between the following sentences:

> *subject verb*   *verb*
>
> The **day started** out sunny but then **turned** cloudy.

subject verb   *subject verb*

The **day started** out sunny, but then the **sky turned** cloudy.

Should the first sentence have a comma after the word *sunny* and before the coordinating conjunction *but*? No, it should not; the first sentence is not a compound sentence. It contains a compound verb: the subject is *day*, and the two verbs are *started* and *turned*. Because it does not contain two different subject-verb relationships, we do not add a comma before the conjunction.

Creating Compound Sentences

Independent Clauses Joined by a Coordinating Conjunction

The first way to form a compound sentence is to join two independent clauses with a coordinating conjunction. The conjunctions *and, or, for, but, so, nor,* and *yet* link together words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. These words are known as the **coordinating conjunctions** because they join coordinate, or equal, elements. Two coordinate, independent clauses can be joined with these conjunctions:

subject verb   *subject verb*

We stopped at the bank, *and* then **we went** to the post office.

subject verb   *subject verb*

I want to have a garden, *but* **I know** nothing about plants.

subject verb   *subject verb*

You can spend your money now, *or* **you can save** it for something better.

Each of the coordinating conjunctions indicates a certain type of relationship.

Addition: *and*

Cause or effect: *for, so*

Contrast: *but, yet*

Choice or alternative: *or, nor*

When you join two independent clauses with a coordinating conjunction, notice that you add a comma before (and not after) the conjunction.

Incorrect: The sun is shining and, the birds are singing.

Correct: The sun is shining, and the birds are singing.

Independent Clauses Joined by a Semicolon and Conjunctive Adverb

The second way to join two independent clauses involves adding a **semicolon** and a **conjunctive adverb**. Some of the most common conjunctive adverbs are:

also	moreover
as a result	nevertheless
consequently	next
finally	now
furthermore	on the other hand
hence	otherwise
however	similarly
in addition	soon
indeed	still
in fact	then
instead	therefore
likewise	thus
meanwhile	

He is very intelligent; **in fact**, he graduated at the top of his class.

The temperature dropped below freezing; **as a result**, the pipes burst.

They sold their house; **then**, they bought a motor home.

Like coordinating conjunctions, conjunctive adverbs signal different relationships between the two independent clauses. The adverbs as a result, consequently, therefore, and thus all indicate a cause/effect relationship. The adverbs however, instead, nevertheless, and on the other hand signal contrast. The adverbs finally, next, and soon indicate a time order relationship.

Your choice of a conjunctive adverb matters, for you can change the meaning of a sentence by changing just the conjunctive adverb:

They married young; **later**, they divorced.

In this sentence, the word then indicates only a time relationship between the two clauses. Notice how the meaning changes in the next compound sentence:

They married young; **consequently**, they divorced ten years later.

In this sentence, the word consequently suggests that marrying young was the cause of the breakup.

When you join independent clauses with a conjunctive adverb, notice that you add a semicolon before the conjunctive adverb and a comma after it:

Incorrect: The sculpture is strange, nevertheless, I like it.

Correct: The sculpture is strange; nevertheless, I like it.

Do not make the mistake of using a comma in place of the semicolon, or you will create an error called a **comma splice**.

Independent Clauses Joined by a Semicolon

The third way to form a compound sentence is to join independent clauses with just a **semicolon**:

We have to leave now**;** it is time for our lunch break.

He did not want to hurt her feelings**;** he fibbed about liking her new hairstyle.

Notice than when only a semicolon joins independent clauses, the second clause begins with a lowercase letter.

Before you link two independent clauses, make sure the two ideas they express are closely related. One sentence may show a cause and the other an effect. The two ideas may be contrasting. There could be a time relationship, and so on. Then, consider whether you should provide a conjunctive adverb that more explicitly states the relationship. Your reader may or may not discern the relationship you mean to suggest, so providing an adverb will remove the guesswork:

He did not want to hurt her feelings**; therefore**, he fibbed about liking her new hairstyle.

With the addition of the conjunctive adverb *therefore*, this sentence now makes the relationship between the two clauses much clearer.

Dependent Clauses in Complex Sentences

Complex sentences are combinations of dependent and independent clauses. As defined earlier, a dependent clause is a group of words that contains both a subject and a verb and their modifiers and objects. A dependent clause must be attached to an independent clause. Notice how the following dependent clauses express thoughts that are incomplete:

Because she did not study

When you get to the convenience store

Unless you plan to be home

However, when these dependent clauses are added to independent clauses, their meaning becomes complete and clear:

dependent clause   *independent clause*

Because she did not study, she failed the exam.

dependent clause   *independent clause*

When you get to the convenience store, call me.

independent clause   *dependent clause*

I will lock the door   **unless you plan to be home.**

Combining one or more dependent clauses with an independent clause creates a **complex sentence**. A **compound-complex sentence** contains two or more independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses.

Relative Clauses

The **relative clause** is a type of dependent clause that begins with a relative pronoun such as *that, which, who*, or *whom*.

Children **who walk to school** benefit from the exercise.

The dish **that fell and broke** was an antique.

This type of clause functions in a sentence as either a noun or an adjective:

noun (direct object)

He confessed **that he committed the crime**. (The clause is a direct object that answers the question *confessed what?*)

adjective

The file **that he requested** is missing. (The clause is an adjective that answers the *question which file?)*

adjective

Her essay, **which she wrote in an hour**, earned a C. (The clause is an adjective that modifies the word *essay*.)

Writers often confuse the **relative pronouns** *that, which, who,* and *whom*. They cannot be used interchangeably, so you will need to learn to distinguish them from one another.

First of all, the relative pronouns that and which refer to things and animals whereas the relative pronouns who and whom refer to humans.

Incorrect: A woman **that** inspires me is Oprah Winfrey.

Correct: A woman **who** inspires me is Oprah Winfrey.

Next, you will need to distinguish between that and which. That begins essential relative clauses whereas which begins nonessential relative clauses.

essential relative clause

The dish **that I love the most** is spaghetti and meatballs.

nonessential relative clause

I eat spaghetti and meatballs, **which is my favorite dish**, at least once a week.

Therefore, relative clauses beginning with *that* will not be enclosed in commas. Relative clauses beginning with *which* offer information that is not essential, so they are set off with commas from the rest of the sentence.

Finally, learn the difference between *who* and *whom*. You have studied the subjective and objective forms of pronouns. The relative pronoun *who* is the subjective form. Therefore, it is the correct pronoun to use when it is immediately followed by a verb:

verb

The person **who eats** the most hotdogs wins the contest.

As you recall from the previous section about punctuating essential and nonessential relative clauses, you will separate any who clause that offers nonessential information with commas from the rest of the sentence:

Her cousin**, who arrived yesterday,** plans to stay a week.

The relative pronoun *whom* is the objective form. Therefore, it is the appropriate form to use when it is immediately followed by a noun or a pronoun:

noun

The girl **whom the judges** chose cried tears of joy.

Use commas before and after a *whom* clause if the information it offers is not essential:

nonessential relative clause

His wife, **whom he adores,** is his best friend.

Creating Complex Sentences

Subordinating Conjunctions

When you learned about compound sentences, you saw that their independent clauses are linked together with **coordinating conjunctions**. These conjunctions indicate that both clauses are coordinate, or equal. The clauses in a complex sentence, however, are not equal. One of them is dependent on, or subordinate to, the other. Thus, they are linked together with subordinating conjunctions—words that indicate this subordinate relationship. By adding one of the following words or phrases to the beginning of a clause, you make it dependent, or subordinate:

After	unless
although	until
as	what
because	whatever
before	when
even if	whenever

even though	where
how	whereas
if	whether
in order that	whichever
since	while
though	whoever

Notice how adding one of these words to an independent clause instantly creates a dependent clause that requires the addition of an independent clause to complete its meaning:

Independent clause: We lost the game.

Dependent clause: After we lost the game

Dependent clause: Even though we lost the game

Dependent clause: When we lost the game

These subordinating conjunctions not only point out which idea is subordinate but also indicate the relationship (time order, cause or effect, contrast, and so on) between the two ideas.

Punctuating Dependent Clauses

When a dependent clause that begins with a subordinating conjunction starts a sentence, the dependent clause is followed by a comma:

dependent clause   *independent clause*

Because she suffers from allergies,   she cannot have a cat.

dependent clause   *independent clause*

Since she came to work here, the office is more organized.

If the dependent clause follows the independent clause, you usually do not need a comma.

independent clause   *dependent clause*

She cannot have a cat   **because she suffers from allergies.**

The office is more organized   **since she came to work here.**

Punctuating Relative Clauses

You may have noticed by now that some of this chapter's example sentences have included commas around relative clauses and that some have not. Whether a relative clause is separated from the rest of the sentence by commas depends on whether the clause is essential or nonessential. The nonessential relative clause adds information that is not necessary to knowing which person or thing the writer means:

Mr. Rodriguez, **who owns this restaurant**, is very wealthy.

In this sentence, the relative clause *who owns this restaurant* is not essential to knowing who the subject is. Therefore, the clause is not essential; it could be eliminated without any loss of meaning. As a result, it is separated from the rest of the sentence by a comma before and a comma after.

Sometimes, however, a relative clause offers information that is essential to knowing which person or thing the writer means:

The man **who owns this restaurant** is very wealthy.

In this sentence, we do not know which man the writer means without the information in the relative clause. Therefore, the clause is essential, and it is not enclosed within commas.

Lesson 7.2: Punctuation

Lesson 7.2 Introduction

Proper punctuation helps you convey your message to your reader by avoiding the confusion and misreading that punctuation errors can cause. In this section, you will learn the rules for the **major punctuation marks**: **periods, question marks, exclamation points, commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, and quotation marks**. You will also learn how to avoid sentence fragments, comma splices, and run-on sentences.

Periods, Question Marks, Exclamation Points, and Commas

Periods, Question Marks, and Exclamation Points Periods, question marks, and exclamation points are all types of end punctuation. That is, they indicate that a sentence has ended.

I cannot find you.

Where are you?

There you are!

A period is the most common way to end a sentence. If a sentence does not ask a question or present something in an exclamatory way—such as the first sentence in the previous group—it ends with a period. The question mark ends a sentence that asks a question, such as *Where are you?* If a sentence is exclamatory in nature, such as the last sentence in the previous example, it ends with an exclamation point. You probably will not use exclamation points as frequently as you use periods and question marks in your writing, but if you want to emphasize the severity or excitement of a certain sentence, an exclamation point is appropriate.

A period is also used to indicate abbreviations, such as those for Doctor (Dr.), Registered Nurse (R.N.), or Mister (Mr.).

Commas

Commas often seem to be tricky punctuation marks. However, there are actually only seven rules for comma usage. Memorize these seven rules; then, each time you wonder whether or not you should insert a comma, ask yourself if the situation is one of those described next.

Commas separate certain elements in sentences. Use commas to:

Separate elements in a series of three or more words, phrases, or clauses:

I went to the store and bought apples, grapes, melons, and pears.

The dog ran across the street, down the sidewalk, and into the yard.

Connect two independent clauses that are joined by a coordinating conjunction *(and, but, for, nor, yet, or, so)*:

I went to the store, **but** I forgot to buy fruit.

Separate introductory elements, including dependent clauses, from the independent clause:

Going to the store, I ran into an old friend.

Because she has an A average, she does not have to take the final exam.

Separate an element—such as an appositive, certain relative clauses, or the name of the person being spoken to—that could be removed from the sentence without changing its meaning:

This book, which is overly long, is difficult to read.

Mrs. Davis, my music teacher, is a brilliant pianist.

I wonder, Bob, if it is wise to proceed without getting approval.

Separate two or more coordinate adjectives:

We ate all of the ripe, delicious fruit.

Separate elements in direct quotations:

She said, "No."

Separate phrases that indicate contrast:

I told her to fetch me a fork, not a spoon.

Semicolons, Apostrophes, Colons, and Quotations Marks

Semicolons

There are only two uses of the semicolon in sentences:

To link two independent clauses:

You should go to school; I'm going to go to work.

Make sure your car suits your lifestyle; otherwise, you will never feel comfortable in the driver's seat.

To separate the items in a list in which one (or more) of the items contains a comma:

>In attendance at the meeting were Mr. Jones, president; Ms. Anderson, vice president; Mr. Lee, treasurer; and Mrs. Lopez, secretary.

Apostrophes

Apostrophes have only three uses.

They form contractions:

>do not = don't

>have not = haven't

>there is = there's

>you are = you're

They indicate possession:

>Mrs. Johnson's letters

>the girls' smiles

>my brother-in-law's house

They are used to form plurals of single letters and numerals:

>She earned B's in all of her courses.

>When you are rolling dice, two 1's are called snake eyes, and two 6's are called boxcars.

Colons

Two of the main uses for colons are listed below.

They introduce a list:

>Present at the meeting were the following people: the president, the vice president, the treasurer, the secretary, and three committee chairpersons.

They introduce some direct quotations:

>Every time I would complain, my mother would say: "Count your blessings."

Quotation Marks

Quotation marks have three main uses in sentences. They are used to:

Indicate that you are using someone else's exact words:

>Jack Dugan said, "I do not agree with Mayor Elliott's position on the energy program."

Indicate the use of a word in an unusual way or to indicate reservation:

> I do not agree with Mayor Elliott's position on the energy "program."

Used in this way, the quotation marks indicate that the writer thinks that "program" is not the correct way to describe the energy situation.

Indicate titles of poems, essays, short stories, song titles, and articles:

> The professor asked us to read William Faulkner's story "A Rose for Emily."

Avoiding Comma Splices and Run-ons

The Comma Splice

A **comma splice** occurs when a comma is used where a semicolon should be:

> He is holding four aces, he definitely has the winning hand.

> She made the salad, meanwhile, he set the table.

In both of these sentences, only a comma separates the two independent clauses. A comma is appropriate if the clauses are joined with a coordinating conjunction; however, neither of these two includes a conjunction. In the first sentence, the comma must be replaced with a semicolon:

> He is holding four aces; he definitely has the winning hand.

In the second example, which includes the conjunctive adverb meanwhile, the first comma must be changed to a semicolon:

> She made the salad; meanwhile, he set the table.

You can also correct a comma splice by replacing the incorrect comma with a period and creating two separate sentences. However, the comma error is usually an indication that the two independent clauses are related, so it is often   more appropriate to link them in some type of compound sentence.

The Run-on Sentence

A **run-on sentence**, which is also known as a fused sentence, occurs when there is no punctuation at all between two independent clauses:

> We could go fishing we could go swimming.

> She would love to visit Paris she cannot afford the trip.

> Pizza is his favorite food he eats it often.

These three sentences contain two independent clauses that are run together without any punctuation.

We can correct them in one of three ways. First of all, we could simply add a semicolon between the two independent clauses:

> We could go fishing; we could go swimming.

She would love to visit Paris; she cannot afford the trip.

Pizza is his favorite food; he eats it often.

Or we could add a comma and an appropriate coordinating conjunction:

We could go fishing, or we could go swimming.

She would love to visit Paris, but she cannot afford the trip.

Pizza is his favorite food, so he eats it often.

A third way to correct a run-on sentence is to add a semicolon and an appropriate conjunctive adverb followed by a comma:

We could go fishing; on the other hand, we could go swimming.

She would love to visit Paris; however, she cannot afford the trip.

Pizza is his favorite food; therefore, he eats it often.

Avoiding Sentence Fragments

Dependent clauses cannot stand alone. A dependent clause must be attached to an independent clause that completes its meaning. Therefore, if a dependent clause ends with a period, it becomes a type of **sentence fragment**:

Sentence fragment: Although he loves to exercise.

Sentence fragment: That she plans to install herself.

Correcting Dependent Clause Sentence Fragments

Dependent clause sentence fragments are those that begin with a subordinating conjunction and end, incorrectly, with a period:

Sentence fragment: Even though he is eighteen years old.

Sentence fragment: Because the hotel does not allow pets.

This type of fragment can be corrected in one of two ways. First of all, you can simply remove the subordinating conjunction, which would make the clause independent:

He is eighteen years old.

The hotel does not allow pets.

The second way to correct a dependent clause fragment is to add the independent clause that completes its meaning. This independent clause is often the sentence that comes immediately before or after the fragment:

Even though he is eighteen years old, he is still relatively immature.

I will have to board my dogs at the kennel **because the hotel does not allow pets.**

Correcting Relative Clause Sentence Fragments

Relative clause sentence fragments are those that begin with a relative pronoun and end, incorrectly, with a period:

> Sentence fragment: **Which** I do not understand.

> Sentence fragment: **Who** keeps students interested.

This type of fragment can be corrected one of two ways. First of all, you can rewrite the fragment to eliminate the relative pronoun and create an independent clause:

> I do not understand the homework assignment.

> Mrs. Washington keeps students interested.

Notice that you will usually have to add a subject or an object to those clauses that lack one.

The second way to correct a relative clause fragment is to attach it to the independent clause that completes its meaning. This independent clause is often the sentence that comes immediately before or after the fragment:

> I have not done the homework assignment, **which I do not understand.**

> Mrs. Washington is a great teacher **who keeps students interested.**

Lesson 7.3: Parallel Structure and Combining Sentences

Lesson 7.3 Introduction

When a sentence contains either a pair or a series of elements, those elements must be parallel. That is, the elements must be in the same form or have the same structure. Parallelism gives sentences balance, which makes them easier to read and understand. Therefore, as you write, you will need to make sure that words, phrases, and clauses are all parallel. You will learn about parallel words, phrases, clauses.

Parallelism will help you as you learn to combine sentences. Combining sentences involves not simply linking but also blending them together. Next, you will learn the six different ways to turn one sentence into an element of another sentence.

Parallel Words and Phrases

Parallel Words

A pair or series of words in a sentence should have the same form or be the same part of speech:

> Parallel nouns: **Friends, Romans, countrymen**, lend me your ears.

> Parallel adjectives: Her singing was **loud, forceful, and awful.**

> Parallel adverbs: He works **steadily and conscientiously**.

Can you find the parallelism error in the following sentence?

She enjoys cooking, dancing, and quilts.

This sentence contains a series of three direct objects. Although all three are nouns, the first two are gerunds, nouns that are formed by adding –ing to a verb. The third item in the series is not a gerund, so the sentence contains an error in parallelism. To correct it, we need to change the form of the third item in the series to a gerund:

She enjoys cooking, dancing, and quilting.

If the series takes the form of adverbs, make sure all of its elements are adverbs. If the series takes the form of adjectives, make sure all of its elements are adjectives, and so on. In addition, do not mix single-word elements with phrases:

She enjoys cooking, dancing, and **to quilt**.

In this series of direct objects, the first two are gerunds, but the last item is an infinitive phrase. Because all three elements in the series do not have the same form, the sentence contains a parallelism error.

Parallel Phrases

A pair or series of phrases must be parallel as well.

Parallel prepositional phrases:

She searched **in the closet, under the bed**, and **behind the refrigerator**.

Parallel infinitive phrases:

She is determined to **earn her diploma, to attend college**, and **to make a better life for herself**.

Parallel gerund phrases:

Falling in love, getting married, and **having children** are her current goals.

Can you find the parallelism errors in the following sentence?

To get out of debt, cut up your credit cards, paying cash for your purchases, and patient saving for more expensive items.

This sentence offers a list of things to do to get out of debt, but the three things are presented in three different forms:

cut up your credit cards (verb phrase)

paying cash for your purchases (gerund phrase)

patient saving for more expensive items (noun phrase)

Because of the parallelism errors, this sentence is difficult to comprehend. To correct it, rewrite the sentence so that all three phrases are in the same form:

To get out of debt, **cut** up your credit cards, **pay** cash for your purchases, and patiently **save** for more expensive items. (verb phrases)

To get out of debt, begin **cutting** up your credit cards, **paying** cash for your purchases, and patiently **saving** for more expensive items. (gerund phrases)

To get out of debt, you need **the courage** to cut up your credit cards, **the resolve** to pay cash for your purchases, and **the patience** to save for more expensive items. (noun phrases)

Also, avoid combining a series of phrases with a clause:

The week before the prom, he rented a limo, ordered a corsage, and the restaurant took his reservation.

In what should be a series of three verb phrases, the first two items are verb phrases, but the third item is in the form of an independent clause. To correct the parallelism error, revise the clause to be another verb phrase:

The week before the prom, he rented a limo, ordered a corsage, and made a dinner reservation.

The coordinating conjunctions—especially the words *and, or*, and *but*—will often signal the need for parallel construction of the phrases they join. Also, pay attention to parallelism when you write two words or phrases that are joined with pairs of conjunctions such as *either/or, neither/nor, not only/but also, but/and*, and *not/but*:

The gift was **not** for her **but** for him.

His responsibility was **not only** to himself **but also** to his daughter.

Parallel Clauses

Like words and phrases, clauses must be parallel. In pairs and series, both independent and dependent clauses should have the same structure.

Parallelism and Independent Clauses

When pairs or series of independent clauses express parallel ideas, they must be parallel in structure:

One brother is tall, and the other is short.

Notice how changing the structure of the second independent clause makes the relationship between the two clauses a little harder to understand:

One brother is tall, and "short" best describes the other one.

This sentence is not only more difficult to understand, but its lack of balance also causes it to sound cumbersome and awkward.

Now read two more compound sentences that lack parallelism and try to determine how the structure changes:

He broke up with his girlfriend, and the rejection was struggled with by her.

Does absence make the heart grow fonder, or out of sight out of mind?

In the first example, the first independent clause is in the active voice, and the second one is in the passive voice. Notice how much easier it is to understand this sentence when the second clause is revised to the active voice:

He broke up with his girlfriend, and **she struggled** with his rejection.

In the second example, the second clause is not in the question form of the first clause. To make the clauses parallel, we could write:

Does absence make the heart grow fonder, or **is** a person out of sight out of mind?

The coordinating conjunctions—especially the words *and, or*, and *but*—will often signal the need for parallel construction of the clauses they join. Also, pay attention to parallelism when you write two independent clauses that are joined with pairs of conjunctions such as *either/or, neither/nor*, or *not only/but also*.

Either **we will reach** the summit of the mountain, *or* **we will die** trying.

Not only **can he** prepare gourmet meals, *but* **he** *also* **can** repair a leaky faucet.

Parallelism and Dependent Clauses

In complex sentences, too, a pair or series of dependent clauses should be parallel in structure:

Parallel relative clauses:

I hope **that** you will come to my party and **that** you will bring me a gift.

Parallel dependent clauses:

When he was born and **where** he lives now are none of our business.

Parallel dependent clauses:

The murder occurred sometime **after** the caterer arrived but **before** he left.

Many errors in parallelism occur when writers unintentionally mix words, phrases, and/or clauses in pairs or series of elements. The following sentence, for example, is not parallel:

    dependent clause   *independent clause*

He told her **that he loved her**, and **she should run away with him**.

In this sentence, the subject (he) says two things, so these two things should be expressed with parallel structure. But they are not: one is in the form of a dependent clause, and the other is in the form of an independent clause. To correct this error, we need only delete the comma after her and add the word that before the independent clause:

He told her that he loved her and that she should run away with him.

Can you spot the parallelism errors in the following sentences?

She is a talented golfer and who is also good at bowling.

He was angry about the change and that no one had notified him.

Because she lacked experience and displaying a negative attitude, she was not hired for the job.

The first sentence pairs a noun phrase (*a talented golfer)* with a relative clause (*who is also good at bowling*). To correct it, revise so that the sentence contains two noun phrases:

She is a talented **golfer** and a good **bowler**.

The second sentence pairs a prepositional phrase (*about the change*) with a relative clause (*that no one had notified him*). To correct it, revise the sentence so that it contains either two prepositional phrases or two relative clauses:

He was angry **about** the change and **about** the lack of notification. (prepositional phrases)

He was angry **that** the change had been made and **that** no one had notified him.

In the third sentence, a dependent clause (*Because she lacked experience*) is paired with a participial phrase (*displaying a negative attitude*). To correct this sentence, rewrite it to include either two dependent clauses or two participial phrases:

Because she lacked experience and **because** she displayed a negative attitude, she was not hired for the job. (dependent clauses)

Lacking experience and **displaying** a negative attitude, she was not hired for the job. (participial phrases)

In addition, you could also revise this sentence to include a compound object of a preposition:

Because of her **lack of experience** and **negative attitude**, she was not hired for the job.

Combining Sentences, Part I

Use a Compound Subject or a Compound Verb

One way to combine sentences is to create a compound subject or a compound verb to blend one sentence into another. For example, look at these two sets of short sentences:

Mr. Reynolds drives a Volvo. Mr. McMann drives one, too.

Jennifer made a deposit at the bank. Then she went to the car wash.

The first set of sentences can be combined by using a compound subject to blend the information in the second sentence into the first sentence:

subject   *subject*

Mr. Reynolds and **Mr. McMann** drive Volvos.

Note that the verb in the revised sentence must change to plural to match the compound subject.

The second set of sentences can be combined by using a compound verb to blend the information in the second sentence into the first sentence:

verb   *verb*

Jennifer **made** a deposit at the bank and then **went** to the car wash.

Note, too, that both of these revised sentences are less wordy.

Use a Dependent Clause

Another way to combine sentences is to turn one of the sentences into a dependent clause. For example, look at these sets of sentences:

She did not study. She failed the exam.

The carpenter had already cut the wood. He realized his mistake.

The first set of sentences can be combined by turning the first independent clause into a dependent clause and attaching it to the second independent clause:

dependent clause   *independent clause*

Because she did not study,   she failed the exam.

The second set of sentences can be combined by turning the second sentence into a dependent clause:

independent clause   *dependent clause*

The carpenter had already cut the wood **before he realized his mistake**.

In both new sentences, the information in one of the original sentences becomes an adverb clause for the other original sentence. Notice how the relationship between the two original sentences becomes much clearer when they are combined.

The following list contains subordinating conjunctions that can be used to form dependent clauses.

after	unless
although	until
as	what
because	whatever
before	when
even if	whenever
even though	where
how	whereas
if	whether
in order that	whichever

since	while

though	whoever

Remember that when a dependent clause that begins with a subordinating conjunction starts a sentence, the dependent clause is followed by a comma. If the dependent clause follows the independent clause, you usually do not need a comma.

Use a Relative (*Who, Which*, or *That*) Clause

Sentences can also be combined by turning one of them into a relative (adjective) clause. Read the following two sets of sentences:

Some people exercise regularly. These people are generally healthier.

The film won an Academy Award. I liked it.

The first set of sentences can be combined by turning the first sentence into a relative clause and blending it into the second sentence:

relative clause

People **who exercise regularly** are generally healthier.

The second set of sentences can be combined by turning the second sentence into a relative clause:

relative clause

The film **that I liked** won an Academy Award.

Notice that the relationships are clearer when the sentences are combined.

Remember that a nonessential relative clause should be separated from the rest of the sentence with commas. An essential relative clause is not enclosed within commas.

Combining Sentences, Part 2

Use an Appositive

Sentences can also be combined by turning one of them into an appositive. For example, read the following sentences:

Renee delivered an interesting speech. She is the valedictorian.

The coat was a gift from her parents. It was lime green.

The first set of sentences can be combined by turning the second one into an appositive and blending it into the first sentence:

appositive

Renee, **the valedictorian**, delivered an interesting speech.

The second set of sentences can be combined by turning the first one into an appositive:

appositive

The coat, **a gift from her parents,** was lime green.

Use a Prepositional Phrase

Yet another way to combine sentences is to turn the information in one of them into a prepositional phrase. For example, read these sentences:

The tree had the kite. The kite was stuck.

She heard her favorite song. The radio was playing it.

The first set of sentences can be combined by turning the first sentence into a prepositional phrase and blending it into the second sentence:

prepositional phrase

The kite was stuck **in the tree**.

The second set of sentences can be combined by turning the second sentence into a prepositional phrase:

prepositional phrase

She heard her favorite song **on the radio**.

Use a Participial (–*ed* or –*ing*) Phrase

One last way to combine sentences is to turn one of the sentences into a participial phrase. For example, read the following sets of sentences:

He was a fugitive. He was wanted in three states.

She crouched down low. She remained hidden from sight.

The first set of sentences can be combined by turning the second sentence into a participial phrase and blending it with the first sentence:

participial phrase

He was a fugitive **wanted in three states**.

The second set of sentences can be combined by turning the first sentence into a participial phrase:

participial phrase

Crouching down low, she remained hidden from sight.

NOTE: When using this method, beware of creating dangling or misplaced modifiers.

MODULE 8

BASIC RESEARCH SKILLS

Introduction

As you write essays of your own, you will often need to find and include information from other sources. This information, which is known as **source material**, can take the form of facts, statistics, examples, expert testimony, or the observations of others. It can come from books, newspapers, magazines, Web sites, or other kinds of sources. Source material will help develop or prove your ideas and opinions on a subject. Because it adds additional support, it will help you make a more convincing case.

After you complete this section, you will be able to:

- Explain how the first three steps of the writing process can help writers determine the need for source material.

- List the three main types of sources and explain how to find each type.

- Explain how to determine a source's credibility.

- Define the term *plagiarism* and explain how intentional and unintentional plagiarism occurs.

- Explain the difference between direct quotations and paraphrases.

- Write a paragraph that integrates source material using the MLA style of documentation.

- Prepare a works-cited list.

This section will help you develop your skills in researching, managing information, and incorporating source materials into your own writing.

Lesson 8.1: Source Material

Lesson 8.1 Introduction

Read the following paragraph about work in America and Europe.

> Americans work more and take fewer vacations than Europeans do, and there are some logical explanations for the difference. Of course, neither is better than the other because working too much and working too little have advantages and disadvantages. Fortunately, though, some signs indicate that moderation is occurring on both sides of the Atlantic.

Now compare that paragraph with the following version that includes source material to further develop and prove the main idea.

> Americans work more and take fewer vacations than Europeans do. Americans now work 20 percent more hours than they did in 1970, and the French, for example, are working 24 percent fewer. With holidays and vacations factored in, the average American works 34.5 hours per week, while the average French or German employee works only 28 hours per week. There are some logical explanations for the difference. According to historians, Europeans reacted to the 1970s oil shocks and economic downturn by trying to spread the work evenly among workers. Meanwhile, in the United States, businesses

restructured and laid off many employees, leaving those who remained to work harder and longer. Of course, neither is better than the other because working too much and working too little have advantages and disadvantages. In particular, according to a report by the thirty-nation Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, Americans produce more and get richer than Europeans by putting in longer hours, but they are also more obsessed with possessions and more stressed out than Europeans are. Fortunately, though, some signs indicate that moderation is occurring on both sides of the Atlantic. In Germany and France, companies are increasing work hours, and in the United States, there is new interest in taking more time off.*

Which version of the paragraph is more convincing? The second paragraph, of course, is more convincing because it provides specific facts and statistics to develop the author's points.

Now, you will learn how the first three steps of the writing process can help writers determine the need for source material.

Source: Adapted from "Too Much Work—and Play," no author credited, *USA Today*, July 13, 2004, p. 14A.

Determining the Need for Source Material

When you are deciding whether or not you need information from other sources to support your ideas, you can use the first three steps of the writing process as both guides and stepping stones.

- In Step One, the prewriting stage, for example, as you generate ideas for your composition, you will probably get a sense of not only what you do know about a topic but also what you do not know and need to find out. At this stage of the process, after you have decided upon a tentative main idea statement, you can probably jot down a list of information that you will have to acquire through research. You can turn this into a "shopping list" to take to the library or to a computer and then check off each item once you have found it.

- In Step 2 of the writing process, when you are organizing your ideas, do not forget to account for source material in your outline. Under the appropriate outline heading, list the facts or other kinds of information that you plan to use in that particular paragraph or section. And think again about each point that you want to make so that you can decide if any additional source material might help you make that point clearer for your readers.

- Finally, in Step 3, take a careful look at the paragraphs you have written. Are there ideas that could be made clearer or supported more strongly with facts, statistics, examples, observations, or expert opinions? Evaluate your layers of development, especially in shorter paragraphs, and decide whether you should find more information to bolster your point.

Lesson 8.2: Types of Sources

Lesson 8.2 Introduction

To find source material, you will have to conduct research. It's valuable to have a variety of different sources to support your writing.

The three main types of source material are:

- Printed sources found in the library: When you are searching for information about a topic, the library is the obvious place to go. The two main types of library sources are books and periodicals.

- Online or electronic sources: The Internet offers a wealth of information on just about any topic you can name.

- Nonprint sources: Do not overlook this valuable resource, which includes interviews, radio shows, and television programs.

Now you will explore these types further.

Types of Sources

Library Sources

Spend some time familiarizing yourself with the locations of and the methods of retrieval for the different types of sources in your library. Then, when you need information, you will know where and how to find it. Here are types of materials you can find at libraries:

- **Books:** There are usually two main types of books in libraries. The general collection, which contains works of fiction as well as nonfiction books such as biographies, includes all of the books that can be checked out by those with a library card. In most college libraries, these books are organized according to the Library of Congress subject headings system, which assigns a letter and number (the call number) to each book so that you can locate it on the shelves. The library's card catalog—consists of either printed cards organized in drawers or an electronic database searchable by computer—allows you to look up books by subject, author, or title. You can then write down the call numbers of the books that you want to examine.

  The other type of book is the reference work, which provides factual information about a wide variety of topics. Reference works include general and specialized encyclopedias, statistical sources, dictionaries, and many other books that usually cannot be checked out. They, too, are arranged by call number, and they are usually shelved in a particular section of the library.

- **Periodicals:** Periodicals include magazines, journals, and newspapers that are published periodically—such as every day, once a month, or twice a year. They contain articles on a variety of different subjects. To find articles about your topic, you locate that topic in a printed index such as The Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature. Alternately, you can use one of many different computerized indexes that allow you to search by subject, author, or title.

Online Sources

Search engines such as Google or Yahoo! make it easy to find Web sites that may offer information about a topic. You can also use a search engine to access the specific Web sites of organizations, government agencies, and businesses.

In addition, you can find many publications online. For example, newspapers such as the *New York Times* and *USA Today* post their content online every day. Magazines such as *Time, Newsweek*, and *U.S. News and World Report* also post some or all of their articles online. You can access these sites by typing in the specific URL, or Web site address, into your Internet browser, or you can find them by using a search engine.

You can also subscribe to electronic libraries or databases that allow you to search for information from a wide variety of electronic texts. Some of these require you to pay an annual fee for access to the content. Other databases, especially those available through your local or campus library, may provide access to the same kind of information at no charge.

Nonprint Sources

People who are experts on the subject you are researching are an especially useful source of information. You can set up an interview with one of these individuals and prepare a list of

questions to ask the person. With your interviewee's permission, tape-record your interview so that you will be able to extract direct quotations to use in your paper to support your ideas.

Television shows, radio programs, and films are other good nonprint resources. Often you can obtain a transcript of a television or radio program by contacting the station or network that aired the program. Do not overlook works of art, either. You may find it useful to use a painting, sculpture, photograph, or musical composition as a source.

Lesson 8.3: Evaluating Sources

Lesson 8.3 Introduction

The first step in strengthening your research skills is to learn where information is located and how to access it. However, once you find it, you must then evaluate the information to make sure that it is credible, or believable and trustworthy. If you do not use credible sources, you will weaken your support for your own ideas. Information posted on Internet Web sites, in particular, should be carefully examined for its worthiness and accuracy.

Next, you will learn some questions that will help you evaluate your potential sources.

Evaluating the Credibility of Sources

Here are some questions to ask yourself when you are considering a source's credibility:

1. Is the information current and up-to-date? When was the book or article published? When was the Web site posted or updated? You will want to include only the latest information, so avoid facts and statistics that seem too old.

2. Who wrote or posted the information? Is an author identified? What are the author's credentials? Does he or she seem qualified to be considered an authority on the topic? If not, the information may not be credible. Be careful when using Internet Web sites, in particular, since anyone can create a Web site and post information or opinions on it.

3. Do the ideas and information agree with those in material that you have found in other reputable sources? Beware of outlandish claims that are contrary to everything else you have read about a topic.

4. How objective does the information seem? Does the author provide information about his or her sources, and are those sources reputable? If the author seeks to persuade you, could that person have manipulated the facts or data to support his or her position? Could the information actually be a form of advertising?

Lesson 8.4: Avoiding Plagiarism

Lesson 8.4 Introduction

As you prepare to incorporate source material as layers of development in your composition, you will need to understand what the term *plagiarism* means. **Plagiarism** is the intentional or unintentional use of someone else's ideas or words without giving proper credit to that individual and/or clearly acknowledging the original source.

Next, you will learn more about what plagiarism is and how to avoid it.

What Is Plagiarism?

Intentional plagiarism, the most blatant form, occurs when a writer knowingly transfers someone else's sentences or paragraphs into his or her own paper without providing any information about where the material came from. Word processing and the Internet allow writers to copy and paste others' words into their documents, so computers have made it easier for people to plagiarize.

However, a writer can also be guilty of **unintentional plagiarism**. This occurs when he or she does not properly indicate the point at which borrowed material begins or ends or when he or she fails to provide source information. For example, if a writer does not express someone else's thoughts in his or her own words and ends up using too much of the wording of the original source, plagiarism can result. Likewise, a writer who forgets to acknowledge a source will be inadvertently plagiarizing.

What are the consequences of plagiarism? The practice of using someone else's words as your own is illegal and unethical. It is a lot like lying; you may not go to jail for telling a lie or plagiarizing a passage, but you will cast serious doubt upon your own character and credibility if you commit either one of these moral transgressions. Plagiarizing will undermine your own ideas and arguments, because if you are found to have "stolen" the ideas of others, readers will view you as an untrustworthy source of information. What is more, most academic institutions now impose serious penalties on students who cheat by plagiarizing, so make sure that you always give credit where credit is due.

You will need to learn how to properly acknowledge other writers and sources—and avoid plagiarism. In the next section, you will learn how to use a common system of documentation known as MLA style.

Lesson 8.5: Citing Sources

Lesson 8.5 Introduction

Now that you understand the risks and consequences of plagiarism, you need to learn how to include your source materials ethically and appropriately.

To properly integrate source material into your essays, you first need to decide whether to use a direct quotation or a paraphrase. Then you will appropriately document each direct quotation or paraphrase with a citation in the text along with a corresponding entry on a works-cited page.

You will now learn how to do both.

Direct Quotations and Paraphrases

When you incorporate source material into your own writing, you can use either direct quotations or paraphrases. A **direct quotation** provides the exact wording of the original source, so it is enclosed in quotation marks. For example:

> Jeffery Sheler writes, "Prayer has become familiar terrain in modern America. It is woven into the daily rhythms of life, its ethos embedded in the public and private experiences of millions. Indeed, a recent Roper poll found that nearly half of all Americans said that they pray or meditate every day."*

A **paraphrase** rewords the information in the original source, so it is not enclosed in quotation marks:

> According to Jeffery Sheler, praying is a regular part of modern American life, both public and private. As a matter of fact, half of our country's citizens claim to pray or meditate on a daily basis.

Is it better to use direct quotations or paraphrases when you integrate source material? In general, it is better to use paraphrases, for two reasons:

1. Paraphrasing allows you to include only the essential information. Although it is true that you can remove parts of quotations and indicate the omission with ellipsis dots (. . .), a paraphrase allows you to incorporate only the pertinent facts or ideas into your work, without including any unnecessary words.

2. Paraphrases are usually easier to read. Because paraphrases are in the same wording and style as the rest of your paper, they tend to flow better with the rest of the text. Plus, readers do not have to do the extra mental work required to shift from your voice to a different voice, as they do when they read direct quotations.

*Source: Jeffery L. Sheler, "The Power of Prayer," *U.S. News and World Report*, Dec. 20, 2004, pp. 52–53.

Documenting Sources

You have learned how to incorporate direct quotations and paraphrases from other sources. Now you are ready to learn how to properly acknowledge—or document—the source material that you include in your writing. There are several different systems of documentation, including MLA (Modern Language Association) style, APA (American Psychological Association) style, and the Chicago Manual of Style system. In this text, we will focus on MLA style, the system used most often for papers in the humanities.

MLA style has two main components: (1) citations in the text, enclosed in parentheses, that provide the author's name and the page number (for print sources) of the original source, along with (2) a works-cited list that provides complete bibliographic information for all of the sources cited in the paper.

The following examples provide typical citations for direct quotations and paraphrases.

- **Direct Quotation**: "Carbophobia, the most recent in the century-long series of food fads to wash over the American table, seems to have finally crested, though not before sweeping away entire bakeries and pasta companies in its path, panicking potato breeders into redesigning the spud, crumbling whole doughnut empires, and, at least to my way of thinking, ruining an untold number of meals" (Pollan 74).

  (from Michael Pollan, "Our National Eating Disorder," *New York Times*, Oct. 17, 2004, p. 74.)

- **Partial Quotation:** While other cultures have been eating the same way for generations, America, in contrast, is prone to "applecart-toppling nutritional swings," overnight dietary changes that can be brought about by a scientific study or even just a "lone crackpot with a medical degree" (Pollan 74).

  (from Michael Pollan, "Our National Eating Disorder," *New York Times*, Oct. 17, 2004, p. 74.)

- **Paraphrase:** According to the Sierra Club Web site, several victories for the environment occurred in 2004. In particular, President George Bush in November 2004 signed a bill that created more than 750,000 acres of wilderness land in eastern Nevada (Valtin).

  (from Tom Valtin, "Reasons to Be Cheerful," *The Planet* newsletter, Jan./Feb. 2005, http://www.sierraclub.org/planet/200501/reasons.asp.)

To distinguish source material from your own ideas, make sure to clearly identify source material at both its beginning and its end. In the case of a direct quotation, a quotation mark indicates the beginning of the material, and a closing quotation mark followed by a parenthetical citation indicates the end. Paraphrases are often introduced with the author's name to indicate where the source material begins. In that case, the author's name is not repeated in the citation.

> According to Michael Pollan, while other cultures have been eating the same way for generations, America, in contrast, is prone to "applecart-toppling nutritional swings,"

overnight dietary changes that can be brought about by a scientific study or even just a "lone crackpot with a medical degree" (74).

Other common ways to introduce source material include using statements such as John Smith claims that . . . , Barbara Stock said . . . , or Jack Nelson writes. . .

Preparing the Works-Cited List

A works-cited list is the second element (in addition to citations within the text) of MLA style. This list, which appears at the end of a paper, includes an entry for each source that was cited in the text. Each entry includes specific details about the source placed in a particular order. These entries are arranged in alphabetical order. The following are examples of typical entries.

Book

With one author: Joseph J. Ellis. *American Sphinx*. New York: Knopf, 1997.

With two or more authors: Rose, Sharon, and Neil Schlager. *How Things Are Made: From Automobiles to Zippers*. New York: Black Dog and Leventhal, 1995.

Encyclopedia

"Consumerism." Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Encyclopedia. 2000.

Magazine Article

Jeffery L. Sheler. "The Power of Prayer." *U.S. News and World Report* 20 Dec. 2004: 52.

Journal Article

Grant, B. F., and D. A. Dawson. "Alcohol and Drug Use, Abuse, and Dependence Among Welfare Recipients." *American Journal of Public Health* 86 (1996): 1450–1454.

Newspaper Article

Hamill, Pete. "The Death of Shame." *New York Daily News* 11 May 2003: 41.

Web Site

Firearms and Crime Statistics. 2004. U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/guns.htm>.

Interview

Rodriguez, Jose. Telephone Interview. 12 Nov. 2004.

Formatting a Paper with MLA Documentation

A paper that includes MLA documentation should be typed or printed from a computer on white 8½- x 11-inch paper. Double-space the text, and set all four margins—upper, lower, left, and right—at one inch. In the upper right-hand corner of each page, half an inch from the top, type your last name and the page number.

In the top left corner of the first page, include your name, your instructor's name, the course, and the date. Double-space this information. On the line below this header, center your title. Begin the first sentence of your paper on the line below the title.

Begin your works-cited list on a new page, but number it consecutively with the rest of the pages of the paper. Type the title *Works Cited* in the center at the top of the page. Double-space all entries on this page, and do not insert any extra space between them.

MODULE 9

CREATING A DRAFT

Introduction

You can count on writing quite a few essays in the college courses you take, for the essay is a common academic assignment, but you may be wondering if you will ever have to write essays in your personal and professional life. You will in all likelihood be generating other types of documents—such as memos, business letters, proposals, and reports—that have many similarities to the essay form. So you will be able to apply what you learned about the essay to compose other kinds of writing. Even when a document—such as a lab report or a passage of text for a Web site—seems to bear very little resemblance to an academic essay, you will still be able to use many of the skills you learned from writing essays to compose it.

In this section, you will learn to:

- Identify the parts of an essay, and explain the purpose of each part.
- Write introductions that use techniques to interest readers and that include necessary background information.
- Write effective thesis statements, and reflect a certain audience and purpose.
- Identify thesis statements, topic sentences, and supporting details in essays.
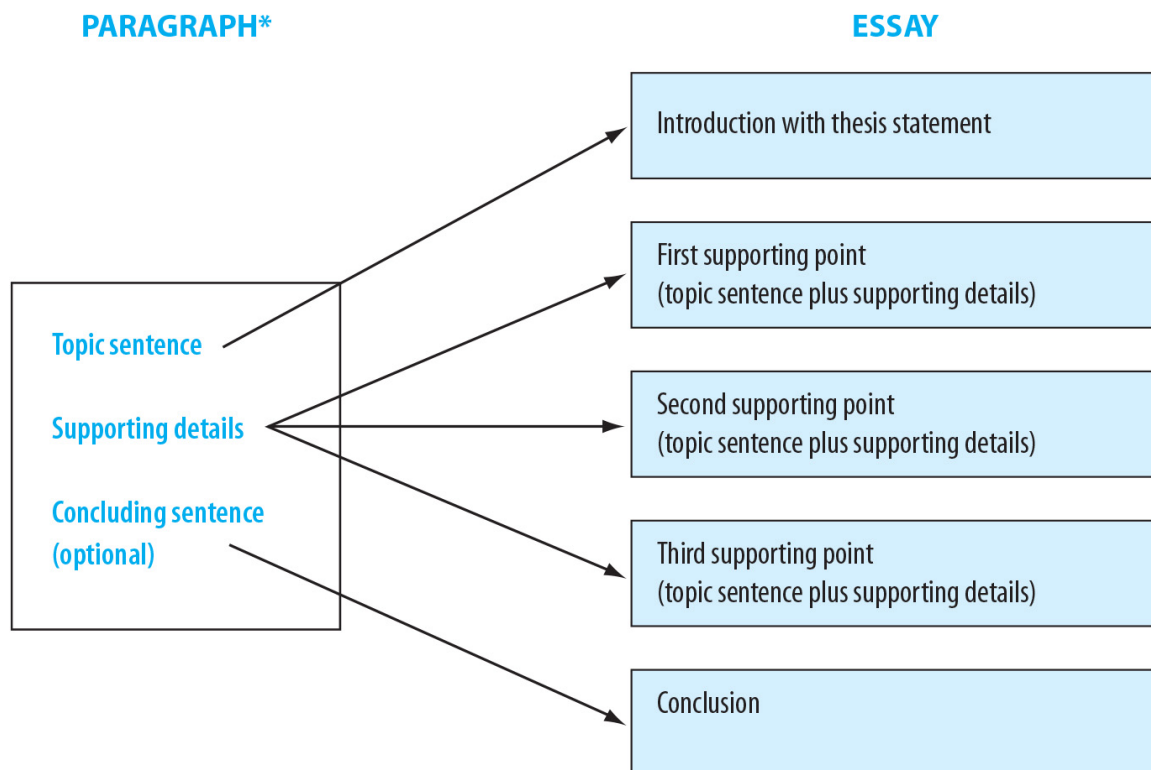
Lesson 9.1: Parts of an Essay

Lesson 9.1 Introduction

You have previously focused on following the steps in the writing process to compose a paragraph. This section focuses on how you can use that same process to write a longer composition, the essay. An **essay** is a multiparagraph composition that develops one idea or opinion, which is called the *thesis*. Like a paragraph, an essay focuses on one point and includes details that support that point.

You will now learn more about the parts of an essay.

Parts of an Essay

The parts of the paragraph often correlate with those of an essay, as the following diagram shows:

PARAGRAPH*

Topic sentence

Supporting details

Concluding sentence
(optional)

ESSAY

Introduction with thesis statement

First supporting point
(topic sentence plus supporting details)

Second supporting point
(topic sentence plus supporting details)

Third supporting point
(topic sentence plus supporting details)

Conclusion

However, an essay is not just an expanded paragraph. For one thing, the thesis usually expresses an idea that requires more development than the idea expressed in the topic sentence of a paragraph. Therefore, an essay is broader in scope and thus needs to be longer. A thesis statement is the essay's main idea and appears in the introduction, while a topic sentence states the main idea of the body paragraph that it is in.

An essay has three main parts: an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. The introduction gives readers background information, gets them interested, and provides the thesis statement. The body is composed of several paragraphs that include all of the evidence to explain or prove the thesis. The conclusion provides a satisfying ending to the essay.

Each of these parts is labeled in the essay that follows:

The Best Job I Have Ever Had

Paragraph 1: INTRODUCTION (Thesis statement in bold.)

We all hope to earn our college degrees and go on to find jobs that we love. But one of my favorite jobs was one I had *while* I was in college. I worked in a flower shop, and my responsibilities included taking orders, helping customers, helping keep records of orders organized, keeping the shop tidy, and occasionally delivering an order. I usually worked on the weekends and in the afternoons after my classes were over. I did not earn very much, of course. **But looking back, I realize that my flower shop job was one of the best ones I have ever had.**

Paragraph 2: BODY

I love flowers, so it was wonderful to be around thousands of them for hours at a time. Their fragrance was always so pleasant; as a matter of fact, smelling the flowers' perfume never failed to sooth me or lift my spirits, even when I was feeling glum[1]. I liked them so much that I did not even mind sweeping out the large walk-in cooler where we kept the buckets of fresh flowers. Even though my job was to cull[2] the dead or dying blooms and keep the buckets filled with water, I never minded cleaning up because it gave me a chance to look at their beautiful colors and inhale their scents.

Paragraph 3: BODY

The people I worked with were another aspect of the job that I loved. The owner of the flower shop, Harry, and another man named Rick were the designers who created all of the arrangements. They were fun-loving and had a good sense of humor. Several of the delivery people became my friends, too. There was a lot of laughter and joking in the shop, so it made the workday pleasant. Even during busy, stressful holidays like Valentine's Day and Mother's Day, when everyone in the world needs flowers delivered on the same day, we all got along and worked well as a team.

Paragraph 4: BODY

I also loved working in a business that makes people happy. Everyone loves to get a delivery of flowers, and the flower arrangements that Harry and Rick created were especially beautiful. On the occasions when I got to make a delivery, I loved seeing the look of delight and surprise on the recipient's face. Even the flowers that went to funerals would often lift people's spirits and let them know that people cared about them. It was nice to know that I was helping to make many people's days a little brighter by doing my small part to get the orders taken, made, and delivered.

Paragraph 5: CONCLUSION

I ended up leaving my job at the flower shop to take a job that paid me more money. I know I could not have worked there forever, but I do miss it. Working there helped me understand that there are other aspects of a job that are just as important as the wages.

Lesson 9.2: Introduction

Lesson 9.2 Introduction

The introduction is also known as the opening, for it is composed of one or more paragraphs at the very beginning of the essay. The introductions of the essays you write should fulfill three purposes. First of all, the introduction should grab readers' attention and get them interested in the essay's topic and the author's point about that topic.

Your introduction will also include your thesis statement. You generate a thesis as part of your prewriting practice. This thesis becomes the thesis statement, the sentence in the essay that states the main idea. A thesis has two parts: It states the topic of the paragraph, and it also states the writer's point about that topic.

You will now learn methods for creating a great introduction as well as how to refine your thesis statement.

Introduction Techniques

To make readers want to read on, you can use one of several methods:

Begin with an anecdote. Everyone likes to hear stories, so you can tell a brief story that is related to your topic and leads to your main point. An anecdote is a tried-and-true technique for hooking readers' interest and making them want to continue reading.

> A few weeks ago, as I was driving one morning on Interstate 40, I witnessed a terrible accident. Up ahead of me, on a long, straight stretch of road, a police cruiser was stopped on the shoulder. A sport-utility vehicle pulling a trailer was in the right lane, headed toward the parked cruiser. The driver of the SUV must have gotten distracted by something because all of a sudden, he veered toward the cruiser and hit it. As I watched in horror, the SUV jerked back to the left and began tumbling. By the time I slowed and stopped my own car, the SUV had rolled several times and then come to rest upside down, on its roof, in the middle of the highway. Amazingly, no one was killed in the accident, but the driver and two passengers in the SUV, as well as the officer in the cruiser, had to be taken by ambulance to the hospital. The people in the SUV were lucky, for rollovers are the number one cause of death in SUV wrecks. Drivers may think that they are safer in these huge, heavy vehicles, but that is just an illusion. SUVs are actually very dangerous both for their owners and for the other drivers on the road.

Begin with an example. You can make the topic immediately interesting by showing how it relates to a specific individual.

> Richie was really looking forward to seeing the Shocking Flamingoes perform live in concert. The band had always been one of his favorites, so when it scheduled a performance in the city where Richie lived, he spent $40 on what he thought would be a great seat. But his seat was not anywhere near the stage, and the crowd around him ended up ruining the whole experience for him. Richie was one of many concertgoers who are finding out that concerts can sometimes be a waste of money.

Provide an interesting fact or statistic. You can also arouse readers' curiosity by providing some information that is surprising, startling, or even shocking.

> While you read this essay, another person will probably die because he or she needed an organ transplant and there were no donors. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' National Organ and Tissue Donation Initiative, about 10 people die every day while waiting for a donated kidney, liver, heart, lung or other organ. And there are more than 55,000 people presently on the national organ transplant waiting list. Statistics show that there is only a 38 percent chance that an individual on this waiting list will get an organ. You can help raise their odds, though, by becoming an organ donor. (The 11th Annual Discover Awards, July 2000, http://www.discover.com/jul_00/explain.html)

Provide a direct quotation. Beginning with a clever or humorous statement made by someone else can be a good way to get readers interested in the topic.

> Ralph Waldo Emerson said that you are a successful person "if even one life has breathed easier because you have lived." My grandparents were not rich or famous. On the contrary, my grandfather worked as a janitor, and my grandmother worked on an

assembly line in a factory. When they finally retired, each lived only a few more years before dying, so they had little time to devote to other accomplishments. But according to Emerson's definition, they were both very successful individuals.

Ask readers a question. You can often draw readers into your essay by asking them questions to get them thinking about their own ideas or opinions about the topic.

Do you feel stressed out and overwhelmed? Do you wish you could find a good technique for relaxing and soothing your frazzled nerves? You may want to try yoga, a series of stretches and poses designed to calm the mind while they strengthen and tone the body. Yoga is not people looking for a mystical, New Age experience. As a matter of fact, yoga's popularity among many different age groups has been steadily increasing because of its physical and mental benefits.

Explain the topic's relevance or significance to the reader. Immediately connect the topic to your readers' interests, goals, or desires.

If you are like most people, you are probably tired of answering your phone and having to listen to a telemarketer try to sell you something. Telemarketing companies think nothing of bothering people by calling them during dinner or while they are trying to relax in the evening. Many people get multiple phone calls every night from different telemarketers. But now, if you want to put a stop to these interruptions, you can. There are now several different ways to prevent unwanted sales calls.

Begin with a contradiction. Present to the reader some commonly held idea or opinion, and then go on to contradict or refute it.

When the Internet began to grow rapidly, offering computer users books, magazines, and huge amounts of other information in electronic form, some people predicted that traditional libraries would become a thing of the past. Of course, that did not happen. As a matter of fact, libraries are still thriving all over the nation. Although it is true that conducting online research is very convenient, the Internet will never completely replace libraries, which will always have an important place in our communities.

Improving Your Thesis Statement

When you write thesis statements for essays of your own, remember that **an effective thesis statement has three essential characteristics**: It is a complete sentence that includes both a topic and a point, it is not too broad or too narrow, and it takes into account not just the topic but also the essay's audience and purpose.

First of all, a thesis statement must contain both of its required parts: a topic and some point about that topic. A topic in the form of a sentence fragment is not a topic sentence.

Incomplete: Extreme sports

Complete thesis statement: Extreme sports have been increasing in popularity for several reasons.

Incomplete: Recent improvements in technology

Complete thesis statement: Recent improvements in technology have given us the ability to get more accurate information more quickly.

Incomplete: Sending astronauts to Mars

Complete thesis statement: Sending astronauts to Mars should become one of America's priorities.

If you try to begin writing with only a topic in mind, you will probably not produce a coherent and well-developed essay. When you are unsure about exactly what you mean to say, your essay will probably ramble aimlessly. Make sure that before you begin to write, you have a complete thesis statement that includes both your topic and your point.

In addition to being complete, a thesis statement must also be appropriately specific. If an idea is too broad or too vague, it will not keep you properly focused as you write. Consider the following examples:

> **Too broad:** People can be very rude.

> **Too vague:** Something should be done about the quality of education in this country.

Neither of these statements expresses one clear idea, so each would probably lead to rambling when it came time to write. To improve these two statements, rewrite them to narrow the topic and/or the idea.

> Many cell phone users are guilty of behaving rudely in public.

> A merit pay system for teachers would help to improve the quality of public school education.

On the other hand, though, you do not want to make your thesis statement so specific or limited that you cannot develop it at all.

> **Too specific:** Bill Clinton served two terms as U.S. president, from 1993 to 2001.

Because this sentence states a fact, there is not much more you can say about the topic. To improve it, broaden the topic and the idea.

> During his two terms of office, Bill Clinton managed to achieve a number of needed improvements in this country.

Be aware that your thesis statement may not be perfect on your first try. You may have to work on it, experimenting with the wording and rewriting it, even after you have begun writing, until it says exactly what you want to express.

Look, for example, at one student's thesis. Lee was assigned to write about the topic "student success," so he generated ideas about studying. He came up with the following idea: *Studying with a group*. But then he realized that this phrase was not a complete sentence, so he revised it to read, *Studying with a group is more effective than studying alone*.

Another student, Jennifer, generated prewriting on the same topic and decided on this thesis: *Good study habits are important*. But then she realized that this statement was too broad and vague. She revised it to read: *Several study techniques will help you better understand and recall information for tests.*

As you can see, a thesis statement may not be perfect the first time you write it. If yours seems to be lacking something, do not proceed with writing the rest of the essay until you have figured out what is missing and have corrected the problem. If you are not sure of exactly what you are trying to communicate to your readers, you will be in greater danger of rambling or failing to adequately develop what you want to say.

Topic, Audience, and Purpose

So far, you have learned that effective thesis statements are complete and appropriately specific. As you evaluate the accuracy and effectiveness of your thesis statement, remember the effects of audience and purpose on that statement. When you are composing your thesis statement, you will want to consider not only *what* you want to say but also *why* and *to whom* you want to say it. Therefore, in addition to the topic, there are two other factors—audience and purpose—that will affect how you express your thesis statement.

The first of these factors is your **audience or readers**. Who is going to read your writing? What do these people need to know or want to know about the topic? Your topic sentence should take into account this audience's needs and desires.

The second factor is your **purpose**. Do you want to inform your readers about your topic so they can learn something new? Or do you want to persuade them to believe what you believe about the topic? Your thesis statement should clearly reflect this purpose.

For example, consider the thesis statement "Running your own business and working for someone else both have their advantages and disadvantages." The writer intends to explain to someone who is interested in exploring different career options the pros and cons of self-employment and regular employment. But notice how the purpose of this next statement differs:

> You should start and operate your own business instead of working for someone else.

Although the audience is probably the same, the words *you should* indicate that the writer's purpose is persuasive.

Lesson 9.3: Body

Lesson 9.3 Introduction

After writing the introduction and refining your thesis statement, you will need to focus on the body of the essay. It supplies all of the ideas and information that explain or prove the point made in the thesis statement. The body consists of several paragraphs, one for each separate idea or reason that supports the thesis. Each idea or reason is usually stated in a clear topic sentence. Then the rest of the paragraph develops this topic sentence with details such as facts, examples, observations, or other kinds of support.

Remember to include a topic sentence and layers of development within each paragraph.

Next, we'll take a look at an example of an essay with body paragraphs.

Body Paragraphs Example

In the following essay, the thesis statement, body, topic sentences, and supporting details have all been labeled.

The Best Job I Have Ever Had

INTRODUCTION

(with thesis statement)

We all hope to earn our college degrees and go on to find jobs that we love. But one of my favorite jobs was one I had *while* I was in college. I worked in a flower shop, and my responsibilities included taking orders, helping customers, helping keep records of orders organized, keeping the shop tidy, and occasionally delivering an order. I usually worked on the weekends and in the afternoons after my classes were over. I did not earn very much, of course. **But looking back, I realize that my flower shop job was one of the best ones I have ever had.**

1st BODY paragraph

(with topic sentence and supporting details)

I love flowers, so it was wonderful to be around thousands of them for hours at a time. Their fragrance was always so pleasant; as a matter of fact, smelling the flowers' perfume never failed to sooth me or lift my spirits, even when I was feeling glum[1]. I liked them so much that I did not even mind sweeping out the large walk-in cooler where we kept the buckets of fresh flowers. Even though my job was to cull[2] the dead or dying blooms and keep the buckets filled with water, I never minded cleaning up because it gave me a chance to look at their beautiful colors and inhale their scents.

2nd BODY paragraph

(with topic sentence and supporting details)

The people I worked with were another aspect of the job that I loved. The owner of the flower shop, Harry, and another man named Rick were the designers who created all of the arrangements. They were fun-loving and had a good sense of humor. Several of the delivery people became my friends, too. There was a lot of laughter and joking in the shop, so it made the workday pleasant. Even during busy, stressful holidays like Valentine's Day and Mother's Day, when everyone in the world needs flowers delivered on the same day, we all got along and worked well as a team.

3rd BODY paragraph

(with topic sentence and supporting details)

I also loved working in a business that makes people happy. Everyone loves to get a delivery of flowers, and the flower arrangements that Harry and Rick created were especially beautiful. On the occasions when I got to make a delivery, I loved seeing the look of delight and surprise on the recipient's face. Even the flowers that went to funerals would often lift people's spirits and let them know that people cared about them. It was nice to know that I was helping to make many people's days a little brighter by doing my small part to get the orders taken, made, and delivered.

CONCLUSION

I ended up leaving my job at the flower shop to take a job that paid me more money. I know I could not have worked there forever, but I do miss it. Working there helped me understand that there are other aspects of a job that are just as important as the wages.

Lesson 9.4: Conclusion

Lesson 9.4 Introduction

In a brief essay, the conclusion is the very last paragraph. It is usually unnecessary to repeat or summarize all of the ideas you have just presented. Instead, think of the purpose of the conclusion as providing closure, or a satisfying ending, for the reader. View the conclusion as an opportunity to wrap up your essay and to suggest how your readers might respond. Write your conclusion under the assumption that you have convinced your readers that the idea or opinion in your thesis is true. Now that they agree with you, what should happen next?

Now, we'll cover methods for creating an effective conclusion.

Conclusion Techniques

When writing your conclusion, you might use one of the following methods:

Describe the consequences of the idea or opinion in your thesis statement. Briefly explain the effects of what you have just shown to be true.

> Once you have selected one or more of these options for preventing telemarketing calls, you will see a significant reduction in the number of calls you receive. As a result, you will finally be able to enjoy a family dinner or your favorite TV show without being interrupted by someone who is trying to sell you something.

Make a prediction that arises from the idea or opinion in your thesis statement. Tell what you think will happen in the future.

> Because libraries offer all of these valuable services, computers will never make them obsolete. Of course, traditional libraries will probably have to continue to make alterations in what they do and how they do it to keep pace with improved technologies. For example, they may have to incorporate more computers and train staff to help library patrons find what they need in cyberspace. But these alterations might cause libraries to expand rather than shrink or die out altogether.

End with a suggestion that readers act in some way. Call readers to action, and ask them to do something such as join an organization, donate time or money, or make some kind of change.

> Now that you have learned how important it is to become an organ donor, take the next step to make your wishes known. Tell your family members that you want to donate your organs to help others. Complete a donor card, and when you renew your driver's license, say yes when you are asked if you want to be an organ donor.

End with a question that keeps readers thinking. Just as you can begin an essay by asking questions that draw readers in, you can end with a question or two that encourage readers to continue reflecting upon the topic or issue.

> As you can see, SUVs are definitely making our roads and highways more dangerous. People who choose to drive an SUV may think that they need all that extra room, and they might believe they look hip and trendy in these gigantic vehicles. But is it not time for us to stop listening to car manufacturers and advertisers who want to sell us expensive SUVs and start making more safety conscious choices?

REVISION STRATEGIES

Introduction

You've now practiced the third step in the writing process, composing a draft. However, even after a draft is written, you are still not quite finished. The fourth step of the process is revising. The fifth step is editing, which is slightly different than revision, and you'll learn that at a later time.

When revising, consider these important tips:

- Allow your draft to sit for a few days between the writing and revising steps. If you give yourself a few days to provide some distance between you and the draft you wrote, you may be better able to see the aspects of it that could use improvement.

- Often, it is difficult to evaluate your own writing. You may be so intimately connected with your creation that it might be challenging to see its flaws and to figure out how to fix them. Therefore, it is often beneficial to ask others—such as classmates, family members, coworkers, or friends—to read your draft and provide you with feedback about your essay's strengths and weaknesses. Get in the habit of allowing enough time to ask one or more people you know to read your essay and to offer their comments and suggestions. Even those who are not teachers can read your draft simply as readers and tell you what they like about it and what confuses them. Consider using some type of peer review sheet to guide your readers' feedback. These sheets ask reviewers to examine specific aspects of an essay and comment on each one.

In this section, you will learn the difference between revising and editing. You will also learn how to revise for completeness, cohesiveness, and coherence.

Lesson 10.1: Revising and Editing

Lesson 10.1 Introduction

The word *revision* includes the prefix *re-*, meaning "back or again," and the root word *vision*. So revision literally means "to look at again." Once you have written your essay, you need to look at the paragraphs again to make sure you have successfully explained your main idea to your readers.

Revising and editing, which is the fifth step of the writing process, are not the same thing. When you revise a paragraph, you are looking for and then correcting paragraph-level problems. You are evaluating and improving the way your whole paragraph or essay is organized or developed.

Editing involves examining the paragraph at the sentence and word levels and correcting errors in sentence construction, grammar, word choice, and spelling. It is best to accomplish revision and editing as two separate, distinct steps, for each process involves looking at different aspects of the paragraph.

To revise, you will need to evaluate for the three C's: completeness, cohesiveness, and coherence.

Revision Example

You will learn how to revise for completeness, cohesiveness, and coherence in the next readings. Here is an example to show you how the revision process works.

Below is the first draft of Maya's paragraph about three tools for student success:

> *Three tools will help students organize their responsibilitys and their materials so they will be more successful. A calender is the first tool, I carry my calender wherever I go. In it, I write down duedates for all of my assignments in all my classes. Like math tests and papers due. Papers are always the hardest assignments. I also write down my work schedule and practices for softball. So I can just glance at the whole month and know what I need to do when. Next I write a To Do list every day. I look at the day on my calendar and see what I need to do. Then I make a list of things to get done. I will write items like "study for math test" and "read chapter 6 of english book." Crossing them off as I do them. I keep a seperate notebook for my materials for each class. I have a notebook for english, one for math, and one for my computer class. I put handouts, class notes, and other class information in each one and take it to class always. To be a good student, it is important to be prepared for class.*

After Maya wrote this paragraph, she set it aside for two days. She was then ready to look at it again and evaluate it for the three C's. When you are examining a paragraph you need to make sure it is **complete**, (adequately developed), **cohesive** (all of its sentences "stick together" to support one main idea), and **coherent** (it makes sense because it offers a clear progression of thought). In addition, she asked one of her classmates to read her paragraph and complete a peer review sheet.

Her classmate's feedback is shown below on the Sample Peer Review Sheet.

Sample Peer Review Sheet #1

Writer: *Maya*

Reviewer: *Randy*

Topic of paragraph: *Three tools to help students*

	Yes	No
1. Does the paragraph contain a topic sentence that clearly states one main idea?	✔	

Suggestions for improvement:

2. Does every sentence in the paragraph support the main idea?		✔

Suggestions for improvement:
I think that the 5th sentence and the last sentence may not go with your topic sentence.

3. Does the paragraph seem complete, or adequately developed?	✔	

Suggestions for improvement:

4. Is the paragraph organized effectively?	✔	

Suggestions for improvement:

5. Has the author included transitions to help readers follow the progression of thought from one sentence to the next?	✔	

Suggestions for improvement:
You might consider using "first," "second," "third" to make it clearer what the three tools are. The third tool is not signaled by a transition at all.

6. Does the paragraph repeat key words and ideas?	✔	

Suggestions for improvement:
You could think of synonyms for the word "tool."

Additional comments and suggestions for improvement:
I think these are three very good tips for students!

Maya considered Randy's suggestions and revised her draft to eliminate the sentences that prevented cohesiveness and then altered the transitions. Her revision follows:

> *Three tools will help students organize their responsibilitys and their materials so they will be more successful. A calender is the first tool, I carry my calender wherever I go. In it, I write down duedates for all of my assignments in all my classes. Like math tests and papers due. I also write down my work schedule and practices for softball. So I can just glance at the whole month and know what I need to do when. The second organization technique I use is a To Do list, which I write every day. I look at the day on my calendar and see what I need to do. Then I make a list of things to get done. I will write items like "study for math test" and "read chapter 6 of english book." Crossing them off as I do them. The third tool for student success consists of separate notebooks for my materials for each class. I have a notebook for english, one for math, and one for my computer*

class. I put handouts, class notes, and other class information in each one and take it to class always.

You'll notice that Maya still needs to edit her paragraph. You will learn about editing, the fifth step in the writing process, later.

Lesson 10.2: Revising for Completeness

Lesson 10.2 Introduction

You will need to include layers of development as you write. A layer of development provides more specific information about a general idea in the sentence that came before it. It anticipates and answers readers' questions about more general statements, so it increases their understanding.

When you examine a paragraph to make sure it is complete, or adequately developed, you evaluate the layers of development in the paragraph. Does it provide enough information and explanation of general ideas? Should you add more facts or examples to develop your ideas?

Next, you will learn techniques to determine whether or not you have provided enough development.

Revising for Completeness

To help determine if you've provided enough layers of development, consider using the following techniques:

1. Use different colors of highlighter markers to identify the layers in your paragraph. Use one color, such as yellow, to highlight the topic sentence, which is the most general sentence in the paragraph. Use another color, such as pink, to highlight the second sentence, which should develop the first sentence. If the third sentence develops the second sentence, use yet another color to highlight it. If the third sentence develops the first sentence, highlight it with the same color you used for the second sentence. Follow this same procedure for all of the other sentences in the paragraph. Then, after you have highlighted every sentence, see how colorful your paragraph is. In general, paragraphs that contain more than two colors are probably developing the main idea with sufficient details. A paragraph that is highlighted with only two colors, however, may need the addition of more specific information and examples. Use the highlighting technique to determine the sentence in the following paragraph that needs more development:

> *There are three main kinds of annoying drivers on the roads. The first kind is the people who are paying attention to everything but driving. This category includes women who are putting on makeup as they speed down the road, people who are chatting away on cell phones, and people who are sightseeing instead of looking at the road in front of them. Another group of annoying drivers are those who drive too slowly. And then there is the opposite: the aggressive drivers. These are the people who speed, weave in and out of traffic, and tailgate other drivers who are obstacles to their progress. Many of them honk their horns and even shout out their windows at other motorists who are in their way.*

Did you identify the fourth sentence as the one that needs more development? Following this sentence should be at least one layer of development that further describes or gives examples of people who drive too slowly.

2. Count the sentences in your paragraphs. There is no magic minimum or maximum number of sentences for a paragraph. The number of sentences a paragraph contains depends on the main idea and supporting information. However, if a paragraph contains only three or four sentences, it may be incomplete because it is not adequately developed. Get in the habit of scrutinizing short paragraphs, in particular, to make sure that they include enough layers of development.

3. Scan your drafts for the phrase *for example*. This phrase often begins sentences that really help readers grasp your ideas. If you never begin sentences this way, you may not be including the specific information your reader needs in order to understand your thoughts on a topic.

Lesson 10.3: Revising for Cohesiveness

Lesson 10.3 Introduction

If a paragraph is cohesive, all of its sentences "stick together" to support one main idea. In other words, a cohesive paragraph has unity because it focuses on just one point. After you decide whether your paragraph includes enough layers of development, the next step is to make sure that every sentence in your paragraph relates to the idea in your topic sentence. When you are writing, it is easy to get sidetracked and go off on tangents when new thoughts come to mind. Evaluating a paragraph for cohesiveness is a process of looking for any sentence that does not directly relate to the main idea.

Next, you'll review two techniques to determine if your drafts are cohesive.

Revising for Cohesiveness

Can you find the sentence in the following paragraph that does not relate to the main idea? Read the paragraph, and underline the sentence that prevents cohesiveness.

> *Being a single parent is very difficult. The hardest part, of course, is making ends meet. Even when one's former spouse pays child support, it can be a challenge to pay all of the bills with just one income. Money problems then cause a lot of stress in the one-parent family. The second most difficult thing about single parenting is the amount of work that the custodial parent faces. A single parent usually works an eight-hour day outside the home and then must take care of at least another eight hours' worth of household chores and parenting responsibilities, such as helping the children with their homework. Homework is beneficial because it helps teach children responsibility. However, single parents often do not get much time to themselves.*

Did you underline the second-to-last sentence in this paragraph? Because it is about a benefit of homework rather than about single parenting, it disrupts the unity in this paragraph.

To determine whether or not you have included any sentences that prevent cohesiveness, try two techniques:

1. Count the sentences in your paragraph. When you evaluate a paragraph for completeness, you pay close attention to especially brief paragraphs. When you evaluate for cohesiveness, pay particular attention to especially long paragraphs. A relatively long paragraph might be trying to develop too many different ideas, so it may not be cohesive. It may need to be divided into smaller, more unified paragraphs.

2. Read the sentences of your paragraph backward, beginning with the last sentence. After you read each sentence, reread the topic sentence. Decide whether each individual sentence truly relates to the main idea.

Lesson 10.4: Revising for Coherence

Lesson 10.4 Introduction

In addition to being complete and cohesive, a paragraph needs to be coherent. If a paragraph is coherent, it makes sense because it offers a clear progression of thought. In other words, readers can easily follow the writer's ideas from sentence to sentence.

Evaluating a paragraph's coherence involves examining its overall organization and transitions as well as repetition of key words and ideas. Next, you will learn techniques for both.

Revising for Coherence

Organization and Transitions

The ideas in paragraphs are often presented in certain types of order that are familiar to readers. For example, paragraphs that relate a series of events or explain the steps in a process are organized with **time order**. In other words, the events or steps are presented in chronological order, or the order in which they happened. In addition, transitional words and phrases—words such as *first, next, then, finally, later, afterward*, and *eventually*—help readers more easily see how the ideas are related to one another.

A second common type of order in paragraphs is **order of importance**. Using this order, a series of ideas or reasons may be presented with the most important item either given first or saved until last. Transitional words and phrases—such as *first, second, third, last*, *in addition, plus, most important*, and *for one thing*—help readers understand when a new idea or reason is being presented.

Another kind of order is **spatial order**, which is used in descriptions of people, places, or things. This order can take the form of front to back, left to right, top to bottom, inside to outside, or whatever other pattern best suits the topic. It usually includes transitional words and phrases— such *as in front of, beside, above, below, next to*, and *on the left*—that help the reader mentally picture how the descriptive details are related to one another.

During the organizing and outlining step of the writing process, you determine the best order for ideas. After the paragraph is written, however, you should evaluate again whether your choice of order is effective. Do your ideas lead logically from one to another? Is the progression of thought easy to follow from sentence to sentence? Have you included transitions that help the reader understand how ideas are related to one another? These are the elements of a coherent paragraph.

Repetition of Key Words and Ideas

Another feature of coherent paragraphs is the repetition of key words and ideas, which link the sentences of the paragraph together. Repeating the words that name the topic, along with synonyms and pronouns that either rename or refer to the topic, causes the whole paragraph to "stick together."

MODULE 11

PROOFREADING AND EDITING STRATEGIES

Introduction

The fifth and final step of the writing process involves editing and preparing a final draft. When you review your writing during the revision step, you are searching for large-scale errors, such as problems with the overall organization or development of your idea.

This section briefly covers the kinds of errors you will need to find and correct as part of the editing stage of the writing process, including how to edit sentences for style, sentence errors, grammatical and mechanical errors, and spelling errors.

Lesson 11.1: Proofreading Versus Editing

Lesson 11.1 Introduction

To edit your writing, you **proofread**, or search for errors at the sentence and word levels. In other words, you comb through the paper carefully, searching for grammatical and spelling errors and making adjustments to sentences to improve your overall style.

Editing means making the necessary corrections. After locating and fixing errors, you prepare your final draft for submission.

Editing and Proofreading Demonstration

Here is a demonstration of the editing and proofreading process. Here is a paragraph that a student, Maya, revised about three tools for student success:

> *Three tools will help students organize their responsibilitys and their materials so they will be more successful. A calender is the first tool, I carry my calender wherever I go. In it, I write down duedates for all of my assignments in all my classes. Like math tests and papers due. I also write down my work schedule and practices for softball. So I can just glance at the whole month and know what I need to do when. The second organization technique I use is a To Do list, which I write every day. I look at the day on my calendar and see what I need to do. Then I make a list of things to get done. I will write items like "study for math test" and "read chapter 6 of english book." Crossing them off as I do them. The third tool for student success consists of separate notebooks for my materials for each class. I have a notebook for english, one for math, and one for my computer class. I put handouts, class notes, and other class information in each one and take it to class always.*

Next, she needed to look over her draft for word- and sentence-level errors. So she asked her peer reviewer, Randy, to help her find grammatical and mechanical errors and to help her polish her style. You can see his feedback below, on a Peer Review Sheet:

After receiving Randy's feedback, Maya found the errors he mentioned and edited her paragraph to eliminate these mistakes. Then she typed her final draft according to her teacher's guidelines. Here, finally, is the draft she submitted:

> *Three Tools for Student Success*
>
> *By Maya Johnson*
>
> *Three tools will help students organize their responsibilities and their materials so they will be more successful. A calendar is the first tool. I carry my calendar wherever I go. In it, I write down due dates for all of my assignments in all my classes, like math tests and papers due. I also write down my work schedule and practices for softball, so I can just glance at the whole month and know what I need to do when. The second organization technique I use is a To Do list, which I write every day. I look at the day on my calendar and see what I need to do, and then I make a list of things to get done. I will write items like "study for math test" and "read Chapter 6 of English book," crossing them off as I do them. The third tool for student success consists of separate notebooks for my materials for each class. I have a notebook for English, one for math, and one for my computer class. I put handouts, class notes, and other class information in each one and take it to class always.*

Because Maya completed all five steps in the writing process to create this paragraph, it is clearly developed, well organized, and easy to read and understand.

Lesson 11.2: Editing for Style

Lesson 11.2 Introduction

The style of writing refers to the words the writer has chosen and the way sentences are constructed. There are many different kinds of writing styles, and you will surely develop your own style as you continue to improve your overall writing skills. Right now, however, you should concentrate on choosing words and constructing sentences so that your writing will be interesting, clear, and easy to read. You can do that by paying attention, especially during proofreading, to the length and type of your sentences as well as to the words you have selected.

Next, you will learn techniques for varying sentence length and type, improving diction, and reducing wordiness.

Editing for Sentence Length and Type

Writing that is composed mostly of very short sentences usually sounds dull and monotonous to readers. If readers are bored by your sentence structure, they will have a more difficult time concentrating on your meaning. Also, short sentences may not be making important connections, so readers may not fully understand your ideas.

The following paragraph contains too many short sentences:

> *I really love vacationing at the beach. I enjoy strolling along the shore. I like the cool ocean breezes. I like to pick up shells for my collection. Swimming is always fun. Body-surfing in the waves is one of my favorite things. I like to build sandcastles with my kids. I enjoy just relaxing, too. It is restful to sit under an umbrella. I can read a book. Or I can take a nap.*

As this example shows, too many short sentences make the whole paragraph sound unsophisticated. But notice how the paragraph becomes clearer, easier to read, and less childish when the length of sentences is varied:

I really love vacationing at the beach. I enjoy strolling along the shore in the cool ocean breezes and picking up shells for my collection. Swimming is always fun, and body-surfing in the waves is one of my favorite things. I like to build sandcastles with my kids, but I enjoy just relaxing, too. While I sit under an umbrella, I can read a book or take a nap.

Now the paragraph includes a mix of shorter and longer sentences, which not only are more pleasurable to read but also sound much more sophisticated.

Techniques for Combining Sentences

If you have a tendency to write too many short sentences, try to combine some of them using the following techniques:

1. Join two sentences with a coordinating conjunction—*and, or, but, nor, for, yet*, or *so*—preceded by a comma.

> **Two short sentences**: *He sings in the choir. He plays on the football team.*

> **Combined sentence**: *He sings in the choir, and he plays on the football team.*

2. Turn one sentence into a dependent clause and attach it to an independent clause.

> **Two short sentences**: *I want to finish my degree. Then I hope to find a good job.*

> **Combined sentence**: *After I finish my degree, I hope to find a good job.*

3. Embed the information of one sentence into another sentence.

> **Two short sentences**: *Jane is the new manager. She starts work next week.*

> **Combined sentence**: *Jane, the new manager, starts work next week.*

Sentence Types

Another way to achieve a style of writing that is interesting is to vary not only the length but also the type of sentence you write. There are four types of sentences—**simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex**—that are illustrated here:

A simple sentence contains just one independent clause:

> *subject verb*

> **She earned** *an A on her research paper.*

A compound sentence contains two or more independent clauses. Each contains at least one subject and one verb and could stand alone as a complete sentence:

> *subject verb   subject verb*

> **Mary decided** *to learn French, and* **Juan chose** *German.*

A complex sentence contains a dependent clause and an independent clause:

> *dependent clause   independent clause*

> *If you do not brush your teeth every day,   you will get cavities.*

A compound-complex sentence includes at least one dependent clause and two or more independent clauses:

> *independent clause #1*

> *dependent clause   subject verb*

> *Because the dog was wearing an ID tag,*   **they located** *its owner, and*

> *independent clause #2*

subject verb

the children *got their pet back.*

When you check over your sentences during the editing stage, determine the type of each sentence in your paragraph. Then, if you see that you are relying too heavily on simple sentences, combine some of them to add more variety.

Diction: Formality and Specificity

Diction refers to the individual words you choose. These words affect your style, so you should make sure that they are appropriate in a number of respects. In particular, you should evaluate the formality, specificity, emotion, and originality of your words. To determine whether a word is appropriate or not, you must consider your readers and decide whether the word is suitable for those readers.

First of all, evaluate your choices of words for their **level of formality**. Although each pair of words in the following chart is made up of synonyms, notice that the words in the two columns vary in their level of formality.

Formal	Informal
Apartment	Pad
Companion	Buddy
Brave	Has guts
Pilfer	Rip off
Gentleman	Guy
Suspicious	Fishy
Supervisor	Head honcho
Relax	Take it easy
Chicanery	Monkey business
Trepidation	Cold feet

Many writing situations, including academic papers and work-related documents, call for a relatively high level of formality. It is unlikely that the words labeled *Informal* in the preceding chart would be appropriate in such documents, for readers expect a more elevated style. In contrast,

more personal kinds of writing, such as e-mail messages and letters to family members and friends, can be much more informal. They are likely to include slang terms and conversational words such as those in the chart labeled *Informal*.

You will also need to evaluate whether your words are **specific** enough. Specific words help readers form clear images in their minds so that they can grasp your meaning more easily. Using general or vague terms makes it harder for readers to understand your ideas. Notice how the following sentence becomes clearer with the substitution of more specific terms:

> **Too general:** *She was going very fast in her large vehicle.*

> **More specific:** *She hurtled down the road in her nine-passenger Ford Expedition at speeds exceeding 80 miles per hour.*

Words and phrases such as *going very fast, large*, and *vehicle* do not provide the reader with much information. The revised sentence, however, substitutes more specific terms that provide readers with much more detail and help them form a clear mental image.

Which words in the following sentence are too vague and general? Circle them as you read the sentence.

> *Jennifer is a very nice person who helps others.*

Did you circle the words *nice, helps*, and *others*? These are the words that provide little information. If this sentence were rewritten to read "Jennifer volunteers a lot of her free time to help children learn how to read," it would be much clearer for the reader.

Diction: Emotion and Originality

The next aspect of diction to examine is the **emotion** in the words you have chosen. Some words, such as *cat*, are relatively neutral. That is, they carry no particular emotional suggestion. But compare the word *kitty*, which indicates affection for that animal. Notice in the following chart how some synonyms reveal more about the feelings of the person who chose the word:

Neutral	Emotional
Waste products	*Trash*
Shelter	*Home*
Investigate	*Snoop*
Spouse	*Soul mate*
Discipline	*Spank*
Penitentiary	*Slammer*
Attorney	*Shyster*

When you are evaluating your word choices, think about the emotions they reveal. Although it is fine to feel strongly—either positively or negatively—about the subject you are writing about, you must also think about your reader, especially when your topic is a controversial one. You do not want to offend, insult, or annoy readers. If you do, they will reject your ideas. So make sure that your words are not inappropriately emotional.

For example, the following sentence contains emotional word choices:

> *Fat people should not blame fast-food restaurants for their own failure to maintain a normal weight.*

The words *fat* and *failure* may offend or insult some readers because of the negative, judgmental emotions attached to the words. Revising the sentence to contain fewer emotional words might be a good idea.

Finally, you will need to determine whether or not your word choices are **original**. In other words, locate and eliminate from your writing all clichés, overused expressions that everyone has heard before. Here are just a few examples of the thousands of clichés we hear often:

the blind leading the blind

a bull in a china shop

dead as a doornail

fish out of water

out of the woods

playing with fire

running around like a chicken with its head cut off

bottom line

it is six of one, half a dozen of the other

let us get this show on the road

a dime a dozen

strong as an ox

better than sliced bread

two peas in a pod

the grass is always greener on the other side

no-brainer

light at the end of the tunnel

up the creek without a paddle

took him to the cleaners

These expressions often creep into our writing because we have heard them over and over, and they naturally pop into our minds as we compose. But they make writing dull and unoriginal, so replace them with other words that say the same thing.

Notice how the revised sentences below are more interesting than the versions containing clichés:

> **Sentence with cliché**: *We will have to cross that bridge when we come to it.*
>
> Revised: *We will deal with that problem when it is on our doorstep ringing the bell.*
>
> **Sentence with cliché:** *Do not count your chickens before they hatch.*
>
> Revised: *Do not deliver your victory speech before the votes are counted.*

Eliminating Wordiness

When you are examining the diction of your writing, one last problem to look for is **wordiness**, or unnecessary words. Clear writing always expresses an idea in as few words as possible. Wordy

writing just makes it more difficult for readers to understand your thoughts, for the extra words slow them down and get in the way. Notice how the following wordy sentences express ideas that become clearer when the unnecessary words are eliminated:

> **Wordy**: *Subsequent to completing his studies at his current institution of higher learning, he is planning to secure a position as a sales associate for a retail company that provides its customers with wireless communication devices.*
>
> **Revised**: *After finishing college, he plans to sell cell phones.*

> **Wordy:** *To develop your ability to put words on paper effectively and with success, read the words that have been written in other documents by individuals who have a facility and talent for creating good sentences, paragraphs, and essays.*
>
> **Revised:** *To learn to write well, read the works of good writers.*

Always ask yourself, Can I find a way to say this in fewer words? Notice how in the first example, the word *after* substitutes for *subsequent to*, the word *college* substitutes for *institution of higher learning*, and the phrase *cell phones* substitutes for *wireless communication devices*. In the second example, *learn* replaces *develop your ability*, *write* replaces *put words on paper*, and *good writers* replaces *individuals who have a facility and talent for creating good sentences, paragraphs, and essays*.

It is quite natural to be wordy when you are writing your first draft and trying to find the right words for expressing your ideas. However, you should get in the habit of examining your drafts in the editing stage and eliminating the words that are not contributing anything. When you are examining your writing for wordiness, look for the following common expressions, which add unnecessary words:

Instead of . . .	Use . . .
Due to the fact that	Because
In order to	To
For the purpose of	To
In the near future	Soon
In the event that	If
At this point in time	Now
At the present time	Now
At that point in time	Then
In today's world	Today
In this day and age	Today
Has the ability	Can
During the same time that	While

Instead of . . . (continued)	Use . . . (continued)
Until such time as	Until
In spite of the fact that	Although
Are of the opinion that	Think
Green in color	Green
Small in size	Small
Short in length	Short
The readon why is that	Because
Given the fact that	Because
Put forth an effort	Try
A number of	Some

Also, look for redundant expressions, which contain words that simply repeat each other. Here are a few common redundant expressions:

Instead of . . .	Use . . .
Close proximity	Proximity
Each and every	Each
He is a man who	He
My personal feeling	My feeling
First and foremost	First
Is located in	Is in
Past history	Past (or history)

Finally, get in the habit of examining the especially long sentences that you write. Ask yourself if you can pare these sentences down so that they say the same thing in fewer words.

Lesson 11.3: Editing to Correct Sentence, Grammar, and Mechanical Errors

Lesson 11.3 Introduction

In addition to proofreading your drafts for sentence variety, appropriate language, and wordiness, you will need to find and eliminate major errors in sentence structure. These errors include sentence fragments, run-on sentences, dangling or misplaced modifiers, and faulty parallelism.

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In addition to locating and correcting major sentence errors, you will need to check your writing for many other kinds of grammatical and mechanical errors, including subject-verb agreement errors, errors in verb tense, and capitalization and punctuation errors.

The best way to find errors is to learn to recognize them yourself. Increase your knowledge of grammar and mechanics so that you stop making the same mistakes over and over again. Pay special attention to your instructors' comments. If an instructor identifies subject-verb agreement errors

in a paper you have written, review the material on subject-verb agreement errors and how to correct them.

Another way to locate errors is to have others read your drafts and point them out. Encourage your reviewers to look for very specific kinds of errors that may be reducing the effectiveness of your writing. Then correct those errors before or during the preparation of your final draft.

Correcting errors in your writing is very important because submitting a final draft that is marred with errors will undermine your credibility as a writer. When a paper contains errors, readers often question the writer's intelligence and overall writing ability, or they assume that the writer did not care enough about the document to ensure that it was error-free.

Sentence Fragments, Comma Splices, and Run-on Sentences

Sentence Fragments

A sentence contains at least one independent clause with at least one subject and one verb. It expresses a complete thought and ends with a period, an exclamation point, or a question mark. A **sentence fragment** is a group of words punctuated like a sentence but unable to stand alone. It may lack a subject, a verb, or both; it may also be a dependent clause or a phrase that does not express a complete idea. The missing element(s) must be added for the sentence to be grammatically correct.

>   **No subject**: *Hopes to earn her college degree.*
>
>   **Corrected**: *She hopes to earn her college degree.*
>
>   **No verb**: *A talented pianist.*
>
>   **Corrected**: *Joe, a talented pianist, entertained the audience.* or *A talented pianist will be performing here next week.*
>
>   **No subject or verb**: *Studying for hours.*
>
>   **Corrected**: *Studying for hours, they went over the material in every chapter.* or *They had been studying for hours.*

Often, correcting a sentence fragment is a matter of attaching a dependent clause or a phrase to a sentence that comes before or after it:

>   **Dependent clause fragment**: *Because she has a beautiful voice. They asked her to sing the national anthem.*
>
>   Correct: *Because she has a beautiful voice, they asked her to sing the national anthem.*
>
>   **Dependent clause fragment**: *Where we like to vacation.*
>
>   Corrected: *Disney World, where we like to vacation, is crowded at this time of year.*
>
>   **Phrase fragment**: *He sent her flowers. To apologize for his behavior.*
>
>   Correct: *He sent her flowers to apologize for his behavior.*
>
>   **Phrase fragment**: *During the severe storm.*

Corrected: *During the severe storm, the power went out.*

Comma Splices and Run-on Sentences

A **comma splice** consists of two independent clauses that are connected with only a comma, which is inadequate punctuation:

> *It should not rain today, weather forecasters predicted a sunny day.*

> *Ray writes the music, Charlene writes the lyrics.*

In both of these examples there are two complete thoughts expressed in two different independent clauses. However, they are separated with only a comma.

A **run-on sentence** consists of two independent clauses that are not separated by any punctuation:

> *The break was over it was time to get back to work.*

> *She is majoring in business her real love is cooking.*

Comma splices and run-on sentences can be corrected in one of three ways:

1. First of all, we could simply use a semicolon to connect the two independent clauses:

> *It should not rain today; weather forecasters predicted a sunny day.*

> *Ray writes the music; Charlene writes the lyrics.*

> *The break was over; it was time to get back to work.*

> *She is majoring in business; her real love is cooking.*

Note that each independent clause could also be written as a separate sentence.

2. Or we could connect the clauses with a comma and an appropriate coordinating conjunction:

> *It should not rain today, for weather forecasters predicted a sunny day.*

> *Ray writes the music, and Charlene writes the lyrics.*

> *The break was over, so it was time to get back to work.*

> *She is majoring in business, but her real love is cooking.*

3. A third way to correct a comma splice or a run-on sentence is to add a semicolon and an appropriate conjunctive adverb followed by a comma:

> *It should not rain today; indeed, weather forecasters predicted a sunny day.*

> *Ray writes the music; afterward, Charlene writes the lyrics.*

> *The break was over; therefore, it was time to get back to work.*

> *She is majoring in business; however, her real love is cooking.*

Misplaced or Dangling Modifiers and Faulty Parallelism

Misplaced or Dangling Modifiers

A **modifier**, especially an adjective, must be placed next to the word it describes. If a modifier is not next to the word it describes, it is called a misplaced modifier:

> *Running for her life, the pantyhose Diana was wearing snagged on the chain link fence.*

In this sentence, the phrase *running for her life* modifies pantyhose because that is the closest word to the phrase. Therefore, this sentence is saying that the pantyhose was running for its life. Actually, though, it is Diana who was doing the running.

To correct this sentence, rewrite it so that the modifier is next to the word it is supposed to describe:

> *Running for her life, Diana snagged her pantyhose on the chain link fence.*

Misplaced modifiers can be phrases or single words. The word *only*, for example, is commonly misplaced:

> *She only won six dollars.*

In this sentence, the word *only* is modifying the verb, but it should be modifying the word *dollar*. So it needs to be moved:

> *She won only six dollars.*

If the word the modifier is supposed to be describing is not in the sentence at all, the error is called a dangling modifier.

> *As a child, my family flew to Hong Kong to see my grandmother.*

In this sentence, the modifier *as a child* is incorrectly describing family. It is not the family that was a child but the speaker of the sentence. To correct the error, rewrite the sentence to add the missing information:

> *As a child, I flew with my family to Hong Kong to see my grandmother.*

Faulty Parallelism

When pairs or series of words, phrases, or clauses express parallel ideas, they must be parallel in structure:

> *He loves gardening, sewing, and cooking.*

> *Either we mow the grass today, or we mow it tomorrow.*

> *I told her that I loved her and that she should marry me.*

Notice how changing the structure of one of the items in the pair or series makes the relationships in the sentence a little harder to understand:

> *He loves gardening, sewing, and to cook.*

> *Either we mow the grass today, or tomorrow would be a good day for doing it.*

> *I told her that I loved her and marrying me is what she should do.*

These sentences are not only more difficult to understand, but their lack of balance also causes them to sound cumbersome and awkward.

Now read two more sentences that lack parallelism, and try to determine how the structure changes:

> *French diners enjoy snails as a gourmet delicacy, and frog legs are considered to be tasty, too.*

> *She is hoping that their team will win and to bring home the big trophy.*

In the first sentence, the verb in the first independent clause is active, and the verb in the second independent clause is passive. To correct the error, rewrite the second independent clause to make the verb active. Now the subjects of both independent clauses are performing the action:

> *French diners enjoy snails as a gourmet delicacy, and they find frog legs tasty, too.*

In the second sentence, one of the direct objects is a noun dependent clause that begins with *that* and the other is an infinitive phrase. To correct this sentence, change the infinitive phrase to a noun dependent clause beginning with *that* to match the form of the first direct object:

> *She hopes that their team will win and that it will bring home the big trophy.*

Lesson 11.4: Editing to Correct Spelling Errors

Lesson 11.4 Introduction

After you have edited your paragraph for style and errors, you will be ready to prepare your final draft for submission. Your final draft should always be free of spelling errors. You will, of course, need to follow your instructor's guidelines for final drafts. Regardless of the final format of your paragraph, however, it should always be neat, clean, and professional looking. It should be typed or handwritten, as your instructor requires, and its appearance should reflect the fact that you have invested time and effort in your paragraph.

After you prepare your final draft, you should go over it one more time to look for **typographical errors**, which are accidental mistakes that occur during the typing of a document. If you find such an error, you should always neatly correct it on the computer or, if it is already printed and cannot easily be reprinted, by carefully striking through the error and writing in the correction with a black pen or covering the error with correction fluid and then writing the correction.

Spelling Errors

There are three ways to identify and correct errors in spelling:

1. Whenever you have the slightest doubt that a word is spelled correctly, look it up in a book or online version of a dictionary. Looking up the correct spelling will help you remember how to spell the word the next time you use it.

2. Use a computer spell-checker. If you have an electronic version of your draft, use the spell-check feature of your word processing program to locate errors. Most of these spell-checkers suggest possible alternative spellings for each error identified. Note, however, that these spell-checkers are not foolproof. They may actually ignore words that are incorrectly spelled. In Microsoft Word, for example, you can activate a feature of the program that identifies faulty sentence structure by marking possible errors with a green wavy underline and identifies possible spelling errors with a red wavy underline, and even suggests corrections. Before you print your final, finished draft, pay special attention to words and sentences the computer has labeled as possible errors.

3. Ask someone to proofread your draft for spelling errors. Ask someone you know who is a good speller to circle possible errors in spelling in your draft.

Spelling Rules: Forming Plurals, Adding Suffixes, and *ie* and *ei* Words

Forming Plurals

Most words are made plural by adding an -s to the end of the word. For example, add an -s to *head* to make the plural *heads*. Or add an -s to the word *hand* to make the plural *hands*. However, as with many of the rules you have learned so far, there are exceptions to the rules. They are listed as follows:

Nouns that end with -s, -z, -x, -sh, and –ch. To form the plural of a noun that ends in -s, -z, -x, -sh, or -ch, add -es:

Singular	Plural
Pass	Passes
Buzz	Buzzes
Tax	Taxes
Crash	Crashes
Glitch	Glitches

Nouns that end in -o. In most cases, also add -*es* to nouns that end in *o*:

Singular	Plural
Potato	Potatoes
Tomato	Tomatoes

There are a few exceptions, such as the word *pianos*.

Words ending in -f or -fe. Words ending in -*f* or -*fe* are made plural in one of three ways:

For some, add -*s*, as with other plurals:

Singular	Plural
Belief	Beliefs
Chief	Chiefs

For words that end in –*ff* or -*ffe*, add either -s or -*es*:

Singular	Plural
Staff	Staffs
Gaffe	Gaffes
Giraffe	Giraffes

Some words ending in -*f* or -*fe* are made plural with -*ves*:

Singular	Plural
Shelf	Shelves
Elf	Elves
Life	Lives

Words that are the same whether singular or plural. Some words are the same in both their singular and plural forms:

deer   sheep

elk   fish

Adding Suffixes to Words -y Words

Change the final *-y* to *-i* and add *-es* to make words ending in *-y* plural or to change the verb tense:

Singular	Plural	Past Tense
Supply	Supplies	Supplied
Cry	Cries	Cried
Empty	Empties	Emptied

-e Words

When you add certain suffixes to many words that end in *-e*, you drop that final *-e* before adding the suffix:

Singular	With Suffix
Bike	Biking
Love	Lovable
Obese	Obesity

Doubling a Final Letter

Double the final letter if (1) it is a consonant, (2) its last two letters are a vowel followed by a consonant, (3) it is a one-syllable word or is accented on the last syllable, or (4) the suffix that you want to add starts with a vowel:

Verb	Past Tense	Gerund
Hop	Hopped	Hopping
Rub	Rubbed	Rubbing
Refer	Refered	Referring

-ally and -ly Words

An adjective or other word becomes an adverb when *-ally* or *-ly* is added. If the word ends in *-ic*, add *-ally*, as in *frantically*. Otherwise, add *-ly* to the end of it, as in *lovely*.

***ie* and *ei* Words**

Usually, if we say the old rhyme "I before E except after C or when sounding like A as in neighbor and weigh," we can figure out how to spell *-ie* and *-ei* words. Again, there are exceptions to this rule:

> *ie*: science, conscience, species, sufficient

> *ei*: seize, either, weird, height, foreign, leisure, counterfeit, forfeit, neither, sleigh

Commonly Confused Words

Here are some commonly confused homonyms (words that sound alike), with their definitions. Study these words to learn the differences in their meanings:

Word	Definition
Accept Except	To agree to Excluding
Adverse Averse	Negative Reluctant
Advice Advise	Counsel To give an opinion
Affect Effect	To influence Result (noun)
Allude Elude	To refer to indirectly To evade
Allusion Illusion	Indirect reference False impression
Assure Ensure Insure	To guarantee To guarantee To cover or underwrite
Bare Bear	Naked Large animal; to carry

Word (continued)	Definition (continued)
Bazaar Bizarre	Festival Odd
Bored Board	Without interest Flat piece of wood; to climb on
Breath Breathe	Mouthful of air To take breaths
By Buy	Near To purchase
Capitol Capital	Building in which a legislature meets Assets; seat of government
Cite Site Sight	To refer to Location Ability to see
Close Clothes	To shut Apparel
Coarse Course	Rough Path; unit of study
Complement Compliment	To balance; to go together Admiring comment
Conscience Conscious	Moral/ethical principles Aware
Decent Descent Dissent	Civilized or well mannered To go down To disagree with
Defuse Diffuse	To calm To spread
Desert Dessert	Arid, sandy place A sweet served at the end of dinner
Devise Device	To concoct Mechanism

Word (continued)	Definition (continued)
Disburse Disperse	To pay out To scatter
Dual Duel	Twofold Contest between two contestants
Dye Die	To change color To expire
Elicit Illicit	To draw out Illegal
Envelop Envelope	To surround Cover; packet
Fair Fare	Balanced Transportation charge
Farther Further	Beyond (distance) Additional
Faze Phase	To put off, disturb Stage
Fiscal Physical	Relating to money Having to do with the body
For Fore Four	In favor of; intended for Front A number
Formally Formally	Officially Previously
Hear Here	To perceive sound At this time; presently
Hole Whole	Gap All together
Incidence Incident Instance	Occurrence Event Example

Word (continued)	Definition (continued)
Its It's	Possessive of *it* Contraction of *it is*
Know No	To be aware of something Rejection
Later Latter	Afterward Concluding
Lead Led	To show the way; a metallic element Showed the way
Liable Libel	Accountable Written slander
Lightening Lightning	Lessening a load Electricity related to a storm event
Lose Loose	To misplace Unfastened
Meat Meet	Animal protein To convene or get together
Miner Minor	Someone who works underground in a mine Of lesser importance
Passed Past	Approved or accepted; gone by History; what went before
Patience Patients	Endurance or fortitude People under the care of a doctor
Peace Piece	Serenity A segment of something larger
Peak Peek Pique	Climax To steal a look To arouse interest or ire
Personal Personnel	Private Group of employees

Word (continued)	Definition (continued)
Plain Plane	Without adornment Flat surface; aeronautical transportation
Populace Populous	The public Densely populated
Pore Pour	Small opening; to study To dispense
Pray Prey	To meditate Quarry or victim
Precede Proceed	To come before To go ahead
Presence Presents	Attendance Gifts
Principal Principle	Head of a school Belief
Quiet Quite	Calm; without sound To a certain extent
Rain Reign Rein	Precipitation Rule Strap to hold a horse
Raise Raze	To lift up To tear down
Right Rite Write	Correct Ritual To put pen to paper
Road Rode	Street Traveled
Root Rout Route	Origin Disorderly retreat; defeat Direction

Word (continued)	Definition (continued)
Sale	Transaction
Sail	Part of a boat
Scene	Location
Seen	Noticed
Stationary	Not moving
Stationery	Writing paper and envelopes
Than	A conjunction used to indicate an unequal comparison or difference
Then	Subsequently
Their	Belonging to them
There	In that place
They're	Contraction of *they are*
Threw	Tossed
Through	During; from beginning to end
To	In the direction of
Too	Also
Two	A number
Waist	The midsection of the body
Waste	Garbage; to use up illogically
Weak	Without strength
Week	Seven days
Weather	Climate; to endure
Whether	A conjunction used to indicate alternatives
Which	A pronoun indicating choice
Witch	A woman possessing magical powers
Who's	Contraction of *who is*
Whose	The possessive form of *who*
Wood	A piece of lumber
Would	Past tense of the verb *will*

Word (continued)	Definition (continued)
Yore	Of old
Your	The possessive of *you*
You're	The contraction of *you are*