

Writing for Success

Writing for Success

[Author removed at request of original publisher]

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA LIBRARIES PUBLISHING EDITION, 2015. THIS EDITION
ADAPTED FROM A WORK ORIGINALLY PRODUCED IN 2010 BY A PUBLISHER WHO HAS
REQUESTED THAT IT NOT RECEIVE ATTRIBUTION.
MINNEAPOLIS, MN



Writing for Success by University of Minnesota is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/), except where otherwise noted.

Contents

[Publisher Information](#)

ix

[Chapter 1: Introduction to Writing](#)

1.1 Reading and Writing in College	2
1.2 Developing Study Skills	15
1.3 Becoming a Successful College Writer	29
1.4 Introduction to Writing: End-of-Chapter Exercises	37

[Chapter 2: Writing Basics: What Makes a Good Sentence?](#)

2.1 Sentence Writing	39
2.2 Subject-Verb Agreement	56
2.3 Verb Tense	68
2.4 Capitalization	75
2.5 Pronouns	80
2.6 Adjectives and Adverbs	89
2.7 Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers	96
2.8 Writing Basics: End-of-Chapter Exercises	101

[Chapter 3: Punctuation](#)

3.1 Commas	105
3.2 Semicolons	113
3.3 Colons	115
3.4 Quotes	119
3.5 Apostrophes	123
3.6 Parentheses	126
3.7 Dashes	128
3.8 Hyphens	130
3.9 Punctuation: End-of-Chapter Exercises	132

[Chapter 4: Working with Words: Which Word Is Right?](#)

4.1 Commonly Confused Words	136
---	-----

4.2 Spelling	145
4.3 Word Choice	154
4.4 Prefixes and Suffixes	161
4.5 Synonyms and Antonyms	167
4.6 Using Context Clues	172
4.7 Working with Words: End-of-Chapter Exercises	176

[Chapter 5: Help for English Language Learners](#)

5.1 Word Order	179
5.2 Negative Statements	185
5.3 Count and Noncount Nouns and Articles	189
5.4 Pronouns	194
5.5 Verb Tenses	200
5.6 Modal Auxiliaries	214
5.7 Prepositions	219
5.8 Slang and Idioms	225
5.9 Help for English Language Learners: End-of-Chapter Exercises	229

[Chapter 6: Writing Paragraphs: Separating Ideas and Shaping Content](#)

6.1 Purpose, Audience, Tone, and Content	232
6.2 Effective Means for Writing a Paragraph	248
6.3 Writing Paragraphs: End-of-Chapter Exercises	262

[Chapter 7: Refining Your Writing: How Do I Improve My Writing Technique?](#)

7.1 Sentence Variety	265
7.2 Coordination and Subordination	281
7.3 Parallelism	290
7.4 Refining Your Writing: End-of-Chapter Exercises	297

[Chapter 8: The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?](#)

8.1 Apply Prewriting Models	300
8.2 Outlining	315
8.3 Drafting	324
8.4 Revising and Editing	337
8.5 The Writing Process: End-of-Chapter Exercises	353

Chapter 9: Writing Essays: From Start to Finish

<u>9.1 Developing a Strong, Clear Thesis Statement</u>	356
<u>9.2 Writing Body Paragraphs</u>	364
<u>9.3 Organizing Your Writing</u>	372
<u>9.4 Writing Introductory and Concluding Paragraphs</u>	377
<u>9.5 Writing Essays: End-of-Chapter Exercises</u>	384

Chapter 10: Rhetorical Modes

<u>10.1 Narration</u>	386
<u>10.2 Illustration</u>	391
<u>10.3 Description</u>	395
<u>10.4 Classification</u>	398
<u>10.5 Process Analysis</u>	401
<u>10.6 Definition</u>	404
<u>10.7 Comparison and Contrast</u>	408
<u>10.8 Cause and Effect</u>	413
<u>10.9 Persuasion</u>	417
<u>10.10 Rhetorical Modes: End-of-Chapter Exercises</u>	425

Chapter 11: Writing from Research: What Will I Learn?

<u>11.1 The Purpose of Research Writing</u>	427
<u>11.2 Steps in Developing a Research Proposal</u>	433
<u>11.3 Managing Your Research Project</u>	442
<u>11.4 Strategies for Gathering Reliable Information</u>	447
<u>11.5 Critical Thinking and Research Applications</u>	470
<u>11.6 Writing from Research: End-of-Chapter Exercises</u>	479

Chapter 12: Writing a Research Paper

<u>12.1 Creating a Rough Draft for a Research Paper</u>	481
<u>12.2 Developing a Final Draft of a Research Paper</u>	495
<u>12.3 Writing a Research Paper: End-of-Chapter Exercises</u>	516

Chapter 13: APA and MLA Documentation and Formatting

<u>13.1 Formatting a Research Paper</u>	519
---	-----

<u>13.2 Citing and Referencing Techniques</u>	535
<u>13.3 Creating a References Section</u>	548
<u>13.4 Using Modern Language Association (MLA) Style</u>	570
<u>13.5 APA and MLA Documentation and Formatting: End-of-Chapter Exercises</u>	579

[Chapter 14: Creating Presentations: Sharing Your Ideas](#)

<u>14.1 Organizing a Visual Presentation</u>	581
<u>14.2 Incorporating Effective Visuals into a Presentation</u>	595
<u>14.3 Giving a Presentation</u>	614
<u>14.4 Creating Presentations: End-of-Chapter Exercises</u>	625

[Chapter 15: Readings: Examples of Essays](#)

<u>15.1 Introduction to Sample Essays</u>	627
<u>15.2 Narrative Essay</u>	628
<u>15.3 Illustration Essay</u>	630
<u>15.4 Descriptive Essay</u>	632
<u>15.5 Classification Essay</u>	634
<u>15.6 Process Analysis Essay</u>	636
<u>15.7 Definition Essay</u>	638
<u>15.8 Compare-and-Contrast Essay</u>	640
<u>15.9 Cause-and-Effect Essay</u>	642
<u>15.10 Persuasive Essay</u>	644

Publisher Information

Writing for Success is adapted from a work produced and distributed under a Creative Commons license (CC BY-NC-SA) in 2011 by a publisher who has requested that they and the original author not receive attribution. This adapted edition is produced by the University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing through the eLearning Support Initiative.



This adaptation has reformatted the original text, and replaced some images and figures to make the resulting whole more shareable. This adaptation has not significantly altered or updated the original 2011 text. This work is made available under the terms of a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike license](#).

For questions about this textbook please contact textbookuse@umn.edu

Chapter 1: Introduction to Writing

- 1.1 Reading and Writing in College
- 1.2 Developing Study Skills
- 1.3 Becoming a Successful College Writer
- 1.4 Introduction to Writing: End-of-Chapter Exercises

1.1 Reading and Writing in College

Learning Objectives

- 1. Understand the expectations for reading and writing assignments in college courses.
- 2. Understand and apply general strategies to complete college-level reading assignments efficiently and effectively.
- 3. Recognize specific types of writing assignments frequently included in college courses.
- 4. Understand and apply general strategies for managing college-level writing assignments.
- 5. Determine specific reading and writing strategies that work best for you individually.

As you begin this chapter, you may be wondering why you need an introduction. After all, you have been writing and reading since elementary school. You completed numerous assessments of your reading and writing skills in high school and as part of your application process for college. You may write on the job, too. Why is a college writing course even necessary?

When you are eager to get started on the coursework in your major that will prepare you for your career, getting excited about an introductory college writing course can be difficult. However, regardless of your field of study, honing your writing skills—and your reading and critical-thinking skills—gives you a more solid academic foundation.

In college, academic expectations change from what you may have experienced in high school. The quantity of work you are expected to do is increased. When instructors expect you to read pages upon pages or study hours and hours for one particular course, managing your work load can be challenging. This chapter includes strategies for studying efficiently and managing your time.

The quality of the work you do also changes. It is not enough to understand course material and summarize it on an exam. You will also be expected to seriously engage with new ideas by reflecting on them, analyzing them, critiquing them, making connections, drawing conclusions, or finding new ways of thinking about a given subject. Educationally, you are moving into deeper waters. A good introductory writing course will help you swim.

[Table 1.1 “High School versus College Assignments”](#) summarizes some of the other major differences between high school and college assignments.

Table 1.1 High School versus College Assignments

High School	College
Reading assignments are moderately long. Teachers may set aside some class time for reading and reviewing the material in depth.	Some reading assignments may be very long. You will be expected to come to class with a basic understanding of the material.
Teachers often provide study guides and other aids to help you prepare for exams.	Reviewing for exams is primarily your responsibility.
Your grade is determined by your performance on a wide variety of assessments, including minor and major assignments. Not all assessments are writing based.	Your grade may depend on just a few major assessments. Most assessments are writing based.
Writing assignments include personal writing and creative writing in addition to expository writing.	Outside of creative writing courses, most writing assignments are expository.
The structure and format of writing assignments is generally stable over a four-year period.	Depending on the course, you may be asked to master new forms of writing and follow standards within a particular professional field.
Teachers often go out of their way to identify and try to help students who are performing poorly on exams, missing classes, not turning in assignments, or just struggling with the course. Often teachers will give students many “second chances.”	Although teachers want their students to succeed, they may not always realize when students are struggling. They also expect you to be proactive and take steps to help yourself. “Second chances” are less common.

This chapter covers the types of reading and writing assignments you will encounter as a college student. You will also learn a variety of strategies for mastering these new challenges—and becoming a more confident student and writer.

Throughout this chapter, you will follow a first-year student named Crystal. After several years of working as a saleswoman in a department store, Crystal has decided to pursue a degree in elementary education and become a teacher. She is continuing to work part-time, and occasionally she finds it challenging to balance the demands of work, school, and caring for her four-year-old son. As you read about Crystal, think about how you can use her experience to get the most out of your own college experience.

Exercise 1

Review [Table 1.1 “High School versus College Assignments”](#) and think about how you have found your college experience to be different from high school so far. Respond to the following questions:

1. In what ways do you think college will be more rewarding for you as a learner?
2. What aspects of college do you expect to find most challenging?
3. What changes do you think you might have to make in your life to ensure your success in college?

Reading Strategies

Your college courses will sharpen both your reading and your writing skills. Most of your writing assignments—from brief response papers to in-depth research projects—will depend on your understanding of course reading assignments or related readings you do on your own. And it is difficult, if not impossible, to write effectively about a text that you have not understood. Even when you do understand the reading, it can be hard to write about it if you do not feel personally engaged with the ideas discussed.

This section discusses strategies you can use to get the most out of your college reading assignments. These strategies fall into three broad categories:

1. **Planning strategies.** To help you manage your reading assignments.
2. **Comprehension strategies.** To help you understand the material.
3. **Active reading strategies.** To take your understanding to a higher and deeper level.

Planning Your Reading

Have you ever stayed up all night cramming just before an exam? Or found yourself skimming a detailed memo from your boss five minutes before a crucial meeting? The first step in handling college reading successfully is planning. This involves both managing your time and setting a clear purpose for your reading.

Managing Your Reading Time

You will learn more detailed strategies for time management in [Section 1.2 “Developing Study Skills”](#), but for now, focus on setting aside enough time for reading and breaking your assignments into manageable chunks. If you are assigned a seventy-page chapter to read for next week’s class, try not to wait until the night before to get started. Give yourself at least a few days and tackle one section at a time.

Your method for breaking up the assignment will depend on the type of reading. If the text is very dense and packed with unfamiliar terms and concepts, you may need to read no more than five or ten pages in one sitting so that you can truly understand and process the information. With more user-friendly texts, you will be able to handle longer sections—twenty to forty pages, for instance. And if you have a highly engaging reading assignment, such as a novel you cannot put down, you may be able to read lengthy passages in one sitting.

As the semester progresses, you will develop a better sense of how much time you need to allow for the reading assignments in different subjects. It also makes sense to preview each assignment well in advance to assess its difficulty level and to determine how much reading time to set aside.

Tip

College instructors often set aside reserve readings for a particular course. These consist of articles, book chapters, or other texts that are not part of the primary course textbook. Copies of reserve readings are available through the university library; in print; or, more often, online. When you are assigned a reserve reading, download it ahead of time (and let your instructor know if you have trouble accessing it). Skim through it to get a rough idea of how much time you will need to read the assignment in full.

Setting a Purpose

The other key component of planning is setting a purpose. Knowing what you want to get out of a reading assignment helps you determine how to approach it and how much time to spend on it. It also helps you stay focused during those occasional moments when it is late, you are tired, and relaxing in front of the television sounds far more appealing than curling up with a stack of journal articles.

Sometimes your purpose is simple. You might just need to understand the reading material well enough to discuss it intelligently in class the next day. However, your purpose will often go beyond that. For instance, you might also read to compare two texts, to formulate a personal response to a text, or to gather ideas for future research. Here are some questions to ask to help determine your purpose:

- **How did my instructor frame the assignment?** Often your instructors will tell you what they expect you to get out of the reading:
 - Read Chapter 2 and come to class prepared to discuss current teaching practices in elementary math.
 - Read these two articles and compare Smith’s and Jones’s perspectives on the 2010 health care reform bill.
 - Read Chapter 5 and think about how you could apply these guidelines to running your own business.
- **How deeply do I need to understand the reading?** If you are majoring in computer science and you are assigned to read Chapter 1, “Introduction to Computer Science,” it is safe to assume the chapter presents fundamental concepts that you will be expected to master. However, for some reading assignments, you may be expected to form a general understanding but not necessarily master the content. Again, pay attention to how your instructor presents the assignment.
- **How does this assignment relate to other course readings or to concepts discussed in class?** Your instructor may make some of these connections explicitly, but if not, try to draw connections on your own. (Needless to say, it helps to take detailed notes both when in class and when you read.)
- **How might I use this text again in the future?** If you are assigned to read about a topic that has always interested you, your reading assignment might help you develop ideas for a future

research paper. Some reading assignments provide valuable tips or summaries worth bookmarking for future reference. Think about what you can take from the reading that will stay with you.

Improving Your Comprehension

You have blocked out time for your reading assignments and set a purpose for reading. Now comes the challenge: making sure you actually understand all the information you are expected to process. Some of your reading assignments will be fairly straightforward. Others, however, will be longer or more complex, so you will need a plan for how to handle them.

For any expository writing—that is, nonfiction, informational writing—your first comprehension goal is to identify the main points and relate any details to those main points. Because college-level texts can be challenging, you will also need to monitor your reading comprehension. That is, you will need to stop periodically and assess how well you understand what you are reading. Finally, you can improve comprehension by taking time to determine which strategies work best for you and putting those strategies into practice.

Identifying the Main Points

In college, you will read a wide variety of materials, including the following:

- **Textbooks.** These usually include summaries, glossaries, comprehension questions, and other study aids.
- **Nonfiction trade books.** These are less likely to include the study features found in textbooks.
- **Popular magazine, newspaper, or web articles.** These are usually written for a general audience.
- **Scholarly books and journal articles.** These are written for an audience of specialists in a given field.

Regardless of what type of expository text you are assigned to read, your primary comprehension goal is to identify the main point: the most important idea that the writer wants to communicate and often states early on. Finding the main point gives you a framework to organize the details presented in the reading and relate the reading to concepts you learned in class or through other reading assignments. After identifying the main point, you will find the supporting points, the details, facts, and explanations that develop and clarify the main point.

Some texts make that task relatively easy. Textbooks, for instance, include the aforementioned features as well as headings and subheadings intended to make it easier for students to identify core concepts. Graphic features, such as sidebars, diagrams, and charts, help students understand complex information and distinguish between essential and inessential points. When you are assigned to read from a textbook,

be sure to use available comprehension aids to help you identify the main points.

Trade books and popular articles may not be written specifically for an educational purpose; nevertheless, they also include features that can help you identify the main ideas. These features include the following:

- **Trade books.** Many trade books include an introduction that presents the writer's main ideas and purpose for writing. Reading chapter titles (and any subtitles within the chapter) will help you get a broad sense of what is covered. It also helps to read the beginning and ending paragraphs of a chapter closely. These paragraphs often sum up the main ideas presented.
- **Popular articles.** Reading the headings and introductory paragraphs carefully is crucial. In magazine articles, these features (along with the closing paragraphs) present the main concepts. Hard news articles in newspapers present the gist of the news story in the lead paragraph, while subsequent paragraphs present increasingly general details.

At the far end of the reading difficulty scale are scholarly books and journal articles. Because these texts are written for a specialized, highly educated audience, the authors presume their readers are already familiar with the topic. The language and writing style is sophisticated and sometimes dense.

When you read scholarly books and journal articles, try to apply the same strategies discussed earlier. The introduction usually presents the writer's thesis, the idea or hypothesis the writer is trying to prove. Headings and subheadings can help you understand how the writer has organized support for his or her thesis. Additionally, academic journal articles often include a summary at the beginning, called an abstract, and electronic databases include summaries of articles, too.

For more information about reading different types of texts, see [Chapter 12 "Writing a Research Paper"](#).

Monitoring Your Comprehension

Finding the main idea and paying attention to text features as you read helps you figure out what you should know. Just as important, however, is being able to figure out what you do not know and developing a strategy to deal with it.

Textbooks often include comprehension questions in the margins or at the end of a section or chapter. As you read, stop occasionally to answer these questions on paper or in your head. Use them to identify sections you may need to reread, read more carefully, or ask your instructor about later.

Even when a text does not have built-in comprehension features, you can actively monitor your own comprehension. Try these strategies, adapting them as needed to suit different kinds of texts:

1. **Summarize.** At the end of each section, pause to summarize the main points in a few sentences. If you have trouble doing so, revisit that section.
2. **Ask and answer questions.** When you begin reading a section, try to identify two to three questions you should be able to answer after you finish it. Write down your questions and use them to test yourself on the reading. If you cannot answer a question, try to determine why. Is

the answer buried in that section of reading but just not coming across to you? Or do you expect to find the answer in another part of the reading?

3. **Do not read in a vacuum.** Look for opportunities to discuss the reading with your classmates. Many instructors set up online discussion forums or blogs specifically for that purpose. Participating in these discussions can help you determine whether your understanding of the main points is the same as your peers’.

These discussions can also serve as a reality check. If everyone in the class struggled with the reading, it may be exceptionally challenging. If it was a breeze for everyone but you, you may need to see your instructor for help.

As a working mother, Crystal found that the best time to get her reading done was in the evening, after she had put her four-year-old to bed. However, she occasionally had trouble concentrating at the end of a long day. She found that by actively working to summarize the reading and asking and answering questions, she focused better and retained more of what she read. She also found that evenings were a good time to check the class discussion forums that a few of her instructors had created.

Exercise 2

Choose any text that that you have been assigned to read for one of your college courses. In your notes, complete the following tasks:

1. Summarize the main points of the text in two to three sentences.
2. Write down two to three questions about the text that you can bring up during class discussion.

Tip

Students are often reluctant to seek help. They feel like doing so marks them as slow, weak, or demanding. The truth is, every learner occasionally struggles. If you are sincerely trying to keep up with the course reading but feel like you are in over your head, seek out help. Speak up in class, schedule a meeting with your instructor, or visit your university learning center for assistance.

Deal with the problem as early in the semester as you can. Instructors respect students who are proactive about their own learning. Most instructors will work hard to help students who make the effort to help themselves.

Taking It to the Next Level: Active Reading

Now that you have acquainted (or reacquainted) yourself with useful planning and comprehension strategies, college reading assignments may feel more manageable. You know what you need to do to

get your reading done and make sure you grasp the main points. However, the most successful students in college are not only competent readers but active, engaged readers.

Using the SQ3R Strategy

One strategy you can use to become a more active, engaged reader is the SQ3R strategy, a step-by-step process to follow before, during, and after reading. You may already use some variation of it. In essence, the process works like this:

1. **Survey** the text in advance.
2. Form **questions** before you start reading.
3. **Read** the text.
4. **Recite** and/or **record** important points during and after reading.
5. **Review** and **reflect** on the text after you read.

Before you read, you survey, or preview, the text. As noted earlier, reading introductory paragraphs and headings can help you begin to figure out the author's main point and identify what important topics will be covered. However, surveying does not stop there. Look over sidebars, photographs, and any other text or graphic features that catch your eye. Skim a few paragraphs. Preview any boldfaced or italicized vocabulary terms. This will help you form a first impression of the material.

Next, start brainstorming questions about the text. What do you expect to learn from the reading? You may find that some questions come to mind immediately based on your initial survey or based on previous readings and class discussions. If not, try using headings and subheadings in the text to formulate questions. For instance, if one heading in your textbook reads "Medicare and Medicaid," you might ask yourself these questions:

- When was Medicare and Medicaid legislation enacted? Why?
- What are the major differences between these two programs?

Although some of your questions may be simple factual questions, try to come up with a few that are more open-ended. Asking in-depth questions will help you stay more engaged as you read.

The next step is simple: read. As you read, notice whether your first impressions of the text were correct. Are the author's main points and overall approach about the same as what you predicted—or does the text contain a few surprises? Also, look for answers to your earlier questions and begin forming new questions. Continue to revise your impressions and questions as you read.

While you are reading, pause occasionally to recite or record important points. It is best to do this at the end of each section or when there is an obvious shift in the writer's train of thought. Put the book aside for a moment and recite aloud the main points of the section or any important answers you found there. You might also record ideas by jotting down a few brief notes in addition to, or instead of, reciting aloud. Either way, the physical act of articulating information makes you more likely to remember it.

After you have completed the reading, take some time to review the material more thoroughly. If the textbook includes review questions or your instructor has provided a study guide, use these tools to guide your review. You will want to record information in a more detailed format than you used during reading, such as in an outline or a list.

As you review the material, reflect on what you learned. Did anything surprise you, upset you, or make you think? Did you find yourself strongly agreeing or disagreeing with any points in the text? What topics would you like to explore further? Jot down your reflections in your notes. (Instructors sometimes require students to write brief response papers or maintain a reading journal. Use these assignments to help you reflect on what you read.)

Exercise 3

Choose another text that that you have been assigned to read for a class. Use the SQ3R process to complete the reading. (Keep in mind that you may need to spread the reading over more than one session, especially if the text is long.)

Be sure to complete all the steps involved. Then, reflect on how helpful you found this process. On a scale of one to ten, how useful did you find it? How does it compare with other study techniques you have used?

Using Other Active Reading Strategies

The SQ3R process encompasses a number of valuable active reading strategies: previewing a text, making predictions, asking and answering questions, and summarizing. You can use the following additional strategies to further deepen your understanding of what you read.

- **Connect what you read to what you already know.** Look for ways the reading supports, extends, or challenges concepts you have learned elsewhere.
- **Relate the reading to your own life.** What statements, people, or situations relate to your personal experiences?
- **Visualize.** For both fiction and nonfiction texts, try to picture what is described. Visualizing is especially helpful when you are reading a narrative text, such as a novel or a historical account, or when you read expository text that describes a process, such as how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).
- **Pay attention to graphics as well as text.** Photographs, diagrams, flow charts, tables, and other graphics can help make abstract ideas more concrete and understandable.
- **Understand the text in context.** Understanding context means thinking about who wrote the text, when and where it was written, the author's purpose for writing it, and what assumptions or agendas influenced the author's ideas. For instance, two writers might both address the subject of health care reform, but if one article is an opinion piece and one is a news story, the context is different.

- **Plan to talk or write about what you read.** Jot down a few questions or comments in your notebook so you can bring them up in class. (This also gives you a source of topic ideas for papers and presentations later in the semester.) Discuss the reading on a class discussion board or blog about it.

As Crystal began her first semester of elementary education courses, she occasionally felt lost in a sea of new terms and theories about teaching and child development. She found that it helped to relate the reading to her personal observations of her son and other kids she knew.

Writing at Work

Many college courses require students to participate in interactive online components, such as a discussion forum, a page on a social networking site, or a class blog. These tools are a great way to reinforce learning. Do not be afraid to be the student who starts the discussion.

Remember that when you interact with other students and teachers online, you need to project a mature, professional image. You may be able to use an informal, conversational tone, but complaining about the work load, using off-color language, or “flaming” other participants is inappropriate.

Active reading can benefit you in ways that go beyond just earning good grades. By practicing these strategies, you will find yourself more interested in your courses and better able to relate your academic work to the rest of your life. Being an interested, engaged student also helps you form lasting connections with your instructors and with other students that can be personally and professionally valuable. In short, it helps you get the most out of your education.

Common Writing Assignments

College writing assignments serve a different purpose than the typical writing assignments you completed in high school. In high school, teachers generally focus on teaching you to write in a variety of modes and formats, including personal writing, expository writing, research papers, creative writing, and writing short answers and essays for exams. Over time, these assignments help you build a foundation of writing skills.

In college, many instructors will expect you to already have that foundation.

Your college composition courses will focus on writing for its own sake, helping you make the transition to college-level writing assignments. However, in most other college courses, writing assignments serve a different purpose. In those courses, you may use writing as one tool among many for learning how to think about a particular academic discipline.

Additionally, certain assignments teach you how to meet the expectations for professional writing in a given field. Depending on the class, you might be asked to write a lab report, a case study, a literary analysis, a business plan, or an account of a personal interview. You will need to learn and follow the

standard conventions for those types of written products.

Finally, personal and creative writing assignments are less common in college than in high school. College courses emphasize expository writing, writing that explains or informs. Often expository writing assignments will incorporate outside research, too. Some classes will also require persuasive writing assignments in which you state and support your position on an issue. College instructors will hold you to a higher standard when it comes to supporting your ideas with reasons and evidence.

[Table 1.2 “Common Types of College Writing Assignments”](#) lists some of the most common types of college writing assignments. It includes minor, less formal assignments as well as major ones. Which specific assignments you encounter will depend on the courses you take and the learning objectives developed by your instructors.

Table 1.2 Common Types of College Writing Assignments

Assignment Type	Description	Example
Personal Response Paper	Expresses and explains your response to a reading assignment, a provocative quote, or a specific issue; may be very brief (sometimes a page or less) or more in-depth	For an environmental science course, students watch and write about President Obama's June 15, 2010, speech about the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico.
Summary	Restates the main points of a longer passage objectively and in your own words	For a psychology course, students write a one-page summary of an article about a man suffering from short-term memory loss.
Position Paper	States and defends your position on an issue (often a controversial issue)	For a medical ethics course, students state and support their position on using stem cell research in medicine.
Problem-Solution Paper	Presents a problem, explains its causes, and proposes and explains a solution	For a business administration course, a student presents a plan for implementing an office recycling program without increasing operating costs.
Literary Analysis	States a thesis about a particular literary work (or works) and develops the thesis with evidence from the work and, sometimes, from additional sources	For a literature course, a student compares two novels by the twentieth-century African American writer Richard Wright.
Research Review or Survey	Sums up available research findings on a particular topic	For a course in media studies, a student reviews the past twenty years of research on whether violence in television and movies is correlated with violent behavior.
Case Study or Case Analysis	Investigates a particular person, group, or event in depth for the purpose of drawing a larger conclusion from the analysis	For an education course, a student writes a case study of a developmentally disabled child whose academic performance improved because of a behavioral-modification program.
Laboratory Report	Presents a laboratory experiment, including the hypothesis, methods of data collection, results, and conclusions	For a psychology course, a group of students presents the results of an experiment in which they explored whether sleep deprivation produced memory deficits in lab rats.
Research Journal	Records a student's ideas and findings during the course of a long-term research project	For an education course, a student maintains a journal throughout a semester-long research project at a local elementary school.
Research Paper	Presents a thesis and supports it with original research and/or other researchers' findings on the topic; can take several different formats depending on the subject area	For examples of typical research projects, see Chapter 12 "Writing a Research Paper" .

Writing at Work

Part of managing your education is communicating well with others at your university. For instance, you might need to e-mail your instructor to request an office appointment or explain why you will need to miss a class. You might need to contact administrators with questions about your tuition or financial aid. Later, you might ask instructors to write recommendations on your behalf.

Treat these documents as professional communications. Address the recipient politely; state your question, problem, or request clearly; and use a formal, respectful tone. Doing so helps you make a positive impression and get a quicker response.

Key Takeaways

- College-level reading and writing assignments differ from high school assignments not only in quantity but also in quality.
- Managing college reading assignments successfully requires you to plan and manage your time, set a purpose for reading, practice effective comprehension strategies, and use active reading strategies to deepen your understanding of the text.
- College writing assignments place greater emphasis on learning to think critically about a particular discipline and less emphasis on personal and creative writing.

1.2 Developing Study Skills

Learning Objectives

1. Use strategies for managing time effectively as a college student.
2. Understand and apply strategies for taking notes efficiently.
3. Determine the specific time-management, study, and note-taking strategies that work best for you individually.

By now, you have a general idea of what to expect from your college courses. You have probably received course syllabi, started on your first few assignments, and begun applying the strategies you learned about in [Section 1.1 “Reading and Writing in College”](#).

At the beginning of the semester, your work load is relatively light. This is the perfect time to brush up on your study skills and establish good habits. When the demands on your time and energy become more intense, you will have a system in place for handling them.

This section covers specific strategies for managing your time effectively. You will also learn about different note-taking systems that you can use to organize and record information efficiently.

As you work through this section, remember that every student is different. The strategies presented here are tried and true techniques that work well for many people. However, you may need to adapt them slightly to develop a system that works well for you personally. If your friend swears by her smartphone, but you hate having to carry extra electronic gadgets around, then using a smartphone will not be the best organizational strategy for you.

Read with an open mind, and consider what techniques have been effective (or ineffective) for you in the past. Which habits from your high school years or your work life could help you succeed in college? Which habits might get in your way? What changes might you need to make?

Understanding Yourself as a Learner

To succeed in college—or any situation where you must master new concepts and skills—it helps to know what makes you tick. For decades, educational researchers and organizational psychologists have examined how people take in and assimilate new information, how some people learn differently than others, and what conditions make students and workers most productive. Here are just a few questions to think about:

- **What is your learning style?** For the purposes of this chapter, learning style refers to the way you prefer to take in new information, by seeing, by listening, or through some other channel. For more information, see the section on learning styles.
- **What times of day are you most productive?** If your energy peaks early, you might benefit from blocking out early morning time for studying or writing. If you are a night owl, set aside a few evenings a week for schoolwork.
- **How much clutter can you handle in your work space?** Some people work fine at a messy desk and know exactly where to find what they need in their stack of papers; however, most people benefit from maintaining a neat, organized space.
- **How well do you juggle potential distractions in your environment?** If you can study at home without being tempted to turn on the television, check your e-mail, fix yourself a snack, and so on, you may make home your work space. However, if you need a less distracting environment to stay focused, you may be able to find one on your college's campus or in your community.
- **Does a little background noise help or hinder your productivity?** Some people work better when listening to background music or the low hum of conversation in a coffee shop. Others need total silence.
- **When you work with a partner or group, do you stay on task?** A study partner or group can sometimes be invaluable. However, working this way takes extra planning and effort, so be sure to use the time productively. If you find that group study sessions turn into social occasions, you may study better on your own.
- **How do you manage stress?** Accept that at certain points in the semester, you will feel stressed out. In your day-to-day routine, make time for activities that help you reduce stress, such as exercising, spending time with friends, or just scheduling downtime to relax.

Learning Styles

Most people have one channel that works best for them when it comes to taking in new information. Knowing yours can help you develop strategies for studying, time management, and note taking that work especially well for you.

To begin identifying your learning style, think about how you would go about the process of assembling a piece of furniture. Which of these options sounds most like you?

1. You would carefully look over the diagrams in the assembly manual first so you could picture each step in the process.
2. You would silently read the directions through, step by step, and then look at the diagrams afterward.
3. You would read the directions aloud under your breath. Having someone explain the steps to you would also help.
4. You would start putting the pieces together and figure out the process through trial and error,

consulting the directions as you worked.

Now read the following explanations. Again, think about whether each description sounds like you.

- If you chose (a), you may be a visual learner. You understand ideas best when they are presented in a visual format, such as a flowchart, a diagram, or text with clear headings and many photos or illustrations.
- If you chose (b), you may be a verbal learner. You understand ideas best through reading and writing about them and taking detailed notes.
- If you chose (c), you may be an auditory learner. You understand ideas best through listening. You learn well from spoken lectures or books on tape.
- If you chose (d), you may be a kinesthetic learner. You learn best through doing and prefer hands-on activities. In long lectures, fidgeting may help you focus.

Your learning style does not completely define you as a student. Auditory learners can comprehend a flow chart, and kinesthetic learners can sit still long enough to read a book. However, if you do have one dominant learning style, you can work with it to get the most out of your classes and study time. [Table 1.3 “Learning Style Strategies”](#) lists some tips for maximizing your learning style.

Table 1.3 Learning Style Strategies

Learning Style	Strategies
Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When possible, represent concepts visually—in charts, diagrams, or sketches. • Use a visual format for taking notes on reading assignments or lectures. • Use different-colored highlighters or pens to color-code information as you read. • Use visual organizers, such as maps, flowcharts, and so forth, to help you plan writing assignments. • Use colored pens, highlighters, or the review feature of your word-processing program to revise and edit writing.
Verbal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the instructional features in course texts—summaries, chapter review questions, glossaries, and so on—to aid your studying. • Take notes on your reading assignments. • Rewrite or condense reading notes and lecture notes to study. • Summarize important ideas in your own words. • Use informal writing techniques, such as brainstorming, freewriting, blogging, or posting on a class discussion forum to generate ideas for writing assignments. • Reread and take notes on your writing to help you revise and edit.
Auditory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask your instructor’s permission to tape-record lectures to supplement your notes. • Read parts of your textbook or notes aloud when you study. • If possible, obtain an audiobook version of important course texts. Make use of supplemental audio materials, such as CDs or DVDs. • Talk through your ideas with other students when studying or when preparing for a writing assignment. • Read your writing aloud to help you draft, revise, and edit.
Kinesthetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you read or study, use techniques that will keep your hands in motion, such as highlighting or taking notes. • Use tactile study aids, such as flash cards or study guides you design yourself. • Use self-stick notes to record ideas for writing. These notes can be physically reorganized easily to help you determine how to shape your paper. • Use a physical activity, such as running or swimming, to help you break through writing blocks. • Take breaks during studying to stand, stretch, or move around.

Tip

The material presented here about learning styles is just the tip of the iceberg. There are numerous other variations in how people learn. Some people like to act on information right away while others reflect on it first. Some people excel at mastering details and understanding concrete, tried and true ideas while others enjoy exploring abstract theories and innovative, even impractical ideas. For more information about how you learn, visit your school's academic resource center.

Time Management

In college you have increased freedom to structure your time as you please. With that freedom comes increased responsibility. High school teachers often take it upon themselves to track down students who miss class or forget assignments. College instructors, however, expect you to take full responsibility for managing yourself and getting your work done on time.

Getting Started: Short- and Long-Term Planning

At the beginning of the semester, establish a weekly routine for when you will study and write. A general guideline is that for every hour spent in class, students should expect to spend another two to three hours on reading, writing, and studying for tests. Therefore, if you are taking a biology course that meets three times a week for an hour at a time, you can expect to spend six to nine hours per week on it outside of class. You will need to budget time for each class just like an employer schedules shifts at work, and you must make that study time a priority.

That may sound like a lot when taking multiple classes, but if you plan your time carefully, it is manageable. A typical full-time schedule of fifteen credit hours translates into thirty to forty-five hours per week spent on schoolwork outside of class. All in all, a full-time student would spend about as much time on school each week as an employee spends on work. Balancing school and a job can be more challenging, but still doable.

In addition to setting aside regular work periods, you will need to plan ahead to handle more intense demands, such as studying for exams and writing major papers. At the beginning of the semester, go through your course syllabi and mark all major due dates and exam dates on a calendar. Use a format that you check regularly, such as your smartphone or the calendar feature in your e-mail. (In [Section 1.3 “Becoming a Successful College Writer”](#) you will learn strategies for planning out major writing assignments so you can complete them on time.)

Tip

The two- to three-hour rule may sound intimidating. However, keep in mind that this is only a rule of thumb. Realistically, some courses will be more challenging than others, and the demands will ebb and flow throughout the semester. You may have trouble-free weeks and stressful weeks. When you schedule your classes, try to balance introductory-level classes with more advanced classes so that your work load stays manageable.

Crystal knew that to balance a job, college classes, and a family, it was crucial for her to get organized. For the month of September, she drew up a week-by-week calendar that listed not only her own class and work schedules but also the days her son attended preschool and the days her husband had off from work. She and her husband discussed how to share their day-to-day household responsibilities so she would be able to get her schoolwork done. Crystal also made a note to talk to her supervisor at work about reducing her hours during finals week in December.

Exercise 1

Now that you have learned some time-management basics, it is time to apply those skills. For this exercise, you will develop a weekly schedule and a semester calendar.

1. Working with your class schedule, map out a week-long schedule of study time. Try to apply the “two- to three-hour” rule. Be sure to include any other nonnegotiable responsibilities, such as a job or child care duties.
2. Use your course syllabi to record exam dates and due dates for major assignments in a calendar (paper or electronic). Use a star, highlighting, or other special marking to set off any days or weeks that look especially demanding.

Staying Consistent: Time Management Dos and Don'ts

Setting up a schedule is easy. Sticking with it, however, may create challenges. A schedule that looked great on paper may prove to be unrealistic. Sometimes, despite students' best intentions, they end up procrastinating or pulling all-nighters to finish a paper or study for an exam.

Keep in mind, however, that your weekly schedule and semester calendar are time-management tools. Like any tools, their effectiveness depends on the user: you. If you leave a tool sitting in the box unused (e.g., if you set up your schedule and then forget about it), it will not help you complete the task. And if, for some reason, a particular tool or strategy is not getting the job done, you need to figure out why and maybe try using something else.

With that in mind, read the list of time-management dos and don'ts. Keep this list handy as a reference

you can use throughout the semester to “troubleshoot” if you feel like your schoolwork is getting off track.

Dos

1. Set aside time to review your schedule or calendar regularly and update or adjust them as needed.
2. Be realistic when you schedule study time. Do not plan to write your paper on Friday night when everyone else is out socializing. When Friday comes, you might end up abandoning your plans and hanging out with your friends instead.
3. Be honest with yourself about where your time goes. Do not fritter away your study time on distractions like e-mail and social networking sites.
4. Accept that occasionally your work may get a little off track. No one is perfect.
5. Accept that sometimes you may not have time for all the fun things you would like to do.
6. Recognize times when you feel overextended. Sometimes you may just need to get through an especially demanding week. However, if you feel exhausted and overworked all the time, you may need to scale back on some of your commitments.
7. Have a plan for handling high-stress periods, such as final exam week. Try to reduce your other commitments during those periods—for instance, by scheduling time off from your job. Build in some time for relaxing activities, too.

Don'ts

1. Do not procrastinate on challenging assignments. Instead, break them into smaller, manageable tasks that can be accomplished one at a time.
2. Do not fall into the trap of “all-or-nothing” thinking: “There is no way I can fit in a three-hour study session today, so I will just wait until the weekend.” Extended periods of free time are hard to come by, so find ways to use small blocks of time productively. For instance, if you have a free half hour between classes, use it to preview a chapter or brainstorm ideas for an essay.
3. Do not fall into the trap of letting things slide and promising yourself, “I will do better next week.” When next week comes, the accumulated undone tasks will seem even more intimidating, and you will find it harder to get them done.
4. Do not rely on caffeine and sugar to compensate for lack of sleep. These stimulants may temporarily perk you up, but your brain functions best when you are rested.

Exercise 2

The key to managing your time effectively is consistency. Completing the following tasks will help you stay on track throughout the semester.

1. Establish regular times to “check in” with yourself to identify and prioritize tasks and plan how to accomplish them. Many people find it is best to set aside a few minutes for this each day and to take some time to plan at the beginning of each week.
2. For the next two weeks, focus on consistently using whatever time-management system you have set up. Check in with yourself daily and weekly, stick to your schedule, and take note of anything that interferes. At the end of the two weeks, review your schedule and determine whether you need to adjust it.
3. Review the preceeding list of dos and don’ts.

Writing at Work

If you are part of the workforce, you have probably established strategies for accomplishing job-related tasks efficiently. How could you adapt these strategies to help you be a successful student? For instance, you might sync up your school and work schedules on an electronic calendar. Instead of checking in with your boss about upcoming work deadlines, establish a buddy system where you check in with a friend about school projects. Give school the same priority you give to work.

Note-Taking Methods

One final valuable tool to have in your arsenal as a student is a good note-taking system. Just the act of converting a spoken lecture to notes helps you organize and retain information, and of course, good notes also help you review important concepts later. Although taking good notes is an essential study skill, many students enter college without having received much guidance about note taking.

These sections discuss different strategies you can use to take notes efficiently. No matter which system you choose, keep the note-taking guidelines in mind.

General Note-Taking Guidelines

1. Before class, quickly review your notes from the previous class and the assigned reading. Fixing key terms and concepts in your mind will help you stay focused and pick out the important points during the lecture.

2. Come prepared with paper, pens, highlighters, textbooks, and any important handouts.
3. Come to class with a positive attitude and a readiness to learn. During class, make a point of concentrating. Ask questions if you need to. Be an active participant.
4. During class, capture important ideas as concisely as you can. Use words or phrases instead of full sentences and abbreviate when possible.
5. Visually organize your notes into main topics, subtopics, and supporting points, and show the relationships between ideas. Leave space if necessary so you can add more details under important topics or subtopics.
6. Record the following:

Review your notes regularly throughout the semester, not just before exams.

Organizing Ideas in Your Notes

A good note-taking system needs to help you differentiate among major points, related subtopics, and supporting details. It visually represents the connections between ideas. Finally, to be effective, your note-taking system must allow you to record and organize information fairly quickly. Although some students like to create detailed, formal outlines or concept maps when they read, these may not be good strategies for class notes, because spoken lectures may not allow time for elaborate notes.

Instead, focus on recording content simply and quickly to create organized, legible notes. Try one of the following techniques.

Modified Outline Format

A modified outline format uses indented spacing to show the hierarchy of ideas without including roman numerals, lettering, and so forth. Just use a dash or bullet to signify each new point unless your instructor specifically presents a numbered list of items.

The first example shows Crystal's notes from a developmental psychology class about an important theorist in this field. Notice how the line for the main topic is all the way to the left. Subtopics are indented, and supporting details are indented one level further. Crystal also used abbreviations for terms like *development* and *example*.

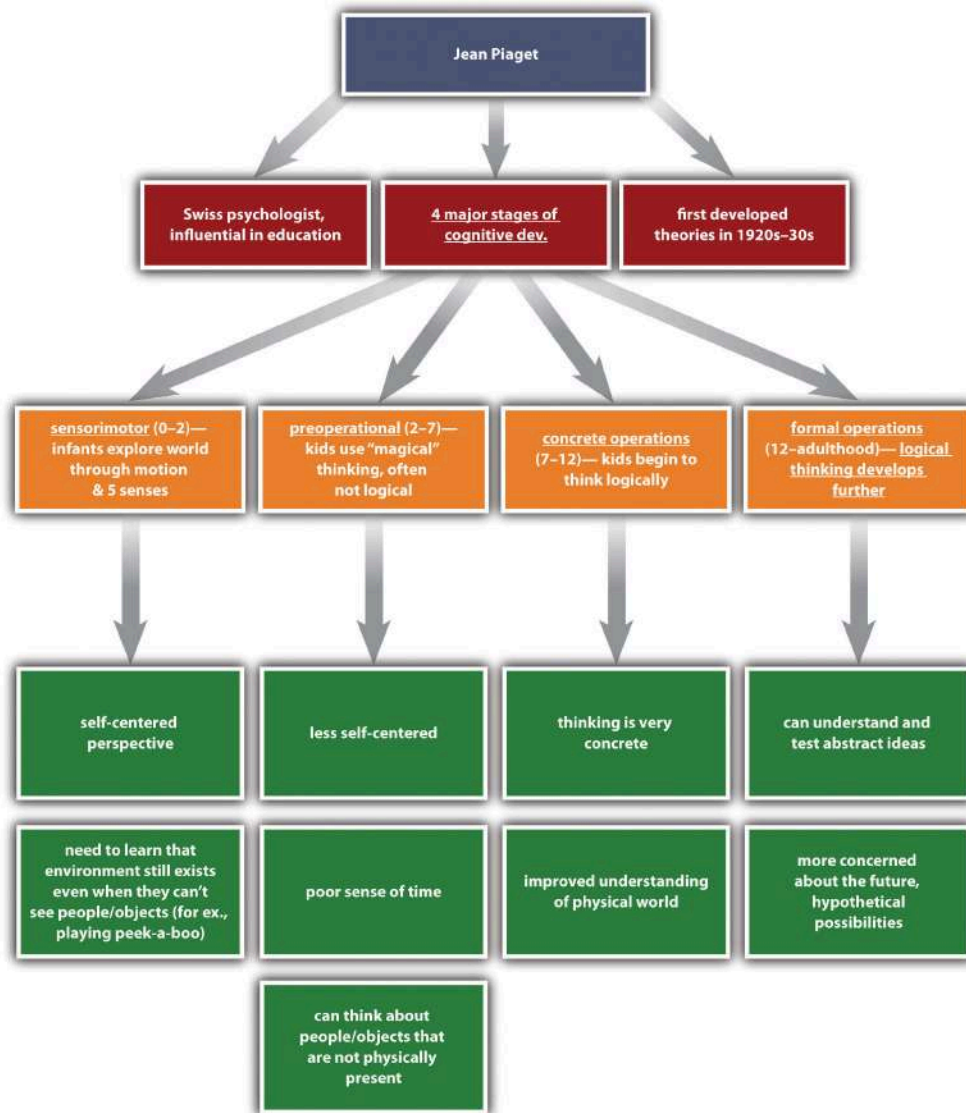
Child Development—20th Century Theorists

- Jean Piaget
- Swiss psychologist, influential in education
- first developed theories in 1920s-30s
- 4 major stages of cognitive dev.
 - sensorimotor (0-2)—infants explore world through motion & senses
 - self-centered perspective
 - need to learn that environment still exists even when they can't see people/objects (for ex., playing peek-a-boo)
 - preoperational (2-7)—kids use "magical" thinking, often not logical
 - less self-centered
 - poor sense of time
 - can think about people/objects that are not physically present
 - concrete operations (7-12)—kids begin to think logically
 - thinking is very concrete
 - improved understanding of physical world
 - formal operations (12-adulthood)—logical thinking develops further
 - can understand & test abstract ideas
 - more concerned about the future, hypothetical possibilities

Idea Mapping

If you discovered in this section that you learn best with visual presentations, you may prefer to use a more graphic format for notes, such as an idea map. The next example shows how Crystal's lecture notes could be set up differently. Although the format is different, the content and organization are the same.

Child Development—20th Century Theorists



Charting

If the content of a lecture falls into a predictable, well-organized pattern, you might choose to use a chart or table to record your notes. This system works best when you already know, either before class or at the beginning of class, which categories you should include. The next figure shows how this system might be used.

THEORIST	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	YEARS ACTIVE	STAGES OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT
Jean Piaget	Switzerland	1920s through 1970s	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. sensorimotor (0-2) 2. preoperational (2-7) 3. concrete operational (7-12) 4. formal operational (12-adulthood)
Erik Erikson	Denmark (studied in Austria, emigrated to US in 1930s)	1930s through 1980s	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. trust vs. mistrust (infants) 2. autonomy vs. shame and doubt (toddler) 3. initiative vs. guilt (preschool-K) 4. industry vs. inferiority (elementary school) 5. identity vs. role confusion (teen years) <p>***See also stages of adult development</p>

The Cornell Note-Taking System

In addition to the general techniques already described, you might find it useful to practice a specific strategy known as the Cornell note-taking system. This popular format makes it easy not only to organize information clearly but also to note key terms and summarize content.

To use the Cornell system, begin by setting up the page with these components:

- The course name and lecture date at the top of the page
- A narrow column (about two inches) at the left side of the page
- A wide column (about five to six inches) on the right side of the page
- A space of a few lines marked off at the bottom of the page

During the lecture, you record notes in the wide column. You can do so using the traditional modified outline format or a more visual format if you prefer.

Then, as soon as possible after the lecture, review your notes and identify key terms. Jot these down in the narrow left-hand column. You can use this column as a study aid by covering the notes on the right-hand side, reviewing the key terms, and trying to recall as much as you can about them so that you can mentally restate the main points of the lecture. Uncover the notes on the right to check your

understanding. Finally, use the space at the bottom of the page to summarize each page of notes in a few sentences.

Using the Cornell system, Crystal's notes would look like the following:

Child Development	September 13, 2011
Piaget cognitive development sensorimotor preoperational concrete operations formal operations concrete thinking abstract thinking	Child Development—20th Century Theorists –Jean Piaget –Swiss psychologist, influential in education –first developed theories in 1920s–30s –4 major stages of cognitive dev. –sensorimotor (0–2)—infants explore world through motion & 5 senses –self-centered perspective –need to learn that environment still exists even when they can't see people/objects (for ex., playing peek-a-boo) –preoperational (2–7)—kids use “magical” thinking, often not logical –less self-centered –poor sense of time –can think about people/objects that are not physically present –concrete operations (7–12)—kids begin to think logically – thinking is very concrete –improved understanding of physical world –formal operations (12–adulthood)—logical thinking develops further –can understand & test abstract ideas –more concerned about the future, hypothetical possibilities
Piaget believed children go through four stages of cognitive development—sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operations, and formal operations. Gradually they progress from having a very limited understanding of the world (infants and young children), to being more logical (older kids), to being able to think abstractly (preteens and teens).	

Writing at Work

Often, at school or in the workplace, a speaker will provide you with pregenerated notes summarizing electronic presentation slides. You may be tempted not to take notes at all because much of the content is already summarized for you. However, it is a good idea to jot down at least a few notes. Doing so keeps you focused during the presentation, allows you to record details you might otherwise forget, and gives you the opportunity to jot down questions or reflections to personalize the content.

Exercise 3

Over the next few weeks, establish a note-taking system that works for you.

1. If you are not already doing so, try using one of the aforementioned techniques. (Remember that the Cornell system can be combined with other note-taking formats.)

2. It can take some trial and error to find a note-taking system that works for you. If you find that you are struggling to keep up with lectures, consider whether you need to switch to a different format or be more careful about distinguishing key concepts from unimportant details.
3. If you find that you are having trouble taking notes effectively, set up an appointment with your school's academic resource center.

Key Takeaways

- Understanding your individual learning style and preferences can help you identify the study and time-management strategies that will work best for you.
- To manage your time effectively, it is important to look at the short term (daily and weekly schedules) and the long term (major semester deadlines).
- To manage your time effectively, be consistent about maintaining your schedule. If your schedule is not working for you, make adjustments.
- A good note-taking system must differentiate among major points, related subtopics, and supporting details, and it must allow you to record and organize information fairly quickly. Choose the format that is most effective for you.

1.3 Becoming a Successful College Writer

Learning Objectives

1. Identify strategies for successful writing.
2. Demonstrate comprehensive writing skills.
3. Identify writing strategies for use in future classes.

In the preceding sections, you learned what you can expect from college and identified strategies you can use to manage your work. These strategies will help you succeed in any college course. This section covers more about how to handle the demands college places upon you as a writer. The general techniques you will learn will help ensure your success on any writing task, whether you complete a bluebook exam in an hour or an in-depth research project over several weeks.

Putting It All Together: Strategies for Success

Writing well is difficult. Even people who write for a living sometimes struggle to get their thoughts on the page. Even people who generally enjoy writing have days when they would rather do anything else. For people who do not like writing or do not think of themselves as good writers, writing assignments can be stressful or even intimidating. And of course, you cannot get through college without having to write—sometimes a lot, and often at a higher level than you are used to.

No magic formula will make writing quick and easy. However, you can use strategies and resources to manage writing assignments more easily. This section presents a broad overview of these strategies and resources. The remaining chapters of this book provide more detailed, comprehensive instruction to help you succeed at a variety of assignments. College will challenge you as a writer, but it is also a unique opportunity to grow.

Using the Writing Process

To complete a writing project successfully, good writers use some variation of the following process.

The Writing Process

- **Prewriting.** In this step, the writer generates ideas to write about and begins developing these ideas.
- **Outlining a structure of ideas.** In this step, the writer determines the overall organizational structure of the writing and creates an outline to organize ideas. Usually this step involves some additional fleshing out of the ideas generated in the first step.
- **Writing a rough draft.** In this step, the writer uses the work completed in prewriting to develop a first draft. The draft covers the ideas the writer brainstormed and follows the organizational plan that was laid out in the first step.
- **Revising.** In this step, the writer revisits the draft to review and, if necessary, reshape its content. This stage involves moderate and sometimes major changes: adding or deleting a paragraph, phrasing the main point differently, expanding on an important idea, reorganizing content, and so forth.
- **Editing.** In this step, the writer reviews the draft to make additional changes. Editing involves making changes to improve style and adherence to standard writing conventions—for instance, replacing a vague word with a more precise one or fixing errors in grammar and spelling. Once this stage is complete, the work is a finished piece and ready to share with others.

Chances are, you have already used this process as a writer. You may also have used it for other types of creative projects, such as developing a sketch into a finished painting or composing a song. The steps listed above apply broadly to any project that involves creative thinking. You come up with ideas (often vague at first), you work to give them some structure, you make a first attempt, you figure out what needs improving, and then you refine it until you are satisfied.

Most people have used this creative process in one way or another, but many people have misconceptions about how to use it to write. Here are a few of the most common misconceptions students have about the writing process:

- **“I do not have to waste time on prewriting if I understand the assignment.”** Even if the task is straightforward and you feel ready to start writing, take some time to develop ideas before you plunge into your draft. Freewriting—writing about the topic without stopping for a set period of time—is one prewriting technique you might try in that situation.
- **“It is important to complete a formal, numbered outline for every writing assignment.”** For some assignments, such as lengthy research papers, proceeding without a formal outline can be very difficult. However, for other assignments, a structured set of notes or a detailed graphic organizer may suffice. The important thing is that you have a solid plan for organizing ideas and details.
- **“My draft will be better if I write it when I am feeling inspired.”** By all means, take advantage of those moments of inspiration. However, understand that sometimes you will have to write when you are not in the mood. Sit down and start your draft even if you do not feel like it. If necessary, force yourself to write for just one hour. By the end of the hour, you may be far more engaged and motivated to continue. If not, at least you will have

accomplished part of the task.

- **“My instructor will tell me everything I need to revise.”** If your instructor chooses to review drafts, the feedback can help you improve. However, it is still your job, not your instructor’s, to transform the draft to a final, polished piece. That task will be much easier if you give your best effort to the draft before submitting it. During revision, do not just go through and implement your instructor’s corrections. Take time to determine what you can change to make the work the best it can be.
- **“I am a good writer, so I do not need to revise or edit.”** Even talented writers still need to revise and edit their work. At the very least, doing so will help you catch an embarrassing typo or two. Revising and editing are the steps that make good writers into great writers.

For a more thorough explanation of the steps of the writing process as well as for specific techniques you can use for each step, see [Chapter 8 “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?”](#).

Tip

The writing process also applies to timed writing tasks, such as essay exams. Before you begin writing, read the question thoroughly and think about the main points to include in your response. Use scrap paper to sketch out a very brief outline. Keep an eye on the clock as you write your response so you will have time to review it and make any needed changes before turning in your exam.

Managing Your Time

In [Section 1.2 “Developing Study Skills”](#), you learned general time-management skills. By combining those skills with what you have learned about the writing process, you can make any writing assignment easier to manage.

When your instructor gives you a writing assignment, write the due date on your calendar. Then work backward from the due date to set aside blocks of time when you will work on the assignment. Always plan at least two sessions of writing time per assignment, so that you are not trying to move from step 1 to step 5 in one evening. Trying to work that fast is stressful, and it does not yield great results. You will plan better, think better, and write better if you space out the steps.

Ideally, you should set aside at least three separate blocks of time to work on a writing assignment: one for prewriting and outlining, one for drafting, and one for revising and editing. Sometimes those steps may be compressed into just a few days. If you have a couple of weeks to work on a paper, space out the five steps over multiple sessions. Long-term projects, such as research papers, require more time for each step.

Tip

In certain situations you may not be able to allow time between the different steps of the writing process. For instance, you may be asked to write in class or complete a brief response paper overnight. If the time available is very limited, apply a modified version of the writing process (as you would do for an essay exam). It is still important to give the assignment thought and effort. However, these types of assignments are less formal, and instructors may not expect them to be as polished as formal papers. When in doubt, ask the instructor about expectations, resources that will be available during the writing exam, and if they have any tips to prepare you to effectively demonstrate your writing skills.

Each Monday in Crystal's Foundations of Education class, the instructor distributed copies of a current news article on education and assigned students to write a one-and-one-half- to two-page response that was due the following Monday. Together, these weekly assignments counted for 20 percent of the course grade. Although each response took just a few hours to complete, Crystal found that she learned more from the reading and got better grades on her writing if she spread the work out in the following way:

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Article response assigned.		Read article, prewrite, and outline response paper.		Draft response.		Revise and edit response.

For more detailed guidelines on how to plan for a long-term writing project, see [Chapter 11 "Writing from Research: What Will I Learn?"](#).

Setting Goals

One key to succeeding as a student and as a writer is setting both short- and long-term goals for yourself. You have already glimpsed the kind of short-term goals a student might set. Crystal wanted to do well in her Foundations of Education course, and she realized that she could control how she handled her weekly writing assignments. At 20 percent of her course grade, she reasoned, those assignments might mean the difference between a C and a B or between a B and an A.

By planning carefully and following through on her daily and weekly goals, Crystal was able to fulfill one of her goals for the semester. Although her exam scores were not as high as she had hoped, her consistently strong performance on writing assignments tipped her grade from a B+ to an A-. She was pleased to have earned a high grade in one of the required courses for her major. She was also glad to have gotten the most out of an introductory course that would help her become an effective teacher.

How does Crystal's experience relate to your own college experience?

To do well in college, it is important to stay focused on how your day-to-day actions determine your long-term success. You may not have defined your career goals or chosen a major yet. Even so, you

surely have some overarching goals for what you want out of college: to expand your career options, to increase your earning power, or just to learn something new. In time, you will define your long-term goals more explicitly. Doing solid, steady work, day by day and week by week, will help you meet those goals.

Exercise 1

In this exercise, make connections between short- and long-term goals.

1. For this step, identify one long-term goal you would like to have achieved by the time you complete your degree. For instance, you might want a particular job in your field or hope to graduate with honors.
2. Next, identify one semester goal that will help you fulfill the goal you set in step one. For instance, you may want to do well in a particular course or establish a connection with a professional in your field.
3. Review the goal you determined in step two. Brainstorm a list of stepping stones that will help you meet that goal, such as “doing well on my midterm and final exams” or “talking to Professor Gibson about doing an internship.” Write down everything you can think of that would help you meet that semester goal.
4. Review your list. Choose two to three items, and for each item identify at least one concrete action you can take to accomplish it. These actions may be recurring (meeting with a study group each week) or one time only (calling the professor in charge of internships).
5. Identify one action from step four that you can do today. Then do it.

Using College Resources

One reason students sometimes find college overwhelming is that they do not know about, or are reluctant to use, the resources available to them. Some aspects of college will be challenging. However, if you try to handle every challenge alone, you may become frustrated and overwhelmed.

Universities have resources in place to help students cope with challenges. Your student fees help pay for resources such as a health center or tutoring, so use these resources if you need them. The following are some of the resources you might use if you find you need help:

- **Your instructor.** If you are making an honest effort but still struggling with a particular course, set up a time to meet with your instructor and discuss what you can do to improve. He or she may be able to shed light on a confusing concept or give you strategies to catch up.
- **Your academic counselor.** Many universities assign students an academic counselor who can help you choose courses and ensure that you fulfill degree and major requirements.
- **The academic resource center.** These centers offer a variety of services, which may range from general coaching in study skills to tutoring for specific courses. Find out what is offered

at your school and use the services that you need.

- **The writing center.** These centers employ tutors to help you manage college-level writing assignments. They will not write or edit your paper for you, but they can help you through the stages of the writing process. (In some schools, the writing center is part of the academic resource center.)
- **The career resource center.** Visit the career resource center for guidance in choosing a career path, developing a résumé, and finding and applying for jobs.
- **Counseling services.** Many universities offer psychological counseling for free or for a low fee. Use these services if you need help coping with a difficult personal situation or managing depression, anxiety, or other problems.

Students sometimes neglect to use available resources due to limited time, unwillingness to admit there is a problem, or embarrassment about needing to ask for help. Unfortunately, ignoring a problem usually makes it harder to cope with later on. Waiting until the end of the semester may also mean fewer resources are available, since many other students are also seeking last-minute help.

Exercise 2

Identify at least one college resource that you think could be helpful to you and you would like to investigate further. Schedule a time to visit this resource within the next week or two so you can use it throughout the semester.

Overview: College Writing Skills

You now have a solid foundation of skills and strategies you can use to succeed in college. The remainder of this book will provide you with guidance on specific aspects of writing, ranging from grammar and style conventions to how to write a research paper.

For any college writing assignment, use these strategies:

- Plan ahead. Divide the work into smaller, manageable tasks, and set aside time to accomplish each task in turn.
- Make sure you understand the assignment requirements, and if necessary, clarify them with your instructor. Think carefully about the purpose of the writing, the intended audience, the topics you will need to address, and any specific requirements of the writing form.
- Complete each step of the writing process. With practice, using this process will come automatically to you.
- Use the resources available to you. Remember that most colleges have specific services to help students with their writing.

For help with specific writing assignments and guidance on different aspects of writing, you may refer to the other chapters in this book. The table of contents lists topics in detail. As a general overview, the following paragraphs discuss what you will learn in the upcoming chapters.

[Chapter 2 “Writing Basics: What Makes a Good Sentence?”](#) through [Chapter 7 “Refining Your Writing: How Do I Improve My Writing Technique?”](#) will ground you in writing basics: the “nuts and bolts” of grammar, sentence structure, and paragraph development that you need to master to produce competent college-level writing. [Chapter 2 “Writing Basics: What Makes a Good Sentence?”](#) reviews the parts of speech and the components of a sentence. [Chapter 3 “Punctuation”](#) explains how to use punctuation correctly. [Chapter 4 “Working with Words: Which Word Is Right?”](#) reviews concepts that will help you use words correctly, including everything from commonly confused words to using context clues.

[Chapter 5 “Help for English Language Learners”](#) provides guidance for students who have learned English as a second language. Then, [Chapter 6 “Writing Paragraphs: Separating Ideas and Shaping Content”](#) guides you through the process of developing a paragraph while [Chapter 7 “Refining Your Writing: How Do I Improve My Writing Technique?”](#) has tips to help you refine and improve your sentences.

[Chapter 8 “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?”](#) through [Chapter 10 “Rhetorical Modes”](#) are geared to help you apply those basics to college-level writing assignments. [Chapter 8 “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?”](#) shows the writing process in action with explanations and examples of techniques you can use during each step of the process. [Chapter 9 “Writing Essays: From Start to Finish”](#) provides further discussion of the components of college essays—how to create and support a thesis and how to organize an essay effectively. [Chapter 10 “Rhetorical Modes”](#) discusses specific modes of writing you will encounter as a college student and explains how to approach these different assignments.

[Chapter 11 “Writing from Research: What Will I Learn?”](#) through [Chapter 14 “Creating Presentations: Sharing Your Ideas”](#) focus on how to write a research paper. [Chapter 11 “Writing from Research: What Will I Learn?”](#) guides students through the process of conducting research, while [Chapter 12 “Writing a Research Paper”](#) explains how to transform that research into a finished paper. [Chapter 13 “APA and MLA Documentation and Formatting”](#) explains how to format your paper and use a standard system for documenting sources. Finally, [Chapter 14 “Creating Presentations: Sharing Your Ideas”](#) discusses how to transform your paper into an effective presentation.

Many of the chapters in this book include sample student writing—not just the finished essays but also the preliminary steps that went into developing those essays. [Chapter 15 “Readings: Examples of Essays”](#) of this book provides additional examples of different essay types.

Key Takeaways

- Following the steps of the writing process helps students complete any writing assignment more successfully.
- To manage writing assignments, it is best to work backward from the due date, allotting appropriate time to complete each step of the writing process.

- Setting concrete long- and short-term goals helps students stay focused and motivated.
- A variety of university resources are available to help students with writing and with other aspects of college life.

1.4 Introduction to Writing: End-of-Chapter Exercises

Exercises

1. Find out more about your learning style by visiting your academic resource center or doing Internet research. Take note of strategies that are recommended for different types of learners. Which strategies do you already use? Which strategies could you incorporate into your routine?
2. Apply the following comprehension and active reading strategies to an assigned reading:
 - Locate the writer’s main idea and major supporting points. (Use text features to gather clues.)
 - Apply the SQ3R strategy: Survey, Question, Read, Recite and Record, and Review and Reflect.
 - Apply at least one other active reading strategy appropriate for the text, such as visualizing or connecting the text to personal experiences.
3. After reviewing your syllabus, map out a timeline of major assignments in the course. Describe the steps you anticipate needing to follow in order to complete these assignments.
4. Take a few minutes to skim through the remaining chapters of this book, whose contents are described in [Section 1.3 “Becoming a Successful College Writer”](#). Use self-stick notes or flags to mark any sections that you expect to consult frequently when you write, such as a grammar guide or guidelines for a particular essay format. You may wish to similarly make notes in other writing handbooks you own and any other reference books you will need to use frequently.

Chapter 2: Writing Basics: What Makes a Good Sentence?

- 2.1 Sentence Writing
- 2.2 Subject-Verb Agreement
- 2.3 Verb Tense
- 2.4 Capitalization
- 2.5 Pronouns
- 2.6 Adjectives and Adverbs
- 2.7 Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers
- 2.8 Writing Basics: End-of-Chapter Exercises

2.1 Sentence Writing

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the components of a basic sentence.
2. Identify the four most serious writing errors.

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

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

Components of a Sentence

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

Independent Clause	Independent Clause
{We went to the store.}	{We bought the ingredients on our list},
Independent Clause	
and then {we went home.}	

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

Subjects

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

Malik is the project manager for this project. He will give us our assignments.

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

The computer lab is where we will work. It will be open twenty-four hours a day.

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

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

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

Tip

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

Subjects are underlined once.

Verbs are underlined twice.

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

Compound Subjects

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

Desmond and Maria have been working on that design for almost a year. Books, magazines, and online articles are all good resources.

Prepositional Phrases

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

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

Exercise 1

Read the following sentences. Underline the subjects, and circle the prepositional phrases.

1. The gym is open until nine o'clock tonight.
2. We went to the store to get some ice.
3. The student with the most extra credit will win a homework pass.
4. Maya and Tia found an abandoned cat by the side of the road.
5. The driver of that pickup truck skidded on the ice.
6. Anita won the race with time to spare.
7. The people who work for that company were surprised about the merger.
8. Working in haste means that you are more likely to make mistakes.
9. The soundtrack has over sixty songs in languages from around the world.
10. His latest invention does not work, but it has inspired the rest of us.

Verbs

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

Action Verbs

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

The dog *barked* at the jogger.
He *gave* a short speech before we ate.

Linking Verbs

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

The coat *was* old and dirty.
The clock *seemed* broken.

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

Action Verb: The boy *looked* for his glove.
Linking Verb: The boy *looked* tired.

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

Helping Verbs

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

The restaurant *is known* for its variety of dishes.
She *does speak up* when prompted in class.

We *have seen* that movie three times.

She *can tell* when someone walks on her lawn.

(is, does, have, and can are helping verbs and known, speak up, seen, and tell are verbs)

Tip

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

Subject: Who or what is the sentence about?

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

Exercise 2

Copy each sentence onto your own sheet of paper and underline the verb(s) twice. Name the type of verb(s) used in the sentence in the space provided (LV, HV, or V).

1. The cat sounds ready to come back inside. _____
2. We have not eaten dinner yet. _____
3. It took four people to move the broken-down car. _____
4. The book was filled with notes from class. _____
5. We walked from room to room, inspecting for damages. _____
6. Harold was expecting a package in the mail. _____
7. The clothes still felt damp even though they had been through the dryer twice. _____
8. The teacher who runs the studio is often praised for his restoration work on old masterpieces.

Sentence Structure, Including Fragments and Run-ons

Now that you know what makes a complete sentence—a subject and a verb—you can use other parts of speech to build on this basic structure. Good writers use a variety of sentence structures to make their work more interesting. This section covers different sentence structures that you can use to make longer, more complex sentences.

Sentence Patterns

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

Subject-Verb

Computers (subject) *hum* (verb)

Subject-Linking Verb-Noun

Computers (subject) *are* (linking verb) tool (noun)

Subject-Linking Verb-Adjective

Computers (subject) *are* (linking verb) expensive (adjective)

Subject-Verb-Adverb

Computers (subject) *calculate* (verb) quickly (adverb)

Subject-Verb-Direct Object

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

Sally (subject) rides (verb) a motorcycle (direct object)

Subject–Verb–Indirect Object–Direct Object

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

My coworker (subject) *gave* (verb) me (indirect object) the reports (direct object)

Exercise 3

Use what you have learned so far to bring variety in your writing. Use the following lines or your own sheet of paper to write six sentences that practice each basic sentence pattern. When you have finished, label each part of the sentence (S, V, LV, N, Adj, Adv, DO, IO).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

Collaboration

Find an article in a newspaper, a magazine, or online that interests you. Bring it to class or post it online. Then, looking at a classmate's article, identify one example of each part of a sentence (S, V, LV, N, Adj, Adv, DO, IO). Please share or post your results.

Fragments

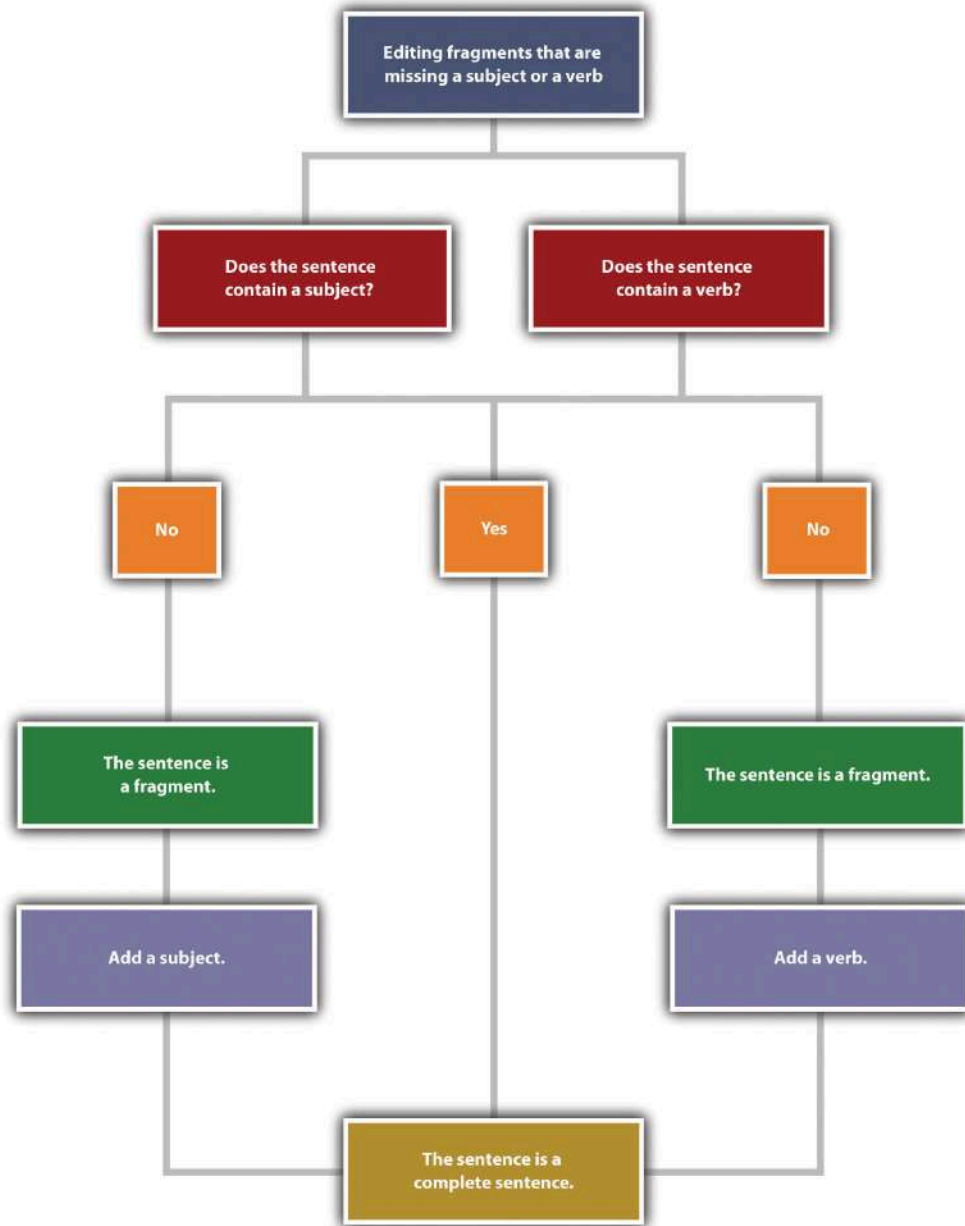
The sentences you have encountered so far have been independent clauses. As you look more closely at your past writing assignments, you may notice that some of your sentences are not complete. A sentence that is missing a subject or a verb is called a fragment. A fragment may include a description or may express part of an idea, but it does not express a complete thought.

Fragment: Children helping in the kitchen.

Complete sentence: Children helping in the kitchen **often make a mess.**

You can easily fix a fragment by adding the missing subject or verb. In the example, the sentence was missing a verb. Adding *often make a mess* creates an S-V-N sentence structure.

Figure 2.1 Editing Fragments That Are Missing a Subject or a Verb



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

Fragment: Told her about the broken vase.

Complete sentence: I told her about the broken vase.

Fragment: The store down on Main Street.

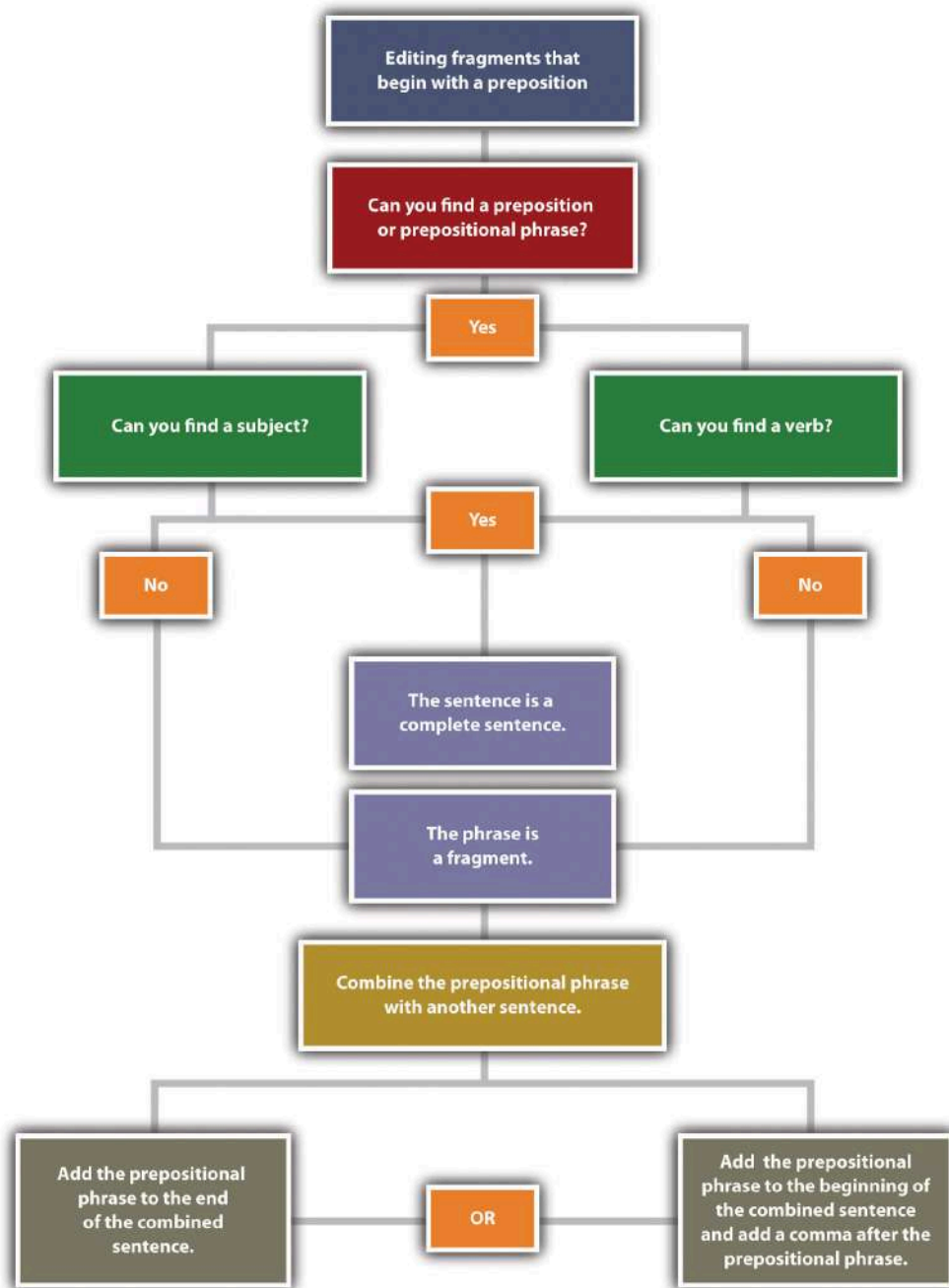
Complete sentence: The store down on Main Street **sells music**.

Common Sentence Errors

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

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

Figure 2.2 Editing Fragments That Begin with a Preposition



Example A

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

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

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

Example B

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

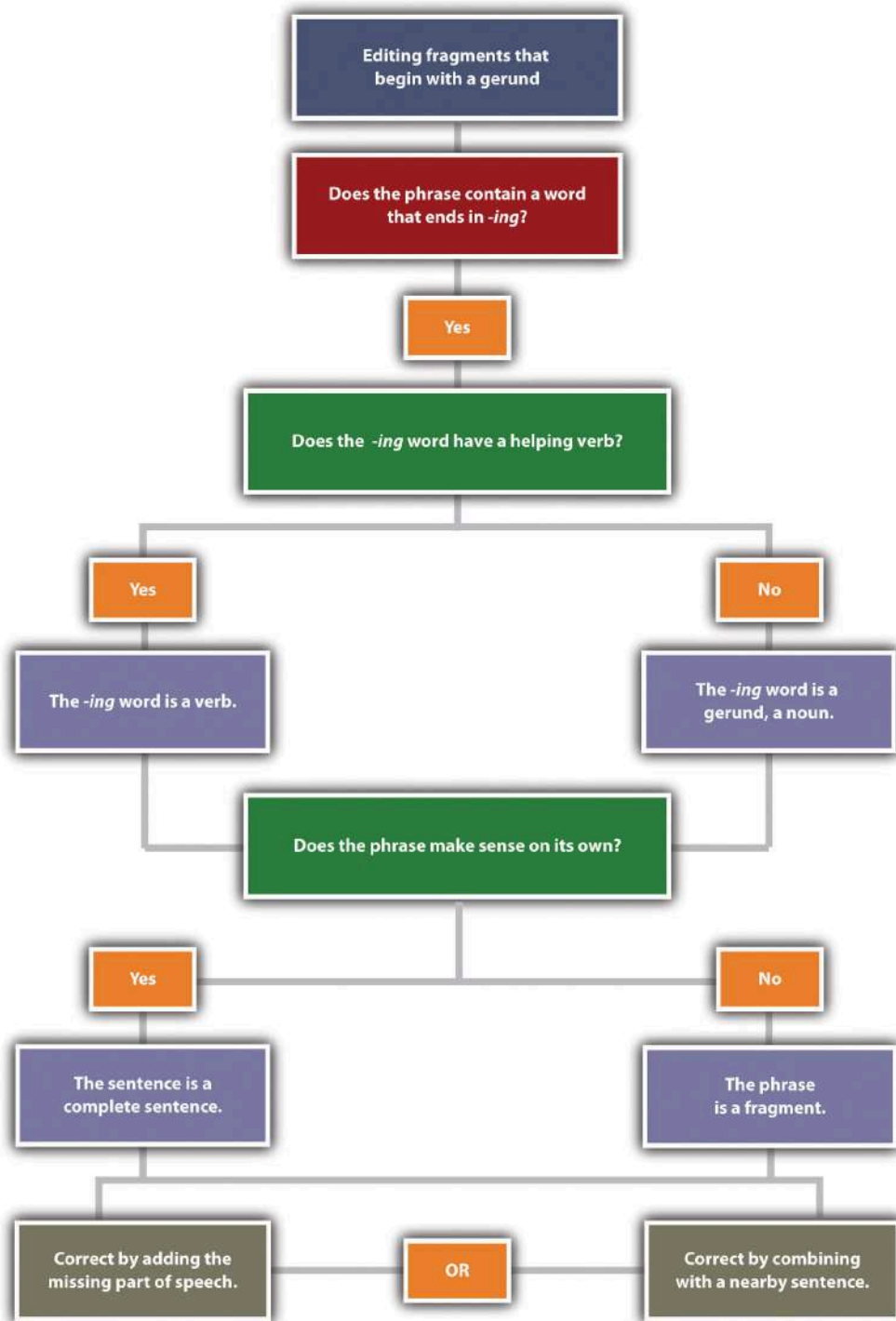
When you encounter a word ending in *-ing* in a sentence, identify whether or not this word is used as a verb in the sentence. You may also look for a helping verb. If the word is not used as a verb or if no helping verb is used with the *-ing* verb form, the verb is being used as a noun. An *-ing* verb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

Verb: I *was* (helping verb) *working* (verb) on homework until midnight.

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

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

Figure 2.3 Editing Fragments That Begin with Gerunds



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Exercise 4

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

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

Run-on Sentences

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

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

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

When two complete sentences are combined into one without any punctuation, the result is a fused sentence. When two complete sentences are joined by a comma, the result is a comma splice. Both errors can easily be fixed.

Punctuation

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

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

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

Using a semicolon between the two complete sentences will also correct the error. A semicolon allows you to keep the two closely related ideas together in one sentence. When you punctuate with a semicolon, make sure that both parts of the sentence are independent clauses. For more information on semicolons, see [Section 2.4.2 “Capitalize Proper Nouns”](#).

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

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

When you use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses, you may wish to add a transition word to show the connection between the two thoughts. After the semicolon, add the transition word and follow it with a comma. For more information on transition words, see [Chapter 8 “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?”](#).

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

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

Coordinating Conjunctions

You can also fix run-on sentences by adding a comma and a coordinating conjunction. A coordinating conjunction acts as a link between two independent clauses.

Tip

These are the seven coordinating conjunctions that you can use: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so*. Use these words appropriately when you want to link the two independent clauses. The acronym *FANBOYS* will help you remember this group of coordinating conjunctions.

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

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

Dependent Words

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

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

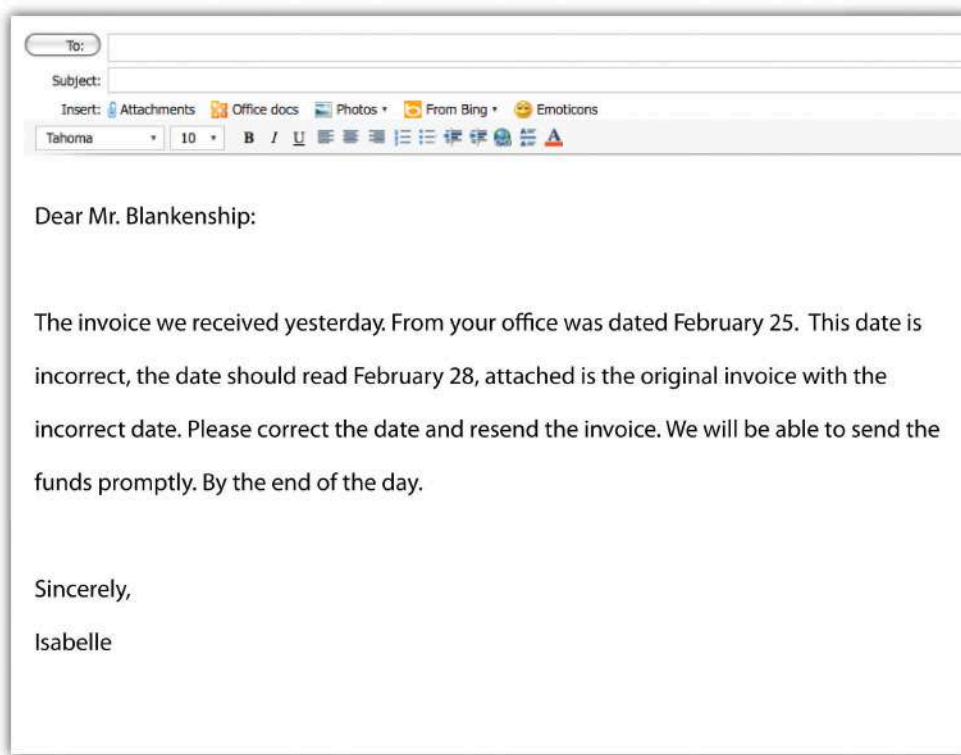
Complete sentence: **Although** we took the elevator, the others got there before us.

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

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

Writing at Work

Figure 2.4 Sample e-mail



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

Exercise 5

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

1. The report is due on Wednesday but we're flying back from Miami that morning. I told the project manager that we would be able to get the report to her later that day she suggested that we come back a day early to get the report done and I told her we had meetings until our flight took off. We e-mailed our contact who said that they would check with his boss, she said that the project could afford a delay as long as they wouldn't have to make any edits or changes to the file our new deadline is next Friday.
2. Anna tried getting a reservation at the restaurant, but when she called they said that there was a waiting list so she put our names down on the list when the day of our reservation arrived we only had to wait thirty minutes because a table opened up unexpectedly which was good because we were able to catch a movie after dinner in the time we'd expected to wait to be seated.

3. Without a doubt, my favorite artist is Leonardo da Vinci, not because of his paintings but because of his fascinating designs, models, and sketches, including plans for scuba gear, a flying machine, and a life-size mechanical lion that actually walked and moved its head. His paintings are beautiful too, especially when you see the computer enhanced versions researchers use a variety of methods to discover and enhance the paintings' original colors, the result of which are stunningly vibrant and yet delicate displays of the man's genius.

Key Takeaways

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

Writing Application

Using the six basic sentence structures, write one of the following:

1. A work e-mail to a coworker about a presentation.
2. A business letter to a potential employer.
3. A status report about your current project.
4. A job description for your résumé.

2.2 Subject-Verb Agreement

Learning Objectives

1. Define subject-verb agreement.
2. Identify common errors in subject-verb agreement.

In the workplace, you want to present a professional image. Your outfit or suit says something about you when meeting face-to-face, and your writing represents you in your absence. Grammatical mistakes in your writing or even in speaking make a negative impression on coworkers, clients, and potential employers. Subject-verb agreement is one of the most common errors that people make. Having a solid understanding of this concept is critical when making a good impression, and it will help ensure that your ideas are communicated clearly.

Agreement

Agreement in speech and in writing refers to the proper grammatical match between words and phrases. Parts of sentences must agree, or correspond with other parts, in number, person, case, and gender.

- **Number.** All parts must match in singular or plural forms.
- **Person.** All parts must match in first person (*I*), second person (*you*), or third person (*he, she, it, they*) forms.
- **Case.** All parts must match in subjective (*I, you, he, she, it, they, we*), objective (*me, her, him, them, us*), or possessive (*my, mine, your, yours, his, her, hers, their, theirs, our, ours*) forms. For more information on pronoun case agreement, see [Section 2.5.1 “Pronoun Agreement”](#).
- **Gender.** All parts must match in male or female forms.

Subject-verb agreement describes the proper match between subjects and verbs.

Because subjects and verbs are either singular or plural, the subject of a sentence and the verb of a sentence must agree with each other in number. That is, a singular subject belongs with a singular verb form, and a plural subject belongs with a plural verb form. For more information on subjects and verbs, see [Section 2.1 “Sentence Writing”](#).

Singular: The cat *jumps* over the fence.

Plural: The cats *jump* over the fence.

Regular Verbs

Regular verbs follow a predictable pattern. For example, in the third person singular, regular verbs always end in -s. Other forms of regular verbs do not end in -s. Study the following regular verb forms in the present tense.

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I live.	We live.
Second Person	You live.	You live.
Third Person	He/She/It lives.	They live.

Tip

Add an *-es* to the third person singular form of regular verbs that end in *-sh*, *-x*, *-ch*, and *-s*. (I wish/He wishes, I fix/She fixes, I watch/It watches, I kiss/He kisses.)

Singular: I read every day.

Plural: We *read* every day.

In these sentences, the verb form stays the same for the first person singular and the first person plural.

Singular: You *stretch* before you go to bed.

Plural: You *stretch* before every game.

In these sentences, the verb form stays the same for the second person singular and the second person plural. In the singular form, the pronoun *you* refers to one person. In the plural form, the pronoun *you* refers to a group of people, such as a team.

Singular: My mother *walks* to work every morning.

In this sentence, the subject is *mother*. Because the sentence only refers to one mother, the subject is

singular. The verb in this sentence must be in the third person singular form.

Plural: My friends *like* the same music as I do.

In this sentence, the subject is *friends*. Because this subject refers to more than one person, the subject is plural. The verb in this sentence must be in the third person plural form.

Tip

Many singular subjects can be made plural by adding an -s. Most regular verbs in the present tense end with an -s in the third person singular. This does not make the verbs plural.

Singular subject, singular verb: The cat *rac*es across the yard.

Plural subject, plural verb: The cats *rac*e across the yard.

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, write the correct verb form for each of the following sentences.

1. I (brush/brushes) my teeth twice a day.
2. You (wear/wears) the same shoes every time we go out.
3. He (kick/kicks) the soccer ball into the goal.
4. She (watch/watches) foreign films.
5. Catherine (hide/hides) behind the door.
6. We (want/wants) to have dinner with you.
7. You (work/works) together to finish the project.
8. They (need/needs) to score another point to win the game.
9. It (eat/eats) four times a day.
10. David (fix/fixes) his own motorcycle.

Irregular Verbs

Not all verbs follow a predictable pattern. These verbs are called irregular verbs. Some of the most common irregular verbs are *be*, *have*, and *do*. Learn the forms of these verbs in the present tense to avoid

errors in subject-verb agreement.

Be

Study the different forms of the verb *to be* in the present tense.

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I am.	We are.
Second Person	You are.	You are.
Third Person	He/She/It is.	They are.

Have

Study the different forms of the verb *to have* in the present tense.

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I have.	We have.
Second Person	You have.	You have.
Third Person	He/She/It has.	They have.

Do

Study the different forms of the verb *to do* in the present tense.

	Singular Form	Plural Form
First Person	I do.	We do.
Second Person	You do.	You do.
Third person	He/She/It does.	They do.

Exercise 2

Complete the following sentences by writing the correct present tense form of *be*, *have*, or *do*. Use your own sheet of paper to complete this exercise.

1. I _____ sure that you will succeed.
2. They _____ front-row tickets to the show.
3. He _____ a great Elvis impersonation.
4. We _____ so excited to meet you in person!
5. She _____ a fever and a sore throat.
6. You _____ not know what you are talking about.
7. You _____ all going to pass this class.
8. She _____ not going to like that.
9. It _____ appear to be the right size.
10. They _____ ready to take this job seriously.

Errors in Subject-Verb Agreement

Errors in subject-verb agreement may occur when

- a sentence contains a compound subject;
- the subject of the sentence is separate from the verb;
- the subject of the sentence is an indefinite pronoun, such as *anyone* or *everyone*;
- the subject of the sentence is a collective noun, such as *team* or *organization*;
- the subject appears after the verb.

Recognizing the sources of common errors in subject-verb agreement will help you avoid these errors in your writing. This section covers the subject-verb agreement errors in more detail.

Compound Subjects

A compound subject is formed by two or more nouns and the coordinating conjunctions *and*, *or*, or *nor*. A compound subject can be made of singular subjects, plural subjects, or a combination of singular and plural subjects.

Compound subjects combined with *and* take a plural verb form.

Two singular subjects: Alicia and Miguel *ride* their bikes to the beach.

Two plural subjects: The girls and the boys *ride* their bikes to the beach.

Singular and plural subjects: Alicia and the boys *ride* their bikes to the beach.

Compound subjects combined with *or* and *nor* are treated separately. The verb must agree with the subject that is nearest to the verb.

Two singular subjects: Neither Elizabeth nor Rianna *wants* to eat at that restaurant.

Two plural subjects: Neither the kids nor the adults *want* to eat at that restaurant.

Singular and plural subjects: Neither Elizabeth nor the kids *want* to eat at that restaurant.

Plural and singular subjects: Neither the kids nor Elizabeth *wants* to eat at that restaurant.

Two singular subjects: Either you or Jason *takes* the furniture out of the garage.

Two plural subjects: Either you or the twins *take* the furniture out of the garage.

Singular and plural subjects: Either Jason or the twins *take* the furniture out of the garage.

Plural and singular subjects: Either the twins or Jason *takes* the furniture out of the garage.

Tip

If you can substitute the word *they* for the compound subject, then the sentence takes the third person plural verb form.

Separation of Subjects and Verbs

As you read or write, you may come across a sentence that contains a phrase or clause that separates the subject from the verb. Often, prepositional phrases or dependent clauses add more information to the sentence and appear between the subject and the verb. However, the subject and the verb must still agree.

If you have trouble finding the subject and verb, cross out or ignore the phrases and clauses that begin with prepositions or dependent words. The subject of a sentence will never be in a prepositional phrase or dependent clause.

The following is an example of a subject and verb separated by a prepositional phrase:

The students with the best grades *win* the academic awards.

The puppy under the table *is* my favorite.

The following is an example of a subject and verb separated by a dependent clause:

The car that I bought *has* power steering and a sunroof.
The representatives who are courteous *sell* the most tickets.

Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns refer to an unspecified person, thing, or number. When an indefinite pronoun serves as the subject of a sentence, you will often use a singular verb form.

However, keep in mind that exceptions arise. Some indefinite pronouns may require a plural verb form. To determine whether to use a singular or plural verb with an indefinite pronoun, consider the noun that the pronoun would refer to. If the noun is plural, then use a plural verb with the indefinite pronoun. View the chart to see a list of common indefinite pronouns and the verb forms they agree with.

Indefinite Pronouns That Always Take a Singular Verb	Indefinite Pronouns That Can Take a Singular or Plural Verb
anybody, anyone, anything	All
each	Any
everybody, everyone, everything	None
much	Some
many	
nobody, no one, nothing	
somebody, someone, something	

Singular: Everybody in the kitchen *sings* along when that song comes on the radio.

The indefinite pronoun *everybody* takes a singular verb form because *everybody* refers to a group performing the same action as a single unit.

Plural: All the people in the kitchen *sing* along when that song comes on the radio.

The indefinite pronoun *all* takes a plural verb form because *all* refers to the plural noun *people*. Because *people* is plural, *all* is plural.

Singular: All the cake *is* on the floor.

In this sentence, the indefinite pronoun *all* takes a singular verb form because *all* refers to the singular noun *cake*. Because *cake* is singular, *all* is singular.

Collective Nouns

A collective noun is a noun that identifies more than one person, place, or thing and considers those people, places, or things one singular unit. Because collective nouns are counted as one, they are singular and require a singular verb. Some commonly used collective nouns are *group*, *team*, *army*, *flock*, *family*, and *class*.

Singular: The class *is* going on a field trip.

In this sentence, *class* is a collective noun. Although the class consists of many students, the class is treated as a singular unit and requires a singular verb form.

The Subject Follows the Verb

You may encounter sentences in which the subject comes after the verb instead of before the verb. In other words, the subject of the sentence may not appear where you expect it to appear. To ensure proper subject-verb agreement, you must correctly identify the subject and the verb.

Here or There

In sentences that begin with *here* or *there*, the subject follows the verb.

Here *is* my wallet!
There *are* thirty dolphins in the water.

If you have trouble identifying the subject and the verb in sentences that start with *here* or *there*; it may help to reverse the order of the sentence so the subject comes first.

My wallet *is* here!
Thirty dolphins *are* in the water.

Questions

When you ask questions, a question word (*who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, or *how*) appears first. The verb and then the subject follow.

Who *are* the people you are related to?
When *am* I going to go to the grocery store?

Tip

If you have trouble finding the subject and the verb in questions, try answering the question being asked.

When *am* I going to the grocery store? I *am* going to the grocery store tonight!

Exercise 3

Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following sentences. If there are no errors in subject-verb agreement, write *OK*. Copy the corrected sentence or the word *OK* on your own sheet of notebook paper.

1. My dog and cats chases each other all the time.

2. The books that are in my library is the best I have ever read.

3. Everyone are going to the concert except me.

4. My family are moving to California.

5. Here is the lake I told you about.

6. There is the newspapers I was supposed to deliver.

7. Which room is bigger?

8. When are the movie going to start?

9. My sister and brother cleans up after themselves.

10. Some of the clothes is packed away in the attic.

Exercise 4

Correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following paragraph. Copy the paragraph on a piece of notebook paper and make corrections.

Dear Hiring Manager,

I feels that I am the ideal candidate for the receptionist position at your company. I has three years of experience as a receptionist in a company that is similar to yours. My phone skills and written communication is excellent. These skills, and others that I have learned on the job, helps me understand that every person in a company helps make the business a success. At my current job, the team always say that I am very helpful. Everyone appreciate when I go the extra mile to get the job done right. My current employer and coworkers feels that I am an asset to the team. I is efficient and organized. Is there any other details about me that you would like to know? If so, please contact me. Here are my résumé. You can reach me by e-mail or phone. I looks forward to speaking with you in person.

Thanks,

Felicia Fellini

Writing at Work

Figure 2.5 Advertisement



Terra Services are dedicated to serving our clients' needs. We settles for nothing less than high quality work, delivered on time. The next time you needs assistance getting your project off the ground, contact Terra Services, where everybody know how important it is that you get the job done right.

Imagine that you are a prospective client and that you saw this ad online. Would you call Terra Services to handle your next project? Probably not! Mistakes in subject-verb agreement can cost a company business. Paying careful attention to grammatical details ensures professionalism that clients will recognize and respect.

Key Takeaways

- Parts of sentences must agree in number, person, case, and gender.
- A verb must always agree with its subject in number. A singular subject requires a singular verb; a plural subject requires a plural verb.
- Irregular verbs do not follow a predictable pattern in their singular and plural forms. Common irregular verbs are *to be*, *to have*, and *to do*.
- A compound subject is formed when two or more nouns are joined by the words *and*, *or*, or *nor*.
- In some sentences, the subject and verb may be separated by a phrase or clause, but the verb must still agree with the subject.
- Indefinite pronouns, such as *anyone*, *each*, *everyone*, *many*, *no one*, and *something*, refer to unspecified people or objects. Most indefinite pronouns are singular.
- A collective noun is a noun that identifies more than one person, place, or thing and treats those people, places, or things one singular unit. Collective nouns require singular verbs.
- In sentences that begin with *here* and *there*, the subject follows the verb.
- In questions, the subject follows the verb.

Writing Application

Use your knowledge of subject-verb agreement to write one of the following:

1. An advertisement for a potential company
2. A memo to all employees of a particular company
3. A cover letter describing your qualifications to a potential employer

Be sure to include at least the following:

- One collective noun
- One irregular verb
- One question

2.3 Verb Tense

Learning Objectives

1. Use the correct regular verb tense in basic sentences.
2. Use the correct irregular verb tense in basic sentences.

Suppose you must give an oral presentation about what you did last summer. How do you make it clear that you are talking about the past and not about the present or the future? Using the correct verb tense can help you do this.

It is important to use the proper verb tense. Otherwise, your listener might judge you harshly. Mistakes in tense often leave a listener or reader with a negative impression.

Regular Verbs

Verbs indicate actions or states of being in the past, present, or future using tenses. Regular verbs follow regular patterns when shifting from the present to past tense. For example, to form a past-tense or past-participle verb form, add *-ed* or *-d* to the end of a verb. You can avoid mistakes by understanding this basic pattern.

Verb tense identifies the time of action described in a sentence. Verbs take different forms to indicate different tenses. Verb tenses indicate

- an action or state of being in the present,
- an action or state of being in the past,
- an action or state of being in the future.

Helping verbs, such as *be* and *have*, also work to create verb tenses, such as the future tense.

Present Tense: Time *walks* to the store. (Singular subject)

Present Tense: Sue and Kimmy *walk* to the store. (Plural subject)

Past Tense: Yesterday, they *walked* to the store to buy some bread. (Singular subject)

Exercise 1

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct form of the verb in simple present, simple past, or simple future tenses. Write the corrected sentence on your own sheet of paper.

- 1. The Dust Bowl (is, was, will be) a name given to a period of very destructive dust storms that occurred in the United States during the 1930s.
- 2. Historians today (consider, considered, will consider) The Dust Bowl to be one of the worst weather of events in American history.
- 3. The Dust Bowl mostly (affects, affected, will affect) the states of Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico.
- 4. Dust storms (continue, continued, will continue) to occur in these dry regions, but not to the devastating degree of the 1930s.
- 5. The dust storms during The Dust Bowl (cause, caused, will cause) irreparable damage to farms and the environment for a period of several years.
- 6. When early settlers (move, moved, will move) into this area, they (remove, removed, will remove) the natural prairie grasses in order to plant crops and graze their cattle.
- 7. They did not (realize, realized, will realize) that the grasses kept the soil in place.
- 8. There (is, was, will be) also a severe drought that (affects, affected, will affect) the region.
- 9. The worst dust storm (happens, happened, will happen) on April 14, 1935, a day called Black Sunday.
- 10. The Dust Bowl era finally came to end in 1939 when the rains (arrive, arrived, will arrive).
- 11. Dust storms (continue, continued, will continue) to affect the region, but hopefully they will not be as destructive as the storms of the 1930s.

Irregular Verbs

The past tense of irregular verbs is not formed using the patterns that regular verbs follow. Study [Table 2.1 “Irregular Verbs”](#), which lists the most common irregular verbs.

Tip

The best way to learn irregular verbs is to memorize them. With the help of a classmate, create flashcards of irregular verbs and test yourselves until you master them.

Table 2.1 Irregular Verbs

Simple Present	Past	Simple Present	Past
be	was, were	lose	lost
become	became	make	made
begin	began	mean	meant
blow	blew	meet	met
break	broke	pay	paid
bring	brought	put	put
build	built	quit	quit
burst	burst	read	read
buy	bought	ride	rode
catch	caught	ring	rang
choose	chose	rise	rose
come	came	run	ran
cut	cut	say	said
dive	dove (dived)	see	saw
do	did	seek	sought
draw	drew	sell	sold
drink	drank	send	sent
drive	drove	set	set
eat	ate	shake	shook
fall	fell	shine	shone (shined)
feed	fed	shrink	shrank (shrunk)
feel	felt	sing	sang
fight	fought	sit	sat
find	found	sleep	slept
fly	flew	speak	spoke
forget	forgot	spend	spent
forgive	forgave	spring	sprang
freeze	froze	stand	stood
get	got	steal	stole

Simple Present	Past	Simple Present	Past
give	gave	strike	struck
go	went	swim	swam
grow	grew	swing	swung
have	had	take	took
hear	heard	teach	taught
hide	hid	tear	tore
hold	held	tell	told
hurt	hurt	think	thought
keep	kept	throw	threw
know	knew	understand	understood
lay	laid	wake	woke
lead	led	wear	wore
leave	left	win	won
let	let	wind	wound

Here we consider using irregular verbs.

Present Tense: Lauren *keeps* all her letters.

Past Tense: Lauren *kept* all her letters.

Future Tense: Lauren *will keep* all her letters.

Exercise 2

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct form of the irregular verb in simple present, simple past, or simple future tense. Copy the corrected sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Marina finally (forgived, forgave, will forgive) her sister for snooping around her room.
2. The house (shook, shook, shakes) as the airplane rumbled overhead.
3. I (bayed, bought, buy) several items of clothing at the thrift store on Wednesday.
4. She (put, putted, puts) the lotion in her shopping basket and proceeded to the checkout line.
5. The prized goose (laid, laid, lay) several golden eggs last night.
6. Mr. Batista (tached, taught, taughted) the class how to use correct punctuation.

7. I (drink, drank, will drink) several glasses of sparkling cider instead of champagne on New Year's Eve next year.
8. Although Hector (grewed, grew, grows) three inches in one year, we still called him "Little Hector."
9. Yesterday our tour guide (lead, led, will lead) us through the maze of people in Times Square.
10. The rock band (burst, bursted, bursts) onto the music scene with their catchy songs.

Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, write a sentence using the correct form of the verb tense shown below.

1. Throw (past)
2. Paint (simple present)
3. Smile (future)
4. Tell (past)
5. Share (simple present)

Maintaining Consistent Verb Tense

Consistent verb tense means the same verb tense is used throughout a sentence or a paragraph. As you write and revise, it is important to use the same verb tense consistently and to avoid shifting from one tense to another unless there is a good reason for the tense shift. In the following box, see whether you notice the difference between a sentence with consistent tense and one with inconsistent tense.

Inconsistent tense:

The crowd *starts* cheering as Melina *approached* the finish line.

Consistent tense:

The crowd *started* cheering as Melina *approached* the finish line.

Consistent tense:

The crowd *starts* cheering as Melina *approaches* the finish line.

Tip

In some cases, clear communication will call for different tenses. Look at the following example:

When I was a teenager, I *wanted* to be a fire fighter, but not I *am studying* computer science.

If the time frame for each action or state is different, a tense shift is appropriate.

Exercise 4

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the inconsistent verb tense. Copy the corrected paragraph onto your own sheet of paper.

In the Middle Ages, most people lived in villages and work as agricultural laborers, or peasants. Every village has a “lord,” and the peasants worked on his land. Much of what they produce go to the lord and his family. What little food was leftover goes to support the peasants’ families. In return for their labor, the lord offers them protection. A peasant’s day usually began before sunrise and involves long hours of backbreaking work, which includes plowing the land, planting seeds, and cutting crops for harvesting. The working life of a peasant in the Middle Ages is usually demanding and exhausting.

Writing at Work

Read the following excerpt from a work e-mail:

I would like to highlight an important concern that comes up after our meeting last week. During the meeting, we agree to conduct a series of interviews over the next several months in which we hired new customer service representatives. Before we do that, however, I would like to review your experiences with the Customer Relationship Management Program. Please suggest a convenient time next week for us to meet so that we can discuss this important matter.

The inconsistent tense in the e-mail will very likely distract the reader from its overall point. Most likely, your coworkers will not correct your verb tenses or call attention to grammatical errors, but it is important to keep in mind that errors such as these do have a subtle negative impact in the workplace.

Key Takeaways

- Verb tense helps you express when an event takes place.
- Regular verbs follow regular patterns when shifting from present to past tense.
- Irregular verbs do not follow regular, predictable patterns when shifting from present to past tense.
- Using consistent verb tense is a key element to effective writing.

Writing Application

Tell a family story. You likely have several family stories to choose from, but pick the one that you find most interesting to write about. Use as many details as you can in the telling. As you write and proofread, make sure your all your verbs are correct and the tenses are consistent.

2.4 Capitalization

Learning Objectives

1. Learn the basic rules of capitalization.
2. Identify common capitalization errors.

Text messages, casual e-mails, and instant messages often ignore the rules of capitalization. In fact, it can seem unnecessary to capitalize in these contexts. In other, more formal forms of communication, however, knowing the basic rules of capitalization and using capitalization correctly gives the reader the impression that you choose your words carefully and care about the ideas you are conveying.

Capitalize the First Word of a Sentence

Incorrect: the museum has a new butterfly exhibit.

Correct: The museum has a new butterfly exhibit.

Incorrect: cooking can be therapeutic.

Correct: Cooking can be therapeutic.

Capitalize Proper Nouns

Proper nouns—the names of specific people, places, objects, streets, buildings, events, or titles of individuals—are always capitalized.

Incorrect: He grew up in harlem, new york.

Correct: He grew up in Harlem, New York.

Incorrect: The sears tower in chicago has a new name.

Correct: The Sears Tower in Chicago has a new name.

Tip

Always capitalize nationalities, races, languages, and religions. For example, American, African American, Hispanic, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, and so on.

Do not capitalize nouns for people, places, things, streets, buildings, events, and titles when the noun is used in general or common way. See the following chart for the difference between proper nouns and common nouns.

Common Noun	Proper Noun
museum	The Art Institute of Chicago
theater	Apollo Theater
country	Malaysia
uncle	Uncle Javier
doctor	Dr. Jackson
book	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>
college	Smith College
war	the Spanish-American War
historical event	The Renaissance

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, write five proper nouns for each common noun that is listed. The first one has been done for you.

Common noun: river

1. Nile River
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Common noun: musician

- 1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Common noun: magazine

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Capitalize Days of the Week, Months of the Year, and Holidays

Incorrect: On wednesday, I will be traveling to Austin for a music festival.

Correct: On Wednesday, I will be traveling to Austin for a music festival.

Incorrect: The fourth of july is my favorite holiday.

Correct: The Fourth of July is my favorite holiday.

Capitalize Titles

Incorrect: The play, *fences*, by August Wilson is one of my favorites.

Correct: The play, *Fences*, by August Wilson is one of my favorites.

Incorrect: The president of the united states will be speaking at my university.

Correct: The President of the United States will be speaking at my university.

Tip

Computer-related words such as “Internet” and “World Wide Web” are usually capitalized; however, “e-mail” and “online” are never capitalized.

Exercise 2

Edit the following sentences by correcting the capitalization of the titles or names.

1. The prince of england enjoys playing polo.
2. “Ode to a nightingale” is a sad poem.
3. My sister loves to read magazines such as the new yorker.
4. *The house on Mango street* is an excellent novel written by Sandra Cisneros.
5. My physician, dr. alvarez, always makes me feel comfortable in her office.

Exercise 3

Edit the following paragraphs by correcting the capitalization.

david grann's *the lost City of Z* mimics the snake-like winding of the amazon River. The three distinct Stories that are introduced are like twists in the River. First, the Author describes his own journey to the amazon in the present day, which is contrasted by an account of percy fawcett's voyage in 1925 and a depiction of James Lynch's expedition in 1996. Where does the river lead these explorers? the answer is one that both the Author and the reader are hungry to discover.

The first lines of the preface pull the reader in immediately because we know the author, david grann, is lost in the amazon. It is a compelling beginning not only because it's thrilling but also because this is a true account of grann's experience. grann has dropped the reader smack in the middle of his conflict by admitting the recklessness of his decision to come to this place. the suspense is further perpetuated by his unnerving observation that he always considered himself A Neutral Witness, never getting personally involved in his stories, a notion that is swiftly contradicted in the opening pages, as the reader can clearly perceive that he is in a dire predicament—and frighteningly involved.

Writing at Work

Did you know that, if you use all capital letters to convey a message, the capital letters come across like shouting? In addition, all capital letters are actually more difficult to read and may annoy the reader. To avoid “shouting” at or annoying your reader, follow the rules of capitalization and find other ways to emphasize your point.

Key Takeaways

- Learning and applying the basic rules of capitalization is a fundamental aspect of good writing.
- Identifying and correcting errors in capitalization is an important writing skill.

Writing Application

Write a one-page biography. Make sure to identify people, places, and dates and use capitalization correctly.

2.5 Pronouns

Learning Objectives

1. Identify pronouns and their antecedents.
2. Use pronouns and their antecedents correctly.

If there were no pronouns, all types of writing would be quite tedious to read. We would soon be frustrated by reading sentences like *Bob said that Bob was tired* or *Christina told the class that Christina received an A*. Pronouns help a writer avoid constant repetition. Knowing just how pronouns work is an important aspect of clear and concise writing.

Pronoun Agreement

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

1. *Lani* complained that *she* was exhausted.

- *She* refers to *Lani*.
- *Lani* is the antecedent of *she*.

2. *Jeremy* left the party early, so I did not see *him* until Monday at work.

- *Him* refers to *Jeremy*.
- *Jeremy* is the antecedent of *him*.

3. *Crina and Rosalie* have been best friends ever since *they* were freshman in high school.

- *They* refers to *Crina and Rosalie*.
- *Crina and Rosalie* is the antecedent of *they*.

Pronoun agreement errors occur when the pronoun and the antecedent do not match or agree with each other. There are several types of pronoun agreement.

Agreement in Number

If the pronoun takes the place of or refers to a singular noun, the pronoun must also be singular.

Incorrect: If a *student* (sing.) wants to return a book to the bookstore, *they* (plur.) must have a receipt.
Correct: If a *student* (sing.) wants to return a book to the bookstore, *he or she* (sing.) must have a receipt.
*If it seems too wordy to use *he or she*, change the antecedent to a plural noun.
Correct: If *students* (plur.) want to return a book to the bookstore, *they* (plur.) must have a receipt.

Agreement in Person

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

If you use a consistent person, your reader is less likely to be confused.

Incorrect: When a *person* (3rd) goes to a restaurant, *you* (2nd) should leave a tip.
Correct: When a *person* (3rd) goes to a restaurant, *he or she* (3rd) should leave a tip.
Correct: When *we* (1st) go to a restaurant, *I should* (1st) should leave a tip.

Exercise 1

Edit the following paragraph by correcting pronoun agreement errors in number and person.

Over spring break I visited my older cousin, Diana, and they took me to a butterfly exhibit at a museum. Diana and I have been close ever since she was young. Our mothers are twin sisters, and she is inseparable! Diana knows how much I love butterflies, so it was their special present to me. I have a soft spot for caterpillars too. I love them because something about the way it transforms is so interesting to me. One summer my grandmother gave me a butterfly growing kit, and you got to see the entire life cycle of five Painted Lady butterflies. I even got to set it free. So when my cousin said they wanted to take me to the butterfly exhibit, I was really excited!

Indefinite Pronouns and Agreement

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

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

Indefinite pronoun agreement

Incorrect: *Everyone* (sing.) should do what *they* (plur.) can to help.

Correct: *Everyone* (sing.) should do what *he or she* (sing.) can to help.

Incorrect: *Someone* (sing.) left *their* (plur.) backpack in the library.

Correct: *Someone* (sing.) left *his or her* (sing.) backpack in the library.

Collective Nouns

Collective nouns suggest more than one person but are usually considered singular. Look over the following examples of collective nouns.

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

Collective noun agreement

Incorrect: Lara's *company* (sing.) will have *their* (plur.) annual picnic next week.

Correct: Lara's *company* (sing.) will have *its* (sing.) annual picnic next week.

Exercise 2

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct pronoun. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper. Then circle the noun the pronoun replaces.

1. In the current economy, nobody wants to waste _____ money on frivolous things.
2. If anybody chooses to go to medical school, _____ must be prepared to work long hours.
3. The plumbing crew did _____ best to repair the broken pipes before the next ice storm.
4. If someone is rude to you, try giving _____ a smile in return.
5. My family has _____ faults, but I still love them no matter what.
6. The school of education plans to train _____ students to be literacy tutors.
7. The commencement speaker said that each student has a responsibility toward _____.
8. My mother's singing group has _____ rehearsals on Thursday evenings.
9. No one should suffer _____ pains alone.
10. I thought the flock of birds lost _____ way in the storm.

Subject and Object Pronouns

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

Singular Pronouns		Plural Pronouns	
Subject	Object	Subject	Object
I	me	we	us
you	you	you	you
he, she, it	him, her, it	they	them

The following sentences show pronouns as subjects:

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

The following sentences show pronouns as objects:

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

Tip

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

Near *them*, the children played.

My mother stood between *us*.

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

Compound subject pronouns are two or more pronouns joined by a conjunction or a preposition that function as the subject of the sentence.

The following sentences show pronouns with compound subjects:

Incorrect: *Me and Harriet* visited the Grand Canyon last summer.

Correct: *Harriet and I* visited the Grand Canyon last summer.

Correct: Jenna accompanied *Harriet and me* on our trip.

Tip

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

Compound object pronouns are two or more pronouns joined by a conjunction or a preposition that function as the object of the sentence.

Incorrect: I have a good feeling about *Janice and I*.

Correct: I have a good feeling about *Janice and me*.

Tip

It is correct to write *Janice and me*, as opposed to *me and Janice*. Just remember it is more polite to refer to yourself last.

Writing at Work

In casual conversation, people sometimes mix up subject and object pronouns. For instance, you might say, “Me and Donnie went to a movie last night.” However, when you are writing or speaking at work or in any other formal situation, you need to remember the distinctions between subject and object pronouns and be able to correct yourself. These subtle grammar corrections will enhance your professional image and reputation.

Exercise 3

Revise the following sentences in which the subject and object pronouns are used incorrectly. Copy the revised sentence onto your own sheet of paper. Write a C for each sentence that is correct.

1. Meera and me enjoy doing yoga together on Sundays.

2. She and him have decided to sell their house.

3. Between you and I, I do not think Jeffrey will win the election.

4. Us and our friends have game night the first Thursday of every month.

5. They and I met while on vacation in Mexico.

6. Napping on the beach never gets boring for Alice and I.

7. New Year’s Eve is not a good time for she and I to have a serious talk.

8. You exercise much more often than me.

9. I am going to the comedy club with Yolanda and she.

10. The cooking instructor taught her and me a lot.

Who versus Whom

Who or *whoever* is always the subject of a verb. Use *who* or *whoever* when the pronoun performs the action indicated by the verb.

Who won the marathon last Tuesday?

I wonder *who* came up with that terrible idea!

On the other hand, *whom* and *whomever* serve as objects. They are used when the pronoun does *not* perform an action. Use *whom* or *whomever* when the pronoun is the direct object of a verb or the object of a preposition.

Whom did Frank marry the third time? (direct object of verb)

From *whom* did you buy that old record player? (object of preposition)

Tip

If you are having trouble deciding when to use *who* and *whom*, try this trick. Take the following sentence:

Who/Whom do I consider my best friend?

Reorder the sentence in your head, using either *he* or *him* in place of *who* or *whom*.

I consider *him* my best friend.

I consider *he* my best friend.

Which sentence sounds better? The first one, of course. So the trick is, if you can use *him*, you should use

whom.

Exercise 4

Complete the following sentences by adding *who* or *whom*. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. _____ hit the home run?
2. I remember _____ won the Academy Award for Best Actor last year.
3. To _____ is the letter addressed?
4. I have no idea _____ left the iron on, but I am going to find out.
5. _____ are you going to recommend for the internship?
6. With _____ are you going to Hawaii?
7. No one knew _____ the famous actor was.
8. _____ in the office knows how to fix the copy machine?
9. From _____ did you get the concert tickets?
10. No one knew _____ ate the cake mom was saving.

Key Takeaways

- Pronouns and their antecedents need to agree in number and person.
- Most indefinite pronouns are singular.
- Collective nouns are usually singular.
- Pronouns can function as subjects or objects.
- Subject pronouns are never used as objects, and object pronouns are never used as subjects.
- *Who* serves as a subject of a verb.
- *Whom* serves as an object of a sentence or the object of a preposition.

Writing Application

Write about what makes an ideal marriage or long-term relationship. Provide specific details to back up your assertions. After you have written a few paragraphs, go back and proofread your paper for correct pronoun

usage.

2.6 Adjectives and Adverbs

Learning Objectives

1. Identify adjectives and adverbs.
2. Use adjectives and adverbs correctly.

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

Adjectives and Adverbs

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

1. The *green* sweater belongs to Iris.
2. She looks *beautiful*.

- In sentence 1, the adjective *green* describes the noun *sweater*.
- In sentence 2, the adjective *beautiful* describes the pronoun *she*.

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

3. Bertrand sings *horribly*.
4. My sociology instructor is *extremely* wise.

5. He threw the ball *very* accurately.

- In sentence 3, *horribly* describes the verb *sings*. How does Bertrand sing? He sings *horribly*.
- In sentence 4, *extremely* describes the adjective *wise*. How *wise* is the instructor? *Extremely* wise.
- In sentence 5, *very* describes the adverb *accurately*. How *accurately* did he throw the ball? *Very* accurately.

Exercise 1

Complete the following sentences by adding the correct adjective or adverb from the list in the previous section. Identify the word as an adjective or an adverb (Adj, Adv).

1. Frederick _____ choked on the piece of chicken when he saw Margaret walk through the door.
2. His _____ eyes looked at everyone and everything as if they were specimens in a biology lab.
3. Despite her pessimistic views on life, Lauren believes that most people have _____ hearts.
4. Although Stefan took the criticism _____, he remained calm.
5. The child developed a _____ imagination because he read a lot of books.
6. Madeleine spoke _____ while she was visiting her grandmother in the hospital.
7. Hector's most _____ possession was his father's bass guitar from the 1970s.
8. My definition of a _____ afternoon is walking to the park on a beautiful day, spreading out my blanket, and losing myself in a good book.
9. She _____ eyed her new coworker and wondered if he was single.
10. At the party, Denise _____ devoured two pieces of pepperoni pizza and a several slices of ripe watermelon.

Comparative versus Superlative

Comparative adjectives and adverbs are used to compare two people or things.

1. Jorge is *thin*.
2. Steven is *thinner* than Jorge.
 - Sentence 1 describes Jorge with the adjective *thin*.
 - Sentence 2 compares Jorge to Steven, stating that Steven is *thinner*. So *thinner* is the comparative form of *thin*.

Form comparatives in one of the following two ways:

1. If the adjective or adverb is a one syllable word, add *-er* to it to form the comparative. For example, *big*, *fast*, and *short* would become *bigger*, *faster*, and *shorter* in the comparative form.
2. If the adjective or adverb is a word of two or more syllables, place the word *more* in front of it to form the comparative. For example, *happily*, *comfortable*, and *jealous* would become *more happily*, *more comfortable*, and *more jealous* in the comparative.

Superlative adjectives and adverbs are used to compare more than two people or two things.

1. Jackie is the *loudest* cheerleader on the squad.

2. Kenyatta was voted the *most confident* student by her graduating class.

- Sentence 1 shows that Jackie is not just *louder* than one other person, but she is the *loudest* of all the cheerleaders on the squad.
- Sentence 2 shows that Kenyatta was voted the *most confident* student of all the students in her class.

Form superlatives in one of the following two ways:

1. If the adjective or adverb is a one-syllable word, add *-est* to form the superlative. For example, *big*, *fast*, and *short* would become *biggest*, *fastest*, and *shortest* in the superlative form.
2. If the adjective or adverb is a word of two or more syllables, place the word *most* in front of it. For example, *happily*, *comfortable*, and *jealous* would become *most happily*, *most comfortable*, and *most jealous* in the superlative form.

Tip

Remember the following exception: If the word has two syllables and ends in *-y*, change the *-y* to an *-i* and add *-est*. For example, *happy* would change to *happiest* in the superlative form; *healthy* would change to *healthiest*.

Exercise 2

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the errors in comparative and superlative adjectives.

Our argument started on the most sunny afternoon that I have ever experienced. Max and I were sitting on my front stoop when I started it. I told him that my dog, Jacko, was more smart than his dog, Merlin. I could not help myself. Merlin never came when he was called, and he chased his tail and barked at rocks. I told Max that Merlin was the most dumbest dog on the block. I guess I was angrier about a bad grade that I received, so I decided to pick on poor little Merlin. Even though Max insulted Jacko too, I felt I had been more mean. The next day I apologized to Max and brought Merlin some of Jacko's treats. When Merlin placed his paw on my knee and licked my hand, I was the most sorry person on the block.

Collaboration

Share and compare your answers with a classmate.

Irregular Words: *Good, Well, Bad, and Badly*

Good, well, bad, and badly are often used incorrectly. Study the following chart to learn the correct usage of these words and their comparative and superlative forms.

		Comparative	Superlative
Adjective	good	better	best
Adverb	well	better	best
Adjective	bad	worse	worst
Adverb	badly	worse	worst

Good versus Well

Good is always an adjective—that is, a word that describes a noun or a pronoun. The second sentence is correct because *well* is an adverb that tells how something is done.

Incorrect: Cecilia felt that she had never done so *good* on a test.

Correct: Cecilia felt that she had never done so *well* on a test.

Well is always an adverb that describes a verb, adverb, or adjective. The second sentence is correct because *good* is an adjective that describes the noun *score*.

Incorrect: Cecilia's team received a *well* score.

Correct: Cecilia's team received a *good* score.

Bad versus Badly

Bad is always an adjective. The second sentence is correct because *badly* is an adverb that tells how the speaker did on the test.

Incorrect: I did *bad* on my accounting test because I didn't study.

Correct: I did *badly* on my accounting test because I didn't study.

Badly is always an adverb. The second sentence is correct because *bad* is an adjective that describes the noun *thunderstorm*.

Incorrect: The coming thunderstorm looked *badly*.

Correct: The coming thunderstorm looked *bad*.

Better and Worse

The following are examples of the use of *better* and *worse*:

Tyra likes sprinting *better* than long distance running.

The traffic is *worse* in Chicago than in Atlanta.

Best and Worst

The following are examples of the use of *best* and *worst*:

Tyra sprints *best* of all the other competitors.

Peter finished *worst* of all the runners in the race.

Tip

Remember *better* and *worse* compare two persons or things. *Best* and *worst* compare three or more persons or things.

Exercise 3

Write *good*, *well*, *bad*, or *badly* to complete each sentence. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. Donna always felt _____ if she did not see the sun in the morning.
2. The school board president gave a _____ speech for once.
3. Although my dog, Comet, is mischievous, he always behaves _____ at the dog park.
4. I thought my back injury was _____ at first, but it turned out to be minor.
5. Steve was shaking _____ from the extreme cold.
6. Apple crisp is a very _____ dessert that can be made using whole grains instead of white flour.
7. The meeting with my son's math teacher went very _____.
8. Juan has a _____ appetite, especially when it comes to dessert.
9. Magritte thought the guests had a _____ time at the party because most people left early.
10. She _____ wanted to win the writing contest prize, which included a trip to New York.

Exercise 4

Write the correct comparative or superlative form of the word in parentheses. Copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.

1. This research paper is _____ (good) than my last one.
2. Tanaya likes country music _____ (well) of all.
3. My motorcycle rides _____ (bad) than it did last summer.
4. That is the _____ (bad) joke my father ever told.
5. The hockey team played _____ (badly) than it did last season.
6. Tracey plays guitar _____ (well) than she plays the piano.
7. It will go down as one of the _____ (bad) movies I have ever seen.
8. The deforestation in the Amazon is _____ (bad) than it was last year.
9. Movie ticket sales are _____ (good) this year than last.
10. My husband says mystery novels are the _____ (good) types of books.

Writing at Work

The irregular words *good*, *well*, *bad*, and *badly* are often misused along with their comparative and superlative forms *better*, *best*, *worse*, and *worst*. You may not hear the difference between *worse* and *worst*, and therefore type it incorrectly. In a formal or business-like tone, use each of these words to write eight separate sentences. Assume these sentences will be seen and judged by your current or future employer.

Key Takeaways

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

Writing Application

Using the exercises as a guide, write your own ten-sentence quiz for your classmate(s) using the concepts covered in this section. Try to include two questions from each subsection in your quiz. Exchange papers and see whether you can get a perfect score.

2.7 Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

Learning Objectives

1. Identify modifiers.
2. Learn how to correct misplaced and dangling modifiers.

A modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that clarifies or describes another word, phrase, or clause. Sometimes writers use modifiers incorrectly, leading to strange and unintentionally humorous sentences. The two common types of modifier errors are called misplaced modifiers and dangling modifiers. If either of these errors occurs, readers can no longer read smoothly. Instead, they become stumped trying to figure out *what* the writer meant to say. A writer's goal must always be to communicate clearly and to avoid distracting the reader with strange sentences or awkward sentence constructions. The good news is that these errors can be easily overcome.

Misplaced Modifiers

A misplaced modifier is a modifier that is placed too far from the word or words it modifies. Misplaced modifiers make the sentence awkward and sometimes unintentionally humorous.

Incorrect: She wore a bicycle helmet on her head *that was too large*.

Correct: She wore a bicycle helmet *that was too large* on her head.

- Notice in the incorrect sentence it sounds as if her head was too large! Of course, the writer is referring to the helmet, not to the person's head. The corrected version of the sentence clarifies the writer's meaning.

Look at the following two examples:

Incorrect: They bought a kitten for my brother *they call Shadow*.

Correct: They bought a kitten *they call Shadow* for my brother.

- In the incorrect sentence, it seems that the brother's name is *Shadow*. That's because the modifier is too far from the word it modifies, which is *kitten*.

Incorrect: The patient was referred to the physician *with stomach pains*.

Correct: The patient *with stomach pains* was referred to the physician.

- The incorrect sentence reads as if it is the physician who has stomach pains! What the writer means is that the patient has stomach pains.

Tip

Simple modifiers like *only*, *almost*, *just*, *nearly*, and *barely* often get used incorrectly because writers often stick them in the wrong place.

Confusing: Tyler *almost* found fifty cents under the sofa cushions.

Repaired: Tyler found *almost* fifty cents under the sofa cushions.

- How do you *almost* find something? Either you find it or you do not. The repaired sentence is much clearer.

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the following sentences to correct the misplaced modifiers.

1. The young lady was walking the dog on the telephone.
2. I heard that there was a robbery on the evening news.
3. Uncle Louie bought a running stroller for the baby that he called "Speed Racer."
4. Rolling down the mountain, the explorer stopped the boulder with his powerful foot.
5. We are looking for a babysitter for our precious six-year-old who doesn't drink or smoke and owns a car.
6. The teacher served cookies to the children wrapped in aluminum foil.
7. The mysterious woman walked toward the car holding an umbrella.
8. We returned the wine to the waiter that was sour.
9. Charlie spotted a stray puppy driving home from work.
10. I ate nothing but a cold bowl of noodles for dinner.

Dangling Modifiers

A dangling modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that describes something that has been left out of the sentence. When there is nothing that the word, phrase, or clause can modify, the modifier is said to dangle.

Incorrect: *Riding in the sports car*, the world whizzed by rapidly.

Correct: As Jane was *riding in the sports car*, the world whizzed by rapidly.

- In the incorrect sentence, *riding in the sports car* is dangling. The reader is left wondering who is riding in the sports car. The writer must tell the reader!

Incorrect: *Walking home at night*, the trees looked like spooky aliens.

Correct: As Jonas was *walking home at night*, the trees looked like spooky aliens.

Correct: The trees looked like spooky aliens as Jonas was *walking home at night*.

- In the incorrect sentence *walking home at night* is dangling. Who is walking home at night? Jonas. Note that there are two different ways the dangling modifier can be corrected.

Incorrect: To win the spelling bee, Luis and Gerard should join our team.

Correct: If we want to win the spelling bee this year, Luis and Gerard should join our team.

- In the incorrect sentence, *to win the spelling bee* is dangling. Who wants to win the spelling bee? We do!

Tip

The following three steps will help you quickly spot a dangling modifier:

1. Look for an *-ing* modifier at the beginning of your sentence or another modifying phrase:
Painting for three hours at night, the kitchen was finally finished by Maggie. (*Painting* is the *-ing* modifier.)
2. Underline the first noun that follows it:

Painting for three hours at night, the kitchen was finally finished by Maggie.

3. Make sure the modifier and noun go together logically. If they do not, it is very likely you have a dangling modifier.

After identifying the dangling modifier, rewrite the sentence.

Painting for three hours at night, Maggie finally finished the kitchen.

Exercise 2

Rewrite the following the sentences onto your own sheet of paper to correct the dangling modifiers.

1. Bent over backward, the posture was very challenging.
2. Making discoveries about new creatures, this is an interesting time to be a biologist.
3. Walking in the dark, the picture fell off the wall.
4. Playing a guitar in the bedroom, the cat was seen under the bed.
5. Packing for a trip, a cockroach scurried down the hallway.
6. While looking in the mirror, the towel swayed in the breeze.
7. While driving to the veterinarian's office, the dog nervously whined.
8. The priceless painting drew large crowds when walking into the museum.
9. Piled up next to the bookshelf, I chose a romance novel.
10. Chewing furiously, the gum fell out of my mouth.

Exercise 3

Rewrite the following paragraph correcting all the misplaced and dangling modifiers.

I bought a fresh loaf of bread for my sandwich shopping in the grocery store. Wanting to make a delicious sandwich, the mayonnaise was thickly spread. Placing the cold cuts on the bread, the lettuce was placed on top. I cut the sandwich in half with a knife turning on the radio. Biting into the sandwich, my favorite song blared loudly in my ears. Humming and chewing, my sandwich went down smoothly. Smiling, my sandwich will be made again, but next time I will add cheese.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Key Takeaways

- Misplaced and dangling modifiers make sentences difficult to understand.
- Misplaced and dangling modifiers distract the reader.
- There are several effective ways to identify and correct misplaced and dangling modifiers.

Writing Application

See how creative and humorous you can get by writing ten sentences with misplaced and dangling modifiers. This is a deceptively simple task, but rise to the challenge. Your writing will be stronger for it. Exchange papers with a classmate, and rewrite your classmate's sentences to correct any misplaced modifiers.

2.8 Writing Basics: End-of-Chapter Exercises

Learning Objectives

1. Use the skills you have learned in the chapter.
2. Work collaboratively with other students.

Exercises

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

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

2. Each sentence contains an error in subject-verb agreement, irregular verb form, or consistent verb tense. Identify the type of error. Then, on your own sheet of paper, rewrite the sentence correctly.
 - a. Maria and Ty meets me at the community center for cooking classes on Tuesdays.

 - b. John’s ability to laugh at almost anything amaze me.

 - c. Samantha and I were walking near the lake when the large, colorful bird appears.

 - d. I builded my own telescope using materials I bought at the hardware store.

e. My mother freezed the remaining tomatoes from her garden so that she could use them during the winter.

f. Bernard asked the stranger sitting next to him for the time, and she says it was past midnight.

g. My mother and brother wears glasses, but my father and sister do not.

h. We held our noses as the skunk runs away.

i. Neither Soren nor Andrew are excited about the early morning swim meet.

j. My hands hurted at the thought of transcribing all those notes.

k. The police questioned the suspect for hours but she gives them no useful information.

l. Terry takes short weekend trips because her job as a therapist was very emotionally draining.

m. She criticize delicately, making sure not to hurt anyone's feelings.

n. Davis winded the old clock and set it atop his nightstand.

o. Cherie losed four poker hands in a row before realizing that she was playing against professionals.

p. Janis and Joan describes their trip to the Amazon in vivid detail.

q. You should decides for yourself whether or not to reduce the amount of processed foods in your diet.

r. The oil rig exploded and spills millions of gallons of oil into the ocean.

s. The handsome vampire appeared out of nowhere and smiles at the smitten woman.

t. The batter swunged at the ball several times but never hit it.

3. Correct the capitalization errors in the following fictional story. Copy the corrected paragraph onto your own sheet of paper.

lance worthington signed a Recording Contract with Capitol records on june 15, 2007. Despite selling two million copies of his Debut Album, nothing to lose, lance lost quite a bit as his tax returns from the irs revealed. lance did not think it was fair that the Record Company kept so much of his earnings, so he decided to hire robert bergman, a prominent music Attorney with a Shark-like reputation. bergman represented lance all the way to the supreme court, where lance won the case against capitol records. Lance worthington was instrumental in changing intellectual property rights and long standing Record Company practices. All artists and musicians can thank him for his brave stance against record companies. Lance subsequently formed his own independent record label called worthy records. worthy is now a successful Label based out of chicago, illinois, and its Artists have appeared on well known shows such as The tonight show and Saturday night live. Lance worthington is a model for success in the do-it-yourself World that has become the Music Industry.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

4. Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct comparative or superlative adjective or adverb. Then copy the completed sentence onto your own sheet of paper.
- Denise has a (cheerful) _____ outlook on life than her husband.
 - I don't mean to brag, but I think I am the (good) _____ cook in my family.
 - Lydia is the (thoughtful) _____ person I know.
 - Italy experienced the (bad) _____ heat wave in its history last year.
 - My teacher, Ms. Beckett, is the (strange) _____ person I know, and I like that.
 - Dorian's drawing skills are (good) _____ this semester than last.
 - My handwriting is the (sloppy) _____ of all my classmates.
 - Melvin's soccer team played (badly) _____ than it did last season.
 - Josie's pen writes (smooth) _____ than mine.
 - I felt (lucky) _____ than my sister because I got in to the college of my choice.

Chapter 3: Punctuation

- 3.1 Commas
- 3.2 Semicolons
- 3.3 Colons
- 3.4 Quotes
- 3.5 Apostrophes
- 3.6 Parentheses
- 3.7 Dashes
- 3.8 Hyphens
- 3.9 Punctuation: End-of-Chapter Exercises

3.1 Commas

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of commas.
2. Correctly use commas in sentences.

One of the punctuation clues to reading you may encounter is the comma. The comma is a punctuation mark that indicates a pause in a sentence or a separation of things in a list. Commas can be used in a variety of ways. Look at some of the following sentences to see how you might use a comma when writing a sentence.

- **Introductory word:** Personally, I think the practice is helpful.
- **Lists:** The barn, the tool shed, and the back porch were destroyed by the wind.
- **Coordinating adjectives:** He was tired, hungry, and late.
- **Conjunctions in compound sentences:** The bedroom door was closed, so the children knew their mother was asleep.
- **Interrupting words:** I knew where it was hidden, of course, but I wanted them to find it themselves.
- **Dates, addresses, greetings, and letters:** The letter was postmarked December 8, 1945.

Commas after an Introductory Word or Phrase

You may notice a comma that appears near the beginning of the sentence, usually after a word or phrase. This comma lets the reader know where the introductory word or phrase ends and the main sentence begins.

Without spoiling the surprise, we need to tell her to save the date.

In this sentence, *without spoiling the surprise* is an introductory phrase, while *we need to tell her to save the date* is the main sentence. Notice how they are separated by a comma. When only an introductory word appears in the sentence, a comma also follows the introductory word.

Ironically, she already had plans for that day.

Exercise 1

Look for the introductory word or phrase. On your own sheet of paper, copy the sentence and add a comma to correct the sentence.

1. Suddenly the dog ran into the house.
2. In the blink of an eye the kids were ready to go to the movies.
3. Confused he tried opening the box from the other end.
4. Every year we go camping in the woods.
5. Without a doubt green is my favorite color.
6. Hesitating she looked back at the directions before proceeding.
7. Fortunately the sleeping baby did not stir when the doorbell rang.
8. Believe it or not the criminal was able to rob the same bank three times.

Commas in a List of Items

When you want to list several nouns in a sentence, you separate each word with a comma. This allows the reader to pause after each item and identify which words are included in the grouping. When you list items in a sentence, put a comma after each noun, then add the word *and* before the last item. However, you do not need to include a comma after the last item.

We'll need to get flour, tomatoes, and cheese at the store.

The pizza will be topped with olives, peppers, and pineapple chunks.

Commas and Coordinating Adjectives

You can use commas to list both adjectives and nouns. A string of adjectives that describe a noun are called coordinating adjectives. These adjectives come before the noun they modify and are separated by commas. One important thing to note, however, is that unlike listing nouns, the word *and* does not always need to be before the last adjective.

It was a bright, windy, clear day.

Our kite glowed red, yellow, and blue in the morning sunlight.

Exercise 2

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned so far about comma use to add commas to the following sentences.

1. Monday Tuesday and Wednesday are all booked with meetings.
2. It was a quiet uneventful unproductive day.
3. We'll need to prepare statements for the Franks Todds and Smiths before their portfolio reviews next week.
4. Michael Nita and Desmond finished their report last Tuesday.
5. With cold wet aching fingers he was able to secure the sails before the storm.
6. He wrote his name on the board in clear precise delicate letters.

Commas before Conjunctions in Compound Sentences

Commas are sometimes used to separate two independent clauses. The comma comes after the first independent clause and is followed by a conjunction, such as *for*, *and*, or *but*. For a full list of conjunctions, see [Chapter 2 “Writing Basics: What Makes a Good Sentence?”](#).

He missed class today, and he thinks he will be out tomorrow, too.

He says his fever is gone, but he is still very tired.

Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, create a compound sentence by combining the two independent clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

1. The presentation was scheduled for Monday. The weather delayed the presentation for four days.

2. He wanted a snack before bedtime. He ate some fruit.

3. The patient is in the next room. I can hardly hear anything.

4. We could go camping for vacation. We could go to the beach for vacation.

5. I want to get a better job. I am taking courses at night.

6. I cannot move forward on this project. I cannot afford to stop on this project.

7. Patrice wants to stop for lunch. We will take the next exit to look for a restaurant.

8. I've got to get this paper done. I have class in ten minutes.

9. The weather was clear yesterday. We decided to go on a picnic.

10. I have never dealt with this client before. I know Leonardo has worked with them. Let's ask Leonardo for his help.

Commas before and after Interrupting Words

In conversations, you might interrupt your train of thought by giving more details about what you are talking about. In a sentence, you might interrupt your train of thought with a word or phrase called interrupting words. Interrupting words can come at the beginning or middle of a sentence. When the interrupting words appear at the beginning of the sentence, a comma appears after the word or phrase.

If you can believe it, people once thought the sun and planets orbited around Earth.

Luckily, some people questioned that theory.

When interrupting words come in the middle of a sentence, they are separated from the rest of the sentence by commas. You can determine where the commas should go by looking for the part of the sentence that is not essential for the sentence to make sense.

An Italian astronomer, Galileo, proved that Earth orbited the sun.

We have known, for hundreds of years now, that the Earth and other planets exist in a solar system.

Exercise 4

On your own sheet of paper, copy the sentence and insert commas to separate the interrupting words from the rest of the sentence.

1. I asked my neighbors the retired couple from Florida to bring in my mail.
2. Without a doubt his work has improved over the last few weeks.
3. Our professor Mr. Alamut drilled the lessons into our heads.
4. The meeting is at noon unfortunately which means I will be late for lunch.
5. We came in time for the last part of dinner but most importantly we came in time for dessert.
6. All of a sudden our network crashed and we lost our files.
7. Alex hand the wrench to me before the pipe comes loose again.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Commas in Dates, Addresses, and the Greetings and Closings of Letters

You also use commas when you write the date, such as in cover letters and e-mails. Commas are used when you write the date, when you include an address, and when you greet someone.

If you are writing out the full date, add a comma after the day and before the year. You do not need to add a comma when you write the month and day or when you write the month and the year. If you need to continue the sentence after you add a date that includes the day and year, add a comma after the end of the date.

The letter is postmarked May 4, 2001.

Her birthday is May 5.

He visited the country in July 2009.

I registered for the conference on March 7, 2010, so we should get our tickets soon.

You also use commas when you include addresses and locations. When you include an address in a sentence, be sure to place a comma after the street and after the city. Do not place a comma between the state and the zip code. Like a date, if you need to continue the sentence after adding the address, simply add a comma after the address.

We moved to 4542 Boxcutter Lane, Hope, Missouri 70832.

After moving to Boston, Massachusetts, Eric used public transportation to get to work.

Greetings are also separated by commas. When you write an e-mail or a letter, you add a comma after the greeting word or the person's name. You also need to include a comma after the closing, which is the word or phrase you put before your signature.

Hello,
I would like more information about your job posting.
Thank you,
Anita Al-Sayf

Dear Mrs. Al-Sayf,
Thank you for your letter. Please read the attached document for details.
Sincerely,
Jack Fromont

Exercise 5

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned about using commas to edit the following letter.

March 27 2010
Alexa Marché
14 Taylor Drive Apt. 6
New Castle Maine 90342
Dear Mr. Timmons
Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. I am available on Monday the fifth. I can stop by your office at any

time. Is your address still 7309 Marcourt Circle #501? Please get back to me at your earliest convenience.
Thank you
Alexa

Exercise 6

On your own sheet of paper, use what you have learned about comma usage to edit the following paragraphs.

1. My brother Nathaniel is a collector of many rare unusual things. He has collected lunch boxes limited edition books and hatpins at various points of his life. His current collection of unusual bottles has over fifty pieces. Usually he sells one collection before starting another.
2. Our meeting is scheduled for Thursday March 20. In that time we need to gather all our documents together. Alice is in charge of the timetables and schedules. Tom is in charge of updating the guidelines. I am in charge of the presentation. To prepare for this meeting please print out any e-mails faxes or documents you have referred to when writing your sample.
3. It was a cool crisp autumn day when the group set out. They needed to cover several miles before they made camp so they walked at a brisk pace. The leader of the group Garth kept checking his watch and their GPS location. Isabelle Raoul and Maggie took turns carrying the equipment while Carrie took notes about the wildlife they saw. As a result no one noticed the darkening sky until the first drops of rain splattered on their faces.
4. Please have your report complete and filed by April 15 2010. In your submission letter please include your contact information the position you are applying for and two people we can contact as references. We will not be available for consultation after April 10 but you may contact the office if you have any questions. Thank you HR Department.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Key Takeaways

- Punctuation marks provide visual cues to readers to tell them how to read a sentence. Punctuation marks convey meaning.
- Commas indicate a pause or a list in a sentence.
- A comma should be used after an introductory word to separate this word from the main sentence.
- A comma comes after each noun in a list. The word *and* is added before the last noun, which is not followed by a comma.
- A comma comes after every coordinating adjective except for the last adjective.

- Commas can be used to separate the two independent clauses in compound sentences as long as a conjunction follows the comma.
- Commas are used to separate interrupting words from the rest of the sentence.
- When you write the date, you add a comma between the day and the year. You also add a comma after the year if the sentence continues after the date.
- When they are used in a sentence, addresses have commas after the street address, and the city. If a sentence continues after the address, a comma comes after the zip code.
- When you write a letter, you use commas in your greeting at the beginning and in your closing at the end of your letter.

3.2 Semicolons

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of semicolons.
2. Properly use semicolons in sentences.

Another punctuation mark that you will encounter is the semicolon (;). Like most punctuation marks, the semicolon can be used in a variety of ways. The semicolon indicates a break in the flow of a sentence, but functions differently than a period or a comma. When you encounter a semicolon while reading aloud, this represents a good place to pause and take a breath.

Semicolons to Join Two Independent Clauses

Use a semicolon to combine two closely related independent clauses. Relying on a period to separate the related clauses into two shorter sentences could lead to choppy writing. Using a comma would create an awkward run-on sentence.

Correct: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview; appearances are important.

Choppy: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview. Appearances are important.

Incorrect: Be sure to wear clean, well-pressed clothes to the interview, appearances are important.

In this case, writing the independent clauses as two sentences separated by a period is correct. However, using a semicolon to combine the clauses can make your writing more interesting by creating a variety of sentence lengths and structures while preserving the flow of ideas.

Semicolons to Join Items in a List

You can also use a semicolon to join items in a list when the items in the list already require commas. Semicolons help the reader distinguish between items in the list.

Correct: The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey; green, brown, and black; or red, green, and brown.

Incorrect: The color combinations we can choose from are black, white, and grey, green, brown, and black, or red, green, and brown.

By using semicolons in this sentence, the reader can easily distinguish between the three sets of colors.

Tip

Use semicolons to join two main clauses. Do not use semicolons with coordinating conjunctions such as *and*, *or*, and *but*.

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding semicolons. If the sentence is correct as it is, write *OK*.

1. I did not notice that you were in the office I was behind the front desk all day.
2. Do you want turkey, spinach, and cheese roast beef, lettuce, and cheese or ham, tomato, and cheese?
3. Please close the blinds there is a glare on the screen.
4. Unbelievably, no one was hurt in the accident.
5. I cannot decide if I want my room to be green, brown, and purple green, black, and brown or green, brown, and dark red.
6. Let's go for a walk the air is so refreshing.

Key Takeaways

- Use a semicolon to join two independent clauses.
- Use a semicolon to separate items in a list when those items already require a comma.

3.3 Colons

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of colons.
2. Properly use colons in sentences.

The colon (:) is another punctuation mark used to indicate a full stop. Use a colon to introduce lists, quotes, examples, and explanations. You can also use a colon after the greeting in business letters and memos.

Dear Hiring Manager:
To: Human Resources
From: Deanna Dean

Colons to Introduce a List

Use a colon to introduce a list of items. Introduce the list with an independent clause.

The team will tour three states: New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland.
I have to take four classes this semester: Composition, Statistics, Ethics, and Italian.

Colons to Introduce a Quote

You can use a colon to introduce a quote.

Mark Twain said it best: “When in doubt, tell the truth.”

If a quote is longer than forty words, skip a line after the colon and indent the left margin of the quote five spaces. Because quotations longer than forty words use line spacing and indentation to indicate a quote, quotation marks are not necessary.

My father always loved Mark Twain's words:

There are basically two types of people. People who accomplish things, and people who claim to have accomplished things. The first group is less crowded.

Tip

Long quotations, which are forty words or more, are called block quotations. Block quotations frequently appear in longer essays and research papers. For more information about block quotations, see [Chapter 11 "Writing from Research: What Will I Learn?"](#).

Colons to Introduce Examples or Explanations

Use a colon to introduce an example or to further explain an idea presented in the first part of a sentence. The first part of the sentence must always be an independent clause; that is, it must stand alone as a complete thought with a subject and verb. Do not use a colon after phrases like *such as* or *for example*.

Correct: Our company offers many publishing services: writing, editing, and reviewing.

Incorrect: Our company offers many publishing services, such as: writing, editing, and reviewing.

Tip

Capitalize the first letter following a colon for a proper noun, the beginning of a quote, or the first letter of another independent clause. Do NOT capitalize if the information following the colon is not a complete sentence.

Proper noun: We visited three countries: Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador.

Beginning of a quote: My mother loved this line from *Hamlet*: "To thine own self be true."

Two independent clauses: There are drawbacks to modern technology: My brother's cell phone died and he lost a lot of phone numbers.

Incorrect: The recipe is simple: Tomato, basil, and avocado.

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding semicolons or colons where needed. If the sentence does not need a semicolon or colon, write *OK*.

1. Don't give up you never know what tomorrow brings.

2. Our records show that the patient was admitted on March 9, 2010 January 13, 2010 and November 16, 2009.

3. Allow me to introduce myself I am the greatest ice-carver in the world.

4. Where I come from there are three ways to get to the grocery store by car, by bus, and by foot.

5. Listen closely you will want to remember this speech.

6. I have lived in Sedona, Arizona Baltimore, Maryland and Knoxville, Tennessee.

7. The boss's message was clear Lateness would not be tolerated.

8. Next semester, we will read some more contemporary authors, such as Vonnegut, Miller, and Orwell.

9. My little sister said what we were all thinking "We should have stayed home."

10. Trust me I have done this before.

Key Takeaways

- Use a colon to introduce a list, quote, or example.
- Use a colon after a greeting in business letters and memos.

3.4 Quotes

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of quotes.
2. Correctly use quotes in sentences.

Quotation marks (“ ”) set off a group of words from the rest of the text. Use quotation marks to indicate direct quotations of another person’s words or to indicate a title. Quotation marks always appear in pairs.

Direct Quotations

A direct quotation is an exact account of what someone said or wrote. To include a direct quotation in your writing, enclose the words in quotation marks. An indirect quotation is a restatement of what someone said or wrote. An indirect quotation does not use the person’s exact words. You do not need to use quotation marks for indirect quotations.

Direct quotation: Carly said, “I’m not ever going back there again.”

Indirect quotation: Carly said that she would never go back there.

Writing at Work

Most word processing software is designed to catch errors in grammar, spelling, and punctuation. While this can be a useful tool, it is better to be well acquainted with the rules of punctuation than to leave the thinking to the computer. Properly punctuated writing will convey your meaning clearly. Consider the subtle shifts in meaning in the following sentences:

- The client said he thought our manuscript was garbage.
- The client said, “He thought our manuscript was garbage.”

The first sentence reads as an indirect quote in which the client does not like the manuscript. But did he actually use the word “garbage”? (This would be alarming!) Or has the speaker paraphrased (and exaggerated) the client’s words?

The second sentence reads as a direct quote from the client. But who is “he” in this sentence? Is it a third party?

Word processing software would not catch this because the sentences are not grammatically incorrect. However, the meanings of the sentences are not the same. Understanding punctuation will help you write what you mean, and in this case, could save a lot of confusion around the office!

Punctuating Direct Quotations

Quotation marks show readers another person’s exact words. Often, you will want to identify who is speaking. You can do this at the beginning, middle, or end of the quote. Notice the use of commas and capitalized words.

Beginning: Madison said, “Let’s stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.”

Middle: “Let’s stop at the farmers market,” Madison said, “to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.”

End: “Let’s stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner,” Madison said.

Speaker not identified: “Let’s stop at the farmers market to buy some fresh vegetables for dinner.”

Always capitalize the first letter of a quote even if it is not the beginning of the sentence. When using identifying words in the middle of the quote, the beginning of the second part of the quote does not need to be capitalized.

Use commas between identifying words and quotes. Quotation marks must be placed *after* commas and periods. Place quotation marks after question marks and exclamation points only if the question or exclamation is part of the quoted text.

Question is part of quoted text: The new employee asked, “When is lunch?”

Question is not part of quoted text: Did you hear her say you were “the next Picasso”?

Exclamation is part of quoted text: My supervisor beamed, “Thanks for all of your hard work!”

Exclamation is not part of quoted text: He said I “single-handedly saved the company thousands of dollars”!

Quotations within Quotations

Use single quotation marks (‘ ’) to show a quotation within in a quotation.

Theresa said, “I wanted to take my dog to the festival, but the man at the gate said, ‘No dogs allowed.’”
“When you say, ‘I can’t help it,’ what exactly does that mean?”
“The instructions say, ‘Tighten the screws one at a time.’”

Titles

Use quotation marks around titles of short works of writing, such as essays, songs, poems, short stories, and chapters in books. Usually, titles of longer works, such as books, magazines, albums, newspapers, and novels, are italicized.

“Annabelle Lee” is one of my favorite romantic poems.
The *New York Times* has been in publication since 1851.

Writing at Work

In many businesses, the difference between exact wording and a paraphrase is extremely important. For legal purposes, or for the purposes of doing a job correctly, it can be important to know exactly what the client, customer, or supervisor said. Sometimes, important details can be lost when instructions are paraphrased. Use quotes to indicate exact words where needed, and let your coworkers know the source of the quotation (client, customer, peer, etc.).

Exercise 1

Copy the following sentences onto your own sheet of paper, and correct them by adding quotation marks where necessary. If the sentence does not need any quotation marks, write *OK*.

1. Yasmin said, I don’t feel like cooking. Let’s go out to eat.

2. Where should we go? said Russell.

3. Yasmin said it didn’t matter to her.

4. I know, said Russell, let's go to the Two Roads Juice Bar.

5. Perfect! said Yasmin.

6. Did you know that the name of the Juice Bar is a reference to a poem? asked Russell.

7. I didn't! exclaimed Yasmin. Which poem?

8. The Road Not Taken, by Robert Frost Russell explained.

9. Oh! said Yasmin, Is that the one that starts with the line, Two roads diverged in a yellow wood?

10. That's the one said Russell.

Key Takeaways

- Use quotation marks to enclose direct quotes and titles of short works.
- Use single quotation marks to enclose a quote within a quote.
- Do not use any quotation marks for indirect quotations.

3.5 Apostrophes

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of apostrophes.
2. Correctly use apostrophes in sentences.

An apostrophe (') is a punctuation mark that is used with a noun to show possession or to indicate where a letter has been left out to form a contraction.

Possession

An apostrophe and the letter *s* indicate who or what owns something. To show possession with a singular noun, add 's.

Jen's dance routine mesmerized everyone in the room.
The dog's leash is hanging on the hook beside the door.
Jess's sister is also coming to the party.

Notice that singular nouns that end in *s* still take the apostrophe *s* ('s) ending to show possession.

To show possession with a plural noun that ends in *s*, just add an apostrophe ('). If the plural noun does not end in *s*, add an apostrophe and an *s* ('s).

Plural noun that ends in *s*: The drummers' sticks all moved in the same rhythm, like a machine.
Plural noun that does not end in *s*: The people's votes clearly showed that no one supported the management decision.

Contractions

A contraction is a word that is formed by combining two words. In a contraction, an apostrophe shows where one or more letters have been left out. Contractions are commonly used in informal writing but not in formal writing.

I do not like ice cream.

I **don't** like ice cream.

Notice how the words *do* and *not* have been combined to form the contraction *don't*. The apostrophe shows where the *o* in *not* has been left out.

We will see you later.

We'll see you later.

Look at the chart for some examples of commonly used contractions.

aren't	are not
can't	cannot
doesn't	does not
don't	do not
isn't	is not
he'll	he will
I'll	I will
she'll	she will
they'll	they will
you'll	you will
it's	it is, it has
let's	let us
she's	she is, she has
there's	there is, there has
who's	who is, who has

Tip

Be careful not to confuse *it's* with *its*. *It's* is a contraction of the words *it* and *is*. *Its* is a possessive pronoun.

It's cold and rainy outside. (It is cold and rainy outside.)

The cat was chasing its tail. (Shows that the tail belongs to the cat.)

When in doubt, substitute the words *it is* in a sentence. If sentence still makes sense, use the contraction *it's*.

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, correct the following sentences by adding apostrophes. If the sentence is correct as it is, write *OK*.

1. "What a beautiful child! She has her mothers eyes."
2. My brothers wife is one of my best friends.
3. I couldnt believe it when I found out that I got the job!
4. My supervisors informed me that I wouldnt be able to take the days off.
5. Each of the students responses were unique.
6. Wont you please join me for dinner tonight?

Key Takeaways

- Use apostrophes to show possession. Add *'s* to singular nouns and plural nouns that do not end in *s*. Add *'* to plural nouns that end in *s*.
- Use apostrophes in contractions to show where a letter or letters have been left out.

3.6 Parentheses

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of parentheses.
2. Properly use parentheses in sentences.

Parentheses () are punctuation marks that are always used in pairs and contain material that is secondary to the meaning of a sentence. Parentheses must never contain the subject or verb of a sentence. A sentence should make sense if you delete any text within parentheses and the parentheses.

Attack of the Killer Potatoes has to be the worst movie I have seen (so far).

Your spinach and garlic salad is one of the most delicious (and nutritious) foods I have ever tasted!

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, clarify the following sentences by adding parentheses. If the sentence is clear as it is, write *OK*.

1. Are you going to the seminar this weekend I am?
2. I recommend that you try the sushi bar unless you don't like sushi.
3. I was able to solve the puzzle after taking a few moments to think about it.
4. Please complete the questionnaire at the end of this letter.
5. Has anyone besides me read the assignment?
6. Please be sure to circle not underline the correct answers.

Key Takeaways

- Parentheses enclose information that is secondary to the meaning of a sentence.

- Parentheses are always used in pairs.

3.7 Dashes

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of dashes.
2. Correctly use dashes in sentences.

A dash (—) is a punctuation mark used to set off information in a sentence for emphasis. You can enclose text between two dashes, or use just one dash. To create a dash in Microsoft Word, type two hyphens together. Do not put a space between dashes and text.

Arrive to the interview early—but not too early.

Any of the suits—except for the purple one—should be fine to wear.

Exercise 1

On your own sheet of paper, clarify the following sentences by adding dashes. If the sentence is clear as it is, write *OK*.

1. Which hairstyle do you prefer short or long?
2. I don't know I hadn't even thought about that.
3. Guess what I got the job!
4. I will be happy to work over the weekend if I can have Monday off.
5. You have all the qualities that we are looking for in a candidate intelligence, dedication, and a strong work ethic.

Key Takeaways

- Dashes indicate a pause in text.

- Dashes set off information in a sentence to show emphasis.

3.8 Hyphens

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the uses of hyphens.
2. Properly use hyphens in sentences.

A hyphen (-) looks similar to a dash but is shorter and used in different ways.

Hyphens between Two Adjectives That Work as One

Use a hyphen to combine words that work together to form a single description.

The fifty-five-year-old athlete was just as qualified for the marathon as his younger opponents.
My doctor recommended against taking the medication, since it can be habit-forming.
My study group focused on preparing for the midyear review.

Hyphens When a Word Breaks at the End of a Line

Use a hyphen to divide a word across two lines of text. You may notice that most word-processing programs will do this for you. If you have to manually insert a hyphen, place the hyphen between two syllables. If you are unsure of where to place the hyphen, consult a dictionary or move the entire word to the next line.

My supervisor was concerned that the team meet-
ing would conflict with the client meeting.

Key Takeaways

- Hyphens join words that work as one adjective.
- Hyphens break words across two lines of text.

3.9 Punctuation: End-of-Chapter Exercises

Learning Objectives

1. Use the skills you have learned in this chapter.
2. Work collaboratively with other students.

Exercises

1. Each sentence contains a punctuation error. On your own sheet of paper, correct each sentence by adding the correct punctuation. The headings will let you know which type of punctuation mistakes to look for. If the sentence does not need corrections, write *OK*.

Commas

- a. The wedding will be July 13 2012.
- b. The date by the way is the anniversary of the day that they met.
- c. The groom the bride and their parents are all planning the event.
- d. Actually all of their friends and relatives are involved in the planning.
- e. The bride is a baker so she will be making the wedding cake herself.
- f. The photography the catering and the music will all be friends.

Semicolons

- a. Some people spend a lot of money hiring people for wedding services they are lucky to have such talented friends.
- b. The flowers will be either roses, daisies, and snapdragons orchids, tulips, and irises or peonies and lilies.

Colons

- a. There will be three colors for the wedding: white, black, and gold.
- b. They've finally narrowed down the dinner choices salmon, steak, and a vegan stew.
- c. Their wedding invitations contained the following quote from the Roman poet Ovid If you want to be loved, be lovable.

Quotes

- a. The invitations said that the wedding would be "outdoor casual."
- b. "What exactly does 'outdoor casual' mean?" I asked the bride.
- c. She told me to dress comfortably and wear shoes that do not sink into the ground.

Apostrophes

- a. On the day of the wedding, were going to rent a limo.

- b. My brothers wife will make the arrangements.
- c. Shes a great party organizer.

Parentheses

- a. On the day of the wedding, the bride looked more beautiful than ever and I've known her for fifteen years.
- b. All the details were perfect in my opinion.

Dashes

- a. Everyone danced at the wedding except my mother.
- b. It was to be expected she just had hip surgery.

Hyphens

- a. The groom danced with his new mother in law.
- b. It was a spectacular, fun filled day for everyone.

2. Each sentence contains a punctuation error. On your own sheet of paper, correct each sentence by adding commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, parentheses, hyphens, and dashes as needed.
 - a. My mothers garden is full of beautiful flowers.
 - b. She has carefully planted several species of roses peonies and irises.
 - c. She is especially proud of her thirty year old Japanese maple tree.
 - d. I am especially proud of the sunflowers I planted them!
 - e. You should see the birds that are attracted to the garden hummingbirds, finches, robins, and sparrows.
 - f. I like to watch the hummingbirds they are my favorite.
 - g. We spend a lot of time in the garden planting weeding and just enjoying the view.
 - h. Each flower has its own personality some seem shy and others seem bold.
 - i. Arent gardens wonderful?
 - j. You should come visit sometime Do you like to garden?

3. The following paragraph contains errors in punctuation. On your own sheet of paper, correct the paragraph by adding commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, parentheses, hyphens, and dashes as needed. There may be more than one way to correct the paragraph.

May 18 2011

Dear Hiring Manager

Allow me to introduce myself in my previous position I was known as the King of Sales. I hope to earn the same title within your company. My name is Frances Fortune. I have thirteen years experience in corporate sales and account management. I have been the top rated seller for two years in a row in my previous position. Clients recognize me as dependable honest and resourceful. I have a strong work ethic and great interpersonal skills. I excel at goal setting and time management. However you don't have to take my word for it I will be happy to provide personal and professional references upon request. Youre welcome to contact my previous employer to inquire about my work performance. I look forward to speaking with you in person in the near future.

Sincerely

Frances Fortune

4. Read the following paragraph. Edit by adding apostrophes, parentheses, dashes, and hyphens where needed. There may be more than one correct way to edit some sentences. Consider how the punctuation you choose affects the meaning of the sentence.

I was a little nervous about the interview it was my first in years. I had to borrow my roommates suit, but it fit me well. A few days ago, I started to research the companys history and mission. I felt like I was well qualified for the job. When I arrived, I shook hands with the interviewer she had a strong grip! It nearly caught me off guard, but I did my best to smile and relax. I was a little distracted by all the books in the womans office she must have had a hundred books in that tiny room. However, I think my responses to her questions were good. Ill send her an e-mail to thank her for her time. Hopefully shell call me soon about the position.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Writing Application

Review some of the recent or current assignments you have completed for school or work. Look through recent business and personal e-mails. Does your work contain any errors in punctuation? Correct the errors and compile a list of the types of errors you are correcting (commas, semicolons, colons, apostrophes, quotation marks, parentheses, dashes, hyphens, etc.). Use this list as a reference for the types of punctuation marks that you should review and practice.

If you do not find many errors—great! You can still look for ways to add interest to your writing by using dashes, semicolons, colons, and parentheses to create a variety of sentence lengths and structures.

Chapter 4: Working with Words: Which Word Is Right?

4.1 Commonly Confused Words

4.2 Spelling

4.3 Word Choice

4.4 Prefixes and Suffixes

4.5 Synonyms and Antonyms

4.6 Using Context Clues

4.7 Working with Words: End-of-Chapter Exercises

4.1 Commonly Confused Words

Learning Objectives

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

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

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

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

Commonly Confused Words

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

I liked her *new* sweater.

I *knew* she would wear that sweater today.

These words may sound alike when spoken, but they carry entirely different usages and meanings. *New* is an adjective that describes the sweater, and *knew* is the past tense of the verb *to know*. To read more about adjectives, verbs, and other parts of speech see [Chapter 2 “Writing Basics: What Makes a Good Sentence?”](#).

Recognizing Commonly Confused Words

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

Commonly Confused Words

A, An, And

- *A* (article). Used before a word that begins with a consonant.
a key, **a** mouse, **a** screen
- *An* (article). Used before a word that begins with a vowel.
an airplane, **an** ocean, **an** igloo
- *And* (conjunction). Connects two or more words together.
peanut butter **and** jelly, pen **and** pencil, jump **and** shout

Accept, Except

- *Accept* (verb). Means to take or agree to something offered.
They **accepted** our proposal for the conference.
- *Except* (conjunction). Means only or but.
We could fly there **except** the tickets cost too much.

Affect, Effect

- *Affect* (verb). Means to create a change.
Hurricane winds **affect** the amount of rainfall.
- *Effect* (noun). Means an outcome or result.
The heavy rains will have an **effect** on the crop growth.

Are, Our

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

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

- *Our* (pronoun). Indicates possession, usually follows the pronoun *we*.
We will bring **our** cameras to take pictures.

By, Buy

- *By* (preposition). Means next to.
My glasses are **by** the bed.
- *Buy* (verb). Means to purchase.
I will **buy** new glasses after the doctor's appointment.

Its, It's

- *Its* (pronoun). A form of *it* that shows possession.
The butterfly flapped **its** wings.
- *It's* (contraction). Joins the words *it* and *is*.
It's the most beautiful butterfly I have ever seen.

Know, No

- *Know* (verb). Means to understand or possess knowledge.
I **know** the male peacock sports the brilliant feathers.
- *No*. Used to make a negative.
I have **no** time to visit the zoo this weekend.

Loose, Lose

- *Loose* (adjective). Describes something that is not tight or is detached.
Without a belt, her pants are **loose** on her waist.
- *Lose* (verb). Means to forget, to give up, or to fail to earn something.
She will **lose** even more weight after finishing the marathon training.

Of, Have

- *Of* (preposition). Means *from* or *about*.
I studied maps **of** the city to know where to rent a new apartment.
- *Have* (verb). Means to possess something.
I **have** many friends to help me move.
- *Have* (linking verb). Used to connect verbs.

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

Quite, Quiet, Quit

- *Quite* (adverb). Means *really* or *truly*.
My work will require **quite** a lot of concentration.
- *Quiet* (adjective). Means not loud.
I need a **quiet** room to complete the assignments.
- *Quit* (verb). Means to stop or to end.
I will **quit** when I am hungry for dinner.

Right, Write

- *Right* (adjective). Means proper or correct.
When bowling, she practices the **right** form.
- *Right* (adjective). Also means the opposite of left.
The ball curved to the **right** and hit the last pin.
- *Write* (verb). Means to communicate on paper.
After the team members bowl, I will **write** down their scores.

Set, Sit

- *Set* (verb). Means to put an item down.
She **set** the mug on the saucer.
- *Set* (noun). Means a group of similar objects.
All the mugs and saucers belonged in a **set**.
- *Sit* (verb). Means to lower oneself down on a chair or another place
I'll **sit** on the sofa while she brews the tea.

Suppose, Supposed

- *Suppose* (verb). Means to think or to consider
I **suppose** I will bake the bread, because no one else has the recipe.
- *Suppose* (verb). Means to suggest.
Suppose we all split the cost of the dinner.
- *Supposed* (verb). The past tense form of the verb suppose, meaning required or allowed.
She was **supposed** to create the menu.

Than, Then

- *Than* (conjunction). Used to connect two or more items when comparing
Registered nurses require less schooling **than** doctors.
- *Then* (adverb). Means next or at a specific time.
Doctors first complete medical school and **then** obtain a residency.

Their, They're, There

- *Their* (pronoun). A form of *they* that shows possession.
The dog walker feeds **their** dogs everyday at two o'clock.
- *They're* (contraction). Joins the words *they* and *are*.
They're the sweetest dogs in the neighborhood.
- *There* (adverb). Indicates a particular place.
The dogs' bowls are over **there**, next to the pantry.
- *There* (pronoun). Indicates the presence of something
There are more treats if the dogs behave.

To, Two, Too

- *To* (preposition). Indicates movement.
Let's go **to** the circus.
- *To*. A word that completes an infinitive verb.
to play, **to** ride, **to** watch.
- *Two*. The number after one. It describes how many.
Two clowns squirted the elephants with water.
- *Too* (adverb). Means *also* or *very*.
The tents were **too** loud, and we left.

Use, Used

- *Use* (verb). Means to apply for some purpose.
We **use** a weed whacker to trim the hedges.
- *Used*. The past tense form of the verb *to use*
He **used** the lawnmower last night before it rained.
- *Used to*. Indicates something done in the past but not in the present
He **used to** hire a team to landscape, but now he landscapes alone.

Who's, Whose

- *Who's* (contraction). Joins the words *who* and either *is* or *has*.

Who's the new student? **Who's** met him?

- *Whose* (pronoun). A form of *who* that shows possession.

Whose schedule allows them to take the new student on a campus tour?

Your, You're

- *Your* (pronoun). A form of *you* that shows possession.

Your book bag is unzipped.

- *You're* (contraction). Joins the words *you* and *are*.

You're the girl with the unzipped book bag.

The English language contains so many words; no one can say for certain how many words exist. In fact, many words in English are borrowed from other languages. Many words have multiple meanings and forms, further expanding the immeasurable number of English words. Although the list of commonly confused words serves as a helpful guide, even these words may have more meanings than shown here. When in doubt, consult an expert: the dictionary!

Exercise 1

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct word.

1. My little cousin turns _____(to, too, two) years old tomorrow.
2. The next-door neighbor's dog is _____(quite, quiet, quit) loud. He barks constantly throughout the night.
3. _____(Your, You're) mother called this morning to talk about the party.
4. I would rather eat a slice of chocolate cake _____(than, then) eat a chocolate muffin.
5. Before the meeting, he drank a cup of coffee and _____(than, then) brushed his teeth.
6. Do you have any _____(loose, lose) change to pay the parking meter?
7. Father must _____(have, of) left his briefcase at the office.
8. Before playing ice hockey, I was _____(suppose, supposed) to read the contract, but I only skimmed it and signed my name quickly, which may _____(affect, effect) my understanding of the rules.
9. Tonight she will _____(set, sit) down and _____(right, write) a cover letter to accompany her résumé and job application.
10. It must be fall, because the leaves _____(are, our) changing, and _____(it's, its) getting darker earlier.

Strategies to Avoid Commonly Confused Words

When writing, you need to choose the correct word according to its spelling and meaning in the context. Not only does selecting the correct word improve your vocabulary and your writing, but it also makes a good impression on your readers. It also helps reduce confusion and improve clarity. The following strategies can help you avoid misusing confusing words.

1. **Use a dictionary.** Keep a dictionary at your desk while you write. Look up words when you are uncertain of their meanings or spellings. Many dictionaries are also available online, and the Internet's easy access will not slow you down. Check out your cell phone or smartphone to see if a dictionary app is available.
2. **Keep a list of words you commonly confuse.** Be aware of the words that often confuse you. When you notice a pattern of confusing words, keep a list nearby, and consult the list as you write. Check the list again before you submit an assignment to your instructor.
3. **Study the list of commonly confused words.** You may not yet know which words confuse you, but before you sit down to write, study the words on the list. Prepare your mind for working with words by reviewing the commonly confused words identified in this chapter.

Tip

Figure 4.1 A Commonly Misused Word on a Public Sign



Commonly confused words appear in many locations, not just at work or at school. Be on the lookout for

misused words wherever you find yourself throughout the day. Make a mental note of the error and remember its correction for your own pieces of writing.

Writing at Work

All employers value effective communication. From an application to an interview to the first month on the job, employers pay attention to your vocabulary. You do not need a large vocabulary to succeed, but you do need to be able to express yourself clearly and avoid commonly misused words.

When giving an important presentation on the effect of inflation on profit margins, you must know the difference between *effect* and *affect* and choose the correct word. When writing an e-mail to confirm deliveries, you must know if the shipment will arrive in *to* days, *too* days, or *two* days. Confusion may arise if you choose the wrong word.

Consistently using the proper words will improve your communication and make a positive impression on your boss and colleagues.

Exercise 2

The following paragraph contains eleven errors. Find each misused word and correct it by adding the proper word.

The original United States Declaration of Independence sets in a case at the Rotunda for the Charters of Freedom as part of the National Archives in Washington, DC. Since 1952, over one million visitors each year of passed through the Rotunda too snap a photograph to capture they're experience. Although signs state, "No Flash Photography," forgetful tourists leave the flash on, an a bright light flickers for just a millisecond. This millisecond of light may not seem like enough to effect the precious document, but supposed how much light could be generated when all those milliseconds are added up. According to the National Archives administrators, its enough to significantly damage the historic document. So, now, the signs display quit a different message: "No Photography." Visitors continue to travel to see the Declaration that began are country, but know longer can personal pictures serve as mementos. The administrators' compromise, they say, is a visit to the gift shop for a preprinted photograph.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Key Takeaways

- In order to write accurately, it is important for writers to be aware of commonly confused words.

- Although commonly confused words may look alike or sound alike, their meanings are very different.
- Consulting the dictionary is one way to make sure you are using the correct word in your writing. You may also keep a list of commonly confused words nearby when you write or study the chart in this book.
- Choosing the proper words leaves a positive impression on your readers.

Writing Application

Review the latest assignment you completed for school or for work. Does it contain any commonly confused words? Circle each example and use the circled words to begin your own checklist of commonly confused words. Continue to add to your checklist each time you complete an assignment and find a misused word.

4.2 Spelling

Learning Objectives

1. Identify common spelling rules.
2. Identify commonly misused homonyms.
3. Identify commonly misspelled words.

One essential aspect of good writing is accurate spelling. With computer spell checkers, spelling may seem simple, but these programs fail to catch every error. Spell checkers identify some errors, but writers still have to consider the flagged words and suggested replacements. Writers are still responsible for the errors that remain.

For example, if the spell checker highlights a word that is misspelled and gives you a list of alternative words, you may choose a word that you never intended even though it is spelled correctly. This can change the meaning of your sentence. It can also confuse readers, making them lose interest. Computer spell checkers are useful editing tools, but they can never replace human knowledge of spelling rules, homonyms, and commonly misspelled words.

Common Spelling Rules

The best way to master new words is to understand the key spelling rules. Keep in mind, however, that some spelling rules carry exceptions. A spell checker may catch these exceptions, but knowing them yourself will prepare you to spell accurately on the first try. You may want to try memorizing each rule and its exception like you would memorize a rhyme or lyrics to a song.

Write *i* before *e* except after *c*, or when pronounced *ay* like “neighbor” or “weigh.”

- achieve, niece, alien
- receive, deceive

When words end in a consonant plus *y*, drop the *y* and add an *i* before adding another ending.

- happy + er = happier
- cry + ed = cried

When words end in a vowel plus *y*, keep the *y* and add the ending.

- delay + ed = delayed

Memorize the following exceptions to this rule: *day, lay, say, pay* = *daily, laid, said, paid*

When adding an ending that begins with a vowel, such as *–able, –ence, –ing, or –ity*, drop the last *e* in a word.

- write + ing = writing
- pure + ity = purity

When adding an ending that begins with a consonant, such as *–less, –ment, or –ly*, keep the last *e* in a word.

- hope + less = hopeless
- advertise + ment = advertisement

For many words ending in a consonant and an *o*, add *–s* when using the plural form.

- photo + s = photos
- soprano + s = sopranos

Add *–es* to words that end in *s, ch, sh,* and *x*.

- church + es = churches
- fax + es = faxes

Exercise 1

Identify and correct the nine misspelled words in the following paragraph.

Sherman J. Alexie Jr. was born in October 1966. He is a Spokane/Coeur d'Alene Indian and an American writer, poet, and filmmaker. Alexie was born with hydrocephalus, or water on the brain. This condition led doctors to predict that he would likly suffer long-term brain damage and possibly mental retardation. Although Alexie survived with no mental disabilitys, he did suffer other serious side effects from his condition that plagud him throughout his childhood. Amazingly, Alexie learned to read by the age of three, and by age five he had read novels such as John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. Raised on an Indian reservation, Alexie often felt aleinated from his peers due to his avid love for reading and also from the long-term effects of his illness, which often kept him from socializeing with his peers on the reservation. The reading skills he displaid at such a young age foreshadowed what he would later become. Today Alexie is a prolific and successful writer with several story anthologeis to his credit, notably *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* and *The Toughest Indian in the World*. Most of his fiction is about contemporary Native Americans who are influenced by pop culture and pow wows and everything in between. His work is sometimes funny but always thoughtful and full of richness and depth. Alexie also writes poetry, novels, and screenplays. His latest collection of storys is called *War Dances*, which came out in 2009.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Tip

Eight Tips to Improve Spelling Skills

1. **Read the words in your assignment carefully, and avoid skimming over the page.** Focusing on your written assignment word by word will help you pay close attention to each word's spelling. Skimming quickly, you may overlook misspelled words.
2. **Use mnemonic devices to remember the correct spelling of words.** Mnemonic devices, or memory techniques and learning aids, include inventive sayings or practices that help you remember. For example, the saying "It is important to be a beautiful person inside and out" may help you remember that *beautiful* begins with "be a." The practice of pronouncing the word *Wednesday* Wed-nes-day may help you remember how to spell the word correctly.
3. **Use a dictionary.** Many professional writers rely on the dictionary—either in print or online. If you find it difficult to use a regular dictionary, ask your instructor to help you find a "poor speller's dictionary."
4. **Use your computer's spell checker.** The spell checker will not solve all your spelling problems, but it is a useful tool. See the introduction to this section for cautions about spell checkers.
5. **Keep a list of frequently misspelled words.** You will often misspell the same words again and again, but do not let this discourage you. All writers struggle with the spellings of certain words; they become aware of their spelling weaknesses and work to improve. Be aware of which words you commonly misspell, and you can add them to a list to learn to spell them correctly.

6. **Look over corrected papers for misspelled words.** Add these words to your list and practice writing each word four to five times each. Writing teachers will especially notice which words you frequently misspell, and it will help you excel in your classes if they see your spelling improve.
7. **Test yourself with flashcards.** Sometimes the old-fashioned methods are best, and for spelling, this tried and true technique has worked for many students. You can work with a peer or alone.
8. **Review the common spelling rules explained in this chapter.** Take the necessary time to master the material; you may return to the rules in this chapter again and again, as needed.

Tip

Remember to focus on spelling during the editing and revising step of the writing process. Start with the big ideas such as organizing your piece of writing and developing effective paragraphs, and then work your way down toward the smaller—but equally important—details like spelling and punctuation. To read more about the writing process and editing and revising, see [Chapter 8 “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?”](#).

Homonyms

Homonyms are words that sound like one another but have different meanings.

Commonly Misused Homonyms

Principle, Principal

- **Principle (noun).** A fundamental concept that is accepted as true.
The **principle** of human equality is an important foundation for all nations.
- **Principal (noun).** The original amount of debt on which interest is calculated.
The payment plan allows me to pay back only the **principal** amount, not any compounded interest.
- **Principal (noun).** A person who is the main authority of a school.
The **principal** held a conference for both parents and teachers.

Where, Wear, Ware

- **Where (adverb).** The place in which something happens.

Where is the restaurant?

- **Wear (verb).** To carry or have on the body.

I will **wear** my hiking shoes when go on a climb tomorrow morning.

- **Ware (noun).** Articles of merchandise or manufacture (usually, *wares*).

When I return from shopping, I will show you my **wares**.

Lead, Led

- **Lead (noun).** A type of metal used in pipes and batteries.

The **lead** pipes in my homes are old and need to be replaced.

- **Led (verb).** The past tense of the verb *lead*.

After the garden, she **led** the patrons through the museum.

Which, Witch

- **Which (pronoun).** Replaces one out of a group.

Which apartment is yours?

- **Witch (noun).** A person who practices sorcery or who has supernatural powers.

She thinks she is a **witch**, but she does not seem to have any powers.

Peace, Piece

- **Peace (noun).** A state of tranquility or quiet.

For once, there was **peace** between the argumentative brothers.

- **Piece (noun).** A part of a whole.

I would like a large **piece** of cake, thank you.

Passed, Past

- **Passed (verb).** To go away or move.

He **passed** the slower cars on the road using the left lane.

- **Past (noun).** Having existed or taken place in a period before the present.

The argument happened in the **past**, so there is no use in dwelling on it.

Lessen, Lesson

- **Lessen (verb).** To reduce in number, size, or degree.

My dentist gave me medicine to **lessen** the pain of my aching tooth.

- **Lesson (noun).** A reading or exercise to be studied by a student.

Today's **lesson** was about mortgage interest rates.

Patience, Patients

- **Patience (noun).** The capacity of being patient (waiting for a period of time or enduring pains and trials calmly).

The novice teacher's **patience** with the unruly class was astounding.

- **Patients (plural noun).** Individuals under medical care.

The **patients** were tired of eating the hospital food, and they could not wait for a home-cooked meal.

Sees, Seas, Seize

- **Sees (verb).** To perceive with the eye.

He **sees** a whale through his binoculars.

- **Seas (plural noun).** The plural of sea, a great body of salt water.

The tidal fluctuation of the oceans and **seas** are influenced by the moon.

- **Seize (verb).** To possess or take by force.

The king plans to **seize** all the peasants' land.

Threw, Through

- **Threw (verb).** The past tense of *throw*.

She **threw** the football with perfect form.

- **Through (preposition).** A word that indicates movement.

She walked **through** the door and out of his life.

Exercise 2

Complete the following sentences by selecting the correct homonym.

1. Do you agree with the underlying _____ (principle, principal) that ensures copyrights are protected in the digital age?
2. I like to _____ (where, wear, ware) unique clothing from thrift stores that do not have company logos on them.
3. Marjorie felt like she was being _____ (led, lead) on a wild goose chase, and she did not like it one bit.
4. Serina described _____ (witch, which) house was hers, but now that I am here, they all look

the same.

5. Seeing his friend without a lunch, Miguel gave her a _____(peace, piece) of his apple.
6. Do you think that it is healthy for mother to talk about the _____(passed, past) all the time?
7. Eating healthier foods will _____(lessen, lesson) the risk of heart disease.
8. I know it sounds cliché, but my father had the _____(patients, patience) of a saint.
9. Daniela _____(sees, seas, seize) possibilities in the bleakest situations, and that it is why she is successful.
10. Everyone goes _____(through, threw) hardships in life regardless of who they are.

Commonly Misspelled Words

Below is a list of commonly misspelled words. You probably use these words every day in either speaking or writing. Each word has a segment in bold type, which indicates the problem area of the word that is often spelled incorrectly. If you can, use this list as a guide before, during, and after you write.

Tip

Use the following two tricks to help you master these troublesome words:

1. Copy each word a few times and underline the problem area.
2. Copy the words onto flash cards and have a friend test you.

Table 4.1 Commonly Misspelled Words

across	dis appoint	integration	particular	separate
address	dis approve	intelligent	perform	similar
answer	doesn't	interest	perhaps	since
argument	eigh th	interfere	personnel	speech
athlete	embarr ass	jewel ry	possess	streng th
begin ning	environ ment	judg ment	possible	success
behavior	exag gerate	knowledge	prefer	surprise
calendar	familiar	maintain ing	prejudice	taught
career	finally	mathematics	privilege	temperature
conscience	govern ment	meant	probably	thorough
crowd ed	grammar	necessary	psychology	thought
definite	height	nervous	pursue	tired
describe	illegal	occasion	reference	until
desperate	immediately	opinion	rhythm	weight
different	important	optimist	ridiculous	written

Exercise 3

Identify and correct the ten commonly misspelled words in the following paragraph.

Brooklyn is one of the five boroughs that make up New York City. It is located on the eastern shore of Long Island directly accross the East River from the island of Manhattan. Its beginings stretch back to the sixteenth century when it was founded by the Dutch who originally called it "Breuckelen." Immediately after the Dutch settled Brooklyn, it came under British rule. However, neither the Dutch nor the British were Brooklyn's first inhabitants. When European settlers first arrived, Brooklyn was largely inhabited by the Lenapi, a collective name for several organized bands of Native American people who settled a large area of land that extended from upstate New York through the entire state of New Jersey. They are sometimes referred to as the Delaware Indians. Over time, the Lenapi succumbed to European diseases or conflicts between European settlers or other Native American enemies. Finalley they were pushed out of Brooklyn completely by the British.

In 1776, Brooklyn was the site of the first important battle of the American Revolution known as the Battle of Brooklyn. The colonists lost this battle, which was led by George Washington, but over the next two years they would win the war, kicking the British out of the colonies once and for all.

By the end of the nineteenth century, Brooklyn grew to be a city in its own right. The completion of the Brooklyn Bridge was an ocasion for celebration; transportation and commerce between Brooklyn and Manhattan now became much easier. Eventually, in 1898, Brooklyn lost its seperate identity as an independent city and became one of five boroughs of New York City. However, in some people's opinion, the intagrations into New York City should have never happened; they though Brooklyn should have

remained an independent city.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Writing at Work

In today's job market, writing e-mails has become a means by which many people find employment. E-mails to prospective employers require thoughtful word choice, accurate spelling, and perfect punctuation. Employers' inboxes are inundated with countless e-mails daily. If even the subject line of an e-mail contains a spelling error, it will likely be overlooked and someone else's e-mail will take priority.

The best thing to do after you proofread an e-mail to an employer and run the spell checker is to have an additional set of eyes go over it with you; one of your teachers may be able to read the e-mail and give you suggestions for improvement. Most colleges and universities have writing centers, which may also be able to assist you.

Key Takeaways

- Accurate, error-free spelling enhances your credibility with the reader.
- Mastering the rules of spelling may help you become a better speller.
- Knowing the commonly misused homonyms may prevent spelling errors.
- Studying the list of commonly misspelled words in this chapter, or studying a list of your own, is one way to improve your spelling skills.

Writing Application

What is your definition of a successful person? Is it based on a person's profession or is it based on his or her character? Perhaps success means a combination of both. In one paragraph, describe in detail what you think makes a person successful. When you are finished, proofread your work for spelling errors. Exchange papers with a partner and read each other's work. See if you catch any spelling errors that your partner missed.

4.3 Word Choice

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the reasons why using a dictionary and thesaurus is important when writing.
2. Identify how to use proper connotations.
3. Identify how to avoid using slang, clichés, and overly general words in your writing.

Effective writing involves making conscious choices with words. When you prepare to sit down to write your first draft, you likely have already completed some freewriting exercises, chosen your topic, developed your thesis statement, written an outline, and even selected your sources. When it is time to write your first draft, start to consider which words to use to best convey your ideas to the reader.

Some writers are picky about word choice as they start drafting. They may practice some specific strategies, such as using a dictionary and thesaurus, using words and phrases with proper connotations, and avoiding slang, clichés, and overly general words.

Once you understand these tricks of the trade, you can move ahead confidently in writing your assignment. Remember, the skill and accuracy of your word choice is a major factor in developing your writing style. Precise selection of your words will help you be more clearly understood—in both writing and speaking.

Using a Dictionary and Thesaurus

Even professional writers need help with the meanings, spellings, pronunciations, and uses of particular words. In fact, they rely on dictionaries to help them write better. No one knows every word in the English language and their multiple uses and meanings, so all writers, from novices to professionals, can benefit from the use of dictionaries.

Most dictionaries provide the following information:

- **Spelling.** How the word and its different forms are spelled.
- **Pronunciation.** How to say the word.
- **Part of speech.** The function of the word.
- **Definition.** The meaning of the word.
- **Synonyms.** Words that have similar meanings.

- **Etymology.** The history of the word.

Look at the following sample dictionary entry and see which of the preceeding information you can identify:

myth, *mith*, *n.* [Gr. *mythos*, a word, a fable, a legend.] A fable or legend embodying the convictions of a people as to their gods or other divine beings, their own beginnings and early history and the heroes connected with it, or the origin of the world; any invented story; something or someone having no existence in fact.—**myth • ic**, **myth • i • cal**

Like a dictionary, a thesaurus is another indispensable writing tool. A thesaurus gives you a list of synonyms, words that have the same (or very close to the same) meaning as another word. It also lists antonyms, words with the opposite meaning of the word. A thesaurus will help you when you are looking for the perfect word with just the right meaning to convey your ideas. It will also help you learn more words and use the ones you already know more correctly.

precocious *adj.* *She's such a precocious little girl!:* uncommonly smart, mature, advanced, smart, bright, brilliant, gifted, quick, clever, apt.

Ant. slow, backward, stupid.

Using Proper Connotations

A denotation is the dictionary definition of a word. A connotation, on the other hand, is the emotional or cultural meaning attached to a word. The connotation of a word can be positive, negative, or neutral. Keep in mind the connotative meaning when choosing a word.

Scrawny

- **Denotation:** Exceptionally thin and slight or meager in body or size.
- **Word used in a sentence:** Although he was a premature baby and a **scrawny** child, Martin has developed into a strong man.
- **Connotation:** (Negative) In this sentence the word *scrawny* may have a negative connotation in the readers' minds. They might find it to mean a weakness or a personal flaw; however, the word fits into the sentence appropriately.

Skinny

- **Denotation:** Lacking sufficient flesh, very thin.

- **Word used in a sentence:** **Skinny** jeans have become very fashionable in the past couple of years.
- **Connotation:** (Positive) Based on cultural and personal impressions of what it means to be skinny, the reader may have positive connotations of the word *skinny*.

Lean

- **Denotation:** Lacking or deficient in flesh; containing little or no fat.
- **Word used in a sentence:** My brother has a **lean** figure, whereas I have a more muscular build.
- **Connotation:** (Neutral) In this sentence, *lean* has a neutral connotation. It does not call to mind an overly skinny person like the word *scrawny*, nor does imply the positive cultural impressions of the word *skinny*. It is merely a neutral descriptive word.

Notice that all the words have a very similar denotation; however, the connotations of each word differ.

Exercise 1

In each of the following items, you will find words with similar denotations. Identify the words' connotations as positive, negative, or neutral by writing the word in the appropriate box. Copy the chart onto your own piece of paper.

1. curious, nosy, interested
2. lazy, relaxed, slow
3. courageous, foolhardy, assured
4. new, newfangled, modern
5. mansion, shack, residence
6. spinster, unmarried woman, career woman
7. giggle, laugh, cackle
8. boring, routine, prosaic
9. noted, notorious, famous
10. assertive, confident, pushy

Positive	Negative	Neutral

Avoiding Slang

Slang describes informal words that are considered nonstandard English. Slang often changes with passing fads and may be used by or familiar to only a specific group of people. Most people use slang when they speak and in personal correspondences, such as e-mails, text messages, and instant messages. Slang is appropriate between friends in an informal context but should be avoided in formal academic writing.

Writing at Work

Frequent exposure to media and popular culture has desensitized many of us to slang. In certain situations, using slang at work may not be problematic, but keep in mind that words can have a powerful effect. Slang in professional e-mails or during meetings may convey the wrong message or even mistakenly offend someone.

Exercise 2

Edit the following paragraph by replacing the slang words and phrases with more formal language. Rewrite the paragraph on your own sheet of paper.

I felt like such an airhead when I got up to give my speech. As I walked toward the podium, I banged my knee on a chair. Man, I felt like such a klutz. On top of that, I kept saying “like” and “um,” and I could not stop fidgeting. I was so stressed out about being up there. I feel like I’ve been practicing this speech 24/7, and I still bombed. It was ten minutes of me going off about how we sometimes have to do things we don’t enjoy doing. Wow, did I ever prove my point. My speech was so bad I’m surprised that people didn’t boo. My teacher said not to sweat it, though. Everyone gets nervous his or her first time speaking in public, and she said, with time, I would become a whiz at this speech giving stuff. I wonder if I have the guts to do it again.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Avoiding Clichés

Clichés are descriptive expressions that have lost their effectiveness because they are overused. Writing that uses clichés often suffers from a lack of originality and insight. Avoiding clichés in formal writing will help you write in original and fresh ways.

- **Clichéd:** Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes my **blood boil**.
- **Plain:** Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes me really angry.
- **Original:** Whenever my brother and I get into an argument, he always says something that makes me want to go to the gym and punch the bag for a few hours.

Tip

Think about all the cliché phrases that you hear in popular music or in everyday conversation. What would happen if these clichés were transformed into something unique?

Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, revise the following sentences by replacing the clichés with fresh, original descriptions.

1. She is writing a memoir in which she will air her family's dirty laundry.
2. Fran had an ax to grind with Benny, and she planned to confront him that night at the party.
3. Mr. Muller was at his wit's end with the rowdy class of seventh graders.
4. The bottom line is that Greg was fired because he missed too many days of work.
5. Sometimes it is hard to make ends meet with just one paycheck.
6. My brain is fried from pulling an all-nighter.
7. Maria left the dishes in the sink all week to give Jeff a taste of his own medicine.
8. While they were at the carnival Janice exclaimed, "Time sure does fly when you are having fun!"
9. Jeremy became tongue-tied after the interviewer asked him where he saw himself in five years.
10. Jordan was dressed to the nines that night.

Avoiding Overly General Words

Specific words and images make your writing more interesting to read. Whenever possible, avoid overly general words in your writing; instead, try to replace general language with particular nouns, verbs, and modifiers that convey details and that bring your words to life. Add words that provide color, texture, sound, and even smell to your writing.

- **General:** My new puppy is cute.
- **Specific:** My new puppy is a ball of white fuzz with the biggest black eyes I have ever seen.
- **General:** My teacher told us that plagiarism is bad.
- **Specific:** My teacher, Ms. Atwater, created a presentation detailing exactly how plagiarism is illegal and unethical.

Exercise 4

Revise the following sentences by replacing the overly general words with more precise and attractive language. Write the new sentences on your own sheet of paper.

1. Reilly got into her car and drove off.
2. I would like to travel to outer space because it would be amazing.
3. Jane came home after a bad day at the office.

4. I thought Milo's essay was fascinating.
5. The dog walked up the street.
6. The coal miners were tired after a long day.
7. The tropical fish are pretty.
8. I sweat a lot after running.
9. The goalie blocked the shot.
10. I enjoyed my Mexican meal.

Key Takeaways

- Using a dictionary and thesaurus as you write will improve your writing by improving your word choice.
- Connotations of words may be positive, neutral, or negative.
- Slang, clichés, and overly general words should be avoided in academic writing.

Writing Application

Review a piece of writing that you have completed for school. Circle any sentences with slang, clichés, or overly general words and rewrite them using stronger language.

4.4 Prefixes and Suffixes

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the meanings of common prefixes.
2. Become familiar with common suffix rules.

The English language contains an enormous and ever-growing number of words. Enhancing your vocabulary by learning new words can seem overwhelming, but if you know the common prefixes and suffixes of English, you will understand many more words.

Mastering common prefixes and suffixes is like learning a code. Once you crack the code, you can not only spell words more correctly but also recognize and perhaps even define unfamiliar words.

Prefixes

A prefix is a word part added to the beginning of a word to create a new meaning. Study the common prefixes in [Table 4.2 “Common Prefixes”](#).

Tip

The main rule to remember when adding a prefix to a word is **not** to add letters or leave out any letters. See [Table 4.2 “Common Prefixes”](#) for examples of this rule.

Table 4.2 Common Prefixes

Prefix	Meaning	Example
dis	not, opposite of	dis + satisfied = dissatisfied
mis	wrongly	mis + spell = misspell
un	not	un + acceptable = unacceptable
re	again	re + election = reelection
inter	between	inter + related = interrelated
pre	before	pre + pay = prepay
non	not	non + sense = nonsense
super	above	super + script = superscript
sub	under	sub + merge = submerge
anti	against, opposing	anti + bacterial = antibacterial

Exercise 1

Identify the five words with prefixes in the following paragraph, and write their meanings on a separate sheet of paper.

At first, I thought one of my fuzzy, orange socks disappeared in the dryer, but I could not find it in there. Because it was my favorite pair, nothing was going to prevent me from finding that sock. I looked all around my bedroom, under the bed, on top of the bed, and in my closet, but I still could not find it. I did not know that I would discover the answer just as I gave up my search. As I sat down on the couch in the family room, my Dad was reclining on his chair. I laughed when I saw that one of his feet was orange and the other blue! I forgot that he was color-blind. Next time he does laundry I will have to supervise him while he folds the socks so that he does not accidentally take one of mine!

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Exercise 2

Add the correct prefix to the word to complete each sentence. Write the word on your own sheet of paper.

1. I wanted to ease my stomach _____comfort, so I drank some ginger root tea.
2. Lenny looked funny in his _____matched shirt and pants.
3. Penelope felt _____glamorous at the party because she was the only one not wearing a dress.

4. My mother said those _____aging creams do not work, so I should not waste my money on them.
5. The child's _____standard performance on the test alarmed his parents.
6. When my sister first saw the meteor, she thought it was a _____natural phenomenon.
7. Even though she got an excellent job offer, Cherie did not want to _____locate to a different country.
8. With a small class size, the students get to _____act with the teacher more frequently.
9. I slipped on the ice because I did not heed the _____cautions about watching my step.
10. A _____combatant is another word for civilian.

Suffixes

A suffix is a word part added to the end of a word to create a new meaning. Study the suffix rules in the following boxes.

Rule 1

When adding the suffixes *-ness* and *-ly* to a word, the spelling of the word does not change.

Examples:

- dark + ness = darkness
- scholar + ly = scholarly

Exceptions to Rule 1

When the word ends in *y*, change the *y* to *i* before adding *-ness* and *-ly*.

Examples:

- ready + ly = readily
- happy + ness = happiness

Rule 2

When the suffix begins with a vowel, drop the silent *e* in the root word.

Examples:

- care + ing = caring

- use + able = usable

Exceptions to Rule 2

When the word ends in *ce* or *ge*, keep the silent *e* if the suffix begins with *a* or *o*.

Examples:

- replace + able = replaceable
- courage + ous = courageous

Rule 3

When the suffix begins with a consonant, keep the silent *e* in the original word.

Examples:

- care + ful = careful
- care + less = careless

Exceptions to Rule 3

Examples:

- true + ly = truly
- argue + ment = argument

Rule 4

When the word ends in a consonant plus *y*, change the *y* to *i* before any suffix not beginning with *i*.

Examples:

- sunny + er = sunnier
- hurry + ing = hurrying

Rule 5

When the suffix begins with a vowel, double the final consonant only if (1) the word has only one syllable or is accented on the last syllable and (2) the word ends in a single vowel followed by a single consonant.

Examples:

- tan + ing = tanning (one syllable word)

- regret + ing = regretting (The accent is on the last syllable; the word ends in a single vowel followed by a single consonant.)
- cancel + ed = canceled (The accent is not on the last syllable.)
- prefer + ed = preferred

Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, write correctly the forms of the words with their suffixes.

1. refer + ed
2. refer + ence
3. mope + ing
4. approve + al
5. green + ness
6. benefit + ed
7. resubmit + ing
8. use + age
9. greedy + ly
10. excite + ment

Key Takeaways

- A prefix is a word part added to the beginning of a word that changes the word's meaning.
- A suffix is a word part added to the end of a word that changes the word's meaning.
- Learning the meanings of prefixes and suffixes will help expand your vocabulary, which will help improve your writing.

Writing Application

Write a paragraph describing one of your life goals. Include five words with prefixes and five words with suffixes. Exchange papers with a classmate and circle the prefixes and suffixes in your classmate's paper.

Correct each prefix or suffix that is spelled incorrectly.

4.5 Synonyms and Antonyms

Learning Objectives

1. Recognize how synonyms improve writing.
2. Identify common antonyms to increase your vocabulary.

As you work with your draft, you will want to pay particular attention to the words you have chosen. Do they express exactly what you are trying to convey? Can you choose better, more effective words? Familiarity with synonyms and antonyms can be helpful in answering these questions.

Synonyms

Synonyms are words that have the same, or almost the same, meaning as another word. You can say an “easy task” or a “simple task” because *easy* and *simple* are synonyms. You can say Hong Kong is a “large city” or a “metropolis” because *city* and *metropolis* are synonyms.

However, it is important to remember that not all pairs of words in the English language are so easily interchangeable. The slight but important differences in meaning between synonyms can make a big difference in your writing. For example, the words *boring* and *insipid* may have similar meanings, but the subtle differences between the two will affect the message your writing conveys. The word *insipid* evokes a scholarly and perhaps more pretentious message than *boring*.

The English language is full of pairs of words that have subtle distinctions between them. All writers, professionals and beginners alike, face the challenge of choosing the most appropriate synonym to best convey their ideas. When you pay particular attention to synonyms in your writing, it comes across to your reader. The sentences become much more clear and rich in meaning.

Writing at Work

Any writing you do at work involves a careful choice of words. For example, if you are writing an e-mail to your employer regarding your earnings, you can use the word *pay*, *salary*, or hourly *wage*. There are also other synonyms to choose from. Just keep in mind that the word you choose will have an effect on the reader, so you want to choose wisely to get the desired effect.

Exercise 1

Replace the underlined words in the paragraph with appropriate synonyms. Write the new paragraph on your own sheet of paper.

When most people think of the Renaissance, they might think of artists like Michelangelo, Raphael, or Leonardo da Vinci, but they often overlook one of the very important figures of the Renaissance: Filippo Brunelleschi. Brunelleschi was born in Florence, Italy in 1377. He is considered the very best architect and engineer of the Renaissance. His impressive accomplishments are a testament to following one's dreams, persevering in the face of obstacles, and realizing one's vision.

The most difficult undertaking of Brunelleschi's career was the dome of Florence Cathedral, which took sixteen years to construct. A major blow to the progress of the construction happened in 1428. Brunelleschi had designed a special ship to carry the one hundred tons of marble needed for the dome. He felt this would be the most inexpensive way to transport the marble, but the unthinkable happened. The ship went down to the bottom of the water, taking all the marble with it to the bottom of the river. Brunelleschi was really sad. Nevertheless, he did not give up. He held true to his vision of the completed dome. Filippo Brunelleschi completed construction of the dome of Florence Cathedral in 1446. His influence on artists and architects alike was felt strongly during his lifetime and can still be felt in this day and age.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Exercise 2

On your own sheet of paper, write a sentence with each of the following words that illustrates the specific meaning of each synonym.

1. leave, abandon
2. mad, insane
3. outside, exterior
4. poor, destitute
5. quiet, peaceful
6. riot, revolt
7. rude, impolite
8. talk, conversation
9. hug, embrace
10. home, residence

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Antonyms

Antonyms are words that have the opposite meaning of a given word. The study of antonyms will not only help you choose the most appropriate word as you write; it will also sharpen your overall sense of language. [Table 4.3 “Common Antonyms”](#) lists common words and their antonyms.

Table 4.3 Common Antonyms

Word	Antonym		Word	Antonym
absence	presence		frequent	seldom
accept	refuse		harmful	harmless
accurate	inaccurate		horizontal	vertical
advantage	disadvantage		imitation	genuine
ancient	modern		inhabited	uninhabited
abundant	scarce		inferior	superior
artificial	natural		intentional	accidental
attractive	repulsive		justice	injustice
borrow	lend		knowledge	ignorance
bravery	cowardice		landlord	tenant
create	destroy, demolish		likely	unlikely
bold	timid, meek		minority	majority
capable	incapable		miser	spendthrift
combine	separate		obedient	disobedient
conceal	reveal		optimist	pessimist
common	rare		permanent	temporary
decrease	increase		plentiful	scarce
definite	indefinite		private	public
despair	hope		prudent	imprudent
discourage	encourage		qualified	unqualified
employer	employee		satisfactory	unsatisfactory
expand	contract		tame	wild
forget	remember		vacant	occupied

Tip

Learning antonyms is an effective way to increase your vocabulary. Memorizing words in combination with or in relation to other words often helps us retain them.

Exercise 3

Correct the following sentences by replacing the underlined words with an antonym. Write the antonym on your own sheet of paper.

1. The pilot who landed the plane was a coward because no one was injured.
2. Even though the botany lecture was two hours long, Gerard found it incredibly dull.
3. My mother says it is impolite to say thank you like you really mean it.
4. Although I have learned a lot of information through textbooks, it is life experience that has given me ignorance.
5. When our instructor said the final paper was compulsory, it was music to my ears!
6. My only virtues are coffee, video games, and really loud music.
7. Elvin was so bold when he walked in the classroom that he sat in the back row and did not participate.
8. Maria thinks elephants who live in freedom have a sad look in their eyes.
9. The teacher filled her students' minds with gloomy thoughts about their futures.
10. The guest attended to every one of our needs.

Key Takeaways

- Synonyms are words that have the same, or almost the same, meaning as another word.
- Antonyms are words that have the opposite meaning of another word.
- Choosing the right synonym refines your writing.
- Learning common antonyms sharpens your sense of language and expands your vocabulary.

Writing Application

Write a paragraph that describes your favorite dish or food. Use as many synonyms as you can in the description, even if it seems too many. Be creative. Consult a thesaurus, and take this opportunity to use words you have never used before. Be prepared to share your paragraph.

4.6 Using Context Clues

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the different types of context clues.
2. Practice using context clues while reading.

Context clues are bits of information within a text that will assist you in deciphering the meaning of unknown words. Since most of your knowledge of vocabulary comes from reading, it is important that you recognize context clues. By becoming more aware of particular words and phrases surrounding a difficult word, you can make logical guesses about its meaning. The following are the different types of context clues:

- Brief definition or restatement
- Synonyms and antonyms
- Examples

Brief Definition or Restatement

Sometimes a text directly states the definition or a restatement of the unknown word. The brief definition or restatement is signaled by a word or a punctuation mark. Consider the following example:

If you visit Alaska, you will likely see many glaciers, or slow moving masses of ice.

In this sentence, the word *glaciers* is defined by the phrase that follows the signal word *or*, which is *slow moving masses of ice*.

In other instances, the text may restate the meaning of the word in a different way, by using punctuation as a signal. Look at the following example:

Marina was indignant—fuming mad—when she discovered her brother had left for the party without her.

Although *fuming mad* is not a formal definition of the word *indignant*, it does serve to define it. These two examples use signals—the word *or* and the punctuation dashes—to indicate the meaning of the unfamiliar word. Other signals to look for are the words *is*, *as*, *means*, *known as*, and *refers to*.

Synonyms and Antonyms

Sometimes a text gives a synonym of the unknown word to signal the meaning of the unfamiliar word:

When you interpret an image, you actively question and examine what the image connotes and suggests.

In this sentence the word *suggests* is a synonym of the word *connotes*. The word *and* sometimes signals synonyms.

Likewise, the word *but* may signal a contrast, which can help you define a word by its antonym.

I abhor clothes shopping, but I adore grocery shopping.

The word *abhor* is contrasted with its opposite: *adore*. From this context, the reader can guess that *abhor* means to dislike greatly.

Examples

Sometimes a text will give you an example of the word that sheds light on its meaning:

I knew Mark's ailurophobia was in full force because he began trembling and stuttering when he saw my cat, Ludwig, slink out from under the bed.

Although *ailurophobia* is an unknown word, the sentence gives an example of its effects. Based on this example, a reader could confidently surmise that the word means a fear of cats.

Tip

Look for signal words like *such as*, *for instance*, and *for example*. These words signal that a word's meaning

may be revealed through an example.

Exercise 1

Identify the context clue that helps define the underlined words in each of the following sentences. Write the context clue on your own sheet of paper.

1. Lucinda is very adroit on the balance beam, but Constance is rather clumsy.
2. I saw the entomologist, a scientist who studies insects, cradle the giant dung beetle in her palm.
3. Lance's comments about politics were irrelevant and meaningless to the botanist's lecture on plant reproduction.
4. Before I left for my trip to the Czech Republic, I listened to my mother's sage advice and made a copy of my passport.
5. His rancor, or hatred, for socializing resulted in a life of loneliness and boredom.
6. Martin was mortified, way beyond embarrassment, when his friends teamed up to shove him into the pool.
7. The petulant four-year-old had a baby sister who was, on the contrary, not grouchy at all.
8. The philosophy teacher presented the students with several conundrums, or riddles, to solve.
9. Most Americans are omnivores, people that eat both plants and animals.
10. Elena is effervescent, as excited as a cheerleader, for example, when she meets someone for the first time.

Exercise 2

On your own sheet of paper, write the name of the context clue that helps to define the underlined words.

Maggie was a precocious child to say the least. She produced brilliant watercolor paintings by the age of three. At first, her parents were flabbergasted—utterly blown away—by their daughter's ability, but soon they got used to their little painter. Her preschool teacher said that Maggie's dexterity, or ease with which she used her hands, was something she had never before seen in such a young child. Little Maggie never gloated or took pride in her paintings; she just smiled contentedly when she finished one and requested her parents give it to someone as a gift. Whenever people met Maggie for the first time they often watched her paint with their mouths agape, but her parents always kept their mouths closed and simply smiled over their "little Monet."

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Tip

In addition to context clues to help you figure out the meaning of a word, examine the following word parts: prefixes, roots, and suffixes.

Writing at Work

Jargon is a type of shorthand communication often used in the workplace. It is the technical language of a special field. Imagine it is your first time working as a server in a restaurant and your manager tells you he is going to “eighty-six” the roasted chicken. If you do not realize that “eighty-six” means to remove an item from the menu, you could be confused.

When you first start a job, no matter where it may be, you will encounter jargon that will likely be foreign to you. Perhaps after working the job for a short time, you too will feel comfortable enough to use it. When you are first hired, however, jargon can be baffling and make you feel like an outsider. If you cannot decipher the jargon based on the context, it is always a good policy to ask.

Key Takeaways

- Context clues are words or phrases within a text that help clarify vocabulary that is unknown to you.
- There are several types of context clues including brief definition and restatement, synonyms and antonyms, and example.

Writing Application

Write a paragraph describing your first job. In the paragraph, use five words previously unknown to you. These words could be jargon words or you may consult a dictionary or thesaurus to find a new word. Make sure to provide a specific context clue for understanding each word. Exchange papers with a classmate and try to decipher the meaning of the words in each other's paragraphs based on the context clues.

4.7 Working with Words: End-of-Chapter Exercises

Learning Objectives

1. Use the skills you have learned in the chapter.
2. Work collaboratively with other students.

Exercises

1. Proofread the paragraph and correct any commonly confused words and misspelled words.

Grunge, or the Seattle sound, is a type of rock music that became quiet popular in the late 1980s and early 1990s. It began in Seattle, Washington. Grunge musicians rejected the dramatic an expensive stage productions that were trendy at the time. There music was striped down with an emphasis on distorted electric guitars. Grunge musicians did not ware makeup or sport extravagant hairstyles like many of the day's rock musicians and bands. Many grunge musicians would by they're clothes from secondhand stores. The lyrics too grunge songs were also quit different compared two what was populer at the time. Grunge lyrics are charecterized by dark or socially conscience themes. Grunge music is still admired today buy music lovers of all ages.

2. Complete the following sentences by filling in the blank line with the correct homonym or frequently misspelled word.
 - a. Kevin asked me a serious question and _____(then, than) interrupted me when I attempted to answer.
 - b. A hot compress will _____(lessen, lesson) the pain of muscle cramps.
 - c. Jason was not a graceful _____(looser, loser) because he knocked his chair over and stormed off the basketball court.
 - d. Please consider the _____(effects, affects) of not getting enough green vegetables in your diet.
 - e. _____(Except, Accept) for Ajay, we all had our tickets to the play.
 - f. I am _____(threw, through) with this magazine, so you can read it if you like.
 - g. I don't care _____(whose, who's) coming to the party and _____(whose, who's) not.
 - h. Crystal could _____(sea, see) the soaring hawk through her binoculars.
 - i. The _____(principal, principle) gave the students a very long lecture about peer pressure.
 - j. Dr. Frankl nearly lost his _____(patience, patients) with one of his _____(patience, patients).
3. Rewrite the following personal essay by replacing the slang, clichés, and overly general language

with stronger, more precise language.

My biggest regret happened in high school. I had always felt like a fish out of water, so during my sophomore year I was determined to fit in with the cool people. Man, was that an uphill battle. I don't even know why I tried, but hindsight is 20/20 I guess. The first thing I did was change the way I dressed. I went from wearing clothes I was comfortable in to wearing stuff that was so not me. Then I started wearing a ton of makeup, and my brother was all like, "What happened to your face?" Not only did my looks change, my personality changed a lot too. I started to act all stuck up and bossy with my friends, and they didn't know how to respond to this person that used to be me. Luckily, this phase didn't last more than a couple of months. I decided it was more fun to be me than to try to be someone else. I guess you can't fit a square peg in a round hole after all.

4. Write the correct synonym for each word.

- a. lenient _____(relaxed, callous)
- b. abandon _____(vacate, deceive)
- c. berate _____(criticize, encourage)
- d. experienced _____(callow, matured)
- e. spiteful _____(malevolent, mellow)
- f. tame _____(subdued, wild)
- g. tasty _____(savory, bland)
- h. banal _____(common, interesting)
- i. contradict _____(deny, revolt)
- j. vain _____(boastful, simple)

Chapter 5: Help for English Language Learners

5.1 Word Order

5.2 Negative Statements

5.3 Count and Noncount Nouns and Articles

5.4 Pronouns

5.5 Verb Tenses

5.6 Modal Auxiliaries

5.7 Prepositions

5.8 Slang and Idioms

5.9 Help for English Language Learners: End-of-Chapter Exercises

5.1 Word Order

Learning Objectives

1. Identify the basic structures of sentences.
2. Determine ways to turn sentences into questions.
3. Define adjectives and how they are used.

If your first language is not English, you will most likely need some extra help when writing in Standard, or formal, English. New students of Standard English often make similar kinds of errors. Even if you have been speaking English for a long time, you may not feel as confident in your written English skills. This chapter covers the most common errors made by English language learners and helps you avoid similar mistakes in your writing.

Basic Sentence Structures

The most basic sentence structure in English is a subject plus a verb. A subject performs the action in the sentence, and the verb identifies the action. Keep in mind that in some languages, such as Spanish and Italian, an obvious subject does not always perform the action in a sentence; the subject is often implied by the verb. However, every sentence in English must have a subject and a verb to express a complete thought.

subject + verb
Samantha sleeps.

Not all sentences are as simple as a subject plus a verb. To form more complex sentences, writers build upon this basic structure. Adding a prepositional phrase to the basic sentence creates a more complex sentence. A preposition is a part of speech that relates a noun or a pronoun to another word in a sentence. It also introduces a prepositional phrase. If you can identify a preposition, you will be able to identify a prepositional phrase.

subject + verb + prepositional phrase
Samantha sleeps on the couch.

On is the preposition. *On the couch* is the prepositional phrase.

Common Prepositions

about	beside	off
above	between	on
across	by	over
after	during	through
against	except	to
along	for	toward
among	from	under
around	in	until
at	into	up
before	like	with
behind	of	without

Exercise 1

Copy the following sentences onto your own sheet of paper and underline the prepositional phrases.

1. Linda and Javier danced under the stars.
2. Each person has an opinion about the topic.
3. The fans walked through the gates.
4. Jamyra ran around the track.
5. Maria celebrated her birthday in January.

Another sentence structure that is important to understand is subject + verb + object. There are two types of objects: direct objects and indirect objects.

A direct object receives the action of the verb.

subject + verb + direct object
Janice writes a letter.

The letter directly receives the action of the verb *writes*.

Tip

A quick way to find the direct object is to ask *what?* or *who?*

Sentence: Maurice kicked the ball.

What did Maurice kick? The direct object, *ball*.

Sentence: Maurice kicked Tom by accident.

Who did Maurice kick? The direct object, *Tom*.

An indirect object does not receive the action of the verb.

subject + verb + indirect object

Janice writes me a letter

The action (*writes*) is performed for or to the indirect object (*me*).

Tip

Even though the indirect object is not found after a preposition in English, it can be discovered by asking *to whom?* or *for whom?* after the verb.

Sentence: Dad baked the children some cookies.

For whom did Dad bake the cookies? The indirect object, *children*.

Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, identify the subject, verb, direct object, and indirect object in the following sentences.

1. Captain Kirk told the crew a story.
2. Jermaine gave his girlfriend a dozen yellow tulips.
3. That hospital offers nurses better pay.
4. Dad served Grandma a delicious dinner.
5. Mom bought herself a new car.

Exercise 3

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the sentences in the correct order. If the sentence is correct as it is, write *OK*.

1. The pizza Jeannine burnt.
2. To the Mexican restaurant we had to go for dinner.
3. Jeannine loved the food.
4. So full were we during the walk home.
5. I will make the pizza next time.

Questions

English speakers rely on the following two common ways to turn sentences into questions:

1. Move the helping verb and add a question mark.
2. Add the verb *do*, *does*, or *did* and add a question mark.

Move the helping verb and add a question mark.

Sentence: Sierra can pack these boxes.

Question: **Can** Sierra pack these boxes?

Add the verb *do*, *does*, or *did*, and add a question mark:

Sentence: Jolene skated across the pond.

Question: **Did** Jolene skate across the pond?

Exercise 4

On a separate sheet of paper, create questions from the following sentences.

1. *Slumdog Millionaire* is a film directed by Danny Boyle.
2. The story centers on a character named Jamal Malik.
3. He and his older brother find different ways to escape the slums.
4. His brother, Salim, pursues a life of crime.

5. Jamal ends up on the game show *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?*

Adjectives

An adjective is a kind of descriptive word that describes a noun or a pronoun. It tells *which one*, *what kind*, and *how many*. Adjectives make your writing more lively and interesting. Keep in mind, a common error that English language learners make is misplacing the adjectives in a sentence. It is important to know where to place the adjective in a sentence so that readers are not confused.

If you are using more than one adjective to describe a noun, place the adjectives in the following order before the noun:

1. **Opinion:** an interesting book, a boring movie, a fun ride
2. **Size:** a large box, a tiny turtle, a tall woman
3. **Shape:** a round ball, a long hose, a square field
4. **Age:** a new day, an old horse, a modern building
5. **Color:** an orange sunset, a green jacket, a red bug
6. **Ethnicity:** Italian cheese, French wine, Chinese tea
7. **Material:** silk shirt, wool socks, a cotton dress

Tip

Adjectives can also be placed at the end of a sentence if they describe the subject of a sentence and appear after the verb.

Sentence: My English teacher is excellent.

Exercise 5

On a separate sheet of paper, place the following sets of adjectives in the correct order before the noun. The first one has been done for you.

1. book: old, small, Spanish

- a small old Spanish book (age, size, ethnicity)
2. photograph: new, strange
 3. suit: wool, green, funny
 4. opinion: refreshing, new
 5. dress: fashionable, purple

Key Takeaways

- The most basic sentence structure is a subject plus a verb that expresses a complete thought.
- Adding a prepositional phrase or a direct or indirect object to a sentence makes it more complex.
- English speakers change a sentence into a question in one of the following two ways: moving the helping verb and adding a question mark or adding the verb *do*, *does*, or *did* and adding a question mark.
- Adjectives follow a particular order before the noun they describe. The order is opinion, size, shape, age, color, ethnicity, and material.

Writing Application

Write a paragraph about a memorable family trip. Use at least two adjectives to describe each noun in your paragraph. Proofread your paragraph, and then exchange papers with a classmate. Check your classmate's use of adjectives to make sure they are correct.

5.2 Negative Statements

Learning Objectives

1. Identify a negative statement.
2. Write negative statements.

Negative statements are the opposite of positive statements and are necessary to express an opposing idea. The following charts list negative words and helping verbs that can be combined to form a negative statement.

Negative Words

never	no	hardly
nobody	none	scarcely
no one	not	barely
nowhere		rarely

Common Helping Verbs

am	is	are
was	were	be
being	been	have
has	had	do
does	did	can
could	may	might
must	will	should
would	ought to	used to

The following examples show several ways to make a sentence negative in the present tense.

1. A helping verb used with the negative word *not*.

Sentence: My guests are arriving now.

Negative: My guests **are not** arriving now.

2. The negative word *no*.

Sentence: Jennie has money.

Negative: Jennie **has no** money.

3. The contraction *n't*.

Sentence: Janetta does miss her mom.

Negative: Janetta **doesn't** miss her mom.

4. The negative adverb *rarely*.

Sentence: I always go to the gym after work.

Negative: I **rarely** go to the gym after work.

5. The negative subject *nobody*.

Sentence: Everybody gets the day off.

Negative: **Nobody** gets the day off.

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the positive sentences as negative sentences. Be sure to keep the sentences in the present tense.

1. Everybody is happy about the mandatory lunch.
2. Deborah likes to visit online dating sites.
3. Jordan donates blood every six months.
4. Our writing instructor is very effective.
5. That beautiful papaya is cheap.

The following sentences show you the ways to make a sentence negative in the past tense.

Sentence: Paul called me yesterday.

Negative: Paul **did not** call me yesterday.

Sentence: Jamilee went to the grocery store.

Negative: Jamilee **never went** to the grocery store.

Sentence: Gina laughed when she saw the huge pile of laundry.

Negative: Gina **did not laugh** when she saw the huge pile of laundry.

Notice that when forming a negative in the past tense, the helping verb *did* is what signals the past tense, and the main verb *laugh* does not have an *-ed* ending.

Exercise 2

Rewrite the following paragraph by correcting the errors in the past-tense negative sentences.

Celeste no did call me when she reached North Carolina. I was worried because she not drove alone before. She was going to meet her friend, Terry, who lived in a town called Asheville, North Carolina. I did never want to worry, but she said she was going to call when she reached there. Finally, four hours later, she called and said, “Mom, I’m sorry I did not call. I lost track of time because I was so happy to see Terry!” I was relieved.

Collaboration

Once you have found all the errors you can, please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Did your partner find an error you missed? Did you find an error your partner missed? Compare with your instructor’s answers.

Double negatives are two negatives used in the same phrase or sentence. They are considered incorrect in Standard English. You should avoid using double negatives in all formal writing. If you want to say something negative, use only one negative word in the sentence. Return to the beginning of this section for a list of negative words, and then study the following examples.

Double negative (incorrect)	Single negative (correct)
neg. + neg. I couldn’t find no paper	neg. I couldn’t find any paper.
neg. + neg. I don’t want nothing.	neg. I don’t want anything.

Tip

Ain’t is considered a contraction of *am not*. Although some may use it in everyday speech, it is considered incorrect in Standard English. Avoid using it when speaking and writing in formal contexts.

Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, correct the double negatives and rewrite the following sentences.

1. Jose didn't like none of the choices on the menu.
2. Brittany can't make no friends with nobody.
3. The Southwest hardly had no rain last summer.
4. My kids never get into no trouble.
5. I could not do nothing about the past.

Key Takeaways

- Negatives are usually formed using a negative word plus a helping verb.
- Double negatives are considered incorrect in Standard English.
- Only one negative word is used to express a negative statement.

Writing Application

Write a paragraph describing your favorite meal. Use rich, colorful language to describe the meal. Exchange papers with a classmate and read his or her paragraph. Then rewrite each sentence of your classmate's paragraph using negatives. Be sure to avoid double negatives. Share your negative paragraphs with each other.

5.3 Count and Noncount Nouns and Articles

Learning Objectives

1. Define and use count and noncount nouns.
2. Recognize and use definite and indefinite articles.

Nouns are words that name things, places, people, and ideas. Right now, you may be surrounded by desks, computers, and notebooks. These are called count nouns because you can count the exact number of desks, computers, and notebooks—three desks, one computer, and six notebooks, for example.

On the other hand, you may be carrying a small amount of money in your wallet and sitting on a piece of furniture. These are called noncount nouns. Although you can count the pieces of furniture or the amount of money, you cannot add a number in front of *money* or *furniture* and simply add –s to the end of the noun. Instead, you must use other words and phrases to indicate the quantity of money and furniture.

Incorrect: five moneys, two furnitures

Correct: some money, two pieces of furniture

By the end of [Section 5.3.1 “Count and Noncount Nouns”](#), you will grasp the difference between the two types of nouns and be able to use them confidently in speaking and writing.

Count and Noncount Nouns

A count noun refers to people, places, and things that are separate units. You make count nouns plural by adding –s.

Table 5.1 Count Nouns

Count Noun	Sentence
Quarter	It takes six quarters to do my laundry.
Chair	Make sure to push in your chairs before leaving class.
Candidate	The two candidates debated the issue.
Adult	The three adults in the room acted like children.
Comedian	The two comedians made the audience laugh.

A noncount noun identifies a whole object that cannot separate and count individually. Noncount nouns may refer to concrete objects or abstract objects. A concrete noun identifies an object you can see, taste, touch, or count. An abstract noun identifies an object that you cannot see, touch, or count. There are some exceptions, but most abstract nouns cannot be made plural, so they are noncount nouns. Examples of abstract nouns include anger, education, melancholy, softness, violence, and conduct.

Table 5.2 Types of Noncount Nouns

Type of Noncount Noun	Examples	Sentence
Food	sugar, salt, pepper, lettuce, rice	Add more sugar to my coffee, please.
Solids	concrete, chocolate, silver, soap	The ice cream was covered in creamy chocolate.
Abstract Nouns	peace, warmth, hospitality, information	I need more information about the insurance policy.

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, label each of the following nouns as count or noncount.

1. Electricity _____
2. Water _____
3. Book _____
4. Sculpture _____
5. Advice _____

Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, identify whether the italicized noun in the sentence is a count or noncount noun by writing **C** or **NC** above the noun.

1. The amount of *traffic* on the way home was terrible.
2. *Forgiveness* is an important part of growing up.
3. I made caramel sauce for the organic *apples* I bought.
4. I prefer film *cameras* instead of digital ones.
5. My favorite subject is *history*.

Definite and Indefinite Articles

The word *the* is a definite article. It refers to one or more specific things. For example, *the woman* refers to not any woman but a particular woman. The definite article *the* is used before singular and plural count nouns.

The words *a* and *an* are indefinite articles. They refer to one nonspecific thing. For example, *a woman* refers to any woman, not a specific, particular woman. The indefinite article *a* or *an* is used before a singular count noun.

Definite Articles (*The*) and Indefinite Articles (*A/An*) with Count Nouns

I saw **the** concert. (singular, refers to a specific concert)

I saw **the** concerts. (plural, refers to more than one specific concert)

I saw **the** U2 concert last night. (singular, refers to a specific concert)

I saw **a** concert. (singular, refers to any nonspecific concert)

Exercise 3

On a separate sheet of paper, write the correct article in the blank for each of the following sentences. Write **OK** if the sentence is correct.

1. (A/An/The) camel can live for days without water. _____
2. I enjoyed (a/an/the) pastries at the Bar Mitzvah. _____

3. (A/An/The) politician spoke of many important issues. _____
4. I really enjoyed (a/an/the) actor's performance in the play. _____
5. (A/An/The) goal I have is to run a marathon this year. _____

Exercise 4

Correct the misused or missing articles and rewrite the paragraph.

Stars are large balls of spinning hot gas like our sun. The stars look tiny because they are far away. Many of them are much larger than sun. Did you know that a Milky Way galaxy has between two hundred billion and four hundred billion stars in it? Scientists estimate that there may be as many as five hundred billion galaxies in an entire universe! Just like a human being, the star has a life cycle from birth to death, but its lifespan is billions of years long. The star is born in a cloud of cosmic gas and dust called a nebula. Our sun was born in the nebula nearly five billion years ago. Photographs of the star-forming nebulas are astonishing.

Collaboration

Once you have found all the errors you can, share with a classmate and compare your answers. Did your partner find an error you missed? Did you find an error your partner missed? Compare with your instructor's answers.

Key Takeaways

- You can make count nouns plural by adding -s.
- Count nouns are individual people, places, or things that can be counted, such as politicians, deserts, or candles.
- Noncount nouns refer to whole things that cannot be made plural, such as salt, peace, or happiness.
- *The* is a definite article and is used to refer to a specific person, place, or thing, such as **the** Queen of England.
- *A* and *an* are indefinite articles, and they refer to nonspecific people, places, or things, such as **an** apple or **a** bicycle.

Writing Application

Write five sentences using the definite article *the*. Write five sentences using the indefinite article *a* or *an*.

Exchange papers with a classmate and check each other's work.

5.4 Pronouns

Learning Objectives

1. Recognize subject and object pronouns.
2. Identify possessive pronouns.
3. Determine common pronoun errors.

A pronoun is a word that can be used in place of the noun. We use pronouns so we do not have to repeat words. For example, imagine writing the following sentence: Afrah put her scarf on because Afrah was cold. The sentence sounds a bit strange because *Afrah* is named twice; however, if you use a pronoun, the sentence will be shorter and less repetitive. You might rewrite the sentence to something similar to the following: Afrah put her scarf on because she was cold. *She* refers to Afrah, so you do not have to write the name twice.

Types of Pronouns

Subject pronouns are often the subject of a sentence—“who” and “what” the sentence is about.

Sentence: **She** loves the desserts in France.

She is the subject.

Sentence: By lunch time, **they** were hungry.

They is the subject.

Object pronouns are often the object of the verb— “who” or “what” was acted upon.

Sentence: Melanie’s thoughtfulness touched **him**.

Him is the object of the verb *touched*.

Sentence: We lifted **it**.

It is the object of the verb *lifted*.

Tip

The masculine subject pronoun is *he*, and the masculine object pronoun is *him*. The feminine subject pronoun is *she*, and the feminine object pronoun is *her*.

A pronoun that shows possession or ownership is called a possessive pronoun.

Sentence: The teacher took **her** apple and left.

The pronoun *her* shows the teacher owns the apple.

Sentence: The hikers spotted **their** guide on the trail.

The pronoun *their* shows the hikers follow the guide who was assigned to the hikers.

Table 5.3 Pronouns

Subject Pronouns	I, you, he, she, it, we, they
Object Pronouns	me, you, him, her, it, us, them
Possessive Pronouns	my (mine), your(s), his, hers, its, our(s), their(s)

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by circling the correct pronoun.

1. Unfortunately, the house was too expensive for (we, us, they).
2. I completed (mine, my, your) research paper, and she completed (his, hers, theirs).
3. My dog Buster is old, but (he, it, them) is very playful.
4. That ring belongs to my father, so it is (hers, his, theirs).
5. I cannot find my textbook, so I think (they, it, he) is lost.

Common Pronoun Errors

English language learners often make the same errors when using pronouns. The following examples illustrate common errors.

Incorrect: **Me** and Daniela went to the restaurant for lunch.

This sentence is incorrect because an object pronoun (*me*) is used instead of a subject pronoun.

Correct: Daniela and **I** went to the restaurant for lunch.

This sentence is now correct because a subject pronoun (*I*) is used.

Incorrect: Mark put *her* grocery bag on the counter.

This sentence is incorrect because the pronoun *her* refers to a female, and Mark is a male.

Correct: Mark put **his** grocery bag on the counter.

This sentence is now correct because the male pronoun *his* refers to the male person, *Mark*.

Incorrect: The woman *she* went to work earlier than usual.

This sentence is incorrect because the subject *the woman* is repeated by the pronoun *she*.

Correct: **The woman** went to work earlier than usual.

Correct: **She** went to work earlier than usual.

These sentences are now correct because the unnecessary repeated subject has been removed.

Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, correct the following sentences that have pronoun errors. If the sentence is correct as it is, write *OK*.

1. Us are going to the county fair this weekend.
2. Steven did not want to see a movie because she had a headache.
3. The teacher congratulated Maria and me.
4. The eighth grade students they were all behaving mysteriously well.
5. Derrick and he received the best grade on the grammar test.

Relative Pronouns

A relative pronoun is a type of pronoun that helps connect details to the subject of the sentence and may

often combine two shorter sentences. The relative pronouns are *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *which* or *that*.

Sentence: A relative pronoun is a type of pronoun.

The subject of this sentence is *a relative pronoun*. The clause *is a type of pronoun* gives some information about the subject.

The relative pronoun *that* may be added to give more details to the subject.

Sentence using a relative pronoun: A relative pronoun is a type of pronoun **that** helps connect details to the subject of the sentence.

Tip

Remember the following uses of relative pronouns:

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

The following examples show how a relative pronoun may be used to connect two sentences and to connect details to the subject.

Sentence 1: Gossip is a form of communication.

Sentence 2: It is a waste of time and energy.

Combination of 1 and 2: Gossip is a form of communication **that** is a waste of time and energy.

Notice how the relative pronoun *that* replaces the subject *it* in sentence 2.

That is called a relative pronoun because it connects the details (*is a waste of time and energy*) to the subject (*Gossip*).

Sentence 1: My grandmother is eighty years old.

Sentence 2: She collects seashells.

Combination of 1 and 2: My grandmother, **who** is eighty years old, collects seashells.

Notice how the relative pronoun *who* replaces the subject *she* in sentence 2.

Who is called a relative pronoun because it connects the details (*is eighty years old*) to the subject (*My*

grandmother).

Exercise 3

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by selecting the correct relative pronoun.

1. He showed me a photo (who, that) upset me.
2. Soccer is a fast moving game (who, that) has many fans worldwide.
3. Juan is a man (which, who) has high standards for everything.
4. Jamaica is a beautiful country (that, who) I would like to visit next year.
5. My mother only eats bananas (who, that) are green.

Exercise 4

On a separate sheet of paper, combine the two sentences into one sentence using a relative pronoun.

1. Jeff is a dependable person. He will never let you down.
2. I rode a roller coaster. It was scary.
3. At the beach, I always dig my feet into the sand. It protects them from the hot sun.
4. Jackie is trying not to use so many plastic products. They are not good for the environment.
5. My Aunt Sherry is teaching me how to drive. She has never been in accident or gotten a ticket.

Key Takeaways

- A pronoun is used in place of a noun.
- There are several types of pronouns, including subject and object pronouns, possessive pronouns, and relative pronouns.
- Subject pronouns are the “who” and “what” the sentence is about.
- Object pronouns are the “who” and “what” that receives the action.
- A possessive pronoun is a pronoun showing ownership.
- Common pronoun errors include mixing up subject, object, and gender pronouns, and repeating the subject of a sentence with a pronoun.

- Relative pronouns help combine two separate sentences.

Writing Application

Proofread a piece of your writing for the types of pronoun errors discussed in this section. Correct any errors you come across.

5.5 Verb Tenses

Learning Objectives

1. Identify simple verb tenses.
2. Recognize *to be*, *to have*, and *to do* verbs.
3. Use perfect verb tenses.
4. Apply progressive verb tenses.
5. Define gerunds and infinitives.

You must always use a verb in every sentence you write. Verbs are parts of speech that indicate actions or states of being. The most basic sentence structure is a subject followed by a verb.

Simple Verb Tenses

Verb tenses tell the reader when the action takes place. The action could be in the past, present, or future.

Past	← Present →	Future
Yesterday I jumped .	Today I jump .	Tomorrow I will jump .

Simple present verbs are used in the following situations:

1. When the action takes place now
I **drink** the water greedily.
2. When the action is something that happens regularly
I **always cross** my fingers for good luck.
3. When describing things that are generally true
College tuition **is** very costly.

Table 5.4 Regular Simple Present Tense Verbs

Verb	I	He/She/It	You	We	They
ask	ask	asks	ask	ask	ask
bake	bake	bakes	bake	bake	bake
cook	cook	cooks	cook	cook	cook
cough	cough	coughs	cough	cough	cough
clap	clap	claps	clap	clap	clap
dance	dance	dances	dance	dance	dance
erase	erase	erases	erase	erase	erase
kiss	kiss	kisses	kiss	kiss	kiss
push	push	pushes	push	push	push
wash	wash	washes	wash	wash	wash

When it is *he*, *she*, or *it* doing the present tense action, remember to add *–s*, or *–es* to the end of the verb or to change the *y* to *–ies*.

Simple past verbs are used when the action has already taken place and is now finished:

- I **washed** my uniform last night.
- I **asked** for more pie.
- I **coughed** loudly last night.

Table 5.5 Regular Simple Past Tense Verbs

Verb	I	He/She/It	You	We	They
ask	asked	asked	asked	asked	asked
bake	baked	baked	baked	baked	baked
cook	cooked	cooked	cooked	cooked	cooked
cough	coughed	coughed	coughed	coughed	coughed
clap	clapped	clapped	clapped	clapped	clapped
dance	danced	danced	danced	danced	danced
erase	erased	erased	erased	erased	erased
kiss	kissed	kissed	kissed	kissed	kissed
push	pushed	pushed	pushed	pushed	pushed
wash	washed	washed	washed	washed	washed

When *he*, *she*, or *it* is doing the action in the past tense, remember to add *-d* or *-ed* to the end of regular verbs.

Simple future verbs are used when the action has not yet taken place:

- I **will work** late tomorrow.
- I **will kiss** my boyfriend when I see him.
- I **will erase** the board after class.

Table 5.6 Regular Simple Future Tense Verbs

Verb	I	He/She/It	You	We	They
ask	will ask	will ask	will ask	will ask	will ask
bake	will bake	will bake	will bake	will bake	will bake
cook	will cook	will cook	will cook	will cook	will cook
cough	will cough	will cough	will cough	will cough	will cough
clap	will clap	will clap	will clap	will clap	will clap
dance	will dance	will dance	will dance	will dance	will dance
erase	will erase	will erase	will erase	will erase	will erase
kiss	will kiss	will kiss	will kiss	will kiss	will kiss
push	will push	will push	will push	will push	will push
wash	will wash	will wash	will wash	will wash	will wash

Going to can also be added to the main verb to make it future tense:

- I am **going to** go to work tomorrow.

Exercise 1

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by adding the verb in the correct simple tense.

1. Please do not (erase, erased, will erase) what I have written on the board.
2. They (dance, danced, will dance) for hours after the party was over.
3. Harrison (wash, washed, will wash) his laundry after several weeks had passed.
4. Yesterday Mom (ask, asked, will ask) me about my plans for college.
5. I (bake, baked, will bake) several dozen cookies for tomorrow's bake sale.

Exercise 2

Correct the verb tense mistakes in the following paragraph.

Last summer, I walk around Walden Pond. Walden Pond is in Concord, Massachusetts. It is where the philosopher Henry David Thoreau will live during the mid-nineteenth century. During his time there, he wrote a book called *Walden*. *Walden* is a book of Thoreau's reflections on the natural environment. It will be consider a classic in American literature. I did not know that Walden Pond is consider the birthplace of the environmental movement. It was very relaxing there. I will listen to birds, frogs, and crickets, not to mention the peaceful sound of the pond itself.

Collaboration

Once you have found all the errors you can, please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Did your partner find an error you missed? Did you find an error your partner missed? Compare with your instructor's answers.

To Be, To Do, and To Have

There are some irregular verbs in English that are formed in special ways. The most common of these are the verbs *to be*, *to have*, and *to do*.

Table 5.7 Verb Forms of *To Be*, *To Do*, and *To Have*

Base Form	Present Tense Form	Past Tense Form	Future Tense Form
be	am/is/are	was/were	will be
do	do/does	did	will do
have	have/has	had	will have

Tip

Memorize the present tense forms of *to be*, *to do*, and *to have*. A song or rhythmic pattern will make them easier to memorize.

Review these examples of *to be*, *to do*, and *to have* used in sentences.

Past	← Present →	Future
To Be		
Yesterday I was angry.	Today I am not angry.	Tomorrow I will be angry.
To Do		
I did my best yesterday.	I do my best every day.	Tomorrow I will do my best.
To Have		
Yesterday I had ten dollars.	Today I have ten dollars.	Tomorrow I will have ten dollars.

Remember the following uses of *to be*, *to have* and *to do*:

To Be

- I → am/was/will be
- you/we/they → are/were/will be
- he/she/it → is/was/will be

To Have

- I/you/we/they → have/had/will have
- he/she/it → has/had/will have

To Do

- I/you/we/they → do/did/will do
- he/she/it → does/did/will do

Tip

Remember, if you have a compound subject like *Marie and Jennifer*, think of the subject as *they* to determine the correct verb form.

- Marie and Jennifer (*they*) have a house on Bainbridge Island.

Similarly, single names can be thought of as *he*, *she*, or *it*.

- LeBron (*he*) has scored thirty points so far.

Exercise 3

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by circling the correct form of the verbs *to be*, *to have*, and *to do* in the three simple tenses.

1. Stefan always (do, does, will do) his taxes the day before they are due.
2. We (are, is, was) planning a surprise birthday party for my mother.
3. Turtles (have, had, has) the most beautiful patterns on their shells.
4. I always (do, did, will do) my homework before dinner, so I can eat in peace.
5. You (is, are, was) so much smarter than you think!

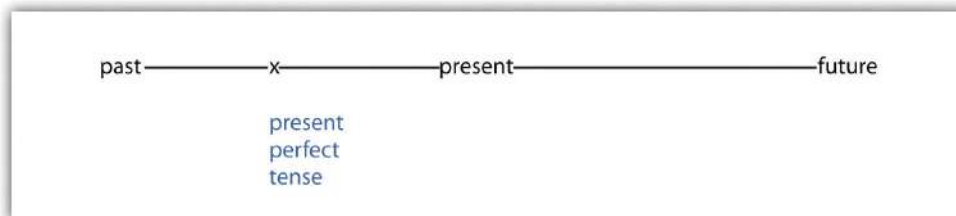
Perfect Verb Tenses

Up to this point, we have studied the three simple verb tenses—simple present, simple past, and simple future. Now we will add three more tenses, which are called perfect tenses. They are present perfect, past perfect, and future perfect. These are the three basic tenses of English. A past participle is often called the *-ed* form of a verb because it is formed by adding *-d* or *-ed* to the base form of regular verbs. Past participles can also end in *-t* or *-en*. Keep in mind, however, the past participle is also formed in various other ways for irregular verbs. The past participle can be used to form the present perfect tense.

Review the following basic formula for the present perfect tense:

Subject	+	has or have	+	past participle
I		have		helped

The present perfect tense has a connection with the past and the present.



Use the present perfect tense to describe a continuing situation and to describe an action that has just happened.

- I **have worked** as a caretaker since June.

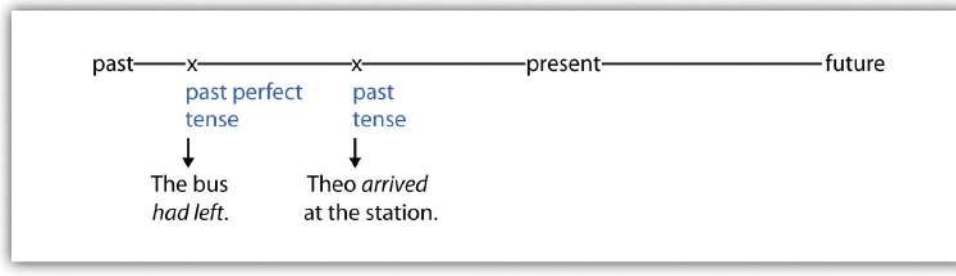
This sentence tells us that the subject has worked as a caretaker in the past and is still working as a caretaker in the present.

- Dmitri **has just received** an award from the Dean of Students.

This sentence tells us that Dmitri has very recently received the award. The word *just* emphasizes that the action happened very recently.

Study the following basic formula for the past perfect tense:

Subject	+	had or have	+	past participle
I		had		listened

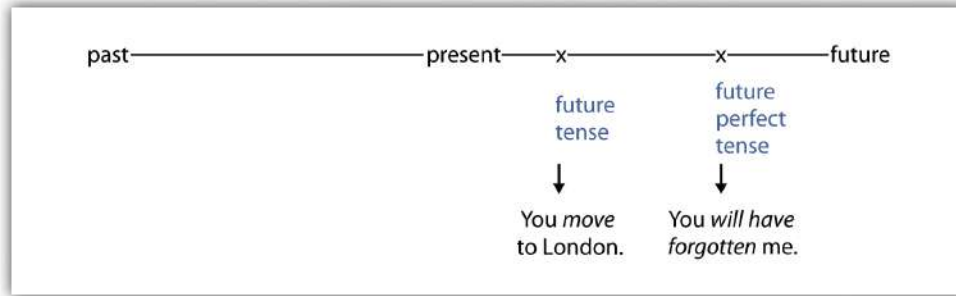


- The bus **had left** by the time Theo **arrived** at the station.

Notice that both actions occurred entirely in the past, but one action occurred before the other. At some time in the past, Theo *arrived* (simple past tense) at the station, but at some time before that, the bus *had left* (past perfect).

Look at the following basic formula for the future perfect tense:

Subject	+	will have	+	past participle
I		will have		graduated



The future perfect tense describes an action from the past in the future, as if the past event has already occurred. Use the future perfect tense when you anticipate completing an event in the future, but you have not completed it yet.

- You **will have forgotten** me after you **move** to London.

Notice that both actions occur in the future, but one action will occur before the other. At some time in the future, the subject (*you*) *will move* (future tense) to London, and at some time after that, the subject *will have forgotten* (future perfect tense) the speaker, *me*.

Exercise 4

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by using the correct perfect verb tense for the verb in parentheses.

1. I plan to start a compost bin because I _____ (to want) one for a long time now.
2. My brother told me he _____ (to argue) with his friend about politics.
3. By the time we reach the mountain top the sun _____ (to set).
4. Denise _____ (to walk) several miles in the past three hours.
5. His mother _____ (to offer) to pay him to work in her office.

Progressive Verb Tenses

Progressive verb tenses describe a continuing or unfinished action, such as *I am going*, *I was going*, or *I will be going*.

The present progressive tense describes an action or state of being that takes place in the present and that continues to take place.

To make verbs in the present progressive tense, combine these two parts:

Present tense form of <i>to be</i>	+	-ing (present participle)
am/is/are	help	helping

You should use the present progressive tense to describe a planned activity, to describe an activity that is recurring right now, and to describe an activity that is in progress, although not actually occurring at the time of speaking:

- Preeti **is starting** school on Tuesday.

This sentence describes a planned activity.

- Janetta **is getting** her teeth cleaned right now.

This sentence describes an activity that is occurring right now.

- I **am studying** ballet at school.

This sentence describes an activity that is in progress but not actually occurring at the time of speaking.

The past progressive tense describes an action or state of being that took place in the past and that continues to take place.

To make verbs in the past progressive tense, combine these two parts:

Past tense form of <i>to be</i>	+	-ing (present participle)
was/were		helping

You should use the past progressive tense to describe a continuous action in the past, to describe a past activity in progress while another activity occurred, or to describe two past activities in progress at the same time:

- Ella and I **were planning** a vacation.

This sentence describes a continuous action in the past.

- I **was helping** a customer when I smelled delicious fried chicken.

This sentence describes a past activity in progress while another activity occurred.

- While I **was finishing** my homework, my wife **was talking** on the phone.

This sentence describes two past activities in progress at the same time.

The future progressive tense describes an action or state of being that will take place in the future and that will continue to take place. The action will have started at that future moment, but it will not have finished at that moment.

To make verbs in the future progressive tense, combine these parts:

Future tense form of <i>to be</i>	+	-ing (present participle)
will be		helping

Use the future progressive tense to describe an activity that will be in progress in the future:

- Samantha and I **will be dancing** in the school play next week.
- Tomorrow Agnes **will be reading** two of her poems.

Exercise 5

On a separate sheet of paper, revise the following sentences, written in simple tenses, using the progressive tenses indicated in parentheses.

1. He prepared the food while I watched. (past progressive tense)
2. Jonathan will speak at the conference. (future progressive)
3. Josie traveled to Egypt last July. (past progressive tense)
4. My foot aches, so I know it will rain. (present progressive tense)
5. Micah will talk a lot when I see him. (future progressive)
6. I yawn a lot because I feel tired. (present progressive tense)

Similar to the present perfect tense, the present perfect progressive tense is used to indicate an action that was begun in the past and continues into the present. However, the present perfect progressive is used when you want to stress that the action is ongoing.

To make verbs in the present perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

Present tense form of <i>to have</i>	+	Been	+	-ing (present participle)
has or have		been		helping

- She **has been talking** for the last hour.

This sentence indicates that *she* started talking in the past and is continuing to talk in the present.

- I **have been feeling** tired lately.

This sentence indicates that *I* started feeling tired in the past, and *I* continue to feel tired in the present. Instead of indicating time, as in the first sentence, the second sentence uses the adverb *lately*. You can also use the adverb *recently* when using the present perfect progressive tense.

Similar to the past perfect tense, the past perfect progressive tense is used to indicate an action that was begun in the past and continued until another time in the past. The past perfect progressive does not continue into the present but stops at a designated moment in the past.

To make verbs in the past perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

Past tense form of <i>to have</i>	+	been	+	-ing (present participle)
had		been		helping

- The employees **had been talking** until their boss arrived.

This sentence indicates that the employees were talking in the past and they stopped talking when their boss arrived, which also happened in the past.

- I **had been working** all day.

This sentence implies that *I* was working in the past. The action does not continue into the future, and the sentence implies that the subject stopped working for unstated reasons.

The future perfect progressive tense is rarely used. It is used to indicate an action that will begin in the future and will continue until another time in the future.

To make verbs in the future perfect progressive tense, combine the following parts:

Future tense form of <i>to have</i>	+	been	+	-ing (present participle)
will have		Been		helping

- By the end of the meeting, I **will have been hearing** about mortgages and taxes for eight hours.

This sentence indicates that in the future *I* will hear about mortgages and taxes for eight hours, but it has not happened yet. It also indicates the action of *hearing* will continue until *the end of the meeting*, something that is also in the future.

Gerunds

A gerund is a form of a verb that is used as a noun. All gerunds end in *-ing*. Since gerunds function as nouns, they occupy places in a sentence that a noun would, such as the subject, direct object, and object of a preposition.

You can use a gerund in the following ways:

1. As a **subject**

Traveling is Cynthia’s favorite pastime.

2. As a **direct object**

I enjoy **jogging**.

3. As an **object of a preposition**

The librarian scolded me for **laughing**.

Often verbs are followed by gerunds. Study [Table 5.8 “Gerunds and Verbs”](#) for examples.

Table 5.8 Gerunds and Verbs

Gerund	Verb Followed by a Gerund
moving	Denise considered moving to Paris.
cleaning	I hate cleaning the bathroom.
winning	Nate imagines winning an Oscar one day.
worrying	Mom says she has stopped worrying .
taking	She admitted taking the pumpkin.

Infinitives

An infinitive is a form of a verb that comes after the word *to* and acts as a noun, adjective, or adverb.

to + verb = infinitive

Examples of infinitives include to move, to sleep, to look, to throw, to read, and to sneeze.

Often verbs are followed by infinitives. Study [Table 5.9 “Infinitives and Verbs”](#) for examples.

Table 5.9 Infinitives and Verbs

Infinitive	Verb Followed by Infinitive
to help	Jessica offered to help her move.
to arrive	Mick expects to arrive early.
to win	Sunita wants to win the writing contest.
to close	He forgot to close the curtains.
to eat	She likes to eat late.

You may wonder which verbs can be followed by gerunds and which verbs can be followed by infinitives. With the following verbs, you can use either a gerund or an infinitive.

Table 5.10 Infinitives and Gerunds Verbs

Base Form of Verb	Sentences with Verbs Followed by Gerunds <i>and</i> Infinitives
begin	1. John began crying .
	2. John began to cry .
hate	1. Marie hated talking on the phone.
	2. Marie hated to talk on the phone.
forget	1. Wendell forgot paying the bills.
	2. Wendell forgot to pay the bills.
like	1. I liked leaving messages.
	2. I liked to leave messages.
continue	1. He continued listening to the news.
	2. He continued to listen to the news.
start	1. I will start recycling immediately.
	2. I will start to recycle immediately.
try	1. Mikhail will try climbing the tree.
	2. Mikhail will try to climb the tree.
prefer	1. I prefer baking .
	2. I prefer to bake .
love	1. Josh loves diving .
	2. Josh loves to dive .

Exercise 6

On your own sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by choosing the correct infinitive or gerund.

1. I meant _____ (to kiss, kissing) my kids before they left for school.
2. The children hoped (to go, going) to a restaurant for dinner.
3. Do you intend _____ (to eat, eating) the entire pie?
4. Crystal postponed _____ (to get dressed, getting dressed) for the party.
5. When we finish _____ (to play, playing) this game, we will go home.

Key Takeaways

- Verb tenses tell the reader when the action takes place.
- Actions could be in the past, present, or future.
- There are some irregular verbs in English that are formed in special ways. The most common of these irregular verbs are the verbs *to be*, *to have*, and *to do*.
- There are six main verb tenses in English: *simple present*, *simple past*, *simple future*, *present perfect*, *past perfect*, and *future perfect*.
- Verbs can be followed by either gerunds or infinitives.

Writing Application

Write about a lively event that is either remembered or imagined. Ask yourself the following three questions: What happened during the event? What happened after the event? Looking back, what do you think of the event now? Answer each question in a separate paragraph to keep the present, past, and future tense verbs separate.

5.6 Modal Auxiliaries

Learning Objectives

1. Define and identify modal auxiliaries.
2. Learn how and when to use modal auxiliaries.

We all need to express our moods and emotions, both in writing and in our everyday life. We do this by using modal auxiliaries.

Modal Auxiliaries

Modal auxiliaries are a type of helping verb that are used only with a main verb to help express its mood.

The following is the basic formula for using a modal auxiliary:

Subject	+	modal auxiliary	+	main verb
James		may		call

There are ten main modal auxiliaries in English.

Table 5.11 Modal Auxiliaries

Modal Auxiliary	Use	Modal Auxiliary + Main Verb
can	Expresses an ability or possibility	I can lift this forty-pound box. (ability)
		We can embrace green sources of energy. (possibility)
could	Expresses an ability in the past; a present possibility; a past or future permission	I could beat you at chess when we were kids. (past ability)
		We could bake a pie! (present possibility)
		Could we pick some flowers from the garden? (future permission)
may	Expresses uncertain future action; permission; ask a yes-no question	I may attend the concert. (uncertain future action)
		You may begin the exam. (permission)
		May I attend the concert? (yes-no questions)
might	Expresses uncertain future action	I might attend the concert (uncertain future action—same as <i>may</i>)
shall	Expresses intended future action	I shall go to the opera. (intended future action)
should	Expresses obligation; ask if an obligation exists	I should mail my RSVP. (obligation, same as <i>ought to</i>)
		Should I call my mother? (asking if an obligation exists)
will	Expresses intended future action; ask a favor; ask for information	I will get an A in this class. (intended future action)
		Will you buy me some chocolate? (favor)
		Will you be finished soon? (information)
would	States a preference; request a choice politely; explain an action; introduce habitual past actions	I would like the steak, please. (preference)
		Would you like to have breakfast in bed? (request a choice politely)
		I would go with you if I didn't have to babysit tonight. (explain an action)
		He would write to me every week when we were dating. (habitual past action)
must	Expresses obligation	We must be on time for class.
ought to	Expresses obligation	I ought to mail my RSVP. (obligation, same as <i>may</i>)

Tip

Use the following format to form a yes-no question with a modal auxiliary:

Modal auxiliary	+	subject	+	main verb
Should		I		drive?

Be aware of these four common errors when using modal auxiliaries:

1. Using an infinitive instead of a base verb after a modal

Incorrect: I can to move this heavy table.

Correct: I **can move** this heavy table.

2. Using a gerund instead of an infinitive or a base verb after a modal

Incorrect: I could moving to the United States.

Correct: I **could move** to the United States.

3. Using two modals in a row

Incorrect: I should must *renew* my passport.

Correct: I **must renew** my passport.

Correct: I **should renew** my passport.

4. Leaving out a modal

Incorrect: I renew my passport.

Correct: I **must renew** my passport.

Exercise 1

Edit the following paragraph by correcting the common modal auxiliary errors.

I may to go to France on vacation next summer. I shall might visit the Palace of Versailles. I would to drive around the countryside. I could imagining myself living there; however, I will not move to France because

my family should miss me very much.

Modals and Present Perfect Verbs

In the previous section, we defined present perfect verb tense as describing a continuing situation or something that has just happened.

subject + has or have + past participle

↓	↓	↓
I	have	helped
He	has	helped

Remember, when a sentence contains a modal auxiliary before the verb, the helping verb is always *have*.

subject + modal auxiliary + have + past participle

↓	↓	↓	↓
I	could	have	helped
He	could	have	helped
He	might	have	helped
He	may	have	helped
He	should	have	helped

Be aware of the following common errors when using modal auxiliaries in the present perfect tense:

1. Using *had* instead of *have*

Incorrect: Jamie would had attended the party, but he was sick.

Correct: Jamie **would have attended** the party, but he was sick.

2. Leaving out *have*

Incorrect: Jamie would attended the party, but he was sick.

Correct: Jamie **would have attended** the party, but he was sick.

Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by changing the given verb form to a modal auxiliary in present perfect tense.

1. The man _____ (laugh).
2. The frogs _____ (croak).
3. My writing teacher _____ (smile).
4. The audience _____ (cheer) all night.
5. My best friend _____ (giggled).

Key Takeaways

- The basic formula for using a modal auxiliary is

subject	+	modal auxiliary	+	main verb
---------	---	-----------------	---	-----------

- There are ten main modal auxiliaries in English: *can, could, may, might, shall, should, will, would, must, and ought to*.
- The four common types of errors when using modals include the following: using an infinitive instead of a base verb after a modal, using a gerund instead of an infinitive or a base verb after a modal, using two modals in a row, and leaving out a modal.
- In the present perfect tense, when a sentence has a modal auxiliary before the verb, the helping verb is always *have*.
- The two common errors when using modals in the present perfect tense include using *had* instead of *have* and leaving out *have*.

Writing Application

On a separate sheet of paper, write ten original sentences using modal auxiliaries.

5.7 Prepositions

Learning Objectives

- 1. Identify prepositions.
- 2. Learn how and when to use prepositions.

A preposition is a word that connects a noun or a pronoun to another word in a sentence. Most prepositions such as *above*, *below*, and *behind* usually indicate a location in the physical world, but some prepositions such as *during*, *after*, and *until* show location in time.

In, At, and On

The prepositions *in*, *at*, and *on* are used to indicate both location and time, but they are used in specific ways. Study [Table 5.12](#), [Table 5.13](#), and [Table 5.14](#) to learn when to use each one.

Table 5.12 *In*

Preposition	Time	Example	Place	Example
in	year	in 1942	country	in Zimbabwe
	month	in August	state	in California
	season	in the summer	city	in Chicago
	time of day (not with <i>night</i>)	in the afternoon		

Table 5.13 *On*

Preposition	Time	Example	Place	Example
on	day	on Monday	surfaces	on the table
	date	on May 23	streets	on 124th Street
	specific days/dates	on Monday	modes of transportation	on the bus

Table 5.14 *At*

Preposition	Time	Example	Place	Example
at	time	at five o'clock	addresses	at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
	with <i>night</i>	at night	location	at Rooney's Grill

Exercise 1

Edit the following letter from a resident to her landlord by correcting errors with *in*, *at*, and *on*.

Dear Mrs. Salazar,
I am writing this letter to inform you that I will be vacating apartment 2A in 356 Maple Street at Wednesday, June 30, 2010. I will be cleaning the apartment at the Monday before I leave. I will return the keys to you on 5 p.m., sharp, at June 30. If you have any questions or specific instructions for me, please contact me in my office. I have enjoyed living at Austin, Texas, but I want to explore other parts of the country now.
Sincerely,
Milani Davis

Prepositions after Verbs

Prepositions often follow verbs to create expressions with distinct meanings. These expressions are sometimes called prepositional verbs. It is important to remember that these expressions cannot be separated.

Table 5.15 Verbs + Prepositions

Verb + Preposition	Meaning	Example
agree with	to agree with something or someone	My husband always agrees with me.
apologize for	to express regret for something, to say sorry about something	I apologize for being late.
apply for	to ask for something formally	I will apply for that job.
believe in	to have a firm conviction in something; to believe in the existence of something	I believe in educating the world's women.
care about	to think that someone or something is important	I care about the health of our oceans.
hear about	to be told about something or someone	I heard about the teachers' strike.
look after	to watch or to protect someone or something	Will you look after my dog while I am on vacation?
talk about	to discuss something	We will talk about the importance of recycling.
speak to, with	to talk to/with someone	I will speak to his teacher tomorrow.
wait for	to await the arrival of someone or something	I will wait for my package to arrive.

Tip

It is a good idea to memorize these combinations of verbs plus prepositions. Write them down in a notebook along with the definition and practice using them when you speak.

Exercise 2

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by writing the correct preposition after the verb.

- Charlotte does not _____ (apologize for, believe in) aliens or ghosts.
- It is impolite to _____ (hear about, talk about) people when they are not here.
- Herman said he was going to _____ (believe in, apply for) the internship.
- Jonas would not _____ (talk about, apologize for) eating the last piece of cake.
- I _____ (care about, agree with) the environment very much.

Prepositions after Adjectives

Similar to prepositions after verbs, prepositions after adjectives create expressions with distinct meanings unique to English. Remember, like prepositional verbs, these expressions also cannot be separated.

Table 5.16 Adjectives + Prepositions

Adjective + Preposition	Meaning	Example
angry at, about	to feel or show anger toward (or about) someone or something	I am angry about the oil spill in the ocean.
confused about	to be unable to think with clarity about someone or something.	Shawn was confused about the concepts presented at the meeting.
disappointed in, with	to feel dissatisfaction with someone or something	I was disappointed in my husband because he voted for that candidate.
dressed in	to clothe the body	He was dressed in a pin-striped suit.
happy for	to show happiness for someone or something	I was happy for my sister who graduated from college.
interested in	giving attention to something, expressing interest	I am interested in musical theater.
jealous of	to feel resentful or bitter toward someone or something (because of their status, possessions, or ability)	I was jealous of her because she always went on vacation.
thankful for	to express thanks for something	I am thankful for my wonderful friends.
tired of	to be disgusted with, have a distaste for	I was tired of driving for hours without end.
worried about	to express anxiety or worry about something	I am worried about my father's health.

Exercise 3

On a separate sheet of paper, complete the following sentences by writing the correct preposition after the verb.

1. Meera was deeply _____ (interested in, thankful for) marine biology.
2. I was _____ (jealous of, disappointed in) the season finale of my favorite show.
3. Jordan won the race, and I am _____ (happy for, interested in) him.

4. The lawyer was _____ (thankful for, confused about) the details of the case.
5. Chloe was _____ (dressed in, tired of) a comfortable blue tunic.

Tip

The following adjectives are always followed by the preposition *at*:

- Good
She is really **good at** chess.
- Excellent
Henry is **excellent at** drawing.
- Brilliant
Mary Anne is **brilliant at** playing the violin.

Key Takeaways

- The prepositions *in*, *at*, and *on* are used to indicate both location and time, but they are used in specific ways.
- The preposition *in* is used when expressing the following: year, month, season, time of day (not with *night*), country, state, and city.
- The preposition *on* is used to express day, date, and specific days or dates and surfaces, streets, and transportation modes.
- The preposition *at* is used for expressions of time, with *night*, and with addresses and locations.
- Prepositions often follow verbs to create expressions with distinct meanings that are unique to English.
- Prepositions also follow adjectives to create expressions with distinct meanings that are unique to English.

Writing Application

Write about a happy childhood memory using as many prepositions followed by verbs and adjectives as you

can. Use at least ten. When you are finished, exchange papers with a classmate and correct any preposition errors you find.

5.8 Slang and Idioms

Learning Objectives

- 1. Recognize slang and idioms.
- 2. Learn to avoid using slang and idioms in formal writing.

Words are the basis of how a reader or listener judges you, the writer and speaker. When you write an academic paper or speak in a business interview, you want to be sure to choose your words carefully. In our casual, everyday talk, we often use a lot of “ums,” “likes,” “yeahs,” and so on. This everyday language is not appropriate for formal contexts, such as academic papers and business interviews. You should switch between different ways of speaking and writing depending on whether the context is formal or informal.

Slang

Hey guys, let’s learn about slang and other cool stuff like that! It will be awesome, trust me. This section is off the hook!

What do you notice about the previous paragraph? You might notice that the language sounds informal, or casual, like someone might talk with a friend or family member. The paragraph also uses a lot of slang. Slang is a type of language that is informal and playful. It often changes over time. The slang of the past is different than the slang of today, but some slang has carried over into the present. Slang also varies by region and culture. The important thing to understand is that slang is casual talk, and you should avoid using it in formal contexts. There are literally thousands of slang words and expressions. [Table 5.17 “Slang Expressions”](#) explains just a few of the more common terms.

Table 5.17 Slang Expressions

Slang Word or Phrase	Meaning
check it out, check this out	v. look at, watch, examine
chocoholic, workaholic, shopaholic	n. a person who loves, is addicted to chocolate/work/shopping
stuff	n. things (used as a singular, noncount noun)
taking care of business	doing things that need to be done
pro	n. a person who is a professional
crack up	v. to laugh uncontrollably
veg (sounds like the <i>veg</i> in <i>vegetable</i>)	v. relax and do nothing
dude, man	n. person, man
all-nighter	n. studying all night
cool	adj. good, fashionable
gross, nasty	adj. disgusting
pig out	v. eat a lot, overeat
screw up	v. make a mistake
awesome	adj. great

Exercise 1

Edit the business e-mail by replacing any slang words and phrases with more formal language.

Dear Ms. O'Connor:

I am writing to follow up on my interview from last week. First of all, it was awesome to meet you. You are a really cool lady. I believe I would be a pro at all the stuff you mentioned that would be required of me in this job. I am not a workaholic, but I do work hard and "take care of business." Haha. Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

M. Ernest Anderson

Idioms

Idioms are expressions that have a meaning different from the dictionary definitions of the individual words in the expression. Because English contains many idioms, nonnative English speakers have difficulties making logical sense of idioms and idiomatic expressions. The more you are exposed to English, however, the more idioms you will come to understand. Until then, memorizing the more

common idioms may be of some help.

Table 5.18 Idioms

Idiom	Definition
a blessing in disguise	a good thing you do not recognize at first
a piece of cake	easy to do
better late than never	it is better to do something late than not at all
get over it	recover from something (like a perceived insult)
I have no idea	I don't know
not a chance	it will definitely not happen
on pins and needles	very nervous about something that is happening
on top of the world	feeling great
pulling your leg	making a joke by tricking another person
the sky is the limit	the possibilities are endless

What if you come across an idiom that you do not understand? There are clues that can help you. They are called context clues. Context clues are words or phrases around the unknown word or phrase that may help you decipher its meaning.

1. **Definition or explanation clue.** An idiom may be explained immediately after its use.

Sentence: I felt like I was sitting *on pins and needles* **I was so nervous.**

2. **Restatement or synonym clues.** An idiom may be simplified or restated.

Sentence: The young girl felt as though she had been *sent to the dog house* when her mother **punished her** for fighting in school.

3. **Contrast or Antonym clues.** An idiom may be clarified by a contrasting phrase or antonym that is near it.

Sentence: Chynna thought the 5k marathon would be *a piece of cake*, **but it turned out to be very difficult.**

Pay attention to the signal word *but*, which tells the reader that an opposite thought or concept is occurring.

Key Takeaways

- Informal language is not appropriate in formal writing or speaking contexts.
- Slang and idioms might not make logical sense to nonnative speakers of English.
- It is good to be aware of slang and idioms so they do not appear in your formal writing.

Writing Application

Write a short paragraph about yourself to a friend. Write another paragraph about yourself to an employer. Examine and discuss the differences in language between the two paragraphs.

5.9 Help for English Language Learners: End-of-Chapter Exercises

Learning Objectives

1. Use the skills you have learned in the chapter.
2. Work collaboratively with other students.

Exercises

1. On a separate sheet of paper, create questions from the following sentences.
 - a. My daughter will have to think about her college options.
 - b. Otto is waiting in the car for his girlfriend.
 - c. The article talks about conserving energy.
 - d. We need to reduce our needs.
 - e. Rusha is always complaining about her work.
2. Underline the prepositional phrase in each of the following sentences.
 - a. Monica told us about her trip.
 - b. I hope we have sunshine throughout the summer.
 - c. The panther climbed up the tree.
 - d. The little boy was standing behind his mother's legs.
 - e. We stayed awake until dawn.
3. Place the following sets of adjectives in the correct order before the noun.
 - a. eyes: black, mesmerizing
 - b. jacket: vintage, orange, suede
 - c. pineapple: ripe, yellow, sweet
 - d. vacation: fun, skiing
 - e. movie: hilarious, independent
4. On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the positive sentences as negative sentences. Be sure to keep the sentences in the present tense.
 - a. Sometimes I work on Saturdays.
 - b. The garden attracts butterflies and bees.
 - c. He breathes loudly at night.
 - d. I chew on blades of grass in the summer time.
 - e. I communicate well with my husband.

5. On a separate sheet of paper, rewrite the following paragraph by correcting the double negatives.

That morning it was so hot Forrest felt like he couldn't hardly breathe. Ain't nothing would get him out the door into that scorching heat. Then he remembered his dog, Zeus, who started whining right then. Zeus was whining and barking so much that Forrest didn't have no choice but to get off the couch and face the day. That dog didn't do nothing but sniff around the bushes and try to stay in the shade while Forrest was sweating in the sun holding the leash. He couldn't not wait for winter to come.

Collaboration

Once you have found all the errors you can, please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Did your partner find an error you missed? Did you find an error your partner missed? Compare with your instructor's answers.

Chapter 6: Writing Paragraphs: Separating Ideas and Shaping Content

6.1 Purpose, Audience, Tone, and Content

6.2 Effective Means for Writing a Paragraph

6.3 Writing Paragraphs: End-of-Chapter Exercises

6.1 Purpose, Audience, Tone, and Content

Learning Objectives

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

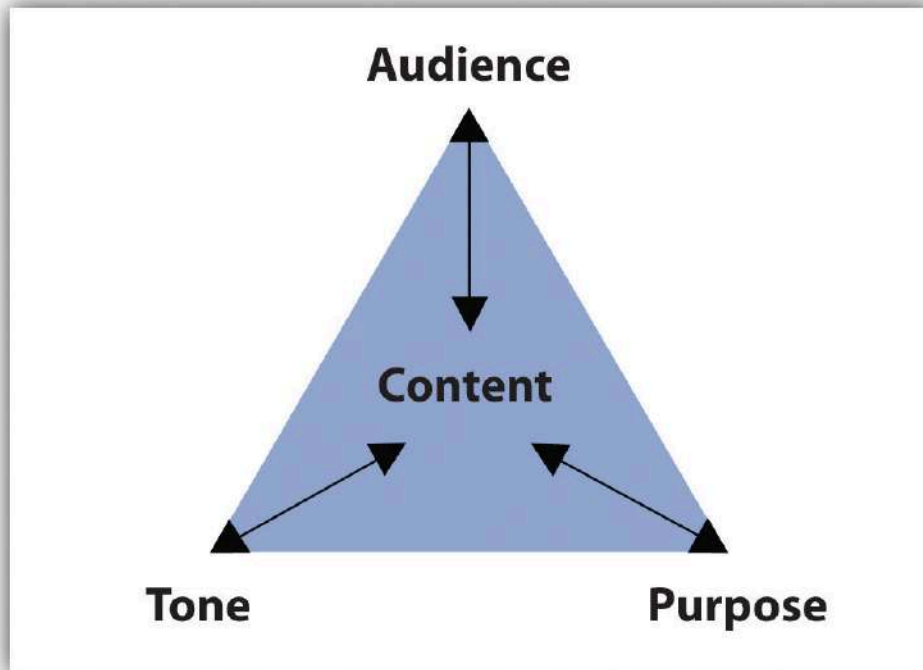
Imagine reading one long block of text, with each idea blurring into the next. Even if you are reading a thrilling novel or an interesting news article, you will likely lose interest in what the author has to say very quickly. During the writing process, it is helpful to position yourself as a reader.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

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

Three elements shape the content of each paragraph:

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

Figure 6.1 Purpose, Audience, Tone, and Content Triangle



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

Identifying Common Academic Purposes

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

In academic settings, the reasons for writing fulfill four main purposes: to summarize, to analyze, to synthesize, and to evaluate. You will encounter these four purposes not only as you read for your classes but also as you read for work or pleasure. Because reading and writing work together, your writing skills will improve as you read. To learn more about reading in the writing process, see [Chapter 8 “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?”](#).

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

Summary Paragraphs

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

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

According to the Monitoring the Future Study, almost two-thirds of 10th-grade students reported having tried alcohol at least once in their lifetime, and two-fifths reported having been drunk at least once (Johnston et al. 2006x). Among 12th-grade students, these rates had risen to over three-quarters who reported having tried alcohol at least once and nearly three-fifths who reported having been drunk at least once. In terms of current alcohol use, 33.2 percent of the Nation's 10th graders and 47.0 percent of 12th graders reported having used alcohol at least once in the past 30 days; 17.6 percent and 30.2 percent, respectively, reported having been drunk in the past 30 days; 21.0 percent and 28.1 percent, respectively, reported having had five or more drinks in a row in the past 2 weeks (sometimes called binge drinking); and 1.3 percent and 3.1 percent, respectively, reported daily alcohol use (Johnston et al. 2006a).

Alcohol consumption continues to escalate after high school. In fact, eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds have the highest levels of alcohol consumption and alcohol dependence of any age group. In the first 2 years after high school, lifetime prevalence of alcohol use (based on 2005 follow-up surveys from the Monitoring the Future Study) was 81.8 percent, 30-day use prevalence was 59 percent, and binge-drinking prevalence was 36.3 percent (Johnston et al. 2006b). Of note, college students on average drink more than their noncollege peers, even though they drank less during high school than those who did not go on to college (Johnston et al. 2006a,b; Schulenberg and Maggs 2002). For example, in 2005, the rate of binge drinking for college students (1 to 4 years beyond high school) was 40.1 percent, whereas the rate for their noncollege age mates was 35.1 percent.

Alcohol use and problem drinking in late adolescence vary by sociodemographic characteristics. For example, the prevalence of alcohol use is higher for boys than for girls, higher for White and Hispanic adolescents than for African-American adolescents, and higher for those living in the north and north central United States than for those living in the South and West. Some of these relationships change with early adulthood, however. For example, although alcohol use in high school tends to be higher in areas with lower population density (i.e., rural areas) than in more densely populated areas, this relationship reverses during early adulthood (Johnston et al., 2006 a,b). Lower economic status (i.e., lower educational level of parents) is associated with more alcohol use during the early high school years; by the end of high school, and during the transition to adulthood, this relationship changes, and youth from higher socioeconomic backgrounds consume greater amounts of alcohol.

A summary of the report should present all the main points and supporting details in brief. Read the following summary of the report written by a student:

Brown et al. inform us that by tenth grade, nearly two-thirds of students have tried alcohol at least once, and by twelfth grade this figure increases to over three-quarters of students. After high school, alcohol consumption increases further, and college-aged students have the highest levels of alcohol consumption and dependence of any age group. Alcohol use varies according to factors such as gender, race, geographic location, and socioeconomic status.

Some of these trends may reverse in early adulthood. For example, adolescents of lower socioeconomic status are more likely to consume alcohol during high school years, whereas youth from higher socioeconomic status are more likely to consume alcohol in the years after high school.

Notice how the summary retains the key points made by the writers of the original report but omits most of the statistical data. Summaries need not contain all the specific facts and figures in the original document; they provide only an overview of the essential information.

Analysis Paragraphs

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

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

Take a look at a student's analysis of the journal report.

At the beginning of their report, Brown et al. use specific data regarding the use of alcohol by high school students and college-aged students, which is supported by several studies. Later in the report, they consider how various socioeconomic factors influence problem drinking in adolescence. The latter part of the report is far less specific and does not provide statistics or examples.

The lack of specific information in the second part of the report raises several important questions. Why are teenagers in rural high schools more likely to drink than teenagers in urban areas? Where do they obtain alcohol? How do parental attitudes influence this trend? A follow-up study could compare several high schools in rural and urban areas to consider these issues and potentially find ways to reduce teenage alcohol consumption.

Notice how the analysis does not simply repeat information from the original report, but considers how the points within the report relate to one another. By doing this, the student uncovers a discrepancy between the points that are backed up by statistics and those that require additional information. Analyzing a document involves a close examination of each of the individual parts and how they work together.

Synthesis Paragraphs

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

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

Take a look at a student's synthesis of several sources about underage drinking.

In their 2009 report, Brown et al. consider the rates of alcohol consumption among high school and college-aged students and various sociodemographic factors that affect these rates. However, this report is limited to assessing the rates of underage drinking, rather than considering methods of decreasing these rates. Several other studies, as well as original research among college students, provide insight into how these rates may be reduced.

One study, by Spoth, Greenberg, and Turrisi (2009) considers the impact of various types of interventions as a method for reducing alcohol consumption among minors. They conclude that although family-focused interventions for adolescents aged ten to fifteen have shown promise, there is a serious lack of interventions available for college-aged students who do not attend college. These students are among the highest risk level for alcohol abuse, a fact supported by Brown et al.

I did my own research and interviewed eight college students, four men and four women. I asked them when they first tried alcohol and what factors encouraged them to drink. All four men had tried alcohol by the age of thirteen. Three of the women had also tried alcohol by thirteen and the fourth had tried alcohol by fifteen. All eight students said that peer pressure, boredom, and the thrill of trying something illegal were motivating factors. These results support the research of Brown et al. However, they also raise an interesting point. If boredom is a motivating factor for underage drinking, maybe additional after school programs or other community measures could be introduced to dissuade teenagers from underage drinking. Based on my sources, further research is needed to show true preventative measures for teenage alcohol consumption.

Notice how the synthesis paragraphs consider each source and use information from each to create a new thesis. A good synthesis does not repeat information; the writer uses a variety of sources to create a new idea.

Evaluation Paragraphs

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

An academic evaluation communicates your opinion, and its justifications, about a document or a topic of discussion. Evaluations are influenced by your reading of the document, your prior knowledge, and

your prior experience with the topic or issue. Because an evaluation incorporates your point of view and reasons for your point of view, it typically requires more critical thinking and a combination of summary, analysis, and synthesis skills. Thus evaluation paragraphs often follow summary, analysis, and synthesis paragraphs. Read a student's evaluation paragraph.

Throughout their report, Brown et al. provide valuable statistics that highlight the frequency of alcohol use among high school and college students. They use several reputable sources to support their points. However, the report focuses solely on the frequency of alcohol use and how it varies according to certain sociodemographic factors. Other sources, such as Spoth, Greenberg, and Turrissi's study (2009) and the survey I conducted among college students, examine the reasons for alcohol use among young people and offer suggestions as to how to reduce the rates. Nonetheless, I think that Brown et al. offer a useful set of statistics from which to base further research into alcohol use among high school and college students.

Notice how the paragraph incorporates the student's personal judgment within the evaluation. Evaluating a document requires prior knowledge that is often based on additional research.

Tip

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

Exercise 1

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

1. This film could easily have been cut down to less than two hours. By the final scene, I noticed that most of my fellow moviegoers were snoozing in their seats and were barely paying attention to what was happening on screen. Although the director sticks diligently to the book, he tries too hard to cram in all the action, which is just too ambitious for such a detail-oriented story. If you want my advice, read the book and give the movie a miss.
2. During the opening scene, we learn that the character Laura is adopted and that she has spent the past three years desperately trying to track down her real parents. Having exhausted all the usual options—adoption agencies, online searches, family trees, and so on—she is on the verge of

giving up when she meets a stranger on a bus. The chance encounter leads to a complicated chain of events that ultimately result in Laura getting her lifelong wish. But is it really what she wants? Throughout the rest of the film, Laura discovers that sometimes the past is best left where it belongs.

3. To create the feeling of being gripped in a vice, the director, May Lee, uses a variety of elements to gradually increase the tension. The creepy, haunting melody that subtly enhances the earlier scenes becomes ever more insistent, rising to a disturbing crescendo toward the end of the movie. The desperation of the actors, combined with the claustrophobic atmosphere and tight camera angles create a realistic firestorm, from which there is little hope of escape. Walking out of the theater at the end feels like staggering out of a Roman dungeon.
4. The scene in which Campbell and his fellow prisoners assist the guards in shutting down the riot immediately strikes the viewer as unrealistic. Based on the recent reports on prison riots in both Detroit and California, it seems highly unlikely that a posse of hardened criminals will intentionally help their captors at the risk of inciting future revenge from other inmates. Instead, both news reports and psychological studies indicate that prisoners who do not actively participate in a riot will go back to their cells and avoid conflict altogether. Examples of this lack of attention to detail occur throughout the film, making it almost unbearable to watch.

Collaboration

Share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Writing at Work

Thinking about the purpose of writing a report in the workplace can help focus and structure the document. A summary should provide colleagues with a factual overview of your findings without going into too much specific detail. In contrast, an evaluation should include your personal opinion, along with supporting evidence, research, or examples to back it up. Listen for words such as *summarize*, *analyze*, *synthesize*, or *evaluate* when your boss asks you to complete a report to help determine a purpose for writing.

Exercise 2

Consider the essay most recently assigned to you. Identify the most effective academic purpose for the assignment.

My assignment: _____

My purpose: _____

Identifying the Audience

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

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

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

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

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

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

Example A

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

Example B

OMG! You won’t believe this! My advisor forced me to do my community service hours at this hospital all weekend! We learned CPR but we did it on dummies, not even real peeps. And some kid sneezed on me and

got me sick! I was so bored and sniffing all weekend; I hope I don't have to go back next week. I def do NOT want to miss the basketball tournament!

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

Tip

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

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

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

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

expectations given the assignment's purpose and organization. In an essay titled "The Economics of Enlightenment: The Effects of Rising Tuition," for example, audience members may expect to read about the economic repercussions of college tuition costs.

Exercise 3

On your own sheet of paper, generate a list of characteristics under each category for each audience. This list will help you later when you read about tone and content.

1. Your classmates

- Demographics _____
- Education _____
- Prior knowledge _____
- Expectations _____

2. Your instructor

- Demographics _____
- Education _____
- Prior knowledge _____
- Expectations _____

3. The head of your academic department

- Demographics _____
- Education _____
- Prior knowledge _____
- Expectations _____

4. Now think about your next writing assignment. Identify the purpose (you may use the same purpose listed in [Note 6.12 "Exercise 2"](#)), and then identify the audience. Create a list of characteristics under each category.

My assignment: _____

My purpose: _____

My audience: _____

- Demographics _____
- Education _____
- Prior knowledge _____
- Expectations _____

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Keep in mind that as your topic shifts in the writing process, your audience may also shift. For more information about the writing process, see [Chapter 8 “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?”](#).

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

Selecting an Appropriate Tone

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

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

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

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

Exercise 4

Think about the assignment and purpose you selected in [Note 6.12 “Exercise 2”](#), and the audience you selected in [Note 6.16 “Exercise 3”](#). Now, identify the tone you would use in the assignment.

My assignment: _____

My purpose: _____

My audience: _____

My tone: _____

Choosing Appropriate, Interesting Content

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

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

Exercise 5

Match the content in the box to the appropriate audience and purpose. On your own sheet of paper, write the correct letter next to the number.

1. Whereas economist Holmes contends that the financial crisis is far from over, the presidential advisor Jones points out that it is vital to catch the first wave of opportunity to increase market share. We can use elements of both experts' visions. Let me explain how.
2. In 2000, foreign money flowed into the United States, contributing to easy credit conditions. People bought larger houses than they could afford, eventually defaulting on their loans as interest rates rose.
3. The Emergency Economic Stabilization Act, known by most of us as the humungous government bailout, caused mixed reactions. Although supported by many political leaders, the statute provoked outrage among grassroots groups. In their opinion, the government was actually rewarding banks for their appalling behavior.

1. Audience: An instructor
Purpose: To analyze the reasons behind the 2007 financial crisis
Content: _____
2. Audience: Classmates
Purpose: To summarize the effects of the \$700 billion government bailout
Content: _____
3. Audience: An employer
Purpose: To synthesize two articles on preparing businesses for economic recovery
Content: _____

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Exercise 6

Using the assignment, purpose, audience, and tone from [Note 6.18 “Exercise 4”](#), generate a list of content ideas. Remember that content consists of examples, statistics, facts, anecdotes, testimonies, and observations.

My assignment: _____

My purpose: _____

My audience: _____

My tone: _____

My content ideas: _____

Key Takeaways

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

- Content may consist of examples, statistics, facts, anecdotes, testimonies, and observations. All content must be appropriate and interesting for the audience, purpose and tone.

6.2 Effective Means for Writing a Paragraph

Learning Objectives

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

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

A strong paragraph contains three distinct components:

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

The foundation of a good paragraph is the topic sentence, which expresses the main idea of the paragraph. The topic sentence relates to the thesis, or main point, of the essay (see [Chapter 9 “Writing Essays: From Start to Finish”](#) for more information about thesis statements) and guides the reader by signposting what the paragraph is about. All the sentences in the rest of the paragraph should relate to the topic sentence.

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

Developing a Topic Sentence

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

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

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

Tip

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

Main Idea versus Controlling Idea

Topic sentences contain both a main idea (the subject, or topic that the writer is discussing) and a controlling idea (the writer's specific stance on that subject). Just as a thesis statement includes an idea that controls a document's focus (as you will read about in [Chapter 8 “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?”](#)), a topic sentence must also contain a controlling idea to direct the paragraph. Different writers may use the same main idea but can steer their paragraph in a number of different directions according to their stance on the subject. Read the following examples.

- Marijuana is a destructive influence on teens and causes long-term brain damage.
- The antinausea properties in marijuana are a lifeline for many cancer patients.
- Legalizing marijuana would create a higher demand for Class A and Class B drugs.

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

Exercise 1

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

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

Characteristics of a Good Topic Sentence

Five characteristics define a good topic sentence:

1. A good topic sentence provides an accurate indication of what will follow in the rest of the paragraph.

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

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

2. A good topic sentence contains both a topic and a controlling idea or opinion.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Exercise 2

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

1. a. This paper will discuss the likelihood of the Democrats winning the next election.
b. To boost their chances of winning the next election, the Democrats need to listen to public opinion.
2. a. The unrealistic demands of union workers are crippling the economy for three main reasons.
b. Union workers are crippling the economy because companies are unable to remain competitive as a result of added financial pressure.
3. a. Authors are losing money as a result of technological advances.
b. The introduction of new technology will devastate the literary world.
4. a. Rap music is produced by untalented individuals with oversized egos.
b. This essay will consider whether talent is required in the rap music industry.

Exercise 3

Using the tips on developing effective topic sentences in this section, create a topic sentence on each of the

following subjects. Remember to include a controlling idea as well as a main idea. Write your responses on your own sheet of paper.

1. An endangered species

2. The cost of fuel

3. The legal drinking age

4. A controversial film or novel

Writing at Work

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

Headings are another helpful tool. In a text-heavy document, break up each paragraph with individual headings. These serve as useful navigation aids, enabling colleagues to skim through the document and locate paragraphs that are relevant to them.

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

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

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

Identifying Parts of a Paragraph

An effective paragraph contains three main parts: a topic sentence, the body, and the concluding sentence. A topic sentence is often the first sentence of a paragraph. This chapter has already discussed its purpose—to express a main idea combined with the writer’s attitude about the subject. The body of the paragraph usually follows, containing supporting details. Supporting sentences help explain, prove, or enhance the topic sentence. The concluding sentence is the last sentence in the paragraph. It reminds the reader of the main point by restating it in different words.

Figure 6.2 Paragraph Structure Graphic Organizer

Paragraph Structure Graphic Organizer	
Topic Sentence	
(main idea + personal opinion)	
Body	
Supporting Sentence	
Supporting Sentence	
Supporting Sentence	
Supporting Sentence	
Conclusion	
(summary of main idea + personal opinion)	
Concluding Sentence	

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

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

The first sentence of this paragraph is the topic sentence. It tells the reader that the paragraph will be about reality television shows, and it expresses the writer’s distaste for these shows through the use of the word *bombarded*.

Each of the following sentences in the paragraph supports the topic sentence by providing further information about a specific reality television show. The final sentence is the concluding sentence. It reiterates the main point that viewers are bored with reality television shows by using different words from the topic sentence.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Placing a topic sentence in the middle of a paragraph is often used in creative writing. If you notice that you have used a topic sentence in the middle of a paragraph in an academic essay, read through the paragraph carefully to make sure that it contains only one major topic. To read more about topic sentences and where they appear in paragraphs, see [Chapter 8 “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?”](#).

Implied Topic Sentences

Some well-organized paragraphs do not contain a topic sentence at all. Instead of being directly stated, the main idea is implied in the content of the paragraph. Read the following example:

Heaving herself up the stairs, Luella had to pause for breath several times. She let out a wheeze as she sat down heavily in the wooden rocking chair. Tao approached her cautiously, as if she might crumble at the slightest touch. He studied her face, like parchment; stretched across the bones so finely he could almost see right through the skin to the decaying muscle underneath. Luella smiled a toothless grin.

Although no single sentence in this paragraph states the main idea, the entire paragraph focuses on one concept—that Luella is extremely old. The topic sentence is thus implied rather than stated. This technique is often used in descriptive or narrative writing. Implied topic sentences work well if the writer has a firm idea of what he or she intends to say in the paragraph and sticks to it. However, a paragraph loses its effectiveness if an implied topic sentence is too subtle or the writer loses focus.

Tip

Avoid using implied topic sentences in an informational document. Readers often lose patience if they are unable to quickly grasp what the writer is trying to say. The clearest and most efficient way to communicate in an informational document is to position the topic sentence at the beginning of the paragraph.

Exercise 4

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

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

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Supporting Sentences

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

- **Reason**

Sentence: The refusal of the baby boom generation to retire is contributing to the current lack of available jobs.

- **Fact**

Sentence: Many families now rely on older relatives to support them financially.

- **Statistic**

Sentence: Nearly 10 percent of adults are currently unemployed in the United States.

- **Quotation**

Sentence: “We will not allow this situation to continue,” stated Senator Johns.

- **Example**

Sentence: Last year, Bill was asked to retire at the age of fifty-five.

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

There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car. **(Topic sentence)**

First, they get 20 percent to 35 percent more miles to the gallon than a fuel-efficient gas-powered vehicle. **(Supporting sentence 1: statistic)**

Second, they produce very few emissions during low speed city driving. **(Supporting sentence 2: fact)**

Because they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependency on fossil fuels, which helps lower prices at the pump. **(Supporting sentence 3: reason)**

Alex bought a hybrid car two years ago and has been extremely impressed with its performance. **(Supporting sentence 4: example)**

“It’s the cheapest car I’ve ever had,” she said. “The running costs are far lower than previous gas powered vehicles I’ve owned.” **(Supporting sentence 5: quotation)**

Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex’s example in the near future. **(Concluding sentence)**

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

- Reference book
- Encyclopedia
- Website
- Biography/autobiography
- Map
- Dictionary
- Newspaper/magazine
- Interview
- Previous experience
- Personal research

To read more about sources and research, see [Chapter 11 “Writing from Research: What Will I Learn?”](#).

Tip

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

Concluding Sentences

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

Topic sentence: There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car.

Concluding sentence: Given the low running costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many more people will follow Alex’s example in the near future.

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

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

A concluding sentence may do any of the following:

- Restate the main idea.

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

- Summarize the key points in the paragraph.

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

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

Example: These statistics indicate that unless we take action, childhood obesity rates will

continue to rise.

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

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

- Offer an additional observation about the controlling idea.

Example: Childhood obesity is an entirely preventable tragedy.

Exercise 5

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

Transitions

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

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

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

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

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

sentence as follows:

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

The following chart provides some useful transition words to connect supporting sentences and concluding sentences. See [Chapter 8 “The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?”](#) for a more comprehensive look at transitional words and phrases.

Table 6.1 Useful Transitional Words and Phrases

For Supporting Sentences					
above all	but	for instance	in particular	moreover	subsequently
also	conversely	furthermore	later on	nevertheless	therefore
aside from	correspondingly	however	likewise	on one hand	to begin with
at the same time	for example	in addition	meanwhile	on the contrary	
For Concluding Sentences					
after all	all things considered	in brief	in summary	on the whole	to sum up
all in all	finally	in conclusion	on balance	thus	

Exercise 6

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

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Writing at Work

Transitional words and phrases are useful tools to incorporate into workplace documents. They guide the reader through the document, clarifying relationships between sentences and paragraphs so that the reader understands why they have been written in that particular order.

For example, when writing an instructional memo, it may be helpful to consider the following transitional words and phrases: *before you begin*, *first*, *next*, *then*, *finally*, *after you have completed*. Using these transitions as a template to write your memo will provide readers with clear, logical instructions about a particular process and the order in which steps are supposed to be completed.

Key Takeaways

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

6.3 Writing Paragraphs: End-of-Chapter Exercises

Exercises

1. Select one of the following topics or choose a topic of your choice:

- Drilling for oil in Alaska
- Health care reform
- Introducing a four-day work week
- Bringing pets to work
- Charging airline passengers to use the in-flight bathroom

Create a topic sentence based on the topic you chose, remembering to include both a main idea and a controlling idea. Next, write an alternative topic sentence using the same main idea but a different controlling idea. Explain how each fully developed paragraph might differ in tone and content.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

2. At some point during your career, you may be asked to write a report or complete a presentation. Imagine that you have been asked to report on the issue of health and safety in the workplace. Using the information in [Section 6.1.2 “Identifying the Audience”](#), complete an analysis of your intended audience—your fellow office workers. Consider how demographics, education, prior knowledge, and expectations will influence your report and explain how you will tailor it to your audience accordingly.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

3. Group activity. Working in a group of four or five, assign each group member the task of collecting one document each. These documents might include magazine or newspaper articles, workplace documents, academic essays, chapters from a reference book, film or book reviews, or any other type of writing. As a group, read through each document and discuss the author’s purpose for writing. Use the information you have learned in this chapter to decide whether the main purpose is to summarize, analyze, synthesize, or evaluate. Write a brief report on the purpose of each document, using supporting evidence from the text.

4. Group activity. Working in a small group, select a workplace document or academic essay that has a clear thesis. Examine each paragraph and identify the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. Then, choose one particular paragraph and discuss the following questions:

- Is the topic sentence clearly identifiable or is it implied?
- Do all the supporting sentences relate to the topic sentence?
- Does the writer use effective transitions to link his or her ideas?
- Does the concluding sentence accurately summarize the main point of the paragraph?

As a group, identify the weakest areas of the paragraph and rewrite them. Focus on the relationship among the topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentence. Use transitions to illustrate the connection between each sentence in the paragraph.

5. **Peer activity.** Using the information you have learned in this chapter, write a paragraph about a current event. Underline the topic sentence in your paragraph. Now, rewrite the paragraph, placing the topic sentence in a different part of the paragraph. Read the two paragraphs aloud to a peer and have him or her identify the topic sentence. Discuss which paragraph is more effective and why.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate, compare your answers, and discuss the contrasting results.

Chapter 7: Refining Your Writing: How Do I Improve My Writing Technique?

7.1 Sentence Variety

7.2 Coordination and Subordination

7.3 Parallelism

7.4 Refining Your Writing: End-of-Chapter Exercises

7.1 Sentence Variety

Learning Objectives

1. Identify ways to vary sentence structure.
2. Write and revise sentence structure at the beginning of sentences.
3. Write and revise sentence structure by connecting ideas.

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

In this chapter, you will follow a student named Naomi who has written a draft of an essay but needs to refine her writing. This section discusses how to introduce sentence variety into writing, how to open sentences using a variety of techniques, and how to use different types of sentence structure when connecting ideas. You can use these techniques when revising a paper to bring life and rhythm to your work. They will also make reading your work more enjoyable.

Incorporating Sentence Variety

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

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

In this extract from an election campaign, the writer uses short, simple sentences of a similar length and

style. Writers often mistakenly believe that this technique makes the text more clear for the reader, but the result is a choppy, unsophisticated paragraph that does not grab the audience's attention. Now read the revised paragraph with sentence variety:

During my time in office, I have helped increase funding for local schools, reduced crime rates in the neighborhood, and encouraged young people to get involved in their community. Why fix what isn't broken? If you reelect me this year, I will continue to achieve great things for this community. Don't take a chance on an unknown contender; vote for the proven success.

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

Tip

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

Exercise 1

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

1. Heroin is an extremely addictive drug. Thousands of heroin addicts die each year.
2. Shakespeare's writing is still relevant today. He wrote about timeless themes. These themes include love, hate, jealousy, death, and destiny.
3. Gay marriage is now legal in six states. Iowa, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine all permit same-sex marriage. Other states are likely to follow their example.
4. Prewriting is a vital stage of the writing process. Prewriting helps you organize your ideas. Types of prewriting include outlining, brainstorming, and idea mapping.
5. Mitch Bancroft is a famous writer. He also serves as a governor on the local school board. Mitch's two children attend the school.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Using Sentence Variety at the Beginning of Sentences

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

John and Amanda will be analyzing this week's financial report.

The car screeched to a halt just a few inches away from the young boy.

Students rarely come to the exam adequately prepared.

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

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

The subprime mortgage crisis left many financial institutions in jeopardy. Some economists argued that the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. The government finally opted to bail out the banks. It acquired \$400 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. The government optimistically expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

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

Starting a Sentence with an Adverb

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

She slowly turned the corner and peered into the murky basement.

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

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

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

Cautiously, he unlocked the kennel and waited for the dog's reaction.

Solemnly, the policeman approached the mayor and placed him under arrest.

Suddenly, he slammed the door shut and sprinted across the street.

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

The subprime mortgage crisis left many financial institutions in jeopardy. Some economists argued that the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. The government finally opted to bail out the banks. It acquired \$700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. The government optimistically expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

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

The subprime mortgage crisis left many financial institutions in jeopardy. Some economists argued that the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. Finally, the government opted to bail out the banks. It acquired \$700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. Optimistically, the government expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

Tip

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

Exercise 2

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

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

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Starting a Sentence with a Prepositional Phrase

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

Table 7.1 Common Prepositions

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

Read the following sentence:

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

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

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

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

Underneath the heavy wooden table, the terrified child hid.

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

The bandaged man waited **in the doctor's office**.

In the doctor's office, the bandaged man waited.

My train leaves the station **at 6:45 a.m.**

At 6:45 a.m., my train leaves the station.

Teenagers exchange drugs and money **under the railway bridge**.

Under the railway bridge, teenagers exchange drugs and money.

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

The subprime mortgage crisis left many financial institutions in jeopardy. Some economists argued that the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. The government finally opted to bail out the banks. It acquired \$700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. The government optimistically expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

Now read the revised version.

Throughout 2007 and 2008, the subprime mortgage crisis worsened, leaving many financial institutions in jeopardy. According to some economists, the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. Despite public objections, the government finally opted to bail out the banks. Since the 2008 bill passed, it has acquired \$700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities. The government optimistically expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

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

Unmovable Prepositional Phrases

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

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

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

Overuse of Prepositional Phrases

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

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

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

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

Writing at Work

The overuse of prepositional phrases often occurs when our thoughts are jumbled and we are unsure how concepts or ideas relate to one another. If you are preparing a report or a proposal, take the time to organize your thoughts in an outline before writing a rough draft. Read the draft aloud, either to yourself or to a colleague, and identify areas that are rambling or unclear. If you notice that a particular part of your report contains several sentences over twenty words, you should double check that particular section to make certain that it is coherent and does not contain unnecessary prepositional phrases. Reading aloud sometimes helps detect unclear and wordy sentences. You can also ask a colleague to paraphrase your main points to ensure that the meaning is clear.

Starting a Sentence by Inverting Subject and Verb

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

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

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

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

The subprime mortgage crisis left many financial institutions in jeopardy. Some economists argued that the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. The government finally opted to bail out the banks. It acquired \$700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. The government optimistically expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

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

The subprime mortgage crisis left many financial institutions in jeopardy. The banks were too big to fail, argued some economists. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. The government finally opted to bail out the banks. It acquired \$700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. These assets will rise in value, expects the government optimistically. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

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

Exercise 3

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

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

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Connecting Ideas to Increase Sentence Variety

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

Joining Ideas Using an *-ing* Modifier

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dangling Modifiers

A common mistake when combining sentences using the *-ing* verb form is to misplace the modifier so that it is not logically connected to the rest of the sentence. This creates a dangling modifier. Look at the following example:

Jogging across the parking lot, my breath grew ragged and shallow.

In this sentence, *jogging across the parking lot* seems to modify *my breath*. Since breath cannot jog, the sentence should be rewritten so that the subject is placed immediately after the modifier or added to the dangling phrase.

Jogging across the parking lot, I felt my breath grow ragged and shallow.

For more information on dangling modifiers, see [Chapter 2 “Writing Basics: What Makes a Good Sentence?”](#).

Joining Ideas Using an *-ed* Modifier

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

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

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

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

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

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

The subprime mortgage crisis left many financial institutions in jeopardy. Some economists argued that the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. Opting to bail out the banks, the government acquired \$700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. It optimistically expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

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

Joining Ideas Using a Relative Clause

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

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

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

To connect two sentences using a relative clause, substitute the subject of one of the sentences (*he*) for a relative pronoun (*who*). This gives you a relative clause (*who lives in Seattle*) that can be placed next to the noun it describes (*the managing director*). Make sure to keep the sentence you want to emphasize as the main clause. For example, reversing the main clause and subordinate clause in the preceding sentence emphasizes where the managing director lives, not the fact that he is visiting the company.

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

Relative clauses are a useful way of providing additional, nonessential information in a sentence. Take a look at how Naomi might incorporate relative clauses into her essay.

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

Notice how the underlined relative clauses can be removed from Naomi's essay without changing the meaning of the sentence.

Tip

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

Joining Ideas Using an Appositive

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

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

Revised sentence: Harland Sanders, "the Colonel," began serving food for hungry travelers in 1930.

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

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

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

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

The subprime mortgage crisis, the biggest financial disaster since the 1929 Wall Street crash, left many financial institutions in jeopardy. Some economists argued that the banks were too big to fail. Other economists argued that an infusion of credit and debt would exacerbate the problem. The government, the institution that would decide the fate of the banks, finally opted to bail them out. It acquired \$700 billion worth of mortgage-backed securities in 2008. The government optimistically expects these assets will rise in value. This will profit both the banks and the government itself.

Exercise 4

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

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

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Writing at Work

In addition to varying sentence structure, consider varying the types of sentences you are using in a report or other workplace document. Most sentences are declarative, but a carefully placed question, exclamation, or command can pique colleagues' interest, even if the subject material is fairly dry. Imagine that you are writing a budget analysis. Beginning your report with a rhetorical question, such as "Where is our money going?" or "How can we increase sales?" encourages people to continue reading to find out the answers. Although they should be used sparingly in academic and professional writing, questions or commands are effective rhetorical devices.

Key Takeaways

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

7.2 Coordination and Subordination

Learning Objectives

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

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

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

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

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

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

Coordination

Coordination joins two independent clauses that contain related ideas of equal importance.

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

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

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

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

Coordinating Conjunctions

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

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

Tip

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

Conjunctive Adverbs

Another method of joining two independent clauses with related and equal ideas is to use a conjunctive adverb and a semicolon (see [Chapter 2 “Writing Basics: What Makes a Good Sentence?”](#) for information on semicolon usage). A conjunctive adverb is a linking word that demonstrates a relationship between two clauses. Read the following sentences:

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

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

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

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

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

Function	Conjunctive Adverb	Example
Addition	also, furthermore, moreover, besides	Alicia was late for class and stuck in traffic; furthermore, her shoe heel had broken and she had forgotten her lunch.
Comparison	similarly, likewise	Recycling aluminum cans is beneficial to the environment; similarly, reusing plastic bags and switching off lights reduces waste.
Contrast	instead, however, conversely	Most people do not walk to work; instead, they drive or take the train.
Emphasis	namely, certainly, indeed	The Siberian tiger is a rare creature; indeed, there are fewer than five hundred left in the wild.
Cause and Effect	accordingly, consequently, hence, thus	I missed my train this morning; consequently, I was late for my meeting.
Time	finally, next, subsequently, then	Tim crossed the barrier, jumped over the wall, and pushed through the hole in the fence; finally, he made it to the station.

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

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

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

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

Exercise 1

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

1. Pets are not allowed in Mr. Taylor's building. He owns several cats and a parrot.
2. New legislation prevents drivers from sending or reading text messages while driving. Many people continue to use their phones illegally.
3. The coroner concluded that the young man had taken a lethal concoction of drugs. By the time his relatives found him, nothing could be done.
4. Amphibians are vertebrates that live on land and in the water. Flatworms are invertebrates that live only in water.
5. Ashley carefully fed and watered her tomato plants all summer. The tomatoes grew juicy and ripe.

6. When he lost his car key, Simon attempted to open the door with a wire hanger, a credit card, and a paper clip. He called the manufacturer for advice.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Writing at Work

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

Subordination

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tip

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

Subordinating Conjunctions

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

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

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

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

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

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

Exercise 2

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

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

Exercise 3

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

The yeast is added to the must. Alcoholic fermentation then begins. Here, the red wine production process differs from the method used in white wine production. Red wine is fermented for a shorter time. It is fermented at a higher temperature. Whereas white wines may ferment for over a month, red wines typically ferment for less than two weeks. During fermentation, contact between the skins and the juice releases tannins and flavor compounds into the must. This process is known as maceration. Maceration may occur before, during, or after fermentation. The fermentation process is completed. The next stage is pressing. Many methods are used for pressing, the most common of which is basket pressing.

Key Takeaways

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

7.3 Parallelism

Learning Objectives

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

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

Using Parallelism

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

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

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

Faulty parallelism: Ali prefers jeans to wearing a suit.

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

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

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

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

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

Tip

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

Creating Parallelism Using Coordinating Conjunctions

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

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

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

The first sentence uses two different verb forms (*to listen, talking*). In the second sentence, the grammatical construction on each side of the coordinating conjunction (*and*) is the same, creating a parallel sentence.

The same technique should be used for joining items or lists in a series:

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

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

The first sentence contains two items that use the same verb construction (*reduce, cut*) and a third item

that uses a different verb form (*lowering*). The second sentence uses the same verb construction in all three items, creating a parallel structure.

Exercise 1

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

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

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Creating Parallelism Using *Than* or *As*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Exercise 2

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

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

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Creating Parallelism Using Correlative Conjunctions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Correct parallelism: The movie was both long and poorly written.

Tip

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

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

Writing at Work

Speechwriters use parallelism not only within sentences but also throughout paragraphs and beyond. Repeating particular key phrases throughout a speech is an effective way of tying a paragraph together as a cohesive whole and creating a sense of importance. This technique can be adapted to any piece of writing, but it may be especially useful for creating a proposal or other type of persuasive workplace document.

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

Exercise 3

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

1. The cyclist owns both a mountain bike and has a racing bike.

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

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Exercise 4

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

Owning a pet has proven to be extremely beneficial to people's health. Pets help lower blood pressure, boost immunity, and are lessening anxiety. Studies indicate that children who grow up in a household with cats or dogs are at a lower risk of developing allergies or suffer from asthma. Owning a dog offers an additional bonus; it makes people more sociable. Dogs are natural conversation starters and this not only helps to draw people out of social isolation but also they are more likely to find a romantic partner.

Benefits of pet ownership for elderly people include less anxiety, lower insurance costs, and they also gain peace of mind. A study of Alzheimer's patients showed that patients have fewer anxious outbursts if there is an animal in the home. Some doctors even keep dogs in the office to act as on-site therapists. In short, owning a pet keeps you healthy, happy, and is a great way to help you relax.

Key Takeaways

- Parallelism creates a sense of rhythm and balance in writing by using the same grammatical structure to express equal ideas.
- Faulty parallelism occurs when elements of a sentence are not balanced, causing the sentence to sound clunky and awkward.

- Parallelism may be created by connecting two clauses or making a list using coordinating conjunctions; by comparing two items using *than* or *as*; or by connecting two parts of a sentence using correlative conjunctions.

7.4 Refining Your Writing: End-of-Chapter Exercises

Learning Objectives

1. Use the skills you have learned in the chapter.
2. Work collaboratively with other students.
3. Work with a variety of academic and on-the-job, real-world examples.

Exercises

1. Children’s stories are deliberately written in short, simple sentences to avoid confusion. Most sentences are constructed using the standard subject-verb-object format. Choose a children’s story that is suitable for eight- to ten-year-olds. Rewrite a chapter of the story so that it appeals to a slightly older age group, by editing for sentence variety. Experiment with the techniques you learned in [Section 7.1 “Sentence Variety”](#), including the three different ways to vary sentence structure at the beginning of a sentence and the three different ways to connect ideas between sentences. Compare the revised chapter with the original version and consider how sentence variety can be used to target a particular audience.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

2. Compile a selection of real-life writing samples from the workplace or around the home. You might like to choose one of the following: e-mail, junk mail, personal letter, company report, social networking page, local newspaper, bulletin-board posting, or public notice. Choose two samples that lack sentence variety. Highlight areas of each writing sample that you would edit for sentence variety and explain why. Replace any recognizable name with a pseudonym, or a fictitious name.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

3. Group activity. Choose a well-known speech, such as Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, Winston Churchill’s “Blood, Toil, Tears, and Sweat” speech, or Barack Obama’s inaugural address. Make a copy of the speech and, as a group, underline examples of parallelism. Discuss the effects of using parallelism and consider whether it is always used to achieve the same result or whether the writer manipulates parallelism to create a variety of responses among his or her audience.

4. Group activity. Working in a small group, select a workplace document or academic essay. Examine each paragraph and identify examples of sentence variety, coordination and subordination, and parallelism. Then, choose one particular paragraph and discuss the following questions:

- Does the writer use sentence variety effectively?

- Does the writer connect his or her ideas effectively?
- Does the writer use subordination and coordination correctly?
- Does the writer use parallelism to emphasize his or her points?

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

5. Choose a college essay or a recent piece of writing from your work or everyday life. Use the techniques you have learned throughout this chapter to edit your writing for sentence variety, appropriate coordination and subordination, and parallelism. When you have finished, compare the two versions and write a brief analysis of how sentence variety, coordination and subordination, and parallelism help refine a piece of writing.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Chapter 8: The Writing Process: How Do I Begin?

8.1 Apply Prewriting Models

8.2 Outlining

8.3 Drafting

8.4 Revising and Editing

8.5 The Writing Process: End-of-Chapter Exercises

8.1 Apply Prewriting Models

Learning Objective

1. Use prewriting strategies to choose a topic and narrow the focus.

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

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

These are the five steps in the writing process:

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

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

Prewriting

Prewriting is the stage of the writing process during which you transfer your abstract thoughts into more

concrete ideas in ink on paper (or in type on a computer screen). Although prewriting techniques can be helpful in all stages of the writing process, the following four strategies are best used when initially deciding on a topic:

1. Using experience and observations
2. Reading
3. Freewriting
4. Asking questions

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

Choosing a Topic

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

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

My purpose: _____

My audience: _____

Using Experience and Observations

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

Tip

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

Reading

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

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

Tip

The steps in the writing process may seem time consuming at first, but following these steps will save you time in the future. The more you plan in the beginning by reading and using prewriting strategies, the less time you may spend writing and editing later because your ideas will develop more swiftly.

Prewriting strategies depend on your critical reading skills. Reading prewriting exercises (and outlines and drafts later in the writing process) will further develop your topic and ideas. As you continue to follow the writing process, you will see how Mariah uses critical reading skills to assess her own prewriting exercises.

Freewriting

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

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

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

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

Tip

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

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

Exercise 1

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

Asking Questions

Who? What? Where? When? Why? How? In everyday situations, you pose these kinds of questions to get more information. Who will be my partner for the project? When is the next meeting? Why is my car making that odd noise? Even the title of this chapter begins with the question “How do I begin?”

You seek the answers to these questions to gain knowledge, to better understand your daily experiences, and to plan for the future. Asking these types of questions will also help you with the writing process. As you choose your topic, answering these questions can help you revisit the ideas you already have and generate new ways to think about your topic. You may also discover aspects of the topic that are unfamiliar to you and that you would like to learn more about. All these idea-gathering techniques will help you plan for future work on your assignment.

When Mariah reread her freewriting notes, she found she had rambled and her thoughts were disjointed. She realized that the topic that interested her most was the one she started with, the media. She then decided to explore that topic by asking herself questions about it. Her purpose was to refine media into a topic she felt comfortable writing about. To see how asking questions can help you choose a topic, take a look at the following chart that Mariah completed to record her questions and answers. She asked herself the questions that reporters and journalists use to gather information for their stories. The questions are often called the 5WH questions, after their initial letters.

Figure 8.1 Asking Questions

Questions	Answers
Who?	I use media. Students, teachers, parents, employers and employees-almost everyone uses media.
What?	The media can be a lot of things. Television, radio, e-mail (I think), newspapers, magazines, books.
Where?	The media is almost everywhere now. It's in homes, at work, in cars, even on cell phones!
When?	Media has been around for a long time, but seems a lot more important now.
When?	Hmm. This is a good question. I don't know why there is mass media. Maybe we have it because we have the technology now. Or people live far away from their families and they have to stay in touch.
How?	Well, edia is possible because of the technology inventions, but I don't know how they all work!

Tip

Prewriting is very purpose driven; it does not follow a set of hard-and-fast rules. The purpose of prewriting is to find and explore ideas so that you will be prepared to write. A prewriting technique like asking questions can help you both find a topic and explore it. The key to effective prewriting is to use the techniques that work best for your thinking process. Freewriting may not seem to fit your thinking process, but keep an open mind. It may work better than you think. Perhaps brainstorming a list of topics might better fit your personal style. Mariah found freewriting and asking questions to be fruitful strategies to use. In your own prewriting, use the 5WH questions in any way that benefits your planning.

Exercise 2

Choose a general topic idea from the prewriting you completed in [Note 8.9 “Exercise 1”](#). Then read each question and use your own paper to answer the 5WH questions. As with Mariah when she explored her writing topic for more detail, it is OK if you do not know all the answers. If you do not know an answer, use your own opinion to speculate, or guess. You may also use factual information from books or articles you previously read on your topic. Later in the chapter, you will read about additional ways (like searching the Internet) to answer your questions and explore your guesses.

5WH Questions

1. Who?

2. What?

3. Where?

4. When?

5. Why?

6. How?

Now that you have completed some of the prewriting exercises, you may feel less anxious about starting a paper from scratch. With some ideas down on paper (or saved on a computer), writers are often more comfortable continuing the writing process. After identifying a good general topic, you, too, are ready

to continue the process.

Exercise

Write your general topic on your own sheet of paper, under where you recorded your purpose and audience. Choose it from among the topics you listed or explored during the prewriting you have done so far. Make sure it is one you feel comfortable with and feel capable of writing about.

My general topic: _____

Tip

You may find that you need to adjust your topic as you move through the writing stages (and as you complete the exercises in this chapter). If the topic you have chosen is not working, you can repeat the prewriting activities until you find a better one.

More Prewriting Techniques

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

- Brainstorming
- Idea mapping
- Searching the Internet

Narrowing the Focus

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

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

Brainstorming

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

The following is Mariah's brainstorming list:

Mass Media

Magazines

Newspapers

Broadcasting

Radio

Television

DVD

Gaming/video games

Internet

Cell phones

Smartphones

Text messages

Tiny cameras

GPS

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

Writing at Work



Imagine you have to write an e-mail to your current boss explaining your prior work experience, but you do not know where to start. Before you begin the e-mail, you can use the brainstorming technique to generate a list of employers, duties, and responsibilities that fall under the general topic “work experience.”

Idea Mapping

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

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

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

Figure 8.2 Idea Map



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

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

Searching the Internet

Using search engines on the Internet is a good way to see what kinds of websites are available on your topic. Writers use search engines not only to understand more about the topic’s specific issues but also to get better acquainted with their audience.

Tip

Look back at the chart you completed in [Note 8.12 “Exercise 2”](#). Did you guess at any of the answers? Searching the Internet may help you find answers to your questions and confirm your guesses. Be choosy about the websites you use. Make sure they are reliable sources for the kind of information you seek.

When you search the Internet, type some key words from your broad topic or words from your narrowed focus into your browser’s search engine (many good general and specialized search engines are available for you to try). Then look over the results for relevant and interesting articles.

Results from an Internet search show writers the following information:

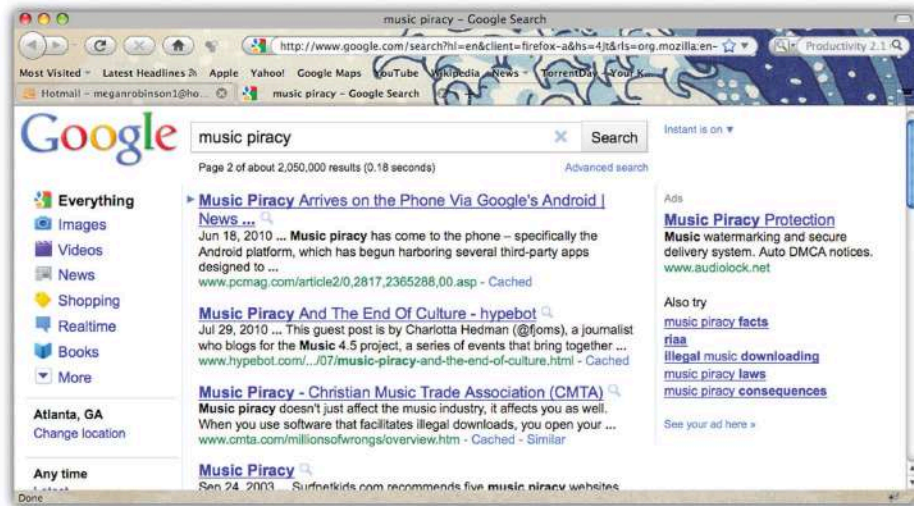
- Who is talking about the topic
- How the topic is being discussed
- What specific points are currently being discussed about the topic

Tip

If the search engine results are not what you are looking for, revise your key words and search again. Some search engines also offer suggestions for related searches that may give you better results.

Mariah typed the words *music piracy* from her idea map into the search engine Google.

Figure 8.3 Useful Search Engine Results



Retrieved from

<http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&client=firefox-a&hs=4Jt&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&q=music+piracy&start=10&sa=N!>>

Not all the results online search engines return will be useful or reliable. Give careful consideration to the reliability of an online source before selecting a topic based on it. Remember that factual information can be verified in other sources, both online and in print. If you have doubts about any information you find, either do not use it or identify it as potentially unreliable.

The results from Mariah's search included websites from university publications, personal blogs, online news sources, and lots of legal cases sponsored by the recording industry. Reading legal jargon made Mariah uncomfortable with the results, so she decided to look further. Reviewing her map, she realized that she was more interested in consumer aspects of mass media, so she refocused her search to media technology and the sometimes confusing array of expensive products that fill electronics stores. Now, Mariah considers a paper topic on the products that have fed the mass media boom in everyday lives.

Exercise 3

In [Note 8.12 "Exercise 2"](#), you chose a possible topic and explored it by answering questions about it using the 5WH questions. However, this topic may still be too broad. Here, in [Note 8.21 "Exercise 3"](#), choose and complete one of the prewriting strategies to narrow the focus. Use either brainstorming, idea mapping, or searching the Internet.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers. Share what you found and what interests you about the possible topic(s).

Prewriting strategies are a vital first step in the writing process. First, they help you first choose a broad topic and then they help you narrow the focus of the topic to a more specific idea. An effective topic ensures that you are ready for the next step.

Topic Checklist

Developing a Good Topic

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

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

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

My narrowed topic: _____

Key Takeaways

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

8.2 Outlining

Learning Objectives

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

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

Tip

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

Organizing Ideas

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

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

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

Methods of Organizing Writing

The three common methods of organizing writing are chronological order, spatial order, and order of importance. You will learn more about these in [Chapter 9 “Writing Essays: From Start to Finish”](#); however, you need to keep these methods of organization in mind as you plan how to arrange the information you have gathered in an outline. An outline is a written plan that serves as a skeleton for the paragraphs you write. Later, when you draft paragraphs in the next stage of the writing process, you will add support to create “flesh” and “muscle” for your assignment.

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

[Table 8.1 “Order versus Purpose”](#) shows the connection between order and purpose.

Table 8.1 Order versus Purpose

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

Writing a Thesis Statement

One legitimate question readers always ask about a piece of writing is “What is the big idea?” (You may even ask this question when you are the reader, critically reading an assignment or another document.) Every nonfiction writing task—from the short essay to the ten-page term paper to the lengthy senior thesis—needs a big idea, or a controlling idea, as the spine for the work. The controlling idea is the main idea that you want to present and develop.

Tip

For a longer piece of writing, the main idea should be broader than the main idea for a shorter piece of writing. Be sure to frame a main idea that is appropriate for the length of the assignment. Ask yourself, “How many pages will it take for me to explain and explore this main idea in detail?” Be reasonable with your estimate. Then expand or trim it to fit the required length.

The big idea, or controlling idea, you want to present in an essay is expressed in a thesis statement. A thesis statement is often one sentence long, and it states your point of view. The thesis statement is not the topic of the piece of writing but rather what you have to say about that topic and what is important to tell readers.

[Table 8.2 “Topics and Thesis Statements”](#) compares topics and thesis statements.

Table 8.2 Topics and Thesis Statements

Topic	Thesis Statement
Music piracy	The recording industry fears that so-called music piracy will diminish profits and destroy markets, but it cannot be more wrong.
The number of consumer choices available in media gear	Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are extensive, and the specifications are often confusing.
E-books and online newspapers increasing their share of the market	E-books and online newspapers will bring an end to print media as we know it.
Online education and the new media	Someday, students and teachers will send avatars to their online classrooms.

The first thesis statement you write will be a preliminary thesis statement, or a working thesis statement. You will need it when you begin to outline your assignment as a way to organize it. As you continue to develop the arrangement, you can limit your working thesis statement if it is too broad or expand it if it proves too narrow for what you want to say.

Exercise 1

Using the topic you selected in [Section 8.1 “Apply Prewriting Models”](#), develop a working thesis statement that states your controlling idea for the piece of writing you are doing. On a sheet of paper, write your working thesis statement.

Tip

You will make several attempts before you devise a working thesis statement that you think is effective. Each draft of the thesis statement will bring you closer to the wording that expresses your meaning exactly.

Writing an Outline

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

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

Tip

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

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

- Place your introduction and thesis statement at the beginning, under roman numeral I.
- Use roman numerals (II, III, IV, V, etc.) to identify main points that develop the thesis statement.
- Use capital letters (A, B, C, D, etc.) to divide your main points into parts.
- Use arabic numerals (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc.) if you need to subdivide any As, Bs, or Cs into smaller parts.
- End with the final roman numeral expressing your idea for your conclusion.

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

1. Introduction

Thesis statement

2. Main point 1 → *becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 1*

Main point 2 → *becomes the topic sentence of body paragraph 2*

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

Conclusion

Tip

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

Tip

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

Constructing Topic Outlines

A topic outline is the same as a sentence outline except you use words or phrases instead of complete sentences. Words and phrases keep the outline short and easier to comprehend. All the headings, however, must be written in parallel structure. (For more information on parallel structure, see [Chapter 7 “Refining Your Writing: How Do I Improve My Writing Technique?”](#).)

Here is the topic outline that Mariah constructed for the essay she is developing. Her purpose is to inform, and her audience is a general audience of her fellow college students. Notice how Mariah begins with her thesis statement. She then arranges her main points and supporting details in outline form using short phrases in parallel grammatical structure.

- I. *Introduction*
 - *Thesis statement: Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are many, and the specifications are often confusing.*
- II. *E-book readers and the way that people read*
 - A. *Books easy to access and carry around*
 - 1. *Electronic downloads*
 - 2. *Storage in memory for hundreds of books*
 - B. *An expanding market*
 - 1. *E-book readers from booksellers*
 - 2. *E-book readers from electronics and computer companies*
 - C. *Limitations of current e-book readers*
 - 1. *Incompatible features from one brand to the next*
 - 2. *Borrowing and sharing e-books*
- III. *Film cameras replaced by digital cameras*
 - A. *Three types of digital cameras*
 - 1. *Compact digital cameras*
 - 2. *Single lens reflex cameras, or SLRs*
 - 3. *Cameras that combine the best features of both*
 - B. *The confusing "megapixel wars"*
 - C. *The zoom lens battle*
- IV. *The confusing choice among televisions*
 - A. *1080p vs. 768p*
 - B. *Plasma screens vs. LCDs*
 - C. *Home media centers*
- V. *Conclusion*
 - *How to be a wise consumer*

Checklist

Writing an Effective Topic Outline

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

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

- Do I need to make any adjustments in my working thesis statement before I consider it the final version?

Writing at Work

Word processing programs generally have an automatic numbering feature that can be used to prepare outlines. This feature automatically sets indents and lets you use the tab key to arrange information just as you would in an outline. Although in business this style might be acceptable, in college your instructor might have different requirements. Teach yourself how to customize the levels of outline numbering in your word-processing program to fit your instructor's preferences.

Exercise 2

Using the working thesis statement you wrote in [Note 8.32 “Exercise 1”](#) and the reading you did in [Section 8.1 “Apply Prewriting Models”](#), construct a topic outline for your essay. Be sure to observe correct outline form, including correct indentions and the use of Roman and arabic numerals and capital letters.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your outline. Point out areas of interest from their outline and what you would like to learn more about.

Constructing Sentence Outlines

A sentence outline is the same as a topic outline except you use complete sentences instead of words or phrases. Complete sentences create clarity and can advance you one step closer to a draft in the writing process.

Here is the sentence outline that Mariah constructed for the essay she is developing.

- I. Introduction
 - Thesis statement: Everyone wants the newest and the best digital technology, but the choices are many, and the specifications are often confusing.
- II. E-book readers are changing the way people read.
 - A. E-book readers make books easy to access and to carry.
 - 1. Books can be downloaded electronically.
 - 2. Devices can store hundreds of books in memory.
 - B. The market expands as a variety of companies enter it.
 - 1. Booksellers sell their own e-book readers.
 - 2. Electronics and computer companies also sell e-book readers.
 - C. Current e-book readers have significant limitations.
 - 1. The devices are owned by different brands and may not be compatible.
 - 2. Few programs have been made to fit the other way Americans read: by borrowing books from libraries.
- III. Digital cameras have almost totally replaced film cameras.
 - A. The first major choice is the type of digital camera.
 - 1. Compact digital cameras are light but have fewer megapixels.
 - 2. Single lens reflex cameras, or SLRs, may be large and heavy but can be used for many functions.
 - 3. Some cameras combine the best features of compacts and SLRs.
 - B. Choosing the camera type involves the confusing "megapixel wars."
 - C. The zoom lens battle also determines the camera you will buy.
- IV. Nothing is more confusing to me than choosing among televisions.
 - A. In the resolution wars, what are the benefits of 1080p and 768p?
 - B. In the screen-size wars, what do plasma screens and LCD screens offer?
 - C. Does every home really need a media center?
- V. Conclusion
 - The solution for many people should be to avoid buying on impulse. Consumers should think about what they really need, not what is advertised.

Tip

The information compiled under each roman numeral will become a paragraph in your final paper. In the previous example, the outline follows the standard five-paragraph essay arrangement, but longer essays will require more paragraphs and thus more roman numerals. If you think that a paragraph might become too long or stringy, add an additional paragraph to your outline, renumbering the main points appropriately.

Writing at Work

PowerPoint presentations, used both in schools and in the workplace, are organized in a way very similar to formal outlines. PowerPoint presentations often contain information in the form of talking points that the presenter develops with more details and examples than are contained on the PowerPoint slide.

Exercise 3

Expand the topic outline you prepared in [Note 8.41 “Exercise 2”](#) to make it a sentence outline. In this outline, be sure to include multiple supporting points for your main topic even if your topic outline does not contain them. Be sure to observe correct outline form, including correct indentions and the use of Roman and arabic numerals and capital letters.

Key Takeaways

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