Unit 4: Writing—Taking a Second Look

Overview

In the previous unit you produced a first draft of an expository essay. In this expository essay you explained something to your readers and built most of your communication TOWER. However, your essay is not quite finished. It is your first attempt to write, or "speak," to your audience. This first attempt to direct your writing to an audience is your first draft. Think back to the last time you looked through a pair of binoculars or a microscope. Most likely, the picture you saw was a little blurred. You found, however, that some fine tuning helped. You could adjust the picture until it became crystal clear. You are about to do the same thing to your first draft. You are about to fine-tune it so it is also crystal clear. This final draft will say exactly what you want it to say.

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Fine Tuning Your Writing

The process of fine tuning your writing has three steps. The first step is called **revision**. During *revision*, you look at what you have said and the way you have said it. You make absolutely sure your message is as **detailed** as you need it to be. Here, you add to or omit *details* from your work. Not until you have fine-tuned your message are you ready to **edit**, which is the second step: *editing*. During the editing stage, you check your grammar, **punctuation**, and spelling. Finally, after your work says what you intend and uses correct English, you are ready for the third step: **proofreading**. During this step you check for typing errors, omitted words, misspellings, or any other "accidents" on the page. This is your final look to make sure everything is just right. When you have finished these three steps, you are ready to present your writing to your **audience**.

During the editing stage, you check for typing errors, omitted words, misspellings, or any other "accidents" on the page.

These three steps are used by all different levels of writers. Even professional writers don't get it right in their very first draft. Writing is a process, and good writing has been adjusted until its message is clear and nearly error free.

Revision

The word revision sounds like exactly what it means. Before you attempt to fine tune your words, you must re-envision them. In other words, you must see them again with a more focused look. The best revision comes after you have left your writing for a while. You need to get some distance from your ideas in order *see* them as your readers do. Your mission is to put yourself in your readers' place and see if they can understand clearly what you've written.

Revising Your Expository Essay

Some time has passed since you wrote the first draft for your expository essay in Unit 3. It's time to look at again and revise it. However, before revising yours, read over the following.

The purpose of **expository writing** is *to explain your subject* to your readers. You must see whether your readers grasp your instruction, information, or argument. Your readers may understand your words and **sentences**. However, unless they can turn your **essay** into their knowledge, your writing is not successful.

During the revising stage, you are checking your writing for its language, content, and organization. You are checking to see if you have chosen the best words. You are also making sure you have written the very best *sentences* that you can. Finally, you are figuring out if you have included the right information. If you have done these things, your writing will be clear and persuasive.

Checking and revising your first draft can be a little frightening. You may be unsure of where to begin. Fortunately, most big projects can be broken down into smaller steps. This is true of your *essay*. You will find your essay more manageable if you examine your **paragraphs** in the following four ways.

1. Check the **essay as a whole** (the title and paragraphs #1 - #5).
2. Check the **introductory paragraph** (paragraph #1).
3. Check the **body paragraphs** (paragraphs #2 - #4).
4. Check the **concluding paragraph** (paragraph #5).

The Essay as a Whole

Use the questions below to evaluate your entire essay. Don't worry about finding errors. Few writers, even very successful ones, get it right in the first draft.

1. **Does your title announce your useful topic and excite your readers' interest?**

   Consider an essay that explains how your local water source is in danger. It has been tested and shown to have some contaminants. The title "Local Water Pollution" conveys the **useful topic** of this essay. However, it sounds pretty dull. It doesn't exactly snag the readers' interest. In contrast, the essay title "Drinking Water May Be Hazardous to Your Health!" has a bit of zing. It conveys the

useful topic as it attracts the readers' interest. This title plays on the medical warnings that drinking alcohol or smoking tobacco may be hazardous to your health. It replaces these harmful drugs with the most common and necessary part of everyone's diet—drinking water.

An essay entitled "That Glass of Water Will Be Your Last!" is probably overstating the problem.

You must make sure not to exaggerate your essay's contents. An essay entitled "That Glass of Water Will Be Your Last!" is probably overstating the problem. It could be fair and honest only if your local water had been poisoned. Once readers discover that the writer has exaggerated, they will no longer believe the writer's words.

2. **Have you accomplished your purpose?**

   On a slip of paper, write the **purpose** of your essay. Then place it where you can glance at it often as you read your essay. Since you have written an expository essay, you are attempting to explain something. On your slip of paper write, *To explain*…. Then complete this phrase. The writer of the essay on local water pollution mentioned above would write, "To explain how our local water supply is being contaminated."

   Read your essay as if you were a buyer and it were a product. Ask yourself whether your essay has given enough information to completely explain and describe the "product." Make notes at any point in your essay where you think you need to add additional information or discussion to do this. Remember: What you are reading is your first draft. It is quite likely that it needs some fine tuning.

3. **Do all of your body paragraphs explain and discuss your useful topic?**

   Take the sheet of paper on which you have written your *purpose*. Below your purpose, write each **subtopic** or focus of your *body paragraph*. Ask yourself once more if each subtopic relates to your useful topic. To do so, ask yourself the following question of each *subtopic*: "*How* does this subtopic relate to my useful topic?"

The essay on water pollution has these three subtopics: a) contaminated runoff water from local farms, b) polluted waste from factories, and c) outdated practices and equipment at the local water treatment plant. A good test to determine if the subtopics support the thesis is to outline the essay in the following way and ask if each subtopic relates to the useful topic and makes sense.

Useful topic: "Drinking Water May be Hazardous to Your Health!"

A. Because it may contain contaminated runoff water from local farms **(This makes sense.)**

B. Because it may contain polluted waste from factories **(This also makes sense.)**

C. Because it may be polluted by outdated practices and equipment at the local water treatment plant **(This is also a supportive subtopic that makes sense.)**

Originally, the writer had included the following subtopic: "polluted water tastes bad." When she inserted it into the above outline, it read: "Drinking water may be hazardous to your health because polluted water tastes bad." The sentence sounds strange. However, this is not the only problem. Run-off water from local farms can endanger health. Polluted waste from factories can do the same. Also, outdated practices and equipment at the treatment plant can contaminate drinking water. This would indeed make it unsafe to drink. Bad taste could be a result of pollution, but in itself it is not dangerous. The writer realized this subtopic did not support the useful topic.

Originally, the writer had included the following subtopic: "polluted water tastes bad." However, this subtopic does not support the useful topic.

4. **Are your body paragraphs arranged in the best order?**

Sometimes the order of your body paragraphs will be obvious. For example, suppose you are describing the world's tallest skyscraper. The most obvious part of this building is the outside. Therefore, you would probably describe the outside of the building in the first body paragraph. In the second body paragraph you would probably describe the interior. This order follows you as you move inside the

building. You would then describe the structural design that keeps the building from toppling over in the third body paragraph. This is not obvious to the viewer, but it is important information . Your organization goes from the most visible to the unseen.

Unfortunately, the order of body paragraphs is not always so obvious. For instance, in the essay on water pollution, how should the body paragraphs be ordered? Here are those subtopics again.

a) water runoff from local farms

b) polluted waste from factories

c) outdated practices and equipment at the local water treatment plant

Which should go first, second, and third?

The writer decided that c) outdated practices and equipment at the local water treatment plant—should go third. This is the final step in getting water to people. She then decided that b) polluted waste from factories —should be presented first. Polluted waste from factories is the most obvious form of pollution. Most of her readers could smell and see this pollution. By discussing something her readers were familiar with, the writer thought she could gain their interest. She assumed that many of her readers had often wondered where all that pollution from the factories was actually coming from. How did it find its way in their waterways. She decided that after presenting a familiar source of pollution, she would present one that was nearly invisible—contaminated water runoff from local farms.

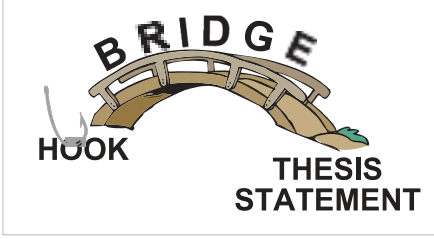
The Essay as a Whole

Ask the following questions of your essay as a whole:
1. Does your title announce your useful topic and excite your readers' interest?
2. Have you accomplished your purpose?
3. Do all of your body paragraphs explain and discuss your useful topic?
4. Are your body paragraphs arranged in the best order?

Revising the Introductory Paragraph: Hook the Reader

You will begin your revision with the introductory paragraph. Before you do, read the following.

The introductory paragraph of your essay should capture or hook your reader's interest. It should also build a connection or *bridge* between the hook and **thesis statement**. Finally, your introduction should make a promise that will be fulfilled in the essay.



The *thesis statement* of the introductory paragraph gives direction to the essay. (This is similar to the way a **topic sentence** gives direction to a single paragraph.) The thesis statement has three purposes:

- to state the main point of the essay
- to indicate your attitude toward the **topic**
- to suggest the way the essay will be organized.

As you write your thesis, keep your purpose in mind. Also, remember your audience. Finally, keep your thesis clear and make it say exactly what your essay will be about.

Revising the Introductory Paragraph

Ask the following questions of your introductory paragraph:
1. How do the first two or three sentences "hook" your readers' interest?
2. Have you built a bridge between your "hook" and your thesis statement?

The following questions are presented again to help as you revise your introductory paragraph.

1. **How do the first two or three sentences "hook" your readers' interest?**

   Reread your first two or three sentences and ask yourself: "If I had a choice, would I read any further? Do these sentences make me want to know more about this *topic* and what the writer has to say?" If your answer is no, you will need to revise your introduction.

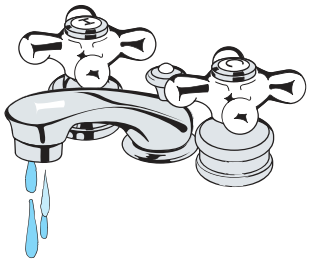
   The writer of "Drinking Water May Be Hazardous to Your Health!" began with the following two sentences in her first draft:

   > "Water is important to our health. If we don't have clean, uncontaminated water to drink, we will not be healthy."

   However, she decided that these sentences did *not* hook her readers. She decided to revise, using a more dramatic statement.

   Her revision read as follows:

   > "Everyone knows that if you smoke cigarettes or drink too much alcohol, you will damage your health. How many of us, however, are aware that the clear and seemingly pure drinking water that flows from our kitchen faucet may make us ill—and may even cause us to develop cancer?"

   Now this writer has captured her readers' interest.

   Remember as you compose your opening sentences not to *exaggerate* simply to catch your readers' eye. The writer above made a statement she would *explain and support* in the body of her essay. It would not be honest for her to have written, "Go ahead, have a drink of water. A couple of glasses and you'll be floating towards your grave!" Those sentences may hook readers, but readers would lose their respect for that writer when they realized she was exaggerating and could not support such an extreme claim.

2. **Have you built a bridge between your "hook" and your thesis statement?**

In every paragraph, one sentence should naturally lead to the next. No sentence should seem jammed or forced into your paragraph. Your introductory paragraph is no exception.

- To check it, circle your hook, or your first few sentences.
- Then circle your thesis statement.
- Ask yourself: "Do the sentences after my hook lead naturally to my thesis statement?"
- If the answer is "yes," move on.
- If the answer is "no," revise to smooth out the bumps.

Look at the introductory paragraph of the essay entitled "Drinking Water May Be Hazardous to Your Health!" The hook and thesis statement have been italicized.

> *Everyone knows that if you smoke cigarettes or drink too much alcohol, you will damage your health. How many of us, however, are aware that the clear and seemingly pure drinking water that flows from the kitchen faucet in many homes may make us ill—may even cause us to develop cancer?* Everyone needs water to survive, so why aren't we taking care of this precious resource? We need to do something now! *You may live in a place where your water is not fit to drink because of runoff from local farms, polluted waste from factories, and outdated practices and equipment at the local water treatment plant.*

Examine the bridge—or the sentences—between the hook and thesis statement: "Everyone needs water to survive, so why aren't we taking care of this precious resource? We need to do something now!" It is a well-written passage. However, it does not continue the point made in the hook. It jerks the reader onto a new point. Here is the writer's revised paragraph. The revised bridge has been italicized so you may compare it with the old bridge.

Everyone knows that if you smoke cigarettes or drink too much alcohol, you will damage your health. How many of us, however, are aware that the drinking water that flows from the kitchen faucet in many homes may make us ill—may even cause us to develop cancer. *What makes this potential problem so dangerous is that bad drinking water may look clear and even be odorless. Similarly, bad, or contaminated, drinking water has been found in wealthy areas and poor areas, in big cities and small towns. In fact*, you may live in a place where your water is not fit to drink because of runoff from local farms, polluted waste from factories, and outdated practices and equipment at the local water treatment plant.

Notice how the new bridge continues with the "potential danger" of our drinking water and the difficulty with becoming aware of "bad drinking water." This bridge smoothly leads into the thesis statement and its introductory remarks: "In fact, you may live in a place where your water is not fit to drink...." These remarks are then followed by the essay's three subtopics: (a) runoff from local farms, (b) polluted waste from factories, and (c) outdated practices and equipment at the local water treatment plant."

Revising the Body Paragraphs: Support Your Essay

Each body paragraph has two components: the topic sentence and the detail sentences. The topic sentence announces the main idea that the rest of the paragraph will support. A good place to put your topic sentence is at the beginning of your body paragraphs.

The Topic Sentence

The topic sentence should contain two things. First, it must state a specific topic. Then, it should convey the writer's opinion about the topic or the feature that will be discussed. Read the following sentence:

> "Abraham Lincoln was the 16th president of the United States."

This sentence contains a good topic: Abraham Lincoln. However, the sentence states a **fact** that everyone would agree with. It lacks any kind of feeling from the author. Compare it to the following sentence:

> "Abraham Lincoln was the greatest president of the 19th Century."

Here, the writer states both the **subject** and his opinion about the *subject*. However, another writer might feel that John Quincy Adams, not Lincoln, was the best president of the 1800s.

Revising the Topic Sentence

Ask the following questions of your introductory paragraph:
1. Does your topic sentence make a claim or state an opinion with which a reasonable person could agree?
2. Are any words or phrases in your topic sentences too general? Do they need to be replaced by specific words?
3. Does your topic sentence suggest the way the rest of the paragraph will be developed?

The following questions are presented again here to help you as you write your topic sentences.

1. **Does each of your topic sentences make a claim or state an opinion that a reasonable person could agree with?**

   A good way to check this is to state the *opposite* of your topic sentence. Then ask yourself whether a reasonable person could agree with it. Consider the following topic sentence:

   "We should not pollute our drinking water."

   Would a reasonable person agree with the opposite claim?

   "We should pollute our drinking water."

   A reasonable person would *not* agree with that statement. Therefore, this is a poorly-worded topic sentence. Consider the following sentence:

   "Common-sense procedures can help keep our drinking water pure."

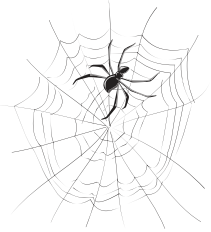
   The opposite of this would be

   "Common-sense procedures will do little to keep our drinking water pure."

   This could be supported. One person might feel that keeping our water safe is completely out of our hands. This second sentence is a good topic sentence.

2. **Are any words or phrases in your topic sentences too general? Do they need to be replaced by specific words?**

   Consider the following topic sentence:

   "Spiders should be protected, not killed, because they are good."

   The word "good" is very general. Each reader who sees this might have a different idea what "good" means.

Compare the generally-stated sentence to this revised one:

> "Spiders should be protected, not killed, because *they do many things that protect our home*s."

Here, the writer leaves no doubt as to her meaning.

3. **Does your topic sentence suggest the way the rest of the paragraph will be developed?**

   Look again at the above topic sentence:

   > "Spiders should be protected, not killed, because they do many things to protect our homes."

   The reader will expect the rest of the paragraph to discuss or illustrate *the things spiders do to protect our homes*.

Detail Sentences: Explain, Illustrate, or Persuade

The sentences that follow the topic sentence are called *detail sentences*. As you know, detail sentences explain, illustrate, persuade, or otherwise discuss the claim made in the topic sentence. Think of a detail sentence as a witness for the topic sentence. The topic sentence is on trial and the detail sentence testifies on its behalf.

Look at the list of ways below to create details for your topic sentences, and choose the ones that will work best for you.

Revising the Detail Sentences

Ask the following questions of each of your detail sentences:
1. Does this detail sentence support or explain the claim made in the topic sentence? a. If so, how does it support or explain the topic sentence? b. If not, can this detail sentence be rewritten to support or explain the topic sentence?
2. Are there any additional explanations, illustrations, or information that would help readers more clearly understand your point?
3. Are there any words or phrases in your detail sentences that are too general? Do they need to be replaced by specific words or phrases?
4. Are your detail sentences in the best order?
5. Is a concluding sentence needed to summarize the point of your paragraph?

The questions for revising your detail sentences are presented again below, along with explanations and examples.

1. **Does this detail sentence support or explain the claim made in the topic sentence?**

   Take this detail sentence and write it next to or below the topic sentence. Do you see the connection between these two sentences?

   If so, how does it support or explain the topic sentence? For example, does this detail sentence offer a reason or a statistic?

Be sure you can explain how each detail sentence relates to the topic sentence.

If not, can this detail sentence be rewritten to support or explain the topic sentence?

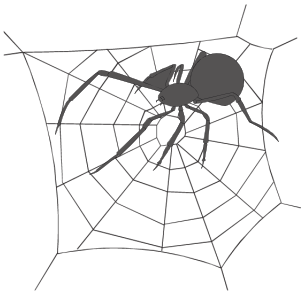
2. **Are there any additional explanations, illustrations, or information that would help readers be persuaded of your point?**

   If so, add them. One example or illustration is generally not enough to persuade readers of a claim made in a topic sentence.

3. **Are there any words or phrases in your detail sentences that are too general?** Do they need to be replaced by specific words or phrases?

   For example, consider the following detail sentence: "A very helpful chore that spiders do is to get rid of bugs." Many readers would wonder *how* spiders get rid of bugs. A good rewrite would be, "A very helpful chore that spiders do is to *eat many bugs that are caught in webs*."

4. **Are your detail sentences in the best order?**



   Is there any information that needs to be moved up to help readers follow your discussion? If so, you will want to place them before the sentences they help clarify. If not, put the best piece of support first, the next best second, and so on. For example, consider these three detail sentences: (a) *Spiders in a typical house will help keep down the number of houseflies, which that can be real pests.* (b) *A very helpful chore that spiders do is to eat many bugs that are caught in webs.* (c) *Spiders also snare the moths that can ruin our clothes made of wool.*

These sentences are out of order. Sentence (b) explains how spiders catch these pesky insects. It should appear before sentences (a) and (c). Sentences (a) and (c) are examples of the "many bugs that are caught in webs." Therefore, sentences (a) and (c) should appear *after* sentence (b).

5. **Is a concluding sentence needed to summarize the point of your paragraph?**

   If so, add it. Remember: The longer your paragraph, the greater the need to summarize your discussion and tie your points together. Shorter paragraphs generally don't need a concluding sentence.

Revising the Concluding Paragraph: Finish Your Essay

The concluding paragraph of an essay is the final word. It is also perhaps the most difficult paragraph to write. Too often, students feel they have no more to say and simply stop writing. Other times, young writers simply repeat the thesis statement word for word and then stop.

However, you must remember: these are the final words your readers will see. No matter how interesting or effective the body has been, a sloppy conclusion will leave a sloppy impression on your reader.

As you revise your concluding paragraph, push yourself to finish the job. Don't let an other□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ developed concluding paragraph. Ask the following questions of your concluding paragraph as you revise it.

Revising the Concluding Paragraph

Ask the following questions of your concluding paragraph:
1. Does your concluding paragraph summarize or retell your main points without repeating sentences, phrases, or words you used in your introductory or body paragraphs?
2. Does your concluding paragraph present a new angle on your topic?
3. Does your concluding paragraph end with a statement that gently closes your discussion rather than just abruptly ending your discussion?

The questions for revising your concluding paragraph are presented again below, along with explanations and examples.

1. **Does your concluding paragraph summarize or retell your main points without repeating sentences, phrases, or words you used in your introductory or body paragraphs?**

   One of the best ways to learn something is to hear it in as many different ways as possible. Think about a time when you have been explaining something to someone and he said:

   "Can you tell it to me in a different way?"

This is very similar to what you should do in your concluding paragraph. You need to repeat the main points of your essay in a different way.

After summarizing your main points, compare the language of your concluding paragraph to the rest of your essay. Avoid repeating the exact same words and phrases. For example, in an essay on the ways spiders can be helpful inside a house, the following topic sentence appears:

> "A very helpful chore that spiders do is to eat many bugs that are caught in webs."

Your topic sentences are main points and should be touched upon in your conclusion. The trick is to revise the points using fresh language. "Spiders use their webs like nets to sift out some of the pests in our homes." Notice how this sentence conveys the same point but in a different way? That's one of the goals of a concluding paragraph.

2. **Does your concluding paragraph present a new angle on your topic?**

   This may seem like a difficult task. After all, you may think you have said all there is to say about your topic. But what your concluding paragraph asks for is a little different than just information. You should be able to present an interesting reflection on your subject. For example, after researching how spiders help our homes, the writer spent a half hour for a couple of days just watching spiders at work. She began to see spiders differently. She was then able to present a new angle on spiders to her readers:

   > "When we stop thinking about all that spiders may do *to* us, we can see all the things that spiders do *for* us."

   There it is—a new angle on spiders!

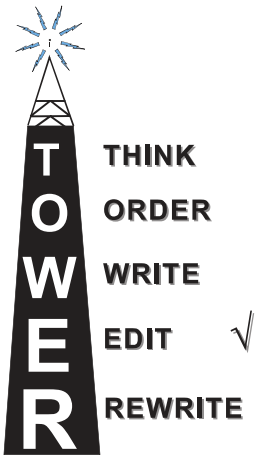
3. **Does your concluding paragraph end with a statement that gently closes your discussion rather than just abruptly ending it?**

   If you were having a nice chat with someone and he just got up and left, you would feel shocked or insulted. Similarly, you don't want to end your essay as if you suddenly decided to stop writing. A good **closing sentence or clincher** announces you are through and says something of importance. For example, in the spider essay, the final sentence read as follows:

   > "Spiders will never be man's best friends, but you should no longer see them as your worst enemy, either."

   Notice how this sentence captures the writer's purpose and says good-bye to the readers.

The *E* in Your TOWER: Editing Your Essay

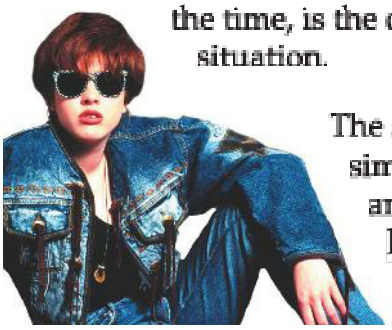


You have now finished a second draft of your essay. For example, your essay tells your readers something worthwhile about your topic. And your paragraphs are ordered to help your readers follow and understand your discussion. You are now ready to edit your essay.

During the *editing* process, you will improve your essay in two ways: (1) You add style, and (2) you revise and eliminate any errors in grammar, punctuation, or spelling.

Style: Making a Statement

Have you ever spoken with someone for the first time and thought to yourself, "This person really has style." Many of us use the word *style* to describe someone or something (such as clothes) without really being able to define what we mean. We see a person's appearance, their clothing, their hairstyle, and even their posture. We may *smell* their fragrance and *feel* the texture of their skin when we shake hands. We *hear* the words they choose and the way they put those words together. Style, most of the time, is the overall sense we get from someone in a social situation.



Many of us use the word style *to describe someone or something (such as clothes) without really being able to define what we mean.*

The style we perceive in a piece of writing is similarly made up of what we see, smell, feel, and hear *when* we read something. Writing that has style uses words to create *vivid images* that excite our senses. Writing that has style also uses *sentences of different lengths and structures* to help us hear a distinct voice. In addition, writing that has style uses *transitions* to link language and ideas, and make the writing flow. Writing that uses words to create images, a variety of sentence structures, and transitions has energy. The writing seems to move along the page—and carry us with it. In addition, when we read this kind of writing, we sense a real person behind it. We can almost see and hear the writer speaking to us.

Using Vivid Images: Replacing Vague Words with Exact Ones

When an image is vivid, we see it clearly and precisely. Compare, for example, the following two descriptions:

Thomas *walked* into the room.

Thomas *swaggered* into the room.

Thomas walked *into the room.*

Each person who reads the first sentence will see Thomas entering the room in a different way. The first description leaves the reader to determine or imagine how Thomas made his way into the room. In the second description, however, the writer has taken control of the image. She has used the word *swaggered* to draw a precise image we can see in our mind's eye. (To *swagger* means "to walk with a proud or insolent air.") Simply by changing a single word the writer can turn a vague image into a specific and vivid one. What would readers see, hear, or feel if the writer wrote that Thomas *stomped*, *tiptoed*, or *inched* into the room?

Consider the sentence, "It *rained* last night, so the grass is *wet*." It leaves you with a few questions: "How *heavy* was the rain? How *wet* is the grass?" Notice how the writer of the two sentences below has given you a precise image that helps you see the force of the rain that *fell* and *feel* the wetness of the grass.

It *drizzled* last night, so the grass is *damp*.

It *poured* last night, so the grass is *soaked*.

Sometimes exchanging one vague word for an exact word is not enough. In some places in your writing, you may decide that to make your point or to create an image, you must replace a word with a phrase, clause, or even a whole paragraph.

Imagine that you are writing a description of an interesting person you know, who is named John. What interests you about John is how understanding he is towards others, yet how cold and military-like he is towards himself. One passage of your essay describes walking home with John. The description ends with this sentence: "John walked into his house." You realize, as you revise and edit your draft that the image of John here is not precise or vivid. You change it to, "John marched into

his house." You are happy with this change because it helps show the military quality in John. Suddenly you realize that John's house tells a lot about him. His house, you decide, is so revealing that it is worthy of a few sentences. So you develop the following paragraph:

> John marched toward a perfectly square wooden building painted a blazing white, with a front porch filled with lawn furniture too clean to have ever been used. It was his house, though it looked more like a military barracks. When he opened the front door, I heard the sound of a seal breaking, as if he were the first person to have ever stepped inside. It sounded that way every time he entered his house.

Replacing "John marched into his house" with this paragraph does more than just appeal to the reader's senses. It also adds energy and warmth, for the reader can imagine a human being thinking and writing this paragraph.

Notice also that this passage gives the reader a sense of what the inside of John's house is like. We can imagine that it is as neat and precise as the outside. Similarly, we imagine that the furniture inside is not round or flowing in design but square and efficient looking.

Study one more example. The first paragraph below nearly hits its target. It does use specific language. The reader does get a good image of the experience Peter is having as he takes a test. However, even a good piece of writing can sometimes be improved.

Origi□ □ □ :

> Peter was having a hard time taking the test. The light over his head was blinking and making a noise. The student behind him was hitting his chair, and the band was outside. Also, he could smell bread being baked.

Revised paragraph:

Peter was having a difficult time concentrating on the test. The fluorescent light over his head had nearly burned out and was flickering and buzzing constantly. The student behind him was rapping on Peter's chair with his pencil, and the band was blaring away outside the window. Peter hadn't eaten breakfast, and the smell of freshly baked bread wafting in from the home economics class next door made him imagine eating the bread slathered with butter.

Imagery was used in the revised paragraph to appeal to the reader's senses of sight (the *flickering* light), sound (*buzzing* noise, *rapping* on Peter's chair, the band *blaring*) and smell (*freshly baked bread wafting in*). The revised paragraph also replaced some the words with more exact descriptions (*fluorescent light* instead of *light*, *flickering* instead of *blinking*, *rapping* instead of *hitting*). These revisions give the reader a clearer picture of Peter's difficulties and make the paragraph more interesting.

Sentence Structure: Variety in Lengths

Variety is not only the spice of life, it is the spice of writing—or speaking, for that matter. No doubt you've been trapped by a well-meaning person who drones on and on in sentences that sound identical. The effect can be hypnotizing. By the time your eyes begin to close, your interest has been shut down for a long time. The same kind of effect can happen to the reader of a series of sentences that are similar in structure and length.

No matter how interesting your ideas, descriptions, or information, if you don't vary your sentence structures and lengths, your readers will find it difficult to stay alert. A good way to think about a paragraph is to imagine it as a long road. Reading through sentences that lack variety is like driving along a perfectly flat road through featureless scenery. After awhile, you begin to fight the urge to fall asleep. But when the road rises and falls, twist and turns with a difference in scenery your, response to these changes keeps you alert and moving along. So it is with a paragraph. A variety in sentence structure and length keeps readers alert and moving along at a comfortable pace.

As you study the sample paragraph below, pay special attention to the variety of sentence beginnings and types. Notice that these sentences vary in length from six to 24 words.

> Our vacation visit to a movie theme park included many unexpected experiences. After abandoning our car in an enormous parking lot, we rode to the entrance gate in a train-like vehicle. Then, we rushed to the ticket window, but we were surprised to find no line in front of us.
>
> "So far, so good," we thought. Then the reality of tourism, Florida's #1 industry, hit us as we realized that every attraction we wanted to visit included long, snakelike waiting lines. We realized, as we spent almost half of our time standing in lines, that vacations can be part fun, part work.

We realized that every attraction we wanted to visit included long, snakelike waiting lines.

Sentence Types: Simple, Compound, and Complex

Sentences are classified according to their structure—*simple*, *compound*, and *complex*. A *simple sentence* is a sentence with one independent clause and no dependent clause. It has only one subject and one verb. Both the subject and the verb may be compound.

A *compound sentence* is a sentence that has two or more independent clauses and no dependent clauses. Simply, it consists of two or more simple sentences joined by a semicolon, or by a comma and a coordinating conjunction—***f****or*, ***a****nd*, ***n****or*, ***b****ut*, ***o****r*, ***y****et*, or ***s****o* (fanboys). For example—"Inside the parlor the blinds were drawn, and the fire burned brightly."

Be careful not to confuse a simple sentence having a compound subject or verb with an actual compound sentence.

> *Simple sentence* with *compound subject*: *Jenna* and *Clay* bought a new car.
>
> *Simple sentence* with *compound verb*: Ray *ran* and *leaped* across the playground.
>
> *Compound sentence*: Jenna bought a new car, *and* Jeff repaired his truck.

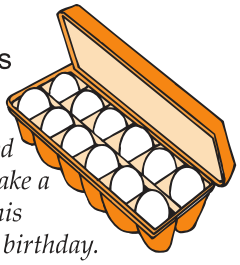
A *complex sentence* has at least one independent clause and one dependent clause. The dependent clause *depends* on the independent clause to complete its meaning. For example, the dependent clause "Because she is a great athlete" leaves us wondering, "What about the fact that she is a great athlete?" To complete the meaning, add an independent clause: "Because she is a great athlete, she will compete in the Olympic games." Note that the clauses in a complex sentence can be reversed: "She will compete in the Olympic games, because she is a great athlete." Dependent clauses are connected to independent clauses with subordinating conjunctions. Below are the most frequently used subordinating conjunctions:

after	because	in order that	that	whereas
although	before	provided that	though	wherever
as	considering (that)	rather than	unless	whether
as far as	even if	since	until	while
as if	even though	so long as	when	
as long as	if	so that	whenever	
as soon as	inasmuch as	than	where	

Sentence Combining: Making Simple Sentences into Compound and Complex Ones

If you notice that most of your sentences in a paragraph look and sound alike, combine some of your sentence to create variety. *Sentence combining* is simply combining two or more short, choppy sentences into one compound or complex sentence to make a smooth, more detailed one. Take, for example, this short paragraph:

> The young boy dashed to the store. He needed eggs to bake a cake for his mother's birthday. The store would be closed in five minutes. There were no other stores nearby. He got there in record time. The manager was just locking the door.



He needed eggs to bake a cake for his mother's birthday.

This paragraph is composed of sentences identical in structure and nearly identical in length. Variety can easily be added to this paragraph simply by combining some of the sentences.

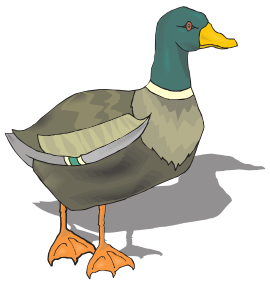
> The young boy dashed to the store because he needed eggs to bake a cake for his mother's birthday. The store would be closed in five minutes, and there were no other stores nearby. He got there in record time, just as the manager was locking the door.

Notice that in the original version all of the sentences are simple sentences. In the revised version, the first sentence uses "*because*" to make a complex sentence from two simple sentences. The next sentence uses a *comma* plus "*and*" to make a compound sentence out of two simple sentences. The last sentence uses "*just as*" to combine two simple sentences into a complex sentence.

Sentence Expanding: Turning Simple Sentences into Complex Ones

Another way to add variety to sentences in a paragraph is through *sentence expanding*. Expand sentences by adding modifiers to a basic sentence pattern. The new sentence will give the reader more details and clarify your meaning. For example, look at the process of expanding the simple sentence below. Details that have been added to each sentence are italicized.

The boy took a picture of the duck.



The boy took a picture of the duck *on the tree stump*.

The boy took a picture of the duck on the tree stump *with his new digital camera*.

The boy took a picture of the duck on the tree stump *because he wanted to test* his new digital camera.

The *talented* boy took a picture of the *wild* duck on the tree stump because he wanted to test his new digital camera.

A good way to expand a sentence is to ask and then answer questions about it.

The bird chirped.

(How loudly did it chirp?) The bird chirped *as loudly as it could*.

(Why did it chirp?) The bird chirped as loudly as it could *because it was hungry*.

Notice in both examples above that the addition of words to the basic sentence pattern created a more vivid and exact image in the reader's mind.

Transitions: Linking Ideas

Transitions are words or phrases that help tie or link ideas together. For this reason, they are also called linking words and phrases. Transitions unify your writing. This makes it clear and easier for your readers to follow and understand.

Below is a paragraph written without transitions. Read it aloud.

Caught and Caught Again

I awoke this morning and found myself caught in a twisted heap of blankets. Untangling myself, I tried to leave my room, but the door was jammed tight. I was able to yank the door open. Unfortunately, the door came free, I flew across the room and fell into the baby highchair I'd kept to remind me of those carefree times. The chair held my hips like a vise. My parents heard the noise and came to the rescue. "Aren't you a bit old to be using that chair?" they asked. We were able to saw the arms off and set me free. I got on all fours and crawled the rest of the way through my room, making sure I didn't get caught again.

Reading this aloud helps you hear the choppiness of the prose. Now, look at the same paragraph with a few transitions added. Again, read it aloud.

Caught and Caught Again

I awoke this morning and found myself caught in a twisted heap of blankets. **After** untangling myself, I tried to leave my room, but the door was jammed tight. **Finally**, I was able to yank the door open. Unfortunately, **when** the door came free, I flew across the room and fell into the baby highchair I'd kept to remind me of those carefree times. The chair held my hips like a vise. **By this time**, my parents heard the noise and came to the rescue. "Aren't you a bit old to be using that chair?" they asked. **After a short while**, we were able to saw the arms off and set me free. **Naturally**, I got on all fours and crawled the rest of the way through my room, making sure I didn't get caught again.

As you can hear from reading aloud, the writing flows better. Also, the ideas link together better.

Paragraphs in an essay should be carefully arranged to make sure the reader understands the writer's ideas. Appropriate use of transitions add to the arrangement by helping the paragraphs flow smoothly from one idea to another. Writers should include transitions in the first sentence in each new paragraph to link it to the previous one.

Here is the last line of the above paragraph.

> *Naturally*, I got on all fours and crawled the rest of the way through my room, making sure I didn't get caught again.

Now read just the first line copied from the next paragraph in the essay "Caught and Caught Again."

> The *next* part of the day was just like the first part, only it took place at school.

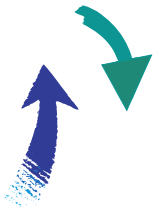
The word "next" keeps the time sequence planted in the reader's mind. The rest of the introductory clause refers back to the events of the first paragraph. The writer has made a smooth transition from one event to a similar one later in the day.

Study the list of transitions and linking words and phrases in the chart below before completing the practice exercise.

Transitions and Connecting Words

Words that show *location* or *place*:

above
across
adjacent
against
along
alongside
amid
among
around
at
away from
behind
below
beneath
beside
between
beyond
by
close
down
farther on
in back of
in front of
inside
into
near
nearby
off
on top of
onto
opposite
outside
over
throughout
to the left
to the right
under



Words that show *similarities* (likenesses) or *comparisons*:

also
as well
compared to
equally important
in comparison
in the same manner
in the same way
like
likewise
similarly

Words that show *differences* or *contrasts*:

a different view is
although
as opposed
but
conversely
counter to
differing from
even so
even though
however
in contrast
in spite of this
in the meantime
nevertheless
notwithstanding
on the contrary
on the other hand
otherwise
still
unlike
yet

Words used to *clarify*:

again
for instance
in other words
more precisely
more specifically
once again
that is
to be exact
to be precise
to be specific
to put it another way
to repeat

Words that show *time*:

about
after
afterward
as soon as
at last
at length
at once
at the same time
before
currently
during
earlier
finally
first
immediately
in the end
in the interim
in the meantime
later
meanwhile
next week
now
presently
prior to
recently
second
shortly
simultaneously
soon
subsequently
temporarily
then
thereafter
third
till
today
tomorrow
until
when
while
yesterday

Words that show *emphasis* (stress a certain point or idea):

again
for this reason
in fact
indeed
of course
to emphasize
to repeat
truly
with this in mind

Words that indicate logical *relationship*:

accordingly
as a result
consequently
for this reason
if
since
so
therefore
thus

More Transitions and Connecting Words

Words used to add *information* or to give *examples*:

additionally
again
along with
also
and
another
as well
besides
equally important
finally
for example
for instance
further
furthermore
in addition
in fact
in particular
in this manner
likewise
moreover
namely
next
one can also say
similarly
specifically
thus
to illustrate
together with
too

Words that *introduce a quoted opinion* (x being the author quoted):

x asserts that…
x says that…
x states that…
x strongly argues…
x suggests that…

Words to *conclude* or *summarize*:

accordingly
all in all
as a matter of fact
as a result
consequently
due to
finally
in a word
in brief
in conclusion
in final analysis
in other words
in short
in sum
in summary
in the end
last
on the whole
that is
therefore
thus
to conclude
to summarize
to sum up

Eliminating Errors: Check Your Grammar, Punctuation, and Spelling

The second step in editing your writing is to check for any errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Of course, before you can check your writing for errors, you must know what the rules of the English language are to be able to spot the errors.

Grammar: The Way Words Work Together

Begin editing by checking the grammar of your writing. In this section of the unit you will learn or review the correct way to use the following:

- sentence formation
- subject and verb agreement
- regular and irregular verbs
- singular and plural nouns
- noun and pronoun agreement
- possessives.

Begin editing by checking the grammar of your writing.

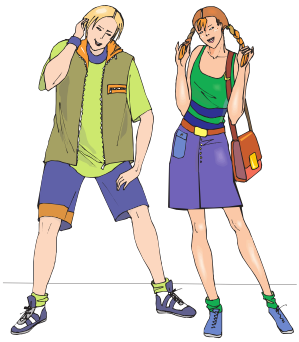
Sentence Formation: Building Complete Sentences

All of your sentences should be sentences. A complete sentence has a subject and a **verb**. It also must be a complete thought. Complete sentences can come in a variety of lengths. Contrast the following two complete sentences.

> I am going.
>
> I am going to the park to see for the last time the place where I played nearly every day as a child.

The two most common mistakes that writers make when forming sentences are **sentence fragments** and **run-on sentences**. Neither the *sentence fragment* nor the *run-on sentence* is a correct complete sentence.

Read the following conversation.



Bill: When are you leaving?

Sarah: When Mom's ready.

Bill: Are you going to New York?

Sarah: We're going to New York, stay there for three days and then we're going to leave for Cleveland, stay there for two days and then leave for Chicago, stay there a week and then we'll come home.

Bill: Well, you'll be well-traveled.

Sarah: And very tired!

You may find nothing wrong with this when it is written as conversation or dialogue. In fact, you have probably had conversations that used the same type of sentence structure and form. Now read the same conversation written in conventional paragraph form.

> When are you leaving? When Mom's ready. Going to New York? We're going to New York, stay there for three days and then we're going to leave for Ohio, stay there for two days and then leave for Chicago, stay there a week and then we'll come home. Well, you'll be well-traveled. And very tired!

Notice how the meaning gets lost when the same information is written in paragraph form and the name of the speaker is omitted. Some of the sentences seem to go on forever and others seem to be missing some information. The sentence that seems to go on forever is called a *run-on sentence*. The sentence that is missing some information or is *in*complete is either a *sentence fragment* (for example, "And very tired!") or a *dependent clause* (for example, "When Mom's ready."). Fragments and dependent clauses cannot stand alone because they are missing important information that the reader needs to make meaning from the sentence.

Remember: A *complete sentence* expresses a complete thought. A complete sentence has a *subject* and a **predicate**. The subject of a sentence tells who or what performs the action. For example, in the sentence, "Rita threw a perfect strike to third base to nail the base runner," *Rita* is the

performer of the action, *threw*. The complete *predicate* is the part of t sentence that says something about the subject. In the example above, the predicate says something about Rita: Rita *threw a perfect strike to third base to nail the base runner*. The complete predicate includes the *verb* ("threw") and any objects, modifiers, and complements.

The subject of a sentence can also identify what the rest of the sentence is about. For example, in the sentence, "Rita is a modest person," the predicate ("is a modest person") tells us about Rita. Note that in this example Rita is not the person performing the action.

Kinds of Complete Sentences: Declarative, Exclamatory, Imperative, and Interrogative

There are four kinds of complete sentences—**declarative sentences**, **exclamatory sentences**, **imperative sentences**, and **interrogative sentences**. Each kind of complete sentence ends in a different **end mark**. Using these four kinds of sentences and the correct *end marks* adds meaning to what you are writing.

Study the types of complete sentences and their examples in the chart below.

Types of Sentences

Sentence Type	Definition/Example	End Mark
Declarative	A sentence that makes a statement *Morning is my favorite time of day.*	.
Exclamatory	A sentence that expresses a strong feeling *You have to taste Milton's chocolate chip cookies!*	!
Imperative	A sentence that gives a command or makes a request *Sit down now! Be careful crossing the street!* or *Sit down now. Be careful crossing the street.*	! *or* .
Interrogative	A sentence that asks a question *When will you speak to your cousin again?*	?

Note: An *imperative sentence* has an understood subject. "Sit down now!" really means "You sit down now!" There is no subject written in this sentence. It is complete, however, with *you* as the *understood* subject.

Complete and Incomplete Sentences: Finished and Unfinished Thoughts

Correcting sentence fragments is part of revising and editing. In order to correct sentence fragments, you must be able to identify them and then rewrite them so they are complete thoughts. Ask yourself the following questions to help you identify and correct sentence fragments.

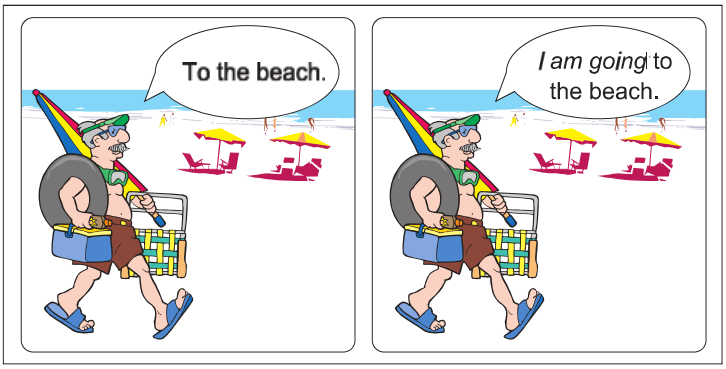
1. Does the sentence express a complete thought? If it does not, add the necessary words to make the thought complete.

2. Does the sentence have a subject? Do you know *who* or *what* is performing the action? If the sentence does not have a subject, insert one.

3. Does the sentence have a verb? Do you know what is the *action* or *state of being* of the subject? If the sentence does not have one, add one.

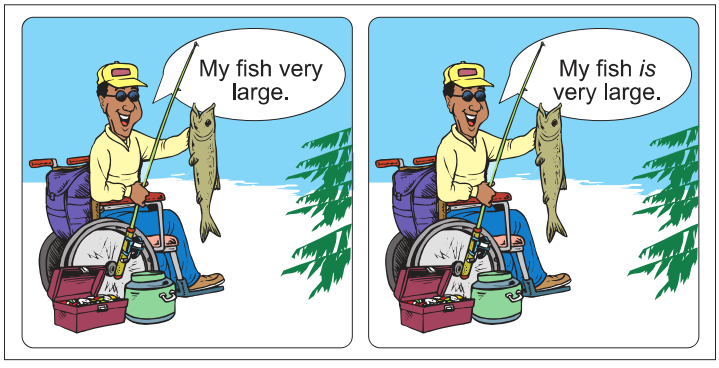
What's wrong with this statement? It is a sentence fragment because the subject and verb are missing.

One way to fix the sentence fragment could be...



What's wrong with this statement? It is a sentence fragment because the verb is missing.

One way to fix the sentence fragment could be...



Complete and Incomplete Sentences: Recognizing Phrase Fragments

A **phrase** is a group of words that does not contain both a subject and verb. It may have one or the other, but not both. Because it does not have both a subject and a verb, a *phrase* by itself is a sentence fragment. Three types of phrases are often mistaken for sentences. These are **verbal phrases**, **appositive phrases**, and **prepositional phrases**.

Verbal Phrases

Verbals are words formed from verbs. However, they are *not* used as verbs. They can be used as nouns or **modifiers**. Because *verbals* and verbs look alike, it can be hard to tell the difference. This is the reason writers often mistake *verbal phrases* for complete sentences.

Watch for verbals in phrases. Some verbals have endings that give you a clue— *-ing*, *-d*, or *-ed*. Look especially carefully at any words with these endings that do not have a helping verb in front of them. Another kind of verbal often has the word *to* in front of it (*to* go, *to* dance). Verbal phrases do *not* express complete thoughts. Used alone, they become sentence fragments.

Fragment: My family concerned about the storm.
Sentence: My family was concerned about the storm.

Fragment: Seated in front of the television.
Sentence: Seated in front of the television, my mother watched the weather report.

Fragment: Hearing a clap of thunder.
Sentence: Hearing a clap of thunder, Mom called for us to come inside.

Fragment: To keep us informed of the storm's progress.
Sentence: To keep us informed of the storm's progress, Dad and I listened to the radio all morning.

Appositive Phrases

An **appositive** is a **noun** or **pronoun** that identifies, renames, or describes another *noun* or *pronoun*. The *appositive* is located next to the word it describes.

Examples: My sister **Rachelle** is a great soccer player.
(The appositive **Rachelle** identifies the noun **sister**.)

Calvin, a cautious **driver**, has never received a speeding ticket.
(The appositive **driver** describes the proper noun, **Calvin**.)

Rachelle

An *appositive phrase* is made up of an appositive and any *modifiers* it has. Often, writers mistakenly punctuate an appositive phrase as a sentence.

Examples: Lina is from Destin, **a city known for beautiful beaches**.
(The appositive phrase—**a city known for beautiful beaches** —describes the proper noun **Destin**.)

Key Largo

Key Largo, **one of the islands in the Florida Keys**, is a famous movie locale.
(The appositive phrase—**one of the islands in the Florida Keys** —identifies the proper noun **Key Largo**.)

Prepositional Phrases

A **preposition** is a word that shows the relationship of a noun or a pronoun to another word. That word is called the **object of the preposition**.

Notice in the following examples how the *prepositions* show different relationships between the verb **flew** and the noun **clouds**, the *object of the prepositions*.

Examples: The airplane flew **past** the clouds.

The airplane flew **among** the clouds.

The airplane flew **into** the clouds.

The airplane flew **across** the clouds.

The airplane flew **under** the clouds.

The airplane flew **near** the clouds.

On the following page is a list of commonly used prepositions.

Commonly Used Prepositions		
aboard	beyond	out
about	but (meaning *except*)	over
above	by	past
across	concerning	since
after	down	through
against	during	throughout
along	except	till
among	for	to
around	from	toward
at	in	under
before	inside	underneath
behind	into	until
below	like	up
beneath	near	upon
beside	of	with
besides	off	within
between	on	without

Compound Prepositions

A preposition that consists of two or more words is called a *compound preposition*.

Examples: The picnic was cancelled **because of** rain.

Glenna is walking **in front of** Lillie.

Commonly Used Compound Prepositions		
according to	in addition to	instead of
because of	in front of	on account of
by means of	in spite of	prior to

A preposition, its object, and any modifiers of the object form a *prepositional phrase*. Writers will sometimes punctuate a prepositional phrase as a sentence. However, this would be a sentence fragment.

Complete and Incomplete Sentences: Recognizing the Dependent Clause

Every complete sentence has an **independent clause**. An *independent clause* has a subject and predicate and is a complete thought. (Remember: The predicate is the part of the sentence that says something about the subject.) For example, the sentence "I have been studying since the sun came up" is an independent clause. It has a subject (I) and a predicate (*have been studying since the sun came up*). Together the subject and predicate make a complete thought. There is no additional information we need to know in order to make sense of this sentence.

A **subordinate clause**, also called a **dependent clause**, also has a subject and a predicate. However, a *dependent clause* is not a complete sentence because it does not convey a complete thought. Because the dependent clause has both a subject and a predicate, it is easy to mistake it for a complete sentence. Consider the following clause:

> Because I spent my childhood in Michigan.

This clause contains a subject (I) and *a predicate* (*spent my childhood in Michigan*). However, the example above is not a complete thought. Because I spent my childhood in Michigan is a clause. Readers need to know what the effect is of having spent a childhood in Michigan.

> Because I spent my childhood in Michigan,
> I am used to freezing winters and tall drifts of snow.

The word *because* is one of a group of words that *introduces* a dependent clause. Anytime that a clause begins with one of these words it is a dependent clause and cannot stand as a complete sentence. The following words often begin subordinate or dependent clauses.

after	if	when	who
although	since	where	whom
because	though	whether	whose
before	unless	which	why
how	until	while	

Here are some examples of dependent clauses beginning with words from the list.

(1) *After* you return from your trek across India,

(2) *Although* your idea is a good one,

(3) *Before* you begin to yell at me,

(4) *If* you only knew how important you are,

(5) *Unless* we can find an alternative,

(6) *When* you smile at me like that,

(7) *While* you were gone,

Notice how each of these dependent clauses leaves us with a question. For example, after hearing clause (2), we wonder: My idea is a good one but what? Clause (5) leaves us wondering: What will happen if we can't find an alternative?

Here are the dependent clauses again, this time joined to independent clauses. Notice how the independent clause delivers the key piece of information that completes each thought. The independent clauses have been italicized.

(1) After you return from your trek across India, *I will massage your feet.*

(2) Although your idea is a good one, *we have tried it before without success.*

(3) Before you begin to yell at me, *I should tell you I have turned off my hearing aid.*

(4) If you only knew how important you are, *you wouldn't talk about yourself in such negative ways.*

(5) Unless we can find an alternative, *we will have to carry our band instruments to the concert across town.*

(6) When you smile at me like that, *I can't think straight.*

(7) While you were gone, *I cleaned up your room and found $50 in change on your floor.*

Correcting Run-on Sentences: When Words Run Stop Signs

A *run-on sentence* is two or more complete sentences that are written as one sentence. Run-on sentences do not show where one idea ends and another begins. Because of this, they can confuse readers. There are two kinds of run-on sentences: the **fused sentence** and the **comma splice**.

In a *fused sentence*, the writer has joined sentences *without any punctuation* between them.

Run-on: Athletes must be smart they need to exercise their minds as well as their bodies.

Correct: Athletes must be smart**.** They need to exercise their minds as well as their bodies.

In a *comma splice*, the writer has joined two sentences *with only a comma* between them.

Run-on: Athletes must be smart, they need to exercise their minds as well as their bodies.

Correct: Athletes must be smart**.** They need to exercise their minds as well as their bodies.

There are different ways to revise a run-on sentence.

- The easiest way to do this is to *make two sentences*, as in the above examples.

However, if the run-on sentences are closely related, you can make a **compound sentence** in the following ways.

- You can join the sentences with a semicolon.

  Athletes must be smart**;** they need to exercise their minds as well as their bodies.

- You can add a comma and a coordinating conjunction (one of the words in *fanboy —for, and, nor, but, or, you*).

  Athletes must be smart**, so** they need to exercise their minds as well as their bodies.

- **You can add a semicolon and a** *conjunctive adverb*. Conjunctive adverbs are words such as *therefore*, *instead*, *meanwhile*, *still*, *also*, *nevertheless*, or *however*. Always put a comma after the conjunctive adverb.

  Athletes must be smart**; therefore,** they need to exercise their minds as well as their bodies.

- You can also correct run-on sentences by making a **complex sentence**. To do this, you will need to turn one of the sentences into a dependent clause. You do this by adding a *subordinating conjunction*, which is a word such as those listed in the following chart.

Common Subordinating Conjunctions		
after	before	unless
although	even though	until
as	if	when
as if	in order that	whenever
as long as	provided that	where
as soon as	since	wherever
as though	so that	whether
as well as	than	while
because	though	why

Because **athletes must be smart,** they need to exercise their minds as well as their bodies.

Subject-Verb Agreement: Matching the Actor with the Action

To make sure that your writing is not misunderstood by your audience, follow the rule of **subject-verb agreement**. It may be obvious to you that nouns or subjects can be singular and plural. *Dog* is singular and *dogs* is plural. Verbs can also be singular or plural. *Was* is singular and *were* is plural. If you think about it, *The dog were here*, sounds funny. This is because *dog* is singular, but *were* is plural.

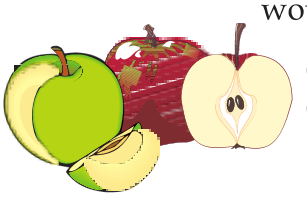
A good test to help you determine whether the subject and verb agree follows.

- Start with the subject. If it is singular, substitute "it" for the subject. If it is plural, substitute "they."

  Example: Apples taste best in fall and winter.
  Apples is plural; substitute "they" for apples.

- Read the sentence aloud. Does it sound correct? If so, your subject and verb agree. If not, they do not agree and you should change the verb.

  Example: They taste best in fall and winter.
  This sounds correct, and it is.
  If you changed the verb to singular, the sentence would read:



They tastes best in fall and winter.
This sounds incorrect, and it is.

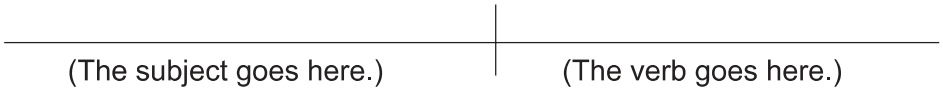
Determining Subject-Verb Agreement in Phrases and Clauses

In some sentences you may find it difficult to tell if a subject is singular or plural. For example, read the following sentence:

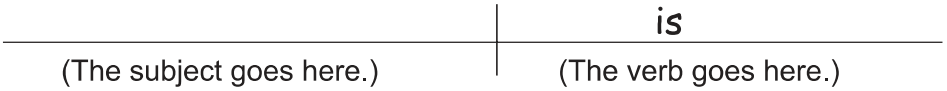
> An answer to your letters is finally here.

Is the subject the singular noun *answer* or the plural noun *letters*? The subject is *answer*. It is an *answer*—not the *letters* that is finally here. Do not let the *phrase* or *clause* (*to your letter*) between the subject (*answer*) and its verb (*is*) confuse you.

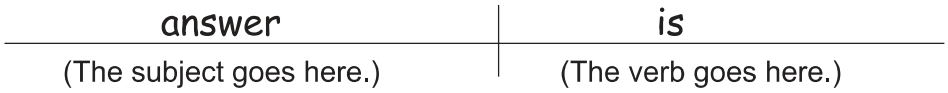
One way to locate the subject is to construct a simple subject/verb diagram. The diagram looks like the following:



Let's diagram the sentence: An answer to your letters *is* finally here. Start with the verb:

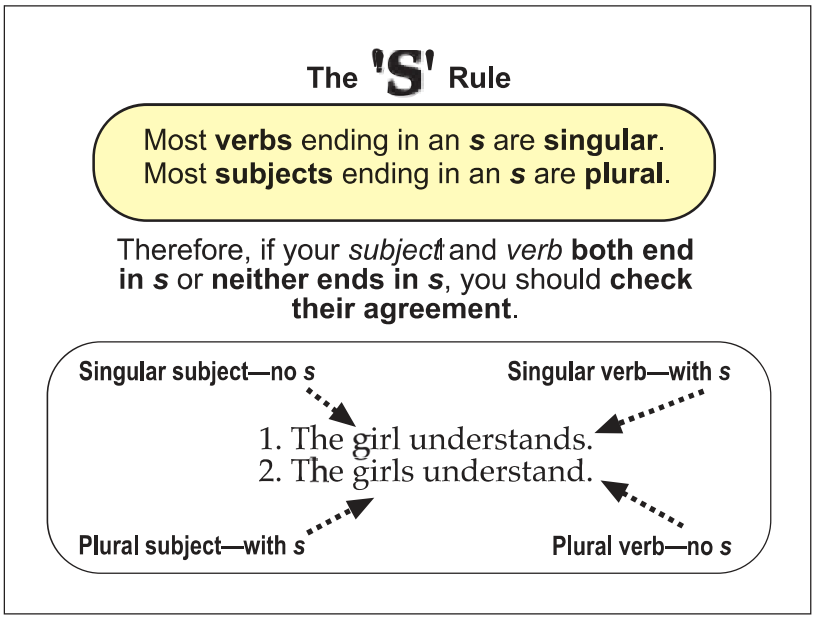


Ask yourself: What IS finally here? The *answer* is the subject, and it goes on the subject line.



Rules about Selecting Verbs That Agree with Pronouns

It is fairly easy to determine that *pronouns* such as *I*, *he*, and *she* are singular, but what about the pronouns *anyone* or *few*? Study and remember the following rules about pronouns and "The 'S' Rule" below.



1. A phrase that follows a subject does not change the number of the subject.

2. The following are singular pronouns and require singular verbs:

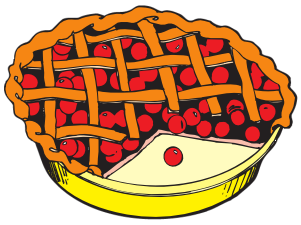
   each, either, neither, one, another
   someone, somebody, something
   no one, nobody, nothing
   anyone, anybody, anything
   everyone, everybody, everything

3. The following are plural pronouns and require plural verbs: *several*, *many*, *both*, and *few*.

4. The following are singular or plural pronouns depending on the sentence: *some*, *all*, *most*, *any*, and *none*.

   If the words refer to a singular noun, then they are also singular. For example—**Some pie** *was* still frozen.

   If the words refer to a plural noun, then they are also plural. For example—**Some birds** *were* captured.



Some pie *was still frozen.*

Rules about Selecting Verbs That Agree with Compound Subjects

A *compound subject* has two or more subjects joined by a conjunction and share the same verb. Below are some rules and examples in selecting verbs to agree with compound subjects.

1. Subjects joined by *and* usually take a plural verb.

   Example: **She** and her **brother** *like* saltwater fishing.

2. Subjects joined by *and* that name only one person, place, thing, or idea take singular verbs, as do singular compound nouns that contain *and*.

   Examples: The school's **mascot and fastest track runner** *was* at the game last night. (one person)
   Staying at a **bed and breakfast** *is* the best way to travel. (one place to stay)

3. Singular subjects joined by *or* or *nor* take a singular verb.

   Example: Neither our **cell phone** nor our **home phone** *was working*.

4. Plural subjects joined by *or* or *nor* take a plural verb.

   Example: Neither the **brake lights** nor the **back-up lights** *are working* on my car.

5. **If a singular subject and a plural subject are joined by** *or* or *nor,* the verb agrees with the subject nearer the verb.

   Examples: Either **Miguel** or his **uncles** *are* going to the mountains this fall.
   Neither the **pies** nor the **pumpkin bread** *is* ready to be eaten.

The *tense* of a verb tells the time of the action of the verb. Verbs in English have six tenses. These six tenses are formed from the four principal parts of verbs. The principal parts of the regular verb laugh are listed below.

Principal Parts of the Regular Verb Laugh

Base Form	Present Participle	Past	Past Participle
laugh	(is) laughing	laughed	have laughed
The six tenses, formed from the above principal parts, are as follows:			
Past	existing or happening in the past Yesterday, I **laughed** at Jenny's funny story		
Present	existing or happening now You **laugh** now, but I will win the race.		
Future	existing or happening in the future I **will laugh** when I cross the finish line first.		
Past Perfect	existing or happening before a specific time in the past Before I tasted the lychee fruit, I **had laughed** at its funny looks.		
Present Perfect	existing or happening sometime before now; maybe continuing now. I **have laughed** when I should not have, and it has always gotten me into trouble.		
Future Perfect	existing or happening before a specific time in the future By the time we have finished painting the fence, we **will have laughed** a great deal.		

Each tense of the verb has another form called the *progressive form*. The progressive form is used to express continuing action or state of being. This form consists of the present participle of a verb and the correct tense of the verb *to be*. (Remember: a verb form ending in *-ing* is *not* a verb without a helper).

present progressive:	am, are laughing
past progressive:	was, were laughing
future progressive:	will be laughing
present perfect progressive:	has, have been laughing
past perfect progressive:	had been laughing
future perfect progressive:	will have been laughing

The present and past tenses have another form. This is called the *emphatic form*. The emphatic form is used to show *emphasis*. In present tense, the emphatic form is made up of the helping verb *do* or *does* and the base form of a verb.

I **do laugh** whenever I watch this television program.

The past tense emphatic form is made up of the verb *did* and the base form of a verb.

We **did laugh** when Shaun slipped off the chair.

Some Verbs Are Irregular Verbs

All of the verbs you have used so far are *regular* verbs. The past tense of a regular verb is made by adding *-ed* to the basic form. This *-ed* form is then used to express the past perfect, present perfect, and future perfect tenses of these regular verbs.

However, some verbs are *irregular* verbs and do *not* follow this rule. The best way to learn how to spell irregular verbs is to eventually memorize them. This will take some time. Until these irregular verbs are familiar to you, use the chart on the following page as you work.

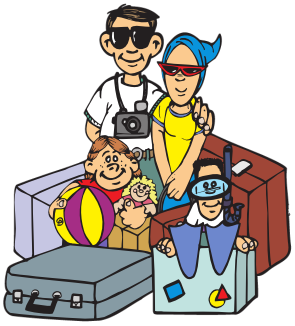
Principal Parts of Irregular Verbs

Present	Past	Past Participle	Present	Past	Past Participle
be, am, are	was, were	been	lie	lay	lain
become	became	become	lose	lost	lost
begin	began	begun	make	made	made
blow	blew	blown	mean	meant	meant
break	broke	broken	meet	met	met
bring	brought	brought	pay	paid	paid
buy	bought	bought	put	put	put
catch	caught	caught	read	read	read
come	came	come	ride	rode	ridden
cost	cost	cost	ring	rang	rung
cut	cut	cut	run	ran	run
do	did	done	say	said	said
drink	drank	drunk	see	saw	seen
drive	drove	driven	sell	sold	sold
eat	ate	eaten	send	sent	sent
fall	fell	fallen	shake	shook	shaken
feel	felt	felt	shoot	shot	shot
fight	fought	fought	shut	shut	shut
find	found	found	sing	sang	sung
fly	flew	flown	sit	sat	sat
forget	forgot	forgotten	sleep	slept	slept
get	got	gotten	speak	spoke	spoken
give	gave	given	spend	spent	spent
go	went	gone	stand	stood	stood
grow	grew	grown	steal	stole	stolen
have	had	had	sweep	swept	swept
hear	heard	heard	take	took	taken
hit	hit	hit	teach	taught	taught
hold	held	held	tell	told	told
hurt	hurt	hurt	think	thought	thought
keep	kept	kept	throw	threw	thrown
know	knew	known	understand	understood	understood
lay	laid	laid	wear	wore	worn
leave	left	left	win	won	won
lend	lent	lent	write	wrote	written

Choosing the Correct Verb Tense

It is very important that your writing is free from needless changes in verb tense.

When writing about events that occur at the same time, use verbs in the same tense.



family vacation

> Mom **planned** our vacation and Dad **paid** for it.
> (All of the verbs are in the past tense)
>
> Mom **plans** our vacation and Dad **pays** for it.
> (All of the verbs are in present tense.)

When writing about events that occur at different times, use verbs in different tenses to show the sequence of action or events.

> Mom **planned** our vacation, and Dad is paying for it.
> (The past tense **planned** is correct because Mom's actions occurred at a specific time in the past. The present progressive **is paying** is correct because Dad's actions are happening now.)
>
> My Dad **works** in the city, but **will be working** from home next year.
> (The present tense **works** is correct because Dad's actions of working in the city are happening now. The future progressive tense **will be working** is correct because his actions of working from home will be happening in the future.)

Nouns: Their Plural and Singular Forms

Nouns are words that name people, places, things, or ideas. Writers must use nouns to describe the details of lives as well as the hopes, fears, and ideals of generations. **Common nouns** name any one of a group of persons, places, or things. **Proper nouns** name a particular person, place, or thing.

Read this sentence that includes *common nouns*.

> While driving to the **city**, the **woman** was listening to an audio **book**.

Read the same sentence in which the common nouns have been replaced with *proper nouns*.

> While driving to **Toronto**, **Gloria Schitzel** was listening to ***101 Ways to Give Your Plants a Happy Life***.

Compound nouns are made up of two or more words joined together. The words may be hyphenated, joined together, or written separately. *Runner-up*, *mother-in-law*, *high jump*, *cable television*, and *broomstick* are all compound nouns.

Collective nouns are singular nouns that name a group, things, or people. *Cluster*, *family*, *harem*, *gang*, and *class* are all collective nouns.

All of these nouns—common, proper, compound, and collective—can be singular or plural. Plurals are formed in various ways. Typically, we add *s* or *es* to the ends of nouns to make them plural. However, some plurals are formed by changing the spelling of the noun, while still others may remain exactly the same as the singular form. Study the chart on the following page on the rules for forming plurals.

Rules of Pluralization

To make a noun plural...		
add *s* to most nouns.	*car*	*car**s***
add *es* to nouns ending in *s*, *sh*, *ch*, *x*, and *z*.	*branch*	*branch**es***
change the *y* to *i* and add *es* to nouns ending in a consonant followed by a *y*.	*pony*	*pon**ies***
add *s* to nouns ending in a vowel followed by a *y*.	*boy*	*boy**s***
change the *f* to *v* and add *es* to some nouns ending in *f* or *fe*.	*knife*	*kniv**es***
add *s* to most nouns ending in *f*.	*chief*	*chief**s***
add *s* to nouns ending in a vowel followed by *o*.	*rodeo*	*rodeo**s***
add *es* to some nouns ending in a consonant followed by *o*.	*tomato*	*tomato**es***
change the basic spelling of certain words.	*ox*	*ox**en***
spell certain words the same way in singular and plural form.	*deer*	***deer***
add *s* (or *'s* if plural would be misunderstood without an apostrophe) to numbers, letters, and signs.	*8* or *1980* *p* or *A* #	*8'**s*** or *1980**s*** *p'**s*** or *A'**s*** #*'**s***
add *s* or *es* following appropriate rules, if the number is spelled out.	*three*	*three**s***
add *s* or *es* to compound nouns to make compound nouns plural.	*leftover* *eyelash*	*leftover**s*** *eyelash**es***
add *s* to the noun and leave the modifier in hyphenated compound nouns unchanged.	*son-in-law*	*son**s**-in-law*
add *s* to nouns ending in *i*	*alibi*	*alibi**s***

Noun-Pronoun Agreement: Matching Case, Gender, and Number

Noun-pronoun agreement is making pronouns match the nouns they refer to and pronouns must match their nouns in case, gender, and number. A pronoun is a word that stands in for a noun. Consider the following examples.

The *student* wished *she* had studied harder for the exam.
(*She* is used in place of *student*.)

The *students* wished *they* had studied harder for the exam.
(*They* is used in place of *students*.)

The word that a pronoun stands in for is called the **antecedent** of the pronoun. In the first example, *student* is the *antecedent* of *she*. In the second example, *students* is the antecedent of *they*.

Personal Pronouns

There are 23 personal pronouns that we use all of the time.

Personal Pronouns

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

Personal pronouns have number, case, and gender. Each personal pronoun used must agree with its case, number, and gender.

Case refers to the way a pronoun is used in a sentence.

- A pronoun can be used as a subject:

  He is able to do nine things at once but not 10 things.

- A pronoun can be used as an object:

  Don't ask *him* to do 10 things at once.

- A pronoun can be used as a possessive:

  His ability to do nine things at once is remarkable!

Cases of Personal Pronouns

	Subject Case	Object Case	Possessive Case
First Person	I, we	me, us	my, mine, our, ours
Second Person	you	you	your, yours
Third Person	he, she, it they	him, her, it them	his, her, hers, its their, theirs

Gender of Nouns and Proper Nouns

Gender refers to the sexual category of a noun or proper noun.

- Pronouns that refer to masculine antecedents must also be masculine:

  Joe can do nine things at a time. *He* cannot, however, do 10 things at once.

  The *boy* will always know you care for *him*.

  Joe knows *he* can do the job well.

- Pronouns that refer to feminine antecedents must also be feminine:

  Gina is one of the finest thinkers in the state. *She* understands how ideas work.

  The *girl* will always carry your smile with *her*.

  Gina knows *she* is a good thinker.

- Pronouns that refer to antecedents of neither sex must also be neuter:

  The *snail* is slow. *It* can move all day and not get too far.

  The *scallop* knows *its* place when the starfish is nearby.

Gender of Personal Pronouns

Masculine	he	him	his
Feminine	she	her	hers
Neuter	it	it	its

Singular Nouns and Pronouns

Number refers to whether the noun is singular (for example, *the boy* or *the table*) or plural (for example, *the boys* or *the tables*).

- Pronouns that refer to singular antecedents must also be singular:

  Take the *exam* and do *it* at home.

- Pronouns that refer to plural antecedents must also be plural:

  Take the *exams* and do *them* at home.

- When two singular antecedents are joined by *or* or *nor*, the pronoun should be singular:

  Either Alice *or* Mary will read a poem *she* has written.

  Neither John *nor* Fernando can find a sweater *he* likes.

- When two or more antecedents are joined by *and*, the pronoun should be plural:

  Alice *and* Fernando know *they* have a lot of studying to do before the exam.

  Gina *and* Mary can't come to the party. *They* have an exam the next morning.

Indefinite Pronouns

An *indefinite pronoun* stands in for a person, place, thing, or idea that may or may not be specifically named.

Examples: Has **anyone** finished the assignment?
Some of the children are napping.
Everything we did on vacation was fun.
All of the money **we** raised went to the library fund.

The following indefinite pronouns are singular: anybody, anyone, anything, each, either, everybody, everyone, everything, neither, nobody, no one, nothing, one, somebody, someone, and something.

Hint: Singular means one. All of the above pronouns either include "one" or imply one. One is part of anyone, everyone, no one, one, and someone. The others, indirectly refer to one—any-one-body, any-one-thing, each one, either one, every-one-body, every-one-thing, neither one, no-one-body, no-one-thing, some-one-body, and some-one-thing. If in doubt, try the "one" test.

Examples: **Neither** of the children **has been** to the new swimming pool.
Somebody is bringing a blanket for the picnic.
Everyone is preparing a special dish to bring.
One of the boys **is driving** a truck to carry a barbecue grill.

The following indefinite pronouns are plural: both, few, many, and several.

Examples: **Both** of the dogs **have had** a bath.
A **few** of the campers **were** ready to go home.
Many of the others **were hoping** to stay longer.
Several of the boys **are hoping** to return soon.

Both *of the dogs* **have had** *a bath.*

The following indefinite pronouns may be *either* singular or plural, depending on how they are used: all, any, more, most, none, and some. The use is determined by a clarifying *prepositional phrase*.

- If the object of the preposition is *singular*, the indefinite pronoun will take a *singular* verb.
- If the object of the preposition is *plural*, the indefinite pronoun will take a *plural* verb.

Examples: **Most** of the **cake** *was* eaten.
(**Most** refers to the *singular* noun **cake**.)

Most of the **cookies** *were* eaten.
(**Most** refers to the *plural* noun **cookies**.)

None of the **program** *was* boring.
(**None** refers to the *singular* noun **program**.)

None of the **singers** *were* unprepared.
(**None** refers to the *plural* noun **singers**.)

All of the **poem** *was* read aloud.
(**All** refers to the *singular* noun **poem**.)

All of the **poems** *were* read aloud.
(**All** refers to the *plural* noun **poems**.)

Most *of the* **cake** was *eaten.*

Possessives: Showing Ownership

The **boy's bicycle** *is painted silver.*

The *possessive case* of a noun or a pronoun is used to show that one person or thing owns something.

Examples: The **boy's bicycle** is painted silver.
(The bicycle belongs to the boy.)

The **girl's skates** are too small.
(The skates belong to the girl.)

In most cases, it is easy to tell whether a word should be made possessive, as in the examples above. However, some cases are more difficult. For example, would you add an apostrophe to the word *days* in the phrase a *days work*? If you are uncertain, simply rewrite the phrase using the word *of*: *the work of a day*. If the *of* fits, then use an apostrophe: *a day's work*.

To form the possessive of most singular nouns, add an apostrophe and an *s*.

Examples: Lisa**'s** bookbag
a month**'s** allowance
one girl**'s** hairbrush
that person**'s** wallet

When forming the possessive of a singular noun that ends in an *s* or a *z* sound, consider the following:

- Does the noun have more than one syllable?

and

- Does the addition of an *s* make the noun awkward to pronounce?

If **both** conditions exist, add only an apostrophe to the word.

Examples: Odysseus' wife Penelope
the Cyclops' eye
the apparatus' height

If a singular noun ending in an *s* or *z* sound does not satisfy both of these conditions, add an apostrophe and an *s*.

Examples: the class**'s** project
Mr. Ramos**'s** car
the dress**'s** buttons

To form the possessive case of a plural noun ending in *s*, add only the apostrophe.

Examples: the horses' manes
the students' discoveries
the ladies' race car

Some plural nouns do not end in *s*. To form the possessive of these nouns, simply add an apostrophe and an *s*.

Examples: the children**'s** clubhouse
mice**'s** footprints
the men**'s** antiques

Possessive Case of a Pronoun

Pronouns present a special case. The possessive case of a pronoun is *not* formed by adding an apostrophe or an *s*.

Pronoun	Possessive
I	my, mine
you	your, yours
he	his
she	her, hers
it	its (*not* it's, which means it is)
we	our, ours
they	their, theirs
who	whose

Capitalization: Uppercase Rules

Capitalization means using "uppercase or capital letters." Capital letters are used for two main reasons. First, they are used to signal the beginning of a sentence. Second, they are used to signal words we consider particularly important. Study the chart below for the rules of *capitalization*.

RULES OF CAPITALIZATION

Always capitalize…	
the first word of every sentence.	The coffee grounds were in my cup.
a person's name and any initials.	John F. Kennedy
titles of people.	Dr. Jones, Mrs. Fisher
***I* and *O* when they are used as words.**	It's the duck that I saw. "Exult O shores! and ring O bells!"
days of the week and months of the year.	Tuesday, March
religions, creeds, denominations, names applied to the Bible and its parts, other sacred books, and nouns and pronouns referring to a deity.	Christianity, Old Testament, God, the Almighty
countries, ethnic groups, nationalities, races, and languages.	Spain, Asian, Russian, Caucasian, English
names of specific cities, states, avenues, streets, routes, and other geographical sections of the country or world, and place names.	Atlanta, Fifth Avenue, Wall Street, Route 66, Middle East, Museum of Art and Science
names of special organizations—government, businesses, schools, professional, and social.	the Jaycees, Department of Education, Sears, Sandalwood High School
names of special buildings and other man-made structures, ships, and planes.	the Gulf Life Building, Southpoint Mall, the *Titanic*
brand or trade names.	Goodyear tires, Kleenex, General Electric
holidays, special or famous events, historical periods or eras, and famous documents.	Labor Day, the Boston Tea Party, the Gold Rush, the Declaration of Independence
the first word and all-important words in the title of a book, magazine, movie, television show, and song.	*The Hobbit, Sports Illustrated, General Hospital,* "America, the Beautiful"
words that come from names that are capitalized.	San Francisco, San Franciscan
the first word of quoted sentences.	Tom said, "We won the game!"

MORE RULES OF CAPITALIZATION

Do *not* capitalize…

the name of a school subject, *unless* it is the name of a specific course or language.	My favorite science course is Biology 101. Sue made low grades in algebra, history, and French.
the names of seasons or directions.	The flowers are lovely in the spring. Turn west after you pass the bank.
the name of trees, fruits, vegetables, birds, or flowers.	roses, robins, oak, mahogany, corn
the names of games or sports, *unless* the name is a trademark.	Tables were arranged for checkers, Scrabble, Monopoly, bridge, and dominoes. Our football team went to see the Dolphins in the playoff.
the name of a disease, *unless* it is named for a person, and then *do not* capitalize the word *disease*.	measles, pneumonia, Hodgkin's disease
the names of musical instruments *unless* the brand is named for a person, and then *do not* capitalize the musical instrument's name.	violin, drums, Baldwin piano
words used as names.	Mother, Father, Aunt, and Uncle*

* Words such as those above and others (dad, cousin, granny, etc.) are not usually capitalized after a possessive pronoun (my, our, her).

My dad grew up in Florida.

Our cousins are visiting us this summer.

Punctuation: Road Signs to Guide Readers

A good way to think of *punctuation* marks is to imagine them as road signs along a sentence. As the reader travels down the sentence, he or she needs signs to make sense of your writing. Where should the reader stop, pause, or read your sentence as a question rather than as a command?

We use punctuation to help make our writing clearer and easier to understand. Read the examples below.

If John bakes Fred will clean up the kitchen.

Now look at this sentence.

If John bakes, Fred will clean up the kitchen.

Can you see the difference that one comma makes? Did *John bake Fred*? Or did *John bake and Fred clean up*? Without the comma in the second example, the reader might think that Fred was going to be tonight's dessert. Commas and other punctuation marks help the reader understand what is written.

Study the **Rules of Punctuation** chart below and on the following page.

Rules of Punctuation

Punctuation Mark	Rules	Examples
Apostrophe ’	1. Apostrophes are used to show possession or ownership.	Joel’s sneakers women’s clothes
	2. Apostrophes are used to form contractions (they go where the missing letter or letters would have been).	it's can’t you’ve
	3. Apostrophes are used to form plurals of numbers, letters, and symbols if plural would be misunderstood without an apostrophe.	8’s and 1980s p’s and A’s #s
Quotation Marks “ ”	1. Quotation marks are used to show the beginning and end of a direct quotation or a person’s exact words.	“You can learn punctuation,” said the teacher.
	2. Quotation marks are used to enclose the titles of magazine articles, chapters, short stories, essays, poems, short pieces of music, and single episodes of a TV series.	“The Masque of the Red Death” “The Enemy” “Stairway to Heaven”

Rules of Punctuation

Punctuation Mark	Rules	Examples
Comma ,	1. Commas are used to separate items in a series.	Lindsay forgot her pencil, paper, and textbook.
	2. Commas are used to separate two or more adjectives before a noun.	A polite, kind, and cheerful student is a pleasure to teach.
	3. Commas are used before the conjunctions ***f**or, **a**nd, **n**or, **b**ut, **o**r, **y**et,* or ***s**o* when they join independent clauses. (A mnemonic device to remember the words is ***fanboys,*** standing for the first letter of each of the conjunctions listed above.)	School was awesome, *for* I had biology.
	4. Commas are used to set off the name of a person spoken to directly or an introductory word.	James, can you lend me a quarter?
	5. Commas are used to set aside a descriptive phrase which is not essential to the sentence.	Yes, I can help. Spike, my naughty puppy, ate my sandals.
	6. Commas are used to separate items in dates and addresses.	I was born in Tallahassee, Florida, on April 30, 1990.
	7. Commas are used after the greeting and close of a friendly letter.	Dear Mom, Love, Max
Semicolon ;	1. Semicolons are used between independent clauses **not** joined by ***f**or, **a**nd, **n**or, **b**ut, **o**r, **y**et,* or ***s**o.* (***fanboys***)	Stretch your mind every day; you'll never regret it.
Colon :	1. Colons are used before a list of items (unless there is a verb right before the list).	I enjoy many arts: music, painting, photography, and sculpture. My favorite actors are Johnny Depp, Will Smith, and Vince Vaughn. (no colon needed)
	2. Colons are used to introduce a restatement or explanation linking two sentences	We are left with a question: Who will pay?
Underlining	1. Underlining is used for the titles of books, magazines, works of art, ships, plays, movies, and TV series only when handwritten.	To Kill a Mockingbird Newsweek Mona Lisa Titanic
Italics	2. *Italics* are most often used in printed material or when using a computer for composition.	*Romeo and Juliet* *Star Wars* *The Oprah Winfrey Show*

You will probably find, as you reread your writing, that you make the same spelling mistakes over and over. For some students, certain words are very, very difficult to spell correctly. If this is the case with your writing, you might find it helpful to keep a notebook of your personal writing mistakes.

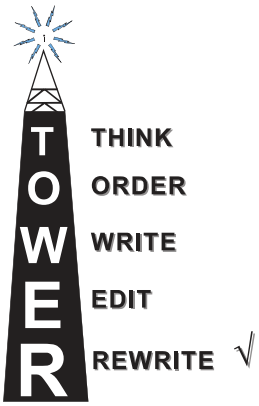
Mistakes	Corrections
alot	a lot
quite vs. quiet	*quite* means "to an extreme" *quiet* means "silent"
to vs. too	*too* means "also" or "more than enough"
Febuary	February
Wensday	Wednesday
its vs. it's	*it's* is short for "it is" *its* is possesive
there vs. they're	*they're* is short for "they are"
whose vs. who's	*who's* is short for "who is"
your vs. you're	*you're* is short for "you are"
knowlege	knowledge
necesary	necessary
truely	truly
enviroment	environment

Finding these mistakes in the first place may take some help. Working with a partner or an older adult to help spot your errors is very helpful. Circle any that such an exercise reveals. Also, look back over writing that has been corrected by your teacher throughout the school year. More than likely, you will notice the same words are marked as being misspelled.

Once found, record them and make the correction that should be in your paper. The mistakes used in the example are common ones.

The *R* in Your TOWER: Rewrite after You Proofread

After you have gotten your writing into the paragraphs, sentences, and word choices that will best convey your message and points, you are ready to do a final and very important check. This last check is called *proofreading*. When you proofread, you check your work for misspellings, typing or word processing mistakes, omitted words, and any other problems you have not yet caught.

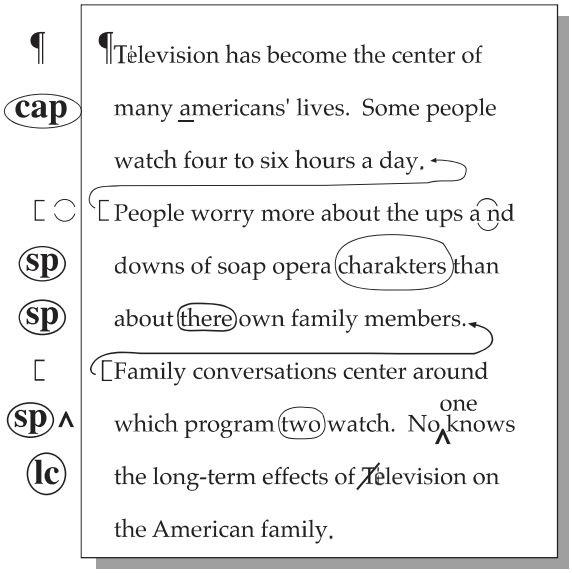


Use the techniques below when you proof your writing.

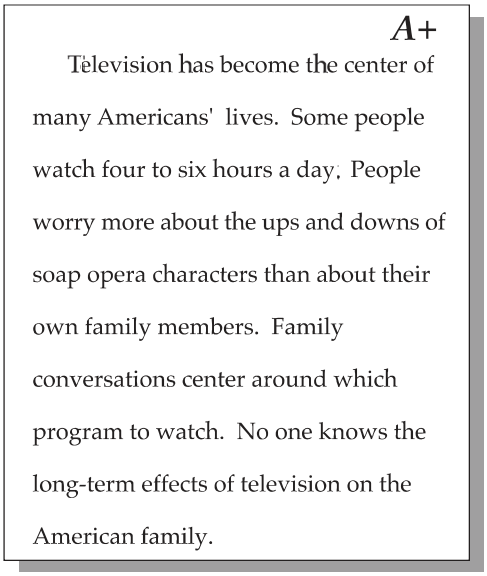
1. Say each word slowly and aloud. Don't rush through your proofreading or you will read what you think you wrote rather than what is actually on the paper.

2. Keep a list of your common spelling mistakes. Glance at these before you proofread and then double-check these words when they appear.

3. Read backwards to check your spelling. Start at the end of your essay or paragraph and read to the beginning. This will force you to look at each word. Study the examples below.



Before Editing and Proofing



After Editing and Proofing

Use these professional copyediting symbols as you proofread your writing. Use them for every piece of writing you do or when you are editing someone else's work.

Copyediting Symbols

Type of Correction Needed	Margin Mark	Editor's Mark
Insert missing item	^	Proofreding is fun. (a)
Insert space	#	Proofreadingis fun. (#)
Insert period	⊙	Proofreading is fun⊙
Delete	ℊ	Proofreadingsg is fun.
Close up extra space	‿	P roofreading is fun.
Make lowercase	lc	Proofreading is Fun.
Capitalize	cap	proofreading is fun.
Use italics	ital	Proofreading is fun.
Underline	underline	Proofreading is fun.
Transpose	tr	Proofreading fun is.
Don't abbreviate	wo	The class is 3 credit hrs.
Abbreviate	abbr	The stool is 3.5 feet high.
Check spelling	sp	Proofreeding
Leave it as it was; ignore editing marks which appear above the dots	stet	The stool is 4 3.5 ••• feet high.
Enclose in quotation marks	“ ”	“Proofreading is fun,” she said.
Enclose in parentheses	parens	This (proofreading) is fun.
Center	][	]Proofreading is fun.[
Move left	[	[Proofreading is fun.
Move right	]	]Proofreading is fun.
Fix this sentence fragment	frag	Because the stool is 3.5' high.
Equalize spacing	spacing	Proofreading‿is‿fun.

Study the tips below to help you edit your essay.

Editing Tips

1. **Wait a while before you edit** to get some distance from the content.

2. **Reread the writing as if it were someone else's.** We tend to be overly critical of our own work.

3. **Identify strong aspects of the writing.** It is important to acknowledge what you're good at, as well as what you need help with.

4. **Ask questions** if you're not sure whether you've made a mistake. Even if you were right, you'll feel more confident the next time.

5. **Read your writing aloud.** Hearing your words helps you identify mistakes you might overlook reading silently.

6. **Point to your words as you read them.** This will help you read what is actually there, instead of what you think is there.

7. **Write clear copies for yourself** and your other proofreaders. A paper covered with corrections is hard to proofread.

8. **Read for one type of error at a time**—spelling, sentence structure, or grammar.

9. **Keep a record in a notebook of your common mistakes** and how to correct them.

10. **Use all of the tools available to help you edit**—spell checkers and grammar checkers, dictionaries, knowledgeable people, etc.