

Write On!

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*A textbook for WR90 "Writing Skills: Paragraph
to Essay"*

Gay Monteverde

MHCC Library Press

Gresham, OR



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Write On! is a simplified, more compact version of [1, 2, 3 Write!](#) The text was shortened by about 20%, pruning several sections and refocusing others. Some new exercises and readings were added. The text covers word use, sentence and paragraph structure, and the basic five-paragraph essay, with a focus on clarity, quality, and correctness.

Write On! is designed for students who need preparatory writing instruction and practice to succeed with college writing.

Cover design by Anne Sigrun.

Editing by Judy McNall.

Thanks again to Lily, Toby, Jodie, and John for help with content, to my past students for sharing their work, and to Heather for persisting. Special thanks to Holly for computer magic.

CHAPTER 1: GETTING STARTED

1.1 Reading and Writing in College

1.2 Study Skills

1.1 Reading and Writing in College

Preview

This section of Ch. 1 will cover the following topics:

- using this textbook
- reading and writing assignments in college
- reading strategies
- college resources

Writing well is difficult. Even people who write for a living sometimes struggle to get their thoughts on the page. For people who do not like writing or do not think of themselves as good writers, college writing assignments can be stressful or intimidating.

But you cannot get through college without having to write—sometimes a lot and often at a higher level than you are used to. Educationally, you are moving into deeper waters. A good introductory writing course will help you swim.

Using this Textbook

Each chapter in this textbook is divided into sections. Each section begins

with a green **Preview** box that lets you know what topics will be covered and ends with an orange **Takeaways** box that highlights important points to remember. Red **Tips** boxes on the right side of the page provide interesting or helpful insights.

Exercises in blue boxes should be completed in your class notebook, using this format:

- Start a new page for each exercise.
- In the top right corner of the page, write the chapter and section number, then put the date you do the assignment below that.
- In the center of the top line, put the exercise number.

Ch. 1.1
Sept. 24

Exercise 1

1. College has been...

You will also see the following supplemental materials throughout the text:

- Blue underlined text is a link to outside materials. Click on it to view the materials.
- Red text with a dotted underline is a link to a brief definition of the word. Click on it to view the definition.
- **Purple** boxes contain graphic materials. Click on the camera icon to view a PowerPoint presentation or video.

You can continue to read this text online throughout the term or you can

print out a paper copy to annotate. If you do print a PDF, the full Glossary will be at the end.

College vs. High School

In college, expectations change from what you may have experienced in high school. The quantity and quality of work increases. The table below summarizes some major differences between high school and college assignments.

High School	College
Teachers may set aside class time for reading and reviewing the material.	You are expected to come to class with a basic understanding of the material.
Teachers often provide study guides and other aids to help you prepare for exams.	Reviewing for exams is primarily your responsibility.
Your grade is determined by a wide variety of assessments, both minor and major. Many assessments are not writing-based.	Your grade may depend on just a few major assessments. Most are writing-based.
Writing assignments include personal and creative writing in addition to <u>expository</u> writing.	Except in creative writing courses, most writing assignments are expository.
The structure and <u>format</u> of writing assignments is generally familiar.	You may be asked to master new formats or follow standards within a particular professional field.
Teachers try to help students who are performing poorly, missing classes, or not turning in work. Often students get many “second chances.”	Although teachers want students to succeed, they expect you to take steps to help yourself. “Second chances” are less common.

Exercise 1

Think about your college experience so far. In your class notebook, briefly respond to the following questions. (See instructions above on how to set up your notebook page.)

- Do you think college will be more rewarding than high school?
- What parts of college do you expect to find most challenging?
- What changes do you think you might have to make in your life to ensure your success in college?

Reading Strategies

Most writing assignments—from brief responses to in-depth research papers—will depend on your ability to understand what you read. Following are some strategies for getting the most out of assigned readings.

Planning

To handle college reading successfully, you need to manage your time and know your purpose. “Time management” means setting aside enough time to complete work and breaking assignments into manageable chunks. If you are assigned a fifty-page chapter for next week’s class, don’t wait until the night before to start. Give yourself a few days and tackle one section at a time.

Knowing what you want to get out of a reading assignment—your purpose—helps you determine how much time to spend on it and helps you

stay focused when tired or distracted. Sometimes your purpose is simple: to understand the reading well enough to discuss it intelligently in class. However, your purpose will often go beyond that. For example, you might read to compare two texts, to write a personal response, or to gather ideas for research.

When you start a reading assignment, identify your purpose and write it down somewhere: on a sticky that you put on your computer screen, on the first page of the book, or in your notes. Keep that information nearby as you read.

Improving Comprehension

In college, you will read a wide variety of materials, including textbooks, articles, and scholarly journals. Your primary goal is to identify the main point, the idea the writer wants to communicate. Finding the main point helps you understand the details—the facts and explanations that develop and clarify the main point—and relate the reading to things you learned in class or in other assignments.

Sometimes that task is relatively easy. Textbooks include headings that identify main concepts. Diagrams and charts help you understand complex information. Textbooks also can include comprehension questions at the end of a section. Non-fiction books and articles may have an introduction that presents the writer's main ideas and purpose. In long works, chapter titles give a sense of what is covered.

A good way to review and reinforce what you've learned is to discuss the reading with classmates. Discussions can help you determine whether your understanding is the same as theirs and perhaps introduce you to new ideas.

Tip

As you read, stop occasionally and assess how well you understand what you are reading. If you aren't confident, go back and read the section again. Don't just push ahead.

Active Reading

The most successful students in college are active readers: students who engage in purposeful activities as they read. The best way to remember the information you read is to do something physical with it, something beyond just letting your eyes scan the page. For example, use a highlighter, write notes, or discuss it with someone.

Exercise 2

Print out and read the essay “How to Mark a Book” by Mortimer Adler. It is listed in Ch. 7, “Readings,” and you can also find it online at <https://www.unz.com/print/SaturdayRev-1940julo6-00011/>

Then use the process Adler explains to mark his essay up as you read it a second time. Put the marked-up essay in your notebook. Then respond to these questions in your notebook:

- What did you learn the second time through that you missed on the first read?
- Is there anything you still don’t understand? (For example, the essay was written a long time ago so has some words that may be unfamiliar.) What is your **strategy** to ensure you understand everything?
- On a scale of 1 to 10, how useful did you find marking up this essay? Explain why.

College Resources

If you try to handle every challenge alone, you may become frustrated and overwhelmed. Let people help. Following are some resources available at Mt. Hood Community College (MHCC):

- **Your instructors** can clarify information that is confusing or give you strategies to succeed. It’s easy to contact a teacher using email.
- **Tutors** can help you manage college-level writing assignments. They will not write or **edit** your paper for you, but they can help you

understand and fix problems before you submit work for grading:

<https://www.mhcc.edu/lsc/>

- **Librarians** can quickly guide you to exactly the information or resource you need. <https://www.mhcc.edu/library/>
- **Free, confidential counseling services** are available for students who need help coping with a difficult personal situation or managing academic problems. <https://www.mhcc.edu/Personal-Counseling/>

Many students are reluctant to seek help. They feel like doing so marks them as slow, weak, or demanding. The truth is, every learner occasionally struggles. If you are sincerely trying to keep up but feel over your head, ask for help as early as you can. Most instructors will work hard to help students who make the effort to help themselves.

Takeaways

- College reading and writing assignments differ from high school assignments in quantity and quality.
- Managing college successfully requires you to plan ahead, divide work into smaller, manageable tasks, and set aside sufficient time.
- Many resources are available to help with writing and other aspects of college life. Ask for help if you need it.

1.2 Study Skills

Preview

This section of Ch. 1 will cover the following topics:

- learning styles
- time management
- note taking

Every student is different: different interests, different abilities, different styles. Adapt these strategies to create a study system that works for you.

Learning Styles

Educational researchers and psychologists examine how people take in and **integrate** new information, how they learn differently, and what conditions make people most productive. Knowing how you learn best can help you succeed in college.

Exercise 1

In your notebook, briefly answer these questions. (Remember to put “Ch. 1.2” and the date in the top right corner of the page and “Exercise 1” on the top line.)

- **What times of day are you most productive?** If your energy peaks early, block out morning time for schoolwork. If you are a night owl, set aside a few evenings a week.
- **How much clutter can you handle?** Some people work fine at a messy desk and know exactly where to find everything, but most people benefit from maintaining a neat, organized space.
- **How well do you juggle distractions?** Some people work better listening to music or the hum of conversation; others need total silence. If you can study at home without being tempted to check your phone or get a snack, that’s great. If you need a less distracting environment to stay focused, find one.
- **Do you work better alone or in a group?** A study group can be invaluable. But if group sessions turn into social occasions, study on your own.
- **How do you manage stress?** Schedule regular time for activities that reduce stress, such as exercise, time with friends, or playing with a pet.

To identify your learning style, think about how you would assemble a piece of furniture. Which of these options sounds most like you?

1. You carefully look over the diagrams in an assembly manual first so

you can picture each step in the process.

2. You silently read the directions through, step by step, and then look at the diagrams afterward.
3. You read the directions aloud under your breath. Having someone explain the steps to you would also help.
4. You start putting the pieces together and figure out the process through trial and error, consulting the directions as you work.

What does your choice mean?

- If you chose (1), you are probably a visual learner. You understand ideas best when they are presented in a diagram or with clear headings and illustrations.
- If you chose (2), you may be a verbal learner. You understand ideas best through reading and writing about them and taking notes.
- If you chose (3), you're an auditory learner. You learn well from spoken lectures or recorded information.
- If you chose (4), you may be a kinesthetic learner. You learn by doing hands-on activities. In long lectures, fidgeting may actually help you focus.

Many people combine styles. However, if you have one primary learning style, work with it to get the most out of your classes.

This table provides tips for maximizing your learning style:

Learning Style	Strategies
Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use different-colored highlighters to color-code information as you read.• Use visual organizers, such as maps or flowcharts, to plan writing assignments.• Revise and edit your writing on the computer so you can see the changes immediately.

Verbal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use summaries, review questions, and glossaries to help you study. • Rewrite or condense reading notes and lecture notes to retain information. • Summarize important ideas in your own words. • Use brainstorming or class discussion to generate ideas for writing assignments.
Auditory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask your instructor's permission to tape-record lectures. • Read your textbook or homework aloud. • Talk through your ideas with other students when studying or preparing a writing assignment. • Read your own writing aloud as you revise and edit.
Kinesthetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you read or study, keep your hands in motion, such as highlighting or taking notes. • Use physical study aids, such as flash cards or study guides you design. • Take breaks during studying to stand, stretch, or move around.

Time Management

In college you have the freedom to structure your time as you please. But with that freedom comes increased responsibility. College instructors expect you to take full responsibility for managing yourself and getting work done on time.

Instructors will tell you that **for every hour spent in class, you should spend another two hours outside of class reading, writing, and studying.**

So a four-credit writing class should actually take about twelve hours per week.

That may sound like a lot, especially when taking multiple classes. But if you plan carefully, it is manageable. Budget time, just like an employer schedules shifts at work, and make studying a priority.

Exercise 2

In your notebook, map out a schedule for the next two weeks.

- Draw a table with seven columns (one for each day) and two rows (one for each week). Turn the notebook sideways if you need more room.
- Label the days and divide each day into chunks of time.
- Insert your classes, then add two hours of study time for each hour of each class.
- Add other non-negotiable responsibilities, such as a job or child care.

Did everything fit? If so, great! If not, what needs to change?

Setting up a schedule is easy. Sticking with it is harder. Remember that your calendar is a time-management tool. If you leave a tool sitting unused (if you set up your schedule and then forget it), it will not help you.

Dos & Don'ts of Time Management

Do	Don't
Do review your schedule regularly and update/adjust it as needed.	Do not plan to write a paper on Friday night when all your friends are out socializing.

Do	Don't
Do be realistic when you schedule study time.	Do not waste study time on e-mail and social networking.
Do be honest with yourself about where your time goes.	Do not procrastinate . If you find you are <u>putting off</u> something, have a talk with yourself, and then do the work.
Do accept that occasionally you may get a little off track. No one is perfect.	Do not try to squeeze a three-hour study session into an already-packed schedule. If you have a free half hour between classes, preview a chapter.
Do recognize when you feel overextended. Sometimes you will have an especially demanding week. But if you feel exhausted a lot, scale back on your commitments.	Do not rely on caffeine or energy drinks to make up for lack of sleep. These stimulants temporarily perk you up, but your brain functions best when you are rested.

Note-Taking Methods

The physical act of converting a lecture or reading to notes helps you understand and retain the information. Taking good notes is an essential study skill, but many students enter college without having received much guidance about how to take notes. To be effective, a note-taking system must allow you to record and organize information quickly.

General Guidelines

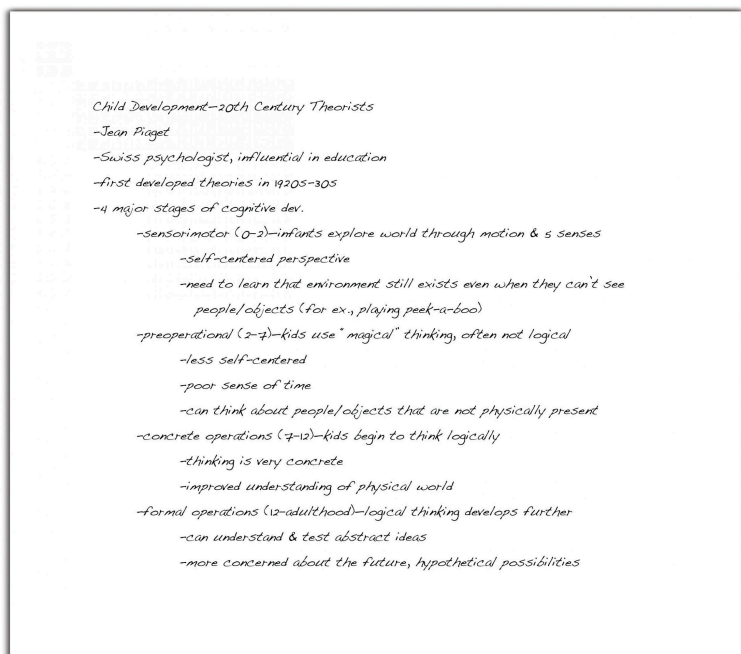
1. Start class prepared, with paper, pens, highlighters, textbooks, and important handouts. Have a positive attitude and a readiness to learn.
2. Before class begins, quickly review notes or assigned readings from the previous class. This will help you focus and pick out important points.
3. During class, concentrate and ask questions. As you take notes, capture important ideas as **concisely** as you can; don't try to write everything a teacher says. Use words or phrases instead of full

sentences.

4. Leave space in your notes to add more details later.
5. Use a note-taking system rather than scribbling randomly. There are many options; two are explained below.

System #1: Modified Outline

An outline uses indents to identify main ideas and details. The main topic is all the way to the left, subtopics are indented, and supporting details are indented further. This is not a detailed, formal outline—just a summary. For example, it uses abbreviations for repeated or common words.



System #2: Cornell Notes

The Cornell system makes it easy to organize information clearly, note key terms, and summarize content. Begin by setting up your paper:

- Put the course name and date at the top of the page
- Create a narrow column (about two inches) at the left side of the page
- Leave a wide column (five to six inches) on the right side of the page
- Mark off a space of a few lines at the bottom of the page

During the lecture, record notes in the wide column. As soon as possible after the lecture, review your notes and jot down key terms in the left-hand column, then use the space at the bottom to summarize the page briefly.

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

It can take trial and error to become a good note taker: someone who gets all the important details down easily. But the more you practice, the better you will get.

Takeaways

- Understanding learning styles can help you identify strategies that work best for you.
- If your schedule isn't working, adjust it rather than abandoning it.
- A good note-taking system separates major points and supporting details, and allows you to record and organize information quickly.

CHAPTER 2: WORDS

2.1 Spelling

2.2 Word Choice

2.3 Nouns, Pronouns, and Verbs

2.4 Adjectives, Adverbs, Prepositions, Conjunctions, and Interjections

2.1 Spelling

Preview

This section of Ch. 2 will cover the following topics:

- spelling tips
- frequently misspelled words
- using a dictionary and thesaurus

With computer spellcheckers, spelling correctly may seem simple. But spellcheckers don't catch every error. Also, if the spellchecker highlights a word that is misspelled and gives you a list of alternatives, you may choose a word with the wrong meaning. Spellcheckers are useful editing tools, but they cannot replace human knowledge and judgment.

Tips to Improve Spelling

- **Read everything you write carefully.** Focusing word by word will help you note each word's spelling. If you skim quickly, you will overlook misspelled words.
- **Use memorizing techniques to remember the correct spelling of words.** For example, pronouncing the word “Wednesday” as Wednesday may help you remember how to spell it correctly.
- **Use a dictionary.** Professional writers rely on dictionaries. If you find it difficult to use a regular dictionary because you can't figure out how

words start, get what is called a “poor speller’s dictionary.”

- **Keep a list of frequently misspelled words.** Writers often misspell the same words over and over. Be aware of which words you commonly misspell and add them to a list.
- **Look over returned assignments for misspelled words.** Add these words to your list.
- **Read.** As simple as that sounds, reading good writing is the best way to learn to spell correctly.

Exercise 1

Identify the nine misspelled words in the following paragraphs. Write the words, spelled correctly, in your notebook.

Sherman J. Alexie, Jr. was born in October 1966. He is a Spokane/Coeur d'Alene Indian and an American writer, poet, and filmmaker. Alexie was born with hydrocephalus, or water on the brain. This condition led doctors to predict that he would likely suffer long-term brain damage and possibly mental retardation. Although Alexie survived with no mental disabilities, he did suffer other serious side effects from his condition that plagued him throughout his childhood. Amazingly, Alexie learned to read by the age of three, and by age five he had read novels such as John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*. Raised on an Indian reservation, Alexie often felt alienated from his peers due to his avid love for reading and also from the long-term effects of his illness, which often kept him from socializing with his peers on the reservation. The reading skills he displayed at such a young age foreshadowed his career.

Today Alexie is a prolific and successful writer with several story anthologies to his credit, notably *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven* and *The Toughest Indian in the World*. Most of his fiction is about contemporary Native Americans who are influenced by everything from pop culture to pow wows. His work is sometimes funny but always thoughtful and full of

richness and depth. Alexie also writes poetry and screenplays. His collection of storys, called *War Dances*, came out in 2009.

Frequently Misspelled Words

Below is a list of words that are often misspelled. Each word has a segment in bold type, which indicates the part of the word that is often spelled incorrectly. Read through the list, noting words that are problematic for you.

across	dis appoint	integration	particular	separate
address	dis approve	intelligent	perform	similar
answer	doesn't	interest	perhaps	since
argument	eigh th	interfere	personnel	speech
athlete	embarrass	jewelry	poss ess	streng th
beginning	environment	judg ment	possible	success
behavior	exag gerate	knowledge	prefer	surprise
calendar	familiar	maintain	prejudice	taught
career	finally	mathematics	privile ge	temperature
conscience	government	meant	probab ly	thorough
crowded	grammar	necessary	psychology	thought
definite	height	nervous	pursue	tired
describe	illegal	occasion	reference	until
desperate	immediately	opinion	rhythm	weight
different	important	optimist	ridiculous	writt en

Exercise 2

On the last page of your notebook, start a list of words you frequently misspell. Title it “(Mis)spelling List.”

Add to this list throughout the term. You may already know some words that are problems for you. You may recognize a problem word in the list above. If you don’t have any words yet, keep an eye on assignments returned to you throughout the term and add any word marked as misspelled.

- On the list, write the word 5 times, spelled correctly.
- Then write a sentence using the word and spelling it correctly.

If you misspell a word again at a later date, put it on your list again.

Use a Dictionary and Thesaurus

Even professional writers need help with the meaning, spelling, pronunciation, and use of some words. They rely on dictionaries. No one knows every word in the English language and their multiple uses and meanings, so all writers, from beginners to professionals, benefit from using a dictionary and a thesaurus.

Most good dictionaries provide the following information:

- Spelling: how the word and its different forms are spelled
- Pronunciation: how to say the word
- Part of speech: the function of the word in a sentence

- Definition: the meaning or meanings of the word
- **Synonyms:** words that have similar meanings
- Etymology: the history of the word

Look at the following dictionary entry and see if you can identify parts from the list above:

myth, mith, *n.* [Gr. *mythos*, a word, a fable, a legend.] A fable or legend embodying the convictions of a people as to their gods or other divine beings, their beginnings and early history and the heroes connected with it, or the origin of the world; any invented story, having no existence in fact.—myth • ic, myth • i • cal

A thesaurus gives a list of synonyms. It also lists **antonyms**. A thesaurus will help you find the perfect word to convey your ideas. It will also help you learn more words.

Here is an example thesaurus entry. It gives the word, its part of speech, an example of its use, and synonyms and antonyms.

precocious adj, She's such a precocious child.: uncommonly smart, mature, advanced, bright, brilliant, gifted, quick, clever. Ant. slow, backward, stupid.

Tip

Never simply replace one word with another unless you are sure you know what the replacement word means!

Every time you use a dictionary or a thesaurus, the number of ways you can express yourself grows and the correctness of your writing improves.

Takeaways

- Error-free spelling makes you more credible to readers.
- Studying lists of commonly misspelled words or keeping a list of your own commonly misspelled words will improve your spelling skills.
- Using a dictionary and thesaurus will expand your word choice.

2.2 Word Choice

Preview

This section of Ch. 2 will cover the following topics:

- commonly confused words
- avoiding slang, **clichés**, and overly general words

Experienced writers know that deliberate, careful word selection can lead to more effective writing. This chapter looks at commonly confused words and types of words to avoid.

Commonly Confused Words

Read the following list, paying special attention to words that are challenging for you.

Accept, Except

- **Accept** (**verb**) means to take or agree to something offered: They **accepted** our proposal for the conference.
- **Except** (conjunction) means only or but: We could fly **except** the tickets cost too much.

Affect, Effect

- **Affect** (verb) means to create a change: Hurricane winds **affect** the amount of rainfall.
- **Effect** (noun) means an outcome or result: Heavy rains will have an **effect** on crops.

Its, It's

- **Its** (**pronoun**) shows possession: The butterfly flapped **its** wings.
- **It's** (**contraction**) joins the words "it" and "is": **It's** a beautiful butterfly.

Loose, Lose

- **Loose** (**adjective**) describes something that is not tight or is detached: Without a belt, his pants are **loose** at the waist.
- **Lose** (verb) means to cease to have: She will **lose** more weight while training for the marathon.

Of, Have

- **Of** (**preposition**) means from or about: I studied maps **of** the city.
- **Have** (verb) means to possess: I **have** friends who help me move.
- **Have** (linking verb) is used to connect verbs: I should **have** helped her.

Quite, Quiet, Quit

- **Quite** (**adverb**) means really or truly: My work will require **quite** a lot of concentration.
- **Quiet** (adjective) means not loud: I need a **quiet** room to study.
- **Quit** (verb) means to stop or to end: I will **quit** when I am tired.

Than, Then

- **Than** (conjunction) is used to connect two or more items when comparing: Registered nurses have less training **than** doctors.

- **Then** (adverb) means next or at a specific time: Doctors first complete medical school and **then** open a practice.

Their, They're, There

- **Their** (pronoun) shows possession: The Townsends feed **their** dogs twice a day.
- **They're** (contraction) joins the words "they" and "are": **They're** the sweetest dogs in the neighborhood.
- **There** (adverb) indicates a particular place: The dogs' bowls are over **there**.
- **There** (pronoun) indicates the presence of something: **There** are more treats handed out if the dogs behave.

To, Two, Too

- **To** (preposition) indicates movement: Let's go **to** the circus.
- **To** is also a word that completes a certain type of verb: **to** play, **to** ride, **to** watch.
- **Two** (adjective) is the number after one. It describes how many: **Two** clowns squirted the elephants with water.
- **Too** (adverb) means also or very: The crowd was **too** loud, so we left.

Who's, Whose

- **Who's** (contraction) joins the words "who" and "is" or "has": **Who's** the new student? **Who's** met him?
- **Whose** (pronoun) shows possession: **Whose** schedule allows them to take the new student tour?

Your, You're

- **Your** (pronoun) shows possession: **Your** book bag is unzipped.
- **You're** (contraction) joins the words "you" and "are": **You're** the girl with the unzipped book bag.

Homonyms

Homonyms are words that sound like each other but have different meanings. For example, a “witch” is a person thought to have magical powers, but “which” is a question word used to choose between options.

Following is a list of commonly confused homonyms. Read through the list, paying particular attention to words you may have found confusing in the past.

Lead, Led

- **Lead** can be used as a noun to name a type of metal: The **lead** pipes in my home need to be replaced. It can also refer to a position of advantage: Our team is in the **lead**. As a verb, means to guide or direct: The girl will **lead** the horse by its halter.
- **Led** (verb) is the **past tense** of “lead”: The young volunteer **led** the patrons through the museum.

Passed, Past

- **Passed** (verb) means to move: He **passed** slower cars using the left lane.
- **Past** (noun) means having taken place before the present: The argument happened in the **past**, so there is no use in dwelling on it.

Principle, Principal

- **Principle** (noun) is a fundamental concept that is accepted as true: The **principle** of human equality is an important foundation for peace.
- **Principal** (noun) has two meanings. It can mean the original amount of debt on which interest is calculated: The payment covered both principal and interest. Or it can mean a person who is the main authority of a school: The **principal** held a conference for parents and teachers.

Threw, Through

- **Threw** (verb) is the past tense of the word “throw”: She **threw** the football with perfect form.
- **Through** (preposition) indicates movement: She walked **through** the door and out of his life. (Note: “Thru” is a non-standard spelling of “through” and should be avoided.)

Where, Wear

- **Where** (adverb) is the place in which something happens: **Where** is the restaurant?
- **Wear** (verb) is to have on one’s body: I **wear** my hiking shoes when I climb.

Whether, Weather

- **Whether** (conjunction) means expressing a doubt or choice: I don’t know **whether** to go to Paris or Hawaii.
- **Weather** (noun) is a quality of the atmosphere: The **weather** could be rainy.

Exercise 1

In your notebook, write the following sentences, selecting the correct word to fill the space.

1. The news predicts good ____ (weather, whether) for our trip.
2. My little cousin turns ____ (to, too, two) years old tomorrow.
3. The next-door neighbor's dog is ____ (quite, quiet, quit) loud. He barks constantly.
4. ____ (Your, You're) mother called this morning to talk about the party.
5. I like to ____ (where, wear) unique clothing from thrift stores with no company logos.
6. I would rather eat a slice of chocolate cake ____ (than, then) eat a chocolate muffin.
7. Everyone goes ____ (through, threw) hardships in life.
8. I don't care ____ (whose, who's) coming to the party.
9. Do you have any ____ (loose, lose) change to pay the parking meter?
10. Father must ____ (have, of) left his briefcase at the office.
11. Marjorie felt like she was being ____ (led, lead) on a wild goose chase, and she did not like it one bit.
12. Before playing ice hockey, I was supposed to read the contract, but I only skimmed it, which may ____ (affect, effect) my understanding.
13. The party ____ (their, there, they're) hosting will be in June at ____ (their, there, they're) ranch.
14. ____ (Except, Accept) for Ajay, we all had tickets to the

game.

15. It must be fall, because ____ (it's, its) getting darker earlier.

Types of Words to Avoid

Slang

Slang is informal, non-standard English. “Non-standard” means “not accepted by most people as correct.” For example, the following words are slang:

lame, chill, what's up, awesome, hang, ace, my bad, crash, freebie

Slang is used by a specific group and often changes over time. For example, the word “cool” was common slang in the 1960s, whereas “cold” is common slang now. Slang is appropriate between friends, but should not be used in academic or business writing.

Exercise 2

Rewrite the following paragraph in your notebook, replacing the slang words and phrases with more formal language.

I felt like such an airhead when I got up to give my speech. I'd been practicing this speech 24/7, and I still bombed. It was ten minutes of me going off about how we sometimes have to do things we don't enjoy doing. Wow, did I ever prove my point. My speech was so bad I'm surprised that people didn't boo. I wonder if I have the guts to do it again.

Clichés

Clichés are expressions that have lost their effectiveness because they are overused. We've heard the phrase "fluffy white clouds" a million times. The poet Rupert Brooke called clouds "rounds of snow." Better, right?

We aren't all poets, but writing that uses clichés suffers from a lack of originality. Avoiding clichés will help your writing feel original and fresh. Even plain wording is better than a cliché. Here is an example:

- **Cliché:** When my brother and I get into an argument, he says things that make my blood boil.
- **Plain:** When my brother and I get into an argument, he says things that make me really angry.
- **Original:** When my brother and I get into an argument, he says things that make me want to go to the gym and punch the bag for a few hours.

Notice that it isn't the use of fancy words that makes an image vivid; it's the use of specific details.

Exercise 3

In your notebook, rewrite the following sentences, replacing the **clichés** with fresh, original descriptions. You don't have to be poetic; just be plain and clear.

1. Chuny had an ax to grind with Ben.
2. Mr. Muller was at his wit's end with the rowdy seventh graders.
3. The bottom line is that Greg was fired because he missed too much work.
4. Sometimes it is hard to make ends meet with just one paycheck.
5. My brain is fried from pulling an all-nighter.
6. Jeremy became tongue-tied when the interviewer asked him where he saw himself in five years.

Overly General Words

Specific words and images make writing more interesting. General words make writing flat and boring. Details bring words to life. Add words that provide color, texture, sound, even smell.

Which sentence in each pair is stronger, more visual, and more fun to read?

- My new puppy is cute.
- My new puppy is a ball of white fuzz with eyes like black olives.

- My teacher told us plagiarism is bad.
- My teacher, Ms. Atwater, explained exactly that plagiarism is illegal and unethical.

Exercise 4

In your notebook, revise the following sentences by replacing the overly general words with more precise and interesting language. Don't overdo; just switch out something general for a specific detail.

1. Reilly got into her car and drove off.
2. Traveling to outer space would be amazing.
3. Jane came home after a bad day at the office.
4. I thought Milo's essay was interesting.
5. Tropical fish are pretty.
6. The goalie blocked the shot.

Takeaways

- Be aware of commonly confused words, including homonyms.
- Slang, clichés, and overly general words should be avoided in college writing.

2.3 Nouns, Pronouns and Verbs

Preview

This section of Ch. 2 will cover the following topics:

- understanding parts of speech
- using nouns, pronouns, and verbs

There are two ways to be a correct writer:

- read a lot
- study grammar

If you were lucky enough to have a family who encouraged you to read books as a child, chances are your writing is already correct. Why? Because your brain absorbed the structures and systems we call “standard English usage” as you read, and you are able to repeat those patterns unconsciously when you write.

If that didn’t happen, you probably struggle with writing to some extent.

It is never too late. The more you read good writing, the more you will automatically write correctly. In the meantime, studying grammar will help you make correct choices, getting you closer to the kind of writing you want to be able to do.

Parts of Speech

“Parts of speech” is the system we use to explain how words work in a sentence—which word goes where, why, and in what form.

Even if you struggle with writing, your brain already has a pretty good grasp of how this system works. For example, you know there is something wrong with this sentence:

I love dog my.

If I asked you to explain the problem, I doubt you would say, “The possessive pronoun ‘my’ is being used as an adjective here, to show who owns the dog, and it should come before the noun it modifies.” But you’ve heard enough correct examples that your brain automatically sees a problem.

But can you spot the more subtle errors in the following sentences?

- The two best things about the party was the music and the food. (Error: subject-verb agreement. The verb “was” does not agree with the subject “things.” It should be “were.”)
- Natalie found a sparkly girl’s bracelet on the sidewalk. (Error: misplaced modifier. It’s not a sparkly girl, it’s a sparkly bracelet.)
- When John’s dog came back, he was so happy. (Error: unclear pronoun reference. Who was happy? The dog or John?)

There are eight parts of speech in English—that is, eight possible jobs that a word can do. This section of Ch. 2 will cover the first three parts of speech: nouns, pronouns, and verbs. The remaining five are covered in Ch. 2.4.

Graphics

This PowerPoint presentation is a visual introduction to the parts of speech. Click on the image below to open it and view the slides.



When you've finished Ch. 2, come back and work through this slideshow again to review what you've learned.

Nouns

The simplest words in English are nouns; they are easy to understand and found everywhere.

A noun is a word that names people, places, things, or ideas.

Remember "part of speech" is what job a word is doing in a sentence. "Naming" is a noun's job.

Most nouns are things you can see (like a mouse or the sun), but nouns can

also name ideas (like democracy or faith). All of the following words are nouns because they name someone, some place, or something:

rabbit, tangerine, paper clip, Mars, democracy, student, Alaska

There are two types of nouns: proper nouns and common nouns.

Proper nouns name **specific** people, places, things, or ideas. For example:

- people: Shakespeare, Jean
- places: Paris, Bulgaria
- things: Kleenex, Oreos
- ideas: Impressionism, Buddhism

Proper nouns can be more than one word, but they still name one thing. For example:

- people: Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Billie Eilish
- places: New York City, Republic of Ireland
- things: House of Representatives, MacBook Pro
- ideas: Harlem Renaissance, New Deal

The following types of words are usually proper nouns:

- deities, religions, religious followers, sacred books (Allah, Catholic, Protestants, the Torah)
- family relationship when used as a name (Mom, Grandpa Lenz)
- nationalities, languages, races, tribes (Italian, Japanese, African American, Apache)
- educational institutions, departments, specific courses (Mt. Hood Community College, Humanities Department, Writing 90)
- government departments, organizations, political parties (Army Corps of Engineers, Doctors Without Borders, Democratic Party)
- historical movements, periods, events, documents (Black Lives Matter, the Renaissance, March Madness, Declaration of Independence)
- trade names (Apple, Xerox, Newman's Own)

- months, holidays, days of the week, but not seasons (July, Yom Kippur, Friday, but not winter)
- titles when used as part of a person's name, but not when used alone (Governor Brown, but not the governor of Oregon)
- titles of books, movies, CDs (*The Hunger Games*, “Bohemian Rhapsody,” *Back to Black*)

Common nouns name **general** people, places, things, or ideas. For example:

- people: students, aunt, dog
- places: river, country, home
- things: aquarium, car, hamburger, rose
- ideas: democracy, love, happiness, religion

Tip

Proper nouns are always capitalized. Common nouns are never capitalized, unless they are the first word of a sentence.

Common nouns can also be more than one word, but they still name one thing. For example:

- people: homeless person, state representative
- places: high school, swimming pool
- things: printer cartridge, washing machine
- ideas: gay pride, public speaking

When two nouns together have a meaning that is different from the two separate words, that is called a **compound noun**. For example, a “state” is one thing, a “representative” is another, and a “state representative” has a third, slightly different meaning. So “state representative” is a compound noun. Sometimes compound nouns are written as one word (“greenhouse”) or hyphenated (“mother-in-law”). Check a dictionary to be sure.

A word also can be a proper noun in one sentence but a common noun in another. For example:

- My sister Fern prefers ferns to flowers. (“Fern” is a proper noun because it is a specific person’s name, but “ferns” is a common noun because it names a general type of plant.)
- My mother said she was tired, but Dad was ready to go. (“mother” is a common noun because it names the relationship, but “Dad” is what we call him, so it’s a proper noun.)

Graphics

Click on the icon below to view a cartoon video about nouns:



Exercise 1

In your notebook, copy the following sentences. Circle all the nouns, putting “np” above the proper nouns and “nc” above the common nouns.

(Remember: Sometimes a noun can be more than one word.)

1. Although raised a Catholic, my sister eventually joined the Church of England.
2. Dad bought three gifts for Mom: a toaster, a blender, and a bathrobe.
3. My telephone has indicators for different types of messages.
4. Astrology is fun. My sign is Aquarius.
5. The wind last night shook the house.

Pronouns

Notice the word “pronoun” has the word “noun” embedded in it. That gives us a hint that they are connected.

A pronoun is a word that replaces a noun to avoid repetition.

For example:

Maria threw the boomerang and it came back to her. (“it” and “her” are pronouns)

Without pronouns, the above sentence would have to be written like this:

Maria threw the boomerang and the boomerang came back to Maria.

The noun being replaced by the pronoun is called its antecedent. “Maria” is the antecedent of “her” and “boomerang” is the antecedent of “it.”

There are half a million nouns in English, but relatively few pronouns. Following is a list of the most common English pronouns:

all	him	myself	somebody	your
another	himself	mine	someone	yours
any	his	most	something	yourself
anyone	she	neither	that	yourselves
anybody	her	nobody	their	we
anything	hers	none	theirs	what
both	herself	no one	them	which
each	I	nothing	themselves	whichever
either	it	one	these	who
everybody	its	our	they	whom
everyone	itself	ours	this	whoever
everything	many	ourselves	those	whomever
few	me	several	use	
he	my	some	you	

Exercise 2

Copy these sentences into your notebook, adding the correct pronoun. Then draw an arrow from the pronoun to the noun (the antecedent) that the pronoun replaces.

1. In the current economy, workers don't want to waste ____ money.
2. If my sister goes to medical school, ____ must be prepared for the long hours.
3. The plumbing crew did ____ best to repair the broken pipes.
4. The commencement speaker said students have an opportunity to improve ____ lives.
5. Aunt Norma was a talented gardener and ____ worked in the yard nearly every day.
6. My computer is nearly ten years old. ____ really needs to be replaced.

Pronoun errors are the second most common error in college writing (comma errors are #1), so it's worthwhile to study pronouns. There are three main pronoun errors.

Error #1: Unclear Pronoun Reference

If we don't understand which noun the pronoun has replaced, that is called an unclear pronoun reference. For example:

Before syncing my phone with my laptop, I deleted everything on it. (What does the pronoun "it" refer to? The phone or the laptop?)

A clearer explanation would be this:

I deleted everything on my phone before syncing it with my laptop.
(Now “it” clearly refers to the phone.)

Error #2: Lack of Noun/Pronoun Agreement

Pronouns must agree in number with the nouns they refer to. If the noun is singular, the pronoun replacing it should also be singular. If the noun is plural, the pronoun should be plural:

The parrot (singular) sat on its (singular) perch.

The parrots (plural) sat on their (plural) perches.

When referring to several people, it can be tempting to avoid sexist language by using both male and female pronouns:

Sexist: An actor must share his emotions.

Not sexist, but awkward: An actor must share her or his emotions.

A better way to fix the problem is to switch to a plural noun and pronoun because although many singular pronouns in English reflect a specific gender (he, she, him, her), most plural pronouns do not (they, them, their, we, us).

Neither sexist nor awkward: Actors must share their emotions.

Error #3: Shifts in Person

To understand what “person” means, imagine a conversation between

Tip

People in the transgender and gender non-conforming communities often use the plural pronoun “they” to refer to one person. In the past, we would not say, “Mason has a new cat because they love cats.” But respect for an individual’s identity is an important part of the evolution of language. Do not assume which pronoun a person uses. It is okay to politely ask people their pronoun.

three people. The first person would speak using “I.” That person would talk to a second person using “you.” When they talk about a third person, they use “he,” “she,” or “they.”

- First person pronouns: I, me, mine, we, us, ours
- Second person pronouns: you, yours
- Third person pronouns: he, him, his, she, her, they, them, theirs, one, anyone, it, its

Avoid “shifts in person.” That is, avoid incorrectly mixing first, second, and third person. For example:

With our delivery service, customers can pay for groceries when ordering or when you receive them. (“you” is a shift in person.)

Here is how the sentence should read:

With our delivery service, customers can pay when they order groceries or when they receive them.

Three More Helpful Pronoun Rules

- The words “who,” “whom,” and “whose” refer only to people. The word “which” refers to things. The word “that” can refer to people or things. Never write “I have a dog **who** bites.”
- To decide whether to use “me” or “I,” take out the other person’s name and see which sounds right: “The teacher looked at ~~Maria and~~ I.” or “The teacher looked at ~~Maria and~~ me.”
- Never put a pronoun directly after a noun. For example: “Christine she went to work earlier than usual.” Delete the pronoun “she.”

Tip

In college writing, avoid using second person (“you”) because it is too casual. Use first person (“I” or “we”) or third person (“she,” “he,” “them”) instead.

Graphics

To review pronouns, watch this great cartoon video:



Exercise 3

In your notebook, write the following sentences, correcting any pronoun errors.

1. The eighth grade students they were behaving mysteriously.
2. Twyla and me went to the circus on Friday.
3. The instructor gave Marilyn her notes.
4. Juan is a man that has high standards.
5. A gardener is only successful if he or she has good soil.

Verbs

Sentences can be short or long, but you can't have a sentence without a verb, no matter how many words you write. For example:

The small black dog in my backyard with floppy ears and a long tail.

That's a fragment. Why? Because it doesn't have a verb.

A verb shows action or a state of being.

Action verbs are easy: "walk," "study," "wash," "wait," "dance." They are words that describe something happening. For example:

The raccoon ate the pizza box. ("ate" is what the raccoon did. "ate" is the verb.)

But a verb can also link subjects with words that describe them. Think of "linking" as an action. Common linking verbs include "is," "am," "are," "was," "seem," and "became." For example:

Emmett is a small black dog. ("is" links the subject "Emmett" with the description "a small black dog." Therefore "is" is the verb.)

A verb that is more than one word is called a verb phrase. For example:

We have taken many trips together. ("have taken" is a verb phrase.)

Verbs not only tell us what is happening, they tell us when it is happening. This is called verb tense. For example:

- I walk to school. (present tense: I am doing it now.)
- I walked to school. (past tense: I used to do it.)
- I will walk to school. (future tense: I am going to do it.)

Verb tense should remain consistent. If you start in present tense, stay there, or if you start in past tense, stay there. For example:

I **walked** to school on Tuesday. When I **arrived**, I **saw** my teacher.

She **told** me to get to class quickly. I **ran** through the door, **sat** in my chair, and **took** a deep breath. (All of the bold words are past tense verbs.)

However, there are times when we want to shift tense to let a reader know things happened at different times. For example:

To Kill a Mockingbird **is** Harper Lee's most famous book. It **received** a Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1961. Lee **died** in 2016, but her book **will remain** one of the most compassionate novels in American literature.

Lee's book is currently famous. She received a prize and died in the past. Her book will remain great into the future. All those events happened at different times and we change the tense of the verb to let the reader know when.

Exercise 4

In your notebook, complete the following sentences by selecting the correct form of the verb: present, past, or future tense.

1. The Dust Bowl ____ (is, was, will be) a name given to a period of destructive dust storms in the United States during the 1930s.
2. Today, historians ____ (consider, considered, will consider) The Dust Bowl to be one of the worst weather of events in American history.
3. The Dust Bowl mostly ____ (affects, affected, will affect) Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico.
4. Dust storms ____ (continue, continued, will continue) to occur in these dry regions, but not to the devastating degree of the 1930s.
5. The Dust Bowl era finally came to end in 1939 when the rains ____ (arrive, arrived, will arrive).

The most troublesome thing about verbs is that many are “irregular.” Regular verbs change to past tense by adding “d” or “ed.” For example:

walk → walked

dance → danced

But irregular verbs change tense in irregular ways. For example:

is → was or were

think → thought

The best way to learn irregular verbs is simply get familiar with them. Read the list below and notice any verbs which cause you problems:

Present → Past	Present → Past	Present → Past	Present → Past
become → became	fight → fought	lose → lost	sing → sang
begin → began	find → found	make → made	sit → sat
blow → blew	fly → flew	mean → meant	sleep → slept
break → broke	forget → forgot	meet → met	speak → spoke
bring → brought	forgive → forgave	pay → paid	spend → spent
build → built	freeze → froze	put → put	spring → sprang
burst → burst	get → got	quit → quit	stand → stood
buy → bought	give → gave	read → read	steal → stole
catch → caught	go → went	ride → rode	strike → struck
choose → chose	grow → grew	ring → rang	swim → swam
come → came	have → had	rise → rose	swing → swung
cut → cut	hear → heard	run → ran	take → took
dive → dove (dived)	hide → hid	say → said	teach → taught
do → did	hold → held	see → saw	tear → tore
draw → drew	hurt → hurt	seek → sought	tell → told
drink → drank	keep → kept	sell → sold	throw → threw
drive → drove	know → knew	send → sent	understand → understood
eat → ate	lay → laid	set → set	wake → woke
fall → fell	lead → led	shake → shook	wear → wore
feed → fed	leave → left	shine → shone (shined)	win → won
feel → felt	let → let	shrink → shrank (shrank)	wind → wound

Graphics

To review verbs, watch this great cartoon video:



Takeaways

- There are eight parts of speech: nouns, pronouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections.
- Each type of word has a specific job in a sentence. Understanding parts of speech will help a writer avoid grammatical errors.
- The core of a sentence is nouns, pronouns and verbs.

2.4 Adjectives, Adverbs, Prepositions, Conjunctions, and Interjections

Preview

This section of Ch. 2 will cover the following topics:

- understanding adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections

Nouns, pronouns and verbs are the core of an English sentence. But sentences are more than just who did what. Sentences include descriptions, information about where and when, and often multiple ideas. Those are the jobs of the remaining five parts of speech: adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections.

Adjectives

Adjectives make writing more interesting. For example, “cat” is a nice noun, but “silky spotted cat” is a much more interesting description. “silky” and “spotted” are adjectives. An adjective answers questions such as which one, what kind, what color, or what shape.

Adjectives modify nouns and pronouns.

Here is an example of adjectives modifying nouns:

The head librarian helped me find a history book on famous writers. (“librarian,” “book” and “writers” are nouns. “head” tell us which librarian; “history” tell us what kind of book; “famous” tells us what kind of writers. So “head,” “history,” and “famous” are all adjectives.)

Here is an example of an adjective modifying a pronoun:

She is tall. (“tall” is an adjective that describes the size of the pronoun “She.”)

The words “a,” “an” and “the” are a type of adjective called an **article**. They modify nouns and pronouns just like regular adjectives, telling us which one or how many. For example:

The dog barked at a woman on the street. (“The” tells us which dog and which street; “a” tells us how many women.)

In English, adjectives usually come before the noun or pronoun (Asian elephant, small table, long journey). But not always. For example:

The organic farm has oranges that are ripe and juicy. (“The” and “organic” are adjectives that modify the noun “farm” and come before it. But “ripe” and “juicy” are adjectives too; they modify “oranges” even though they come after.)

Tip

To find adjectives, find the nouns and pronouns first. Then look to see what words modify those nouns and pronouns.

Nouns or pronouns can modify another noun or pronoun. When they do, they change jobs and become adjectives. For example:

dog's bed, their house, her computer, Maureen's book

This reminds us that a word's part of speech is what job it is doing and that some words can work at different jobs. When identifying the part of speech of a word, always look at the whole sentence to what job the word is doing there.

Graphics

Watch this cartoon video to reinforce what you've learned about adjectives:



Exercise 1

In your notebook, copy the following sentences. Leave space between them so you have room to work.

1. Lily works seven shifts every week at the clinic.
2. The book is fairly new, but it is damaged.
3. Flowers make a very special gift.
4. He is my favorite musician.
5. That little black dog is noisy.

Then, do the following:

- Find the nouns. If the noun is proper, put “np” above it. If the noun is common, put “nc” above it.
- Then, look for pronouns. Put “pro” above them.
- Find any **adjectives** and put “adj” above them.
- Then draw an arrow from the adjective to the noun or pronoun it is modifying.

Adverbs

Using our example of the “silky spotted cat,” we can say it “ran.” The verb “ran” is simple and clear. But “The silky spotted cat ran swiftly and silently” is much more interesting. “swiftly” and “silently” are adverbs.

Adverbs and adjectives do similar jobs: they **modify** other words. The difference is which types of words they modify. Adjectives modify nouns and pronouns.

Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs.

Adverbs answer questions such as how, to what extent, why, when, and where. For example:

- Adverb modifying a verb: Bertrand sings horribly. (“horribly” modifies the verb “sings”; it tells how.)
- Adverb modifying an adjective: Sarah was very nervous about the date. (“very” modifies the adjective “nervous”; it tells to what extent.)
- Adverb modifying another adverb: Students study really hard before finals. (“hard” is an adverb that modifies the verb “study”; it tells how. “really” is also an adverb; it modifies the adverb “hard”; it tells to what extent.)

Unlike adjectives, which usually appear in front of the noun or pronoun they modify, adverbs move around. In the following sentences, the adverb “now” modifies the verb “have” by saying when, but it can appear in many locations:

Now I have enough money for a vacation.

I **now** have enough money for a vacation.

I have enough money **now** for a vacation.

Tip

To find adverbs, first find the verbs and adjectives in the sentence first.

Adverbs can also appear in the middle of a **verb phrase**, but that doesn’t mean they are part of the verb. They are still adverbs. For example:

I **do not** have enough money for a vacation. (“not” is an adverb that modifies the verb “do have.”)

Unlike adjectives, which often add interesting information, too many adverbs can actually weaken writing. For example:

It was a very, very cold night. (The first “very” already means “excessively.”)

Graphics

To reinforce what you’ve learned about adverbs, watch this cartoon video:



Exercise 2

Go back to these sentences from Ex. 1.

1. Lily works seven shifts every week at the clinic.
2. The book is fairly new, but it is damaged.
3. Flowers make a very special gift.
4. He is my favorite musician.
5. That little black dog is noisy.

You found the nouns, pronouns, and adjectives. Now look for verbs and adverbs:

- First, find the verb or verbs in the sentence. Label them with a “v.”
- See if any words **modify** those verbs. Label them “adv” for “adverb.”
- Do any words modify the adjectives you found? Label them “adv.”
- Finally, see if any words modify the adverbs you just found. Label them “adv” too.
- Draw an arrow from the adverbs to the words they modify.

If you are unsure about your answers, go back and re-read the earlier sections of this chapter. Don’t move on until you feel comfortable identifying nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs.

Prepositions

Nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs tell us who is doing what.

Her small dog is barking loudly. (the noun “dog” is doing the verb “is barking”; “Her” and “small” are adjectives that modify “dog”; “loudly” is an adverb that modifies the verb “is barking”)

But sentences are more complex than simply who and what. We also want to know where and when.

Her small dog ran into the street.

Her dog barks at 7 a.m.

If you look at the word “preposition,” you’ll see the word “position.”

A preposition shows the position of something in space and time.

A preposition introduces a prepositional phrase. A prepositional phrase always begins with a preposition and ends with a noun or pronoun. Also, a prepositional phrase never includes the sentence verb or subject.

In the sentences above, “into the street” is a prepositional phrase that shows where the dog ran. “at 7 a.m.” is a prepositional phrase that tells us when. Both phrases begin with prepositions (“into,” “at”) and end with nouns (“street,” “7 a.m.”), but neither includes the subject (“dog”) or the verb (“ran,” “barks”) of the sentence.

Here is another example:

The study rooms (on the first floor) (of the library) are full (in the morning).

Tip

When working with grammar, we mark prepositional phrases by enclosing them in parentheses.

Each group of words enclosed in parentheses is a prepositional phrase: they all start with a preposition (“on,” “of,” “in”), end with a noun or pronoun (“floor,” “library,” “morning”), and don’t include the verb (“are”)

or subject (“rooms”). These prepositional phrases tell us **where** the study rooms are and **when** they are full.

Here are some common prepositions that show positions in space:

to	across	over	against	with
at	through	inside	under	within
in	beyond	between	beneath	without
on	among	above	around	below
by	near	behind	past	from

Imagine a plane flying across a sky. We can change the plane’s position in space by changing the prepositions: above the clouds, below the clouds, within the clouds, between the clouds, past the clouds, behind the clouds.

Here are some common prepositions that show positions in time:

at	for	past	within	from
by	after	until	since	between
in	before	during	throughout	around

Imagine that plane is about to land. We can change its position in time by changing prepositions: at 3 p.m., after 3 p.m., before 3 p.m., around 3 p.m.

Note: The words “of,” “as,” and “like” are also prepositions, but they don’t fit neatly into either the space or time category. However, they are very common. For example:

book of essays, type of bicycle, give as an example, testify as an expert, think like a computer, disappear like magic

So just remember them: “of,” “as,” and “like” are prepositions too.

Exercise 3

In your notebook, copy the following sentences. Skip a line between sentences so you have room to add information.

1. Meera was deeply interested in marine biology.
2. I just watched the season finale of my favorite show.
3. Jordan won the race, and I am happy for him.
4. The lawyer appeared before the court on Monday.
5. Chloe wore a comfortable blue tunic for the party.

Find all the prepositional phrases and enclose them in parentheses.

Then, above each word in the prepositional phrase, identify the word's part of speech by writing "n" for noun, "pro" for pronoun, and "prep" for preposition. If there are any adjectives or adverbs, label them "adj" for adjective, and "adv" for adverb. (Remember: There are no verbs in prepositional phrases.)

Locating prepositional phrases will help you find subjects and verbs (especially in a long or complex sentence) because subjects and verbs never appear in a prepositional phrase. For example:

In the rainy season, one of our windows leaked at all four corners.

If we **isolate** the prepositional phrases from the rest of the sentence, it is easy to see the verb and subject:

(In the rainy season), one (of our windows) leaked (at all four corners).

All we have left after removing the prepositional phrases are the words

“one” and “leaked.” So “one” is the pronoun subject of the sentence and “leaked” is the verb.

This can help writers avoid things like subject-verb agreement problems, sentence fragments, and other common sentence errors. (See Ch. 3 for more on sentences.)

Graphics

To review prepositions, watch this cartoon video:



Conjunctions

The word “junction” means a place where things cross or connect. In the system of parts of speech, a conjunction joins.

Conjunctions connect two or more people, things, places, or ideas.

The most common conjunctions are “for,” “and,” “nor,” “but,” “or,” “yet,” “so.” (These are called “fanboys,” after the first letter of each word.) For example:

A small bird flew into the tree, **but** nearly collided with a crow. The

small bird swerved at the last minute **and** landed safely. Neither the crow **nor** the small bird was hurt, **yet** both seemed upset. (The bold words are all conjunctions.)

Other conjunctions (such as “because,” “since,” “after,” “as,” “when,” “while,” “although”) connect two or more parts of a sentence, including connecting **dependent clauses** to the main part of the sentence.

For example:

The library **and** its landscaping impress people **when** they first visit our campus. (“and” joins “library” with “landscaping,” but “when” joins the main part of the sentence with the dependent clause at the end.)

Graphics

Watch this cartoon video to review conjunctions:



Exercise 4

In your notebook, copy the following sentences. Then, write “conj” above any conjunctions. (It is easier to do this—and good practice—if you also identify all the nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositions.)

1. I don't mean to brag, but I am the best cook in my family.
2. Italy experienced the worst heat wave in its history last year when I visited my family.
3. Ms. Beckett is strange, yet she is also smart.
4. Hilton's soccer team lost last season so they will have to practice more next year.
5. Jose writes letters by hand, and his grandparents love receiving them.
6. I felt lucky because I got into the college of my choice.

Interjections

Interjections convey a greeting or show emotion.

Interjections are common in spoken English but rare in written English because they are considered casual. Interjections are like an emoticon or an exclamation point (both of which should also be avoided in college writing).

Here are some common interjections, but there are hundreds more:

boo-yah, darn, duh, huh, oh, oops, ouch, sweet, wow, yikes

Graphics

Watch this cartoon video to review interjections:



Takeaways

- There are eight parts of speech. Each has a specific job in a sentence.
- Nouns, pronouns, and verbs form the core of an English sentence.
- Adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, and conjunctions provide detail.
- Interjections should be avoided in formal writing.

CHAPTER 3: SENTENCES

3.1 Basic Sentence Structure

3.2 Common Sentence Errors

3.1 Basic Sentence Structure

Preview

This section of Ch. 3 will cover the following topics:

- subjects, predicates and objects
- phrases and clauses
- fragments

Trying to write correctly without understanding grammar is sort of like trying to play baseball if you don't understand bases, pitches, or hits. You can't score if you don't understand how to get to home plate.

Writing is basically a system of structures. Words form phrases, clauses and, eventually, sentences. Ch. 2 focused on words. This chapter looks at how we put words together into sentences.

Sentence Structure

A basic sentence can be broken into two main parts: the subject and the predicate. The subject is who or what performs the action. The predicate is the action. For example:

Samantha sleeps. (“Samantha” is performing the action so she is the subject of the sentence, and “sleeps” is the action she is performing so that is the predicate.)

Subjects are always nouns or pronouns.

To find the subject of a sentence, find all the nouns and pronouns. Then ask yourself which noun or pronoun is performing the action. For example:

Samantha often sleeps on the sofa. (The nouns in that sentence are “Samantha” and “sofa.” But which noun is performing the action? “Samantha” is sleeping, so “Samantha” is the subject.)

The predicate of a sentence contains the verb. The predicate tells what happened to the subject or what state the subject is in. In the above sentence, “often sleeps on the sofa” is the predicate and “sleeps” is the verb.

The subject is often at the beginning of the sentence, but sometimes it isn’t. For example:

After dinner, Alice served cake. (“Alice” is the subject and “served” is the verb; “After dinner” is a prepositional phrase that tells us when the action happened.)

Sometimes sentences have two subjects. For example:

Alice and Juan walked to school. (“Alice” and “Juan” are the subjects; they both did the action. The word “and” isn’t part of the subject; it is a conjunction that joins the two subjects.)

Sentences can also have more than one verb. For example:

Samantha studies at her desk, sleeps on the couch, and drives

Tip

What’s the difference between a predicate and a verb? “Verb” names a certain type of word. “Predicate” is one of the two main parts of a sentence. It usually consists of a verb and its object.

to school. (Samantha does three things: “studies,” “sleeps,” and “drives.” All three of those words are verbs.)

Phrases and Clauses

Groups of words are called “phrases” or “clauses.” (In Ch. 2, we studied one type of phrase: a prepositional phrase.)

A phrase is a group of words that does not contain a sentence subject or verb.

For example:

- in the kitchen
- the long and winding road

A clause is a group of words that does contain a subject and verb.

For example:

- Luisa cooked lasagna.
- the journey includes

There are two types of clauses: dependent and independent.

- Dependent clauses need further information to make a complete sentence. In the above example, “the journey includes” has a subject and a verb but it does not express a complete thought. It is a dependent clause because it depends on additional information to express a complete thought.
- Independent clauses do not need additional information to stand on their own. In the above example, “Luisa cooked lasagna” has a subject, a verb, and it expresses a complete thought. It is an independent clause.

Graphics

To review subjects and predicates, click on the icon below for a cartoon video:



Exercise 1

Copy the following sentences into your notebook. Leave room between them to add information.

1. Linda and Javier danced under the stars.
2. I have an opinion about the topic.
3. The fans walked through the gates.
4. Jamyra ran around the track.
5. In April, Toby celebrated his birthday.

First, identify the nouns in these sentences. Write “n” above them. Then, identify the pronouns and write “pro” above them. Remember that a subject is the noun or pronoun doing the action. Which noun or pronoun is the subject in each sentence? Underline it once.

What is the subject doing? That is the verb. Underline verbs twice.

Hint: Subjects and verbs never appear in prepositional phrases, so another way to do this exercise would be to identify the prepositional phrases first. That makes it easier to find the subject and verb of a sentence.

Obviously, most sentences are not as simple as a noun plus a verb: “Eugenio helped.” But writers build upon this basic structure.

One way sentences grow is by adding an “object.” The object of a sentence is the noun or noun phrase or pronoun affected by the action of the verb. In other words, the subject is the person or thing doing something; the object is having something done to it. For example:

Alice baked a cake. (“Alice” is the subject; she is doing the action of baking. “baked” is the action being done by Alice; it is the verb. “cake” received the action of the verb; it is the object.)

Adding **prepositional phrases** is another way to build more complex sentences. For example:

Samantha is a good student who studies from 6 to 9 p.m. every day and often she will fall asleep on the sofa with a book in her lap.

“from 6 to 9 p.m.,” “on the sofa,” “with a book” and “in her lap” are all prepositional phrases; they add information about where and when.

Experienced writers often write complex sentences, but a sentence is not effective just because it is long. Don’t overload your sentences. For example:

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

If a sentence is cluttered, divide it:

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

Avoiding Fragments

One of the benefits to understanding subjects and predicates is the ability to identify and avoid sentence fragments.

A complete sentence has a subject and a verb, and expresses a complete thought.

“Samantha sleeps,” fulfills those requirements. It has a subject

“Samantha,” a verb “sleeps,” and it expresses a complete thought. Even though it is short, it is a complete sentence.

A fragment is an incomplete sentence.

A fragment may be missing a subject. For example:

Went to the movies last weekend. (Who went to the movies? The subject is missing.)

Or a fragment may be missing a verb. For example:

The statue damaged during the riots. (“damaged” is not a verb; it’s an adjective that describes the noun “statue.” What happened to the statue? Without a verb, this is a fragment.)

Or a fragment may have both a subject and a verb, but not express a complete thought. For example:

If she feels like going. (This has a subject “she” and a verb “feels.” But the point is unfinished.)

To fix fragments, you have to add what is missing. For example:

- “Went to the movies last weekend” + subject = **Massimo** went to the movies last weekend.
- “The statue damaged during the riots” + verb = The statue damaged during the riots **was** a symbol of racism.
- “If she feels like going” + complete thought = If she feels like going, **let her.**

Exercise 2

In your notebook, add missing information any fragments below.

If the sentence is complete, write “Complete.”

Don’t just guess. Identify the parts of speech in the sentence, look for the subject and verb, then make sure the sentence expresses a complete thought.

1. The band arrived in a limo with their guitars in the trunk.
2. Entered the classroom and took off his backpack.
3. Taking a family cruise to Puerto Vallarta.
4. A kite in the shape of an eagle.
5. In the park last night, I saw a bat.
6. Bentley, the next door neighbor, likes.
7. Blew down in the high wind, but the maple tree was unharmed.

Takeaways

- A sentence is a group of words with a subject and a verb, and which expresses a complete thought.
- Adding prepositional phrases and objects makes a sentence more complex.
- Understanding how a sentence is constructed will help you avoid errors such as fragments.

3.2 Common Sentence Errors

Preview

This section of Ch. 3 will cover the following topics:

- subject-verb agreement
- misplaced and dangling modifiers
- parallel structure

Mistakes make a negative impression on a reader (and on a grade). The most common sentence errors are subject-verb agreement, modifier problems, and lack of parallel structure. By understanding parts of speech and sentence structure, these errors can be avoided.

Subject-Verb Agreement

“Subject-verb agreement” means the subject of a sentence and the verb of a sentence must agree with each other in number. For example:

Singular: The **cat jumps** over the fence.

Plural: The **cats jump** over the fence.

Errors in subject-verb agreement are common, especially when the subject of the sentence is separated from the verb by lots of other words. However, if we isolate the prepositional phrases (remember: subjects and verbs never

appear in prepositional phrases), then it's easier to see if the subject and verb agree.

The students ~~with the best grades in the school~~ wins the academic awards.

The puppy ~~under the table~~ is my favorite.

“students” and “wins” do not agree, but “puppy” and “is” do agree.

Exercise 1

In your notebook, correct the errors in subject-verb agreement in the following sentences.

1. My dog and cat chases each other in the house.
2. The books in my library is the best I have ever read.
3. There is the newspapers I was supposed to deliver.
4. Some of the clothes is packed away in the attic.
5. Crows in my white maple tree and on the electrical line is annoying.

Modifiers

A modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that clarifies or describes another word, phrase, or clause. Adjectives and adverbs are modifiers. Phrases and clauses can also work as modifiers.

Two common modifier errors are misplaced modifiers and dangling modifiers. When these errors occur, readers become confused trying to figure out what the writer means.

A misplaced modifier is too far from the word or words it modifies.

Misplaced modifiers make a sentence awkward and sometimes unintentionally funny. For example:

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

This seems to say her head was too large. The modifying phrase “that was too large” should be closer to the word “helmet.” The modifier is misplaced.

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

Here is another example:

The patient was referred to a physician with stomach pains. (Does the doctor have stomach pains? The modifier “with stomach pains” is too far from the word “patient.”)

Corrected: The patient with stomach pains was referred to a physician.

Exercise 2

In your notebook, rewrite the following sentences correcting the misplaced modifiers.

1. The young lady was walking the dog on the telephone.
2. I heard there was a robbery on the evening news.
3. Rolling down the mountain, the explorer stopped the rock with his foot.
4. We are looking for a babysitter for our six-year-old who doesn't smoke and owns a car.
5. The teacher served cookies to the children wrapped in aluminum foil.
6. Charlie spotted a stray puppy driving home from work.

Another modifier problem is what is called a “dangling modifier.”

A dangling modifier describes something that isn't in the sentence.

When there is nothing for the modifier to modify, it is said to “dangle.” For example:

Riding in the sports car, the world whizzed by rapidly. (Who is noticing the world whizzing by? There is something missing. The modifier “riding in the sports car” is dangling.)

Corrected: When Farzad was riding in the sports car, the world whizzed by rapidly.

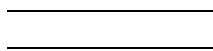
Exercise 3

Rewrite the following the sentences in your notebook and add any necessary information to correct the dangling modifiers.

1. Playing a guitar in the bedroom, the cat was seen under the bed.
2. Packing for a trip, a cockroach scurried down the hallway.
3. While driving to the veterinarian's office, the dog nervously whined.
4. Piled up next to the bookshelf, I chose a romance novel.
5. Chewing furiously, the gum fell out of my mouth.

Parallel Structure

When something is parallel to something else, they are similar in form. For example, two parallel lines look like this:



Parallelism in writing is when a similar structure is used in related words, phrases or clauses.

For example, these three phrases have parallel structure:

in the pool, in the forest, in the book

They feel balanced. Also, they are easy to read and remember.

Now look at these word groups:

in the pool, forests are green, book shelf

They are different from each other in structure. Notice how jagged it feels to read them, and they are more difficult to remember.

Parallel structure creates rhythm and balance within a sentence. An unbalanced sentence sounds awkward. Read the following sentences aloud:

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

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

Swimming in the ocean is much tougher than a pool.

All of these sentences contain faulty parallelism. They are clunky and confusing. In the first example, three different verb forms are used (“had to iron,” “do the washing,” “shopping”). In the second example, the writer begins with nouns (“coordination,” “patience”), but ends with a phrase (“to have good eyesight”). In the third sentence, the writer is comparing an action (“swimming”) with a thing (“a pool”).

Here are the same sentences with correct parallelism:

Kelly had to do the ironing, washing, and shopping before her parents arrived. (The verbs have the same structure.)

Driving a car requires coordination, patience, and good eyesight. (The three qualities are all written as nouns.)

Swimming in the ocean is much tougher than swimming in a pool. (One action is being compared with another action.)

When sentences use parallel structure, they sound more pleasing. Repetition of the pattern also minimizes the work a reader has to do to understand the sentence.

Exercise 4

In your notebook, revise the following sentences to create parallel structure.

1. I would rather work at a second job to pay for a new car than a loan.
2. How you look in the workplace is just as important as your behavior.
3. Indian cuisine is tastier than the food of Great Britain.
4. Jim's opponent in the ring was taller, carried more weight, and not as strong.
5. Working for a living is much harder than school.

Takeaways

- A verb must agree with its subject in number.
- Misplaced and dangling modifiers make sentences difficult to understand.
- Parallelism creates rhythm and balance in writing by using the same grammatical structure.

CHAPTER 4: PUNCTUATION AND CAPITALIZATION

4.1 End Punctuation

4.2 Commas

4.3 Apostrophes

4.4 Quotation Marks, Italics, Underlining

4.5 Capitalization

4.1 End Punctuation

Preview

This section of Ch. 4 will cover the following topics:

- the role of punctuation
- end punctuation: periods, question marks, exclamation points

Punctuation is nothing more than a code that shows how written language should be spoken so the listener understands the meaning.

For example, a question mark at the end of a sentence means your voice goes up at the end. A period means your voice goes down at the end. Say these sentences aloud:

What is your name?

My name is Laura.

Hear the difference? If you use punctuation correctly, readers will hear what you mean.

Incorrect punctuation sends incorrect information to the reader. Sometimes the result is confusing or even silly. For example:

With a comma: Let's eat, Mother. (This is telling your mother it's dinner time.)

Without a comma: Let's eat Mother. (This is suggesting that Mother be the main course)

Chapter 4 provides basic information about punctuation. Let's begin at the end.

End Punctuation

There are only three kinds of punctuation used at the end of English sentences:

- periods
- question marks
- exclamation points

The Period.

A period goes at the end of a complete sentence that makes a statement or a mild command. Most sentences end in a period. For example:

Heavy rain caused delays on I-5. (statement)

Take a different route to avoid traffic congestion. (mild command)

Another way to use a period is after an abbreviation. For example:

Jan. (for January)	Mr. (for Mister)
ft. (for feet)	abbr. (for abbreviation)
Ave. (for Avenue)	Pres. (for President)
Tues. (for Tuesday)	

An abbreviation is not the same thing as an acronym. An abbreviation is a shortening of a word, like “ft.” for “feet.” An acronym is a new word created from the initials of a longer phrase, like “NATO” for the “North Atlantic Treaty Organization” or “AIDS” for “Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome.” Abbreviations end in periods, but acronyms don't.

The Question Mark?

The second most common end punctuation is a question mark. It is used after direct questions, but not after indirect questions. For example:

Has online enrollment begun? (direct question)

I wonder if online enrollment has begun. (indirect question)

The Exclamation Point!

Exclamation points are used after an expression that conveys strong emotions or loud sounds. They are casual and rarely used in college or business writing. For example:

I need a break from this job!

Ouch! That hurts!

The key to end punctuation is to remember to use it! Because many people text or send messages these days, they often forget to use punctuation in other, more formal situations where it matters.

Exercise 1

In your notebook, copy the sentences below, inserting end punctuation where appropriate. (Existing punctuation and capitalization are already correct.)

1. Valivann brought pulled pork, salad rolls, and rice to the picnic
2. Will John be on time
3. Chris always says John has his own clock
4. I still have to clean and move the table and chairs that have been sitting in the basement since last summer
5. Rain On my birthday Such bad luck
6. The good news is we can still eat cake, even in the rain

Moving Forward

The following sections of this chapter will cover the use of commas, apostrophes, quotation marks, and italics. What you won't find is information on other punctuation, like semicolons, colons, hyphens, dashes, parentheses, ellipses, and slashes.

Why? Because 98% of the punctuation you will ever need to use in college or business writing will be the big five: end punctuation, commas, apostrophes, quotation marks, and italics. Focus on these, master them, and worry about the rest later.

Takeaways

- The three types of end punctuation in English are periods, question marks, and exclamation points.
- The content of the sentence determines which punctuation to put at the end.
- Remembering to actually use end punctuation is the biggest challenge.
- Focus on learning the five most common punctuation marks: end punctuation, commas, apostrophes, italics, and quotation marks.

4.2 Commas

Preview

This section of Ch. 4 will cover the following topics:

- basic comma rules
- run-on sentences/comma splices

Commas are the most frequently used punctuation mark and also the most common punctuation error.

Like other punctuation, the job of a comma is to help the reader understand how something is said. The message commas send is this: pause here, just for a second.

Try to read the following sentence:

I have three pigs four cats with six toes a gerbil named Hammy an old spotted cow who still gives milk and an Irish wolfhound named Vanessa.

You don't know where to pause; you struggle to break the information into understandable chunks. Now read this:

I have three pigs, four cats with six toes, a gerbil named Hammy, an old spotted cow who still gives milk, and an Irish wolfhound named Vanessa.

Commas help us translate words on the page into meaning.

But commas used incorrectly can make the reader's job harder. It's the writer's responsibility to use commas correctly, not the reader's responsibility to figure out what the writer means.

Basic Comma Rules

- **Commas have two jobs: they either separate or they enclose.** Remember that, and you are halfway there.
- **There are seven main rules for comma use.** Understanding these seven rules will eliminate nearly all of the comma errors in your writing.

Commas That Separate

Rule 1: Use a comma to separate independent clauses joined by the conjunctions known as “fanboys”: for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so.

For example:

- We brought chips to the party, and our neighbors were appreciative. (“We brought chips to the party” is an independent clause—it has a subject, a verb, and a complete thought. “our neighbors were appreciative” is also an independent clause. The two independent clauses are joined by the conjunction “and,” so we put a comma in front of “and.”)
- My geology textbook is expensive, so I'll find a used copy. (“My geology textbook is expensive” is an independent clause. “I'll find a used copy” is also an independent clause. The two independent clauses are joined by the conjunction “so.” Put a comma in front of “so.”)

Caution: Be sure the conjunction connects two independent clauses, not just two words or two phrases or even two dependent clauses. For example:

My dog curled up on the sofa and waited for dinner. (“and” joins the verbs “curled” and “waited.” The phrase “waited for dinner” is not an independent clause. No comma before “and.”)

This rule clarifies a term you may have heard: **comma splice**. If we put a comma between independent clauses that are NOT joined by “fanboys,” that is called a comma splice. The comma is splicing, or cutting, the sentence into two parts. A comma splice is a comma error.

This is a **comma splice**:

Dogs are people’s best friends,
people are a cat’s best friend.

To fix the error, add one of the
“fanboys”:

Dogs are people’s best friends,
but people are a cat’s best
friend.

Understanding how a comma splice works has the added benefit of explaining what a **run-on sentence** is. A run-on is two or more independent clauses connected improperly. For example:

I love to eat ice cream I would eat it every day if I could.

That **run-on** can be fixed by adding a comma and the conjunction “and” after “ice cream,” or by putting a period after “ice cream” and making it into two sentences.

Tip

This is the most complicated comma rule, so keep working with it.

Exercise 1

In your notebook, join the pairs below by adding a comma and a “fanboys” conjunction. You may need to play with the wording a bit to make the sentence read smoothly.

1. John wanted a snack before bedtime. He ate some fruit.
2. We could go camping for vacation. We could go to the beach for vacation.
3. I want to get a better job. I want to finish college.
4. I cannot move forward on this project. I cannot afford to stop on this project.
5. The weather was clear yesterday. We decided to go on a picnic.

Rule 2: Use commas to separate items in a series, date, or address. This kind of comma allows the reader to pause after each item and identify which words are included in a group.

For example:

- We need to get flour, tomatoes, and cheese at the store. (Separate items in the list with commas.) Note: Writers can leave out the comma before “and” if the meaning is clear, but including it is always correct. That kind of comma is called an “Oxford comma,” by the way.
- Mr. Schaeffer could see a wild, overgrown jungle in his neighbor’s yard. (Use commas between a series of adjectives that modify a noun.)
- My grandfather was born on August 13, 1897, in Alameda County. (In

a date, put a comma between the day and the year. If the sentence continues on, put a comma after the year. When only the month and year are used, no comma is needed: He was born in August 1897.)

- My best friend's address is 2600 Trillium Avenue, Mill Creek, Washington 97202, and she visits me often. (Put a comma after the street and after the city, but not between the state and the zip code. If you continue the sentence after the address, add a comma after the address.)

Exercise 2

In your notebook, copy these sentences and add commas where necessary. If the sentence is correct, write "Correct."

1. The letter was postmarked May 4 2001 but I didn't receive it until June.
2. He visited Italy in July 2009.
3. We looked at the dark dangerous sky and wondered if we would make it home safely.
4. I recently moved to 4542 Larkspur Lane Hope Missouri 70832.
5. Eric lives in Boston Massachusetts and uses public transportation.

Rule 3: Use a comma to separate an introductory word or **phrase** from the main sentence.

For example:

- Finally, he received an Oscar for his work in film. (introductory word)

- During last season, our team won nearly every game. (introductory phrase)

Rule 4: Use a comma to separate a tag question, contrast, comment, or description from the end of the main sentence. (A “tag” is an afterthought.)

For example:

- The age restriction goes into effect in March, doesn't it? (tag question)
- Students who earn high grades are those who study, not those who cheat. (tag contrast)
- She said she would “consider my application,” whatever that means. (tag comment)
- We spent a month in Italy, visiting family. (tag description)

Most prepositional phrases and dependent clauses at the end of sentences are not tags and do not require commas. For example:

The word “ruminate” means to think about something. (“about something” is a prepositional phrase, not a tag. No comma.)

Exercise 3

In your notebook, copy these sentences and add commas where necessary.

1. In the blink of an eye the kids were ready to go to the movies.
2. Confused he tried opening the box from the other end.
3. I prefer ice cream to vegetables don't you?
4. Without a doubt green is my favorite color.
5. The best dogs are loyal and sweet not just beautiful.

Commas That Enclose

Rule 5: Commas are used to enclose (placed before and after) the name of a person being spoken to in a sentence.

For example:

Did you know, Sophia, that you left your book in class?

Rule 6: Commas are used to enclose transitions or expressions that interrupt the flow of the sentence (such as “however,” “by the way,” “on the other hand,” and “I think”).

For example:

I know, by the way, that my paper is late.

I will try, therefore, to be on time in the future.

Sometimes interrupters flow smoothly so they don’t need commas:

Of course you made the right choice.

I think he checked to see if he had his books.

If you are unsure whether an expression is interrupting, say it aloud. You can hear the pause before and after “by the way” in the first sentence. But you can’t hear a pause after “I think” in the last sentence. Remember that punctuation is just pointing out how we would say the words if they were spoken.

Rule 7: Use commas to enclose extra or unnecessary information in the middle of a sentence.

For example:

Max O’Keefe, who organized the event, will introduce the speakers. (“who organized the event” is extra information that could be removed and we would still understand who organized the event.)

But be sure the information is unnecessary:

Tip

When people start studying commas, they tend to insert them everywhere. Don’t put a comma in a sentence unless you can explain the rule for doing so.

The person who organized the event will introduce the speakers.
(We don't know which person without the phrase "who organized the event," so that phrase is necessary. No commas.)

Exercise 4

In your notebook, copy these short paragraphs, inserting commas where necessary. At the end of each sentence, write the number of the rule you used.

1. Our meeting is scheduled for Thursday March 20. Before that time we need to gather all our documents. To prepare for this meeting please print any e-mails faxes or documents referred to in your report.
2. The leader of the group Garth kept checking their GPS location. Isabelle Raoul and Maggie carried the equipment. As a result no one noticed the darkening sky until the first drops of rain.
3. Please have your application submitted by April 15 2020. In your cover letter include contact information the position you are applying for and two references. We will not be available for consultation after April 10 but you may contact the office before then.

Takeaways

- Commas separate or enclose units in a sentence.
- Never use a comma unless you are sure which rule you are following.

4.3 Apostrophes

Preview

This section of Ch. 4 will cover the following topics:

- apostrophes in possessives
- apostrophes in contractions
- commonly confused words

An apostrophe looks like a comma floating in the air: ' .

Apostrophes are used two ways:

- **to show possession:** Mary's cat, the neighbor's garage sale
- **in a contraction, to indicate where something** (usually a letter, but sometimes a number) **has been left out:** didn't, '80s.

The challenge is knowing when to use an apostrophe and where to put it. Correct apostrophe use is important because errors change meaning. For example:

Mary's refers to something Mary has.

Marys refers to more than one person named Mary.

Marys' refers to more than one person named Mary and they both have something.

Possessives

To possess something is to own it. Words that show possession are called “possessives.” We sometimes use apostrophes to show possession.

To know where to put the apostrophe and whether or not to add an “s,” start by asking the question “Who or what does the possessing?”

- If the answer is a word that ends in a letter other than an “s,” add an apostrophe and an “s”: the children’s toys, the doctor’s visit
- If the answer is a word that already ends in an “s” (which includes most plurals), add an apostrophe after the existing “s”: two birds’ nest, the girls’ bicycles
- Sometimes a word that ends in “s” needs another sound to make the possessive clear. For example, Texas’s border, the dress’s color, my boss’s instructions. Say the word aloud. If it needs another sound, you’ll hear it. Add the apostrophe and another “s.”

Pronouns such as our, ours, your, yours, his, her, hers, its, their, theirs, and whose are already possessive and do not need apostrophes. For example:

- their house
- her dog
- our religion

Possessives work as adjectives (refer to Ch. 3) to modify nouns. For example:

Mary’s mother (the mother belongs to Mary)

our friends’ arrival (We know that several friends have arrived because of where the apostrophe is. If only one friend arrived, it would be “our friend’s arrival.” Moving the apostrophe changes the meaning.)

the Jones’s address (the address belongs to the Jones family)

- their counselor’s office (the office belongs to the counselor)
- a person’s clothes (the clothes belong to a single person)
- people’s clothes (the clothes belong to several people, but “people” is plural that doesn’t end in s)

Possessives can be complicated. If you think you need an apostrophe, come back and look at these rules to be sure.

Contractions

To “contract” means to decrease in size. When two words are shortened into one by removing letters and squeezing the words together, an apostrophe is added where the letters were removed. For example:

- is not → isn’t (the apostrophe goes where the “o” was)
- you have → you’ve (the apostrophe goes where “ha” was)

Tip

Contractions are common in informal writing and speech, but should usually be avoided in academic writing.

Here are some common contractions:

These words → become these contractions	
are not → aren’t	should not → shouldn’t
cannot → can’t	that is → that’s
could have → could’ve	there is, there has → there’s
could not → couldn’t	they will → they’ll
does not → doesn’t	they are → they’re
do not → don’t	they have → they’ve

These words → become these contractions	
have not → haven't	we will, we shall → we'll
he will → he'll	we are → we're
he is, he has → he's	we have → we've
I would → I'd	were not → weren't
I will → I'll	what is → what's
I am → I'm	where is → where's
I have → I've	who is, who has → who's
is not → isn't	would have → would've
it is, it has → it's	would not → wouldn't
let us → let's	you will → you'll
she will → she'll	you are → you're
she is, she has → she's	you have → you've
should have → should've	

Exception: When making a contraction of “will not,” the pattern of just removing letters doesn't hold true:

will not → won't

But in all other contractions, the spelling doesn't change and the apostrophe goes exactly where the letter or letters were removed.

Number Contractions

We also sometimes “contract” numbers. The rule is similar: put an apostrophe where the numbers are missing. For example:

He served in the military in the '90s. (put the apostrophe where the number 19 was removed)

If the number is simply a plural, not a contraction, then no apostrophe.

The temperature is going to be in the low 40s. (this is a plural, not a contraction; no apostrophe)

Commonly Confused Words

People often confuse these word pairs:

- “its” (a possessive pronoun) and “it’s” (a contraction of “it is” or “it has”)
- “whose” (a possessive pronoun) and who’s” (a contraction of “who is” or “who has”)
- “your” (a possessive pronoun) and “you’re” (a contraction of “you are”)

One way to know if a word is a contraction and needs an apostrophe is to see if you can turn the contraction back into two words and the sentence still makes sense. For example:

The cat licked its paw. (You would **not** say “The cat licked it is paw,” so “its” is a possessive pronoun, not a contraction. No apostrophe.)

Who’s going to the party? (You **would** say “Who is going” so this is a contraction and needs an apostrophe.)

The doctor said you’re to take the prescription. (You **would** say “you are to take the prescription,” so this is a contraction and needs an apostrophe.)

Tip

Don’t put an apostrophe wherever you see an “s.” A lot of words end in “s.” Always ask if the word is showing possession or is a contraction.

Exercise 1

In your notebook, write the following sentences, adding apostrophes where needed.

1. Colin was a hippie in the 60s.
2. My brothers wife is one of my best friends.
3. Its my parents house, but its my bedroom.
4. I couldnt believe that I got the job!
5. My supervisors informed me that I wouldnt be able to take the day off.
6. Wont you please join me for dinner tonight?
7. Sarahs job just disappeared due to the pandemic.
8. Texass state flower is a bluebonnet, not a yellow rose.

Takeaways

- Use apostrophes to show possession.
- Use apostrophes in contractions to show where letters or numbers have been removed.
- Do not use apostrophes to indicate a plural.

4.4 Quotation Marks, Italics, Underlining

Preview

This section of Ch. 4 will cover the following topics:

- not using underlining
- using quotation marks
- placing quotes with other punctuation
- using italics

What do quotation marks, italics, and underlining look like?

- Quotation marks look like little pairs of commas up in the air (“ ”). They always come in a set: one pair before and one pair after whatever is being enclosed. For example: “The Lottery” is a scary story.
- Italics is a typeface, not a symbol. It is a design that tilts the tops of letters to the right and makes them look fancy, like this: *italics*. (The name comes from the fact that the first typefaces to look like handwriting were designed in Italy.)
- Underlining is obvious: underlining.

How do you use these marks?

First, **stop using underlining**. The only thing underlined in a document these days is a link. One exception is if you are writing a college assignment by hand; you can use underlining where you would normally use italics because they do the same job. But you really don't need underlining for any other reason.

So all you need to know is how to use quotation marks and italics.

Quotation Marks

Quotation marks (“ ”) enclose words to set them off from the rest of the text. Quotation marks are used three ways:

- to identify certain titles
- to indicate another person's words, whether written or spoken
- to refer to a word being used as a word (For example, we put the word “cat” in quotes in this sentence: The word “cat” has three letters. This clarifies that we are referring to the word, not to the animal. This use of quotation marks is rare. Focus on the first two uses, which are much more common.)

Titles in Quotation Marks

Quotation marks are used to identify the titles of short works such as poems, essays, articles, chapters, songs, stories, web pages, TV and radio episodes—anything part of something larger, like a book, CD, program, or website. For example:

“Looking for America” by Lana Del Rey (song)

“Shooting an Elephant” by George Orwell (essay)

“A Real Durwan” by Jhumpa Lahiri (short story)

“Watering the Stones” by Mary Oliver (poem)

“The Rain of Castamere” (episode in a TV series)

“Blood Gold: The Fight for the Future of Brazil’s Rain Forest”
(magazine article)

“Take Action” (page on Cascade AIDS Project’s website)

For the titles of **long** works, see “Italics” below.

Quoting People

In college, you will write lots of research papers, using the ideas and sometimes the words of other people, which means you will use quotation marks a lot.

Understanding the difference between direct and indirect quotations is the first task. **A direct quotation is when you write exactly what someone else said or wrote.** Their words are always enclosed in quotation marks. For example:

The wolf said, “Then I’ll huff and I’ll puff and I’ll blow your house down.”

According to Gandhi, “You must be the change you wish to see in the world.”

An indirect quotation is a restatement of what someone said or wrote but using your own words. Quotation marks are **not** used for indirect quotations. For example:

The wolf threatened to destroy the little pig’s house.

Gandhi often said we have to act if we want the world to be better.

Quotes are capitalized just like regular sentences. The first word in a sentence is capitalized, and the first word in a quote is capitalized.

Martie wrote an email saying, “Thank you for the card. The design was lovely.” (The words “Thank” and “The” are capitalized because they begin sentences.)

When identifying the speaker in the middle of a quote, the second part of the quote does not need to be capitalized unless it is the beginning of a new sentence. For example:

“Thank you for the card,” Martie wrote in her email. “The design was lovely.” (“The” is capitalized because it is the beginning of the new sentence.)

“Thank you for the card,” Martie wrote, adding, “with the lovely design.” (The word “with” is not capitalized because it is a continuation of the sentence that begins “Thank you for the card...”)

Quotation marks go at the beginning and the end of the quote. If a quote goes on for two or more sentences, no additional quotation marks are needed in between. For example:

My sister said, “Your dog ran away again. I found him, but he was wet and muddy. The next time he runs away, get him yourself.”

If the quote is interrupted with explanatory words, the quotation marks go around the quoted parts. For example:

My sister said, “Your dog ran away again.” I could tell she was really angry. “I found him, but he was wet and muddy,” she continued. “The next time he runs away, get him yourself.”

When quotation marks are used next to other punctuation, sometimes it is confusing to know the correct order.

- **Quotation marks are always placed after commas and periods.** For example:

I love the Billie Eilish song “My Future,” which she sang at the Democratic convention. (the end quotes are after the comma)

- **If the sentence is a question or exclamation and the quote is a statement, put the question mark or exclamation point after the end**

quotes. For example:

I finally memorized the poem “The Raven”!

- But if the sentence is a statement and the quoted material is a question or exclamation, put the question mark or exclamation point before the end quotes. For example:

I asked the teacher, “Can you help me?”

Single quotation marks (‘ ’) are only used to indicate a quotation within another quotation. For example:

Theresa said, “I wanted to take my dog to the festival, but the man at the gate said, ‘No dogs allowed,’ so I took Pepper home.”

Using quotation marks correctly requires practice. Keep these rules nearby and check them when you need to use quotation marks.

Exercise 1

Copy the following sentences into your notebook, adding quotation marks where necessary. Be sure to place the end quotes correctly when next to other punctuation. Check the rules above as you work. If the sentence does not need any quotation marks, write “Correct.”

1. Yasmin said, Let’s go out to eat.
2. Where should we go? asked Russell.
3. Yasmin said it didn’t matter to her.
4. I know, let’s go to the Two Roads Juice Bar. Did you know that the name is a reference to a poem? asked Russell.
5. Yasmin was surprised and asked the poem’s title.
6. The Road Not Taken by Robert Frost, Russell explained.
7. Oh! said Yasmin, Is that the one that starts with the line, Two roads diverged in a yellow wood?
8. Russell nodded in agreement.

Italics

Use italics to identify titles of long works: books, plays, newspapers, magazines, albums and CDs, websites, movies, DVDs, TV and radio series. Italics are also used for the names of ships and aircraft as well as for foreign words.

Books and plays: *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Hamlet*, *The Hobbit*

Magazines and newspapers: *The New York Times*, *Rolling Stone*, *Mother Jones*

Movies: *Casablanca*, *Moonlight*, *Toy Story*

TV & radio series: *Stranger Things*, *SNL*, *Morning Edition*

Albums and CDs: *Abbey Road* by The Beatles, *American Idiot* by Green Day

Video games: *Super Mario 3D World*, *Minecraft*

Ships and aircraft: *Enterprise*, *Spruce Goose*

Foreign words: The Italian word *ciao* is used when greeting people.

Tip

Use quotation marks to indicate the titles of small things that are part of something larger.

Use italics to indicate the titles of large things.

Never use both quotation marks and italics.

Exercise 2

In your notebook, draw a line dividing the page into two columns. Label the column on the left “*Italics*” and the one on the right “*Quotes*.” Put the following words in the correct column. (If you are unfamiliar with something, Google it. You can’t punctuate a word correctly if you don’t know what it is.)

- Queen Mary 2
- The Washington Post
- BBC News
- Breaking Bad
- On the Road Again by Willie Nelson
- The Yellow Wallpaper by Charlotte Perkins Gilman
- The New Yorker
- The Raven by Edgar Allen Poe
- aloha
- Bigger Love by John Legend
- Overcooked
- Macbeth by William Shakespeare
- Netflix
- I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou

Notice that whether you put a title in quotes or italics gives your reader information. Don’t mislead or confuse your readers by giving them incorrect information.

Takeaways

- Use quotation marks to enclose direct quotes and titles of short works.
- Use italics to enclose the titles of long works.
- Don't use underlining for anything other than live links.
- Never use both italics and quotes; it's always one or the other.

4.5 Capitalization

Preview

This section of Ch. 4 will cover the following topics:

- using capital letters

Knowing what to capitalize is not difficult: there are only a few rules:

Proper nouns are always capitalized. That is how we differentiate them from common nouns. The following table illustrates the differences:

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

The pronoun “I” is always capitalized.

It's time I settled down and found a job.

The first word in every sentence is capitalized.

Peaches taste best when they are cold.

Also, the first word in a sentence-length quotation is capitalized.

The college president asked, "What can we do for our students?"

The first, last, and main words in a title are capitalized.

I found a copy of Darwin's book *The Origin of Species* at a yard sale.

That's it. Pretty easy, right?

Tip

The challenge is not understanding what to capitalize. The challenge is remembering to do it.

Exercise 1

Copy the following paragraphs into your notebook, correcting the capitalization.

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

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

Takeaways

- There are very few capitalization rules and they are very straightforward and simple.
- The challenge, in this era of texting, is remembering to capitalize.

CHAPTER 5: PARAGRAPHS

5.1 The Structure of a Paragraph

5.2 Stand-alone Paragraphs

5.3 Building with Paragraphs

5.1 The Structure of a Paragraph

Preview

This section of Ch. 5 will cover the following:

- topic sentences
- supporting detail
- transitions and conclusions
- paragraph length

The basic building blocks of language are words. Words form sentences. Sentences combine to make paragraphs. And paragraphs can stand alone or be combined to become essays, research papers, reports, letters, and books.

This chapter covers the components of a paragraph, different types of paragraphs, and using paragraphs to build longer documents.

The Parts of a Paragraph

A paragraph is composed of a topic sentence, supporting information, and a concluding point or transition.

Topic Sentences

The main idea of the paragraph is stated in the topic sentence. A good topic sentence does the following:

- introduces the rest of the paragraph
- contains both a topic and an opinion
- is clear and easy to follow
- does not include supporting details
- engages the reader

For example:

Development of the Alaska oil fields created many problems for already-endangered wildlife.

This sentence introduces the topic and the writer's opinion. After reading this sentence, a reader might reasonably expect the writer to go on to provide supporting details and facts, such as what the problems are and how they were created. The sentence is clear and the word choice is interesting.

Here is another example:

Major league baseball has a history of cheating.

Again, the topic and opinion are clear, the details are saved for later, and the word choice is powerful.

Now look at this example:

I think that people should not take their pets to work, even for special occasions, because it is disruptive and someone might get bitten by a dog or a rabbit.

Even though the topic and opinion are evident, there are too many details (under what conditions, types of pets, different consequences). The phrase

“special occasions” is vague. “I think” is usually unnecessary in academic writing; if you are writing the information, we know it is what you think.

Revised, that sentence might read like this:

People should not take their pets to work.

Much clearer, right?

Put the topic sentence at the beginning of the paragraph. In college and business writing, readers often lose patience if they are unable to quickly grasp what the writer is trying to say. Topic sentences make the writer’s basic point easy to locate and understand.

Exercise 1

Create a topic sentence for **each** of the subjects below. First, narrow the topic to something that could be discussed in a single paragraph. For example, you might narrow the topic “animals” to “animals shelters” or “polar bears.” Then write a topic sentence about why people should adopt pets from shelters or how global warming is making life difficult for polar bears.)

1. animals
2. exercise
3. social media
4. movies

Write the four sentences in your notebook. Be sure all the sentences meet the criteria listed above for a good topic sentence.

Supporting Ideas

The body of a paragraph contains supporting details to help explain, prove, or expand the topic sentence. For example, a paragraph on the topic of people continuing to work into their 70s might have a topic sentence like this:

Retirement is a moving target for many older Americans.

Supporting sentences could include a few of the following details:

- Fact: Many families now rely on older relatives for financial support.
- Reason: The life expectancy for an average American is continuing to increase.
- Statistic: More than 20 percent of adults over age 65 are currently working or looking for work in the United States.
- Quotation: Senator Ted Kennedy once said, “Stabilizing Social Security will help seniors enjoy a well-deserved retirement.”
- Example: Last year, my grandpa took a job with Walmart.

A topic sentence guides the reader by signposting what the paragraph is about, so the rest of the paragraph should relate to the topic sentence. Can you spot the sentence in the following paragraph that does not relate to the topic sentence?

Health policy experts note that opposition to wearing a face mask during the COVID-19 pandemic is similar to opposition to the laws governing alcohol use. For example, some people believe drinking is an individual’s choice, not something the government should regulate. However, when an individual’s behavior impacts others—as when a drunk driver is involved in a fatal car accident—the dynamic changes. Seat belts are a good way to reduce the potential for physical injury in car accidents. Opposition to wearing a face mask during this pandemic is not simply an individual choice; it is a responsibility to others.

If you guessed the sentence that begins “Seat belts are” doesn’t belong,

you are correct. It does not support the paragraph's topic: opposition to regulations. If a point isn't connected to the topic sentence, the writer should tie it in or take it out.

Exercise 2

Choose **one** of the topic sentences you developed for Exercise 1.

In your notebook, write the sentence.

Underneath it, write three supporting sentences. At the end of each, identify whether the sentence is a fact, reason, statistic, quote, or example. Use this format:

Topic Sentence: _____

Supporting sentence # 1

_____ (type)

Supporting sentence # 2

_____ (type)

Supporting sentence # 3

_____ (type)

Concluding Sentences

In a stand-alone paragraph, a strong conclusion draws together the ideas raised in the paragraph. A concluding sentence reminds readers of the main point without repeating the same words.

Concluding sentences can do any of the following:

- summarize the key points in the paragraph
- draw a conclusion based on the information in the paragraph
- make a prediction, suggestion, or recommendation about the information

Tip

Don't introduce new ideas in a conclusion. It will just confuse the reader.

For example, in the paragraph above about wearing face masks, the concluding sentence summarizes the key point: responsibility to others.

Exercise 3

Using the paragraph outline you developed for Exercise 2, write a concluding sentence that summarizes your main idea without repeating the same words.

Then, write a second, different concluding sentence that either draws a conclusion or makes a prediction, suggestion, or recommendation.

Write both sentences in your notebook. Which one do you prefer? Why? Write the paragraph out, with its topic sentence, supporting details, and concluding sentence.

Transitions

In a series of paragraphs, such as in the body of an essay, concluding sentences are often replaced by transitions. Transitions are words or phrases that help the reader move from one idea to the next, whether within a paragraph or between paragraphs. For example:

I am going to fix breakfast. Later, I will do the laundry.

“Later” transitions us from the first task to the second one. “Later” shows a sequence of events and establishes a connection between the tasks.

Look at this paragraph:

There are numerous advantages to owning a hybrid car. **For example**, they get up to 35 percent more miles to the gallon than a fuel-efficient, gas-powered vehicle. **Also**, they produce very few emissions during low speed city driving. **Because** they do not require gas, hybrid cars reduce dependency on fossil fuels, which helps lower prices at the pump. **Given** the low costs and environmental benefits of owning a hybrid car, it is likely that many people will buy hybrids in the future.

Tip

A transition can appear at the end of the paragraph or at the beginning of the next paragraph, but never in both places.

Each of the bold words is a transition. Transitions organize the writer’s ideas and keep the reader on track. They make the writing flow more smoothly and connect ideas.

Beginning writers tend to rely on ordinary transitions, such as “first” or “in conclusion.” There are more interesting ways to tell a reader what you want them to know. Here are some examples:

Purpose	Transition Words and Phrases
to show a sequence of events	eventually, finally, previously, next, then, later on
to show additional information	also, in addition to, for example, for instance
to show consequences	therefore, as a result, because, since
to show comparison or contrast	however, but, nevertheless, although

These words have slightly different meanings so don't just substitute one that sounds newer. Use your dictionary to be sure you are saying what you mean to say.

Exercise 4

Look at the paragraph you finished in Exercise 3. Underline transitions that help the reader move from one point to the next. If you need better transitions, change them. Then rewrite your final, polished paragraph in your notebook.

Paragraph Length

How long should a paragraph be? The answer is “long enough to explain your point.” A paragraph can be fairly short (two or three sentences) or, in a complex essay, a paragraph can be half a page. Most paragraphs contain three to six supporting sentences.

As long as the writer maintains close focus on the topic and does not ramble, a long paragraph is acceptable in college-level writing. But often, a long paragraph will not hold the reader's interest. In such cases, divide the paragraph into two or more shorter paragraphs, adding a transitional word or phrase.

In an essay, a research paper, or a book, paragraphs separate ideas into logical, manageable chunks. Effective writers begin a new paragraph for each new idea they introduce.

Takeaways

- Topic sentences express the main idea of the paragraph and the writer's opinion.
- In most academic essays, the topic sentence appears at the beginning of a paragraph.
- Supporting sentences explain, prove, or enhance the topic sentence by offering facts, reasons, statistics, quotations, or examples.
- Concluding sentences wrap-up the points made in the paragraph.
- Transitional words and phrases show how ideas relate to one another and move the reader on to the next point.

5.2 Stand-alone Paragraphs

Preview

This section of Ch. 5 will cover the following topics:

- summaries and evaluations
- critical thinking
- audience and tone

Often in college, you will be asked to write short responses, whether to a reading assignment or on an essay test. An instructor may ask you to respond to a short story, explain the main points in a chapter in a history textbook, or report back on a lab experiment. Often these responses will be single paragraphs. Two common types of stand-alone paragraphs are summaries and evaluations.

Summary Paragraphs

A **summary** is a significantly shortened version of another, longer piece. A summary gives only a general sense of the information, capturing the main ideas, without necessarily following the order or emphasis of the original. A summary is always written in **your own words**. “Borrowing” words and phrases from the original can be seen as plagiarism. Be careful!

You probably summarize every day. At some point in a casual conversation

with a friend or coworker, you compressed a two-hour movie into a brief description. You described the major highlights in a few sentences, using your own words. That is a summary.

A summary will do the following:

- maintain the meaning of the original document
- contain all the main points, without the supporting details
- **not** include your opinion

In writing a summary, you have to judge what is important and what isn't. The easiest way to do this is to “mark up” the document you want to summarize as you read it—identifying the topic, the main supporting details, and any other significant points. Those notes are easily turned into a summary.

Read this report on a study of alcohol use among young adults:

According to the Monitoring the Future Study, almost two-thirds of 10th-grade students reported having tried alcohol at least once in their lifetime, and two-fifths reported having been drunk at least once (Johnston et al. 2006a). Among 12th-grade students, these rates had risen to over three-quarters who reported having tried alcohol at least once and nearly three-fifths who reported having been drunk at least once. In terms of current alcohol use, 33.2 percent of the Nation's 10th graders and 47.0 percent of 12th graders reported having used alcohol at least once in the past 30 days; 17.6 percent and 30.2 percent, respectively, reported having been drunk in the past 30 days; 21.0 percent and 28.1 percent, respectively, reported having had five or more drinks in a row in the past 2 weeks (sometimes called binge drinking); and 1.3 percent and 3.1 percent, respectively, reported daily alcohol use (Johnston et al. 2006a).

Alcohol consumption continues to escalate after high school. In fact, eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds have the highest levels of alcohol consumption and alcohol dependence of any age group. In the first 2 years after high school, lifetime prevalence of alcohol use (based on 2005 follow-up surveys from the Monitoring the Future Study) was 81.8 percent, 30-day use prevalence was 59 percent, and binge-drinking prevalence was 36.3 percent (Johnston et al. 2006b). Of note, college students on average drink more than their noncollege peers, even though they drank less during high school than those who did not go on to college (Johnston et al. 2006a,b; Schulenberg and Maggs 2002). For example, in 2005, the rate of binge drinking for college students (1 to 4 years beyond high school) was 40.1 percent, whereas the rate for their noncollege age mates was 35.1 percent.

Alcohol use and problem drinking in late adolescence vary by sociodemographic characteristics. For example, the prevalence of alcohol use is higher for boys than for girls, higher for White and Hispanic adolescents than for African-American adolescents, and higher for those living in the north and north central United States than for those living in the South and West. Some of these relationships change with early adulthood, however. For example, although alcohol use in high school tends to be higher in areas with lower population density (i.e., rural areas) than in more densely populated areas, this relationship reverses during early adulthood (Johnston et al., 2006 a,b). Lower economic status (i.e., lower educational level of parents) is associated with more alcohol use during the early high school years; by the end of high school, and during the transition to adulthood, this relationship changes, and youth from higher socioeconomic backgrounds consume greater amounts of alcohol.

Now read the following summary written by a student:

Brown et al. inform us that by tenth grade, nearly two-thirds of students have tried alcohol at least once, and by twelfth grade this figure increases to over three-quarters of students. After high school, alcohol consumption increases further, and college-aged students have the highest levels of alcohol consumption and dependence of any age group. Alcohol use varies according to factors such as gender, race, geographic location, and socioeconomic status.

Some of these trends may reverse in early adulthood. For example, adolescents of lower socioeconomic status are more likely to consume alcohol during high school years, whereas youth from higher socioeconomic status are more likely to consume alcohol in the years after high school.

Notice how the summary retains the key points of the original report but omits most of the statistical data. Also, notice this writer has used his own words to explain the information. Words like “respectively,” “continues to escalate,” and “lifetime prevalence” belong to the expert who wrote the original report.

How to Write a Summary

1. Carefully read the original document, making notes as you go. (This might be a good time to re-read the Adler essay in Ch. 7.1.) You must fully understand something before you try to explain it to someone else.
2. Then, put the original away. This is crucial; if you glance at the original now and then, you will accidentally copy words or sentence structures. Summarizing without referring to the original also forces you to understand the material before trying to explain it.
3. Write a single sentence that explains the original. This is your topic sentence.
4. Identify the main points in the original. (You may refer to your notes, but do not look at the original.) Briefly explain each point. These are your supporting details. Organize your points in a logical way.
5. Check that you have not included your opinion; a summary explains but does not comment on the original.

6. Add a concluding comment that refers to but does not repeat the topic sentence.
7. Re-read the original to be sure you didn't miss anything important.

A summary will be far shorter than the original. It should include just enough information to recount the main points.

- a summary of a paragraph should be one or two sentences
- a summary of a chapter or an essay might be a paragraph or maybe two
- a summary of a whole book might be one or two pages

It takes practice to be able to pull the essential information from a piece of writing, but there are many benefits to doing so. And you will be asked to do this task again and again in college.

Exercise 1

Go to Ch. 7 and read **one** of the following essays:

- “Accomplishing Big Things in Small Places” by William Wissemann
- “Fun. Oh boy. Fun. You Could Die from It” by Suzanne Britt Jordan

If possible, print the essay so you can mark it up. If you can’t do that, take good notes as you read.

Then, write a summary of the essay in your notebook. Follow the steps outlined above.

Your summary should be a single paragraph (at least 100 words but no more than 200). Be sure your paragraph has a topic sentence, clear supporting points, and a concluding comment.

Evaluation Paragraphs

An **evaluation** judges the value of something and determines its worth. Evaluations are based on set standards but influenced by opinion and prior knowledge.

At work, a supervisor may evaluate an employee based on how well he meets the company’s goals, but the evaluation also includes the supervisor’s opinion and prior experience of the employee.

In college, when a student expresses an opinion about a document or a topic, that evaluation should be based on specific **criteria**, careful reading, and any prior knowledge of the topic.

Read a student's evaluation of the report above:

Throughout their report, Brown et al. provide valuable statistics that highlight the frequency of alcohol use among high school and college students. They use several reputable sources to support their points. However, the report focuses solely on the frequency of alcohol use and how it varies according to certain sociodemographic factors. Other sources, such as Spoth, Greenberg, and Turrisi's study (2009) and the survey I conducted among college students, examine the reasons for alcohol use among young people and offer suggestions as to how to reduce the rates. Nonetheless, I think that Brown et al. offer a useful set of statistics from which to base further research into alcohol use among high school and college students.

Notice how the paragraph incorporates the student's personal judgment. Because an evaluation incorporates your point of view and reasons, it requires more critical thinking than a summary.

Critical Thinking

We know what “thinking” is. To “be critical” often means to be disapproving. But in college, “critical thinking” means **actively analyzing something** (a poem, a piece of music, a political issue) **using observation, reflection, and reason to draw a conclusion.**

To engage in critical thinking, a student must be willing to do three things:

- gather evidence: read carefully with the goal of fully understanding the material
- apply criteria: use specific standards to evaluate the material
- demonstrate judgment: think reasonably using previous experience and knowledge

How to Write an Evaluation

- I. Carefully read the original document, taking notes as you go. You

must fully understand it before you have a right to an opinion.

2. Take ten minutes to jot down your thoughts. Start simply: Did you like it? Why or why not? Then get more specific. What did the writer do that was effective? Were there any problems? What observations did you make as you read?
3. Identify several **criteria** for evaluation. For example, you might consider the way the piece was organized, or how well the writer supports her point, or whether the information was repetitive or the language evocative.
4. In one sentence, write your opinion. Name the document and the writer in this sentence so we know what you are evaluating. This is your topic sentence.
5. Then, provide examples from the original to support your opinion.
6. Organize your supporting points logically and use transitions to connect your points.
7. Wrap up with a final thought that reflects your opinion but doesn't repeat things you've already said. That is your concluding sentence.
8. Re-read the original essay to be sure you didn't miss anything important.

Exercise 2

Re-read the essay you chose for Exercise 1, making additional notes.

Following the steps above, write an evaluation paragraph on the essay in your notebook.

Be sure your **opinion** is the focus of your paragraph, that you use supporting details to explain your opinion, and that your concluding comment refers to your opinion. An evaluation paragraph is your judgment of the original, but it is not just your gut feeling. A judgment should be based on reason.

Your evaluation should be a single paragraph (at least 100 words but no more than 200 words).

Audience and Tone

Being aware of readers is a skill you likely already possess. Consider the following paragraphs. Which would the author send to her parents? Which would she send to her best friend?

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

OMG! You won't believe this! My advisor forced me to do my community service hours at this hospital all weekend! We learned CPR but we did it on dummies, not even real peeps. And some kid

sneezed on me and got me sick! I hope I don't have to go back next week. I def do NOT want to miss the basketball game!

Most likely, you matched each paragraph to its intended audience easily.

Just as speakers transmit emotion through voice, writers transmit a range of attitudes with sentence structure, punctuation, and word choice. In the second example above, notice the writer uses slang (“OMG,” “peeps,” “def”), casual punctuation (!), and informal sentence structure (starting a sentence with “And”).

A writer's tone should always match the audience and the purpose of the piece of writing. When you write college assignments, remember who the reader is: your instructor and possibly your classmates. The tone of college writing is slightly formal—not casual, but not stiff. Sound like yourself, but the way you would speak in a formal situation.

Takeaways

- Common types of paragraphs in college include summaries and evaluations.
- Summaries do not include your opinion; evaluations do.
- Critical thinking means actively analyzing something using observation, reflection, and reason to draw a conclusion.
- Writing must be appropriate in tone for the purpose of the document and the intended audience.

5.3 Building with Paragraphs

Preview

This section of Ch. 5 will cover the following topics:

- introductory paragraphs
- body paragraphs
- concluding paragraphs

Most documents are composed of three types of paragraphs: introductory paragraphs, body paragraphs, and concluding paragraphs. This is true of a short story, a scientific study, a business report, and a college essay.

All paragraphs focus on a single idea, provide details that explain or illustrate, and end with a final thought or a transition to the next idea. But introductions, body paragraphs, and conclusions actually have very different purposes.

Introductory Paragraphs

Your introductory paragraph is an invitation to your readers to consider what you have to say and then to follow as you expand your point. If your introductory paragraph is dull or unfocused, your reader will not care about continuing.

The introductory paragraph's job is to attract the reader's interest, present

the topic and the writer's opinion about the topic (this is called the **"thesis"**), and supply any necessary background information. In a long paper, it might also preview major points.

When writing an introductory paragraph, your main goals are to be interesting and clear. Following are several techniques for strong introductory paragraphs:

- Begin with a broad, general statement of the topic, narrowing to the thesis. For example: "Voting is a responsibility, but one that is not always easy to accomplish..." Add some detail, then end with the thesis: "Mail-in ballots would make voting cheaper, easier, and less prone to fraud."
- Start with an idea or a situation the opposite of the one you will develop. For example: "In some countries, people have to risk their lives to cast a vote. In the U.S., it is usually just inconvenient." Add detail that leads to the thesis.
- Convince the readers the subject applies to them or is something they should know about. For example: "Conversations about politics happen on the bus, at the dinner table, in the classroom. One topic of concern is voter turnout." Add detail that leads to the thesis.
- Use an incident or brief story—something that happened to you or that you heard about. For example: "I remember the first time I voted." Add more details, then end with the thesis: "Everyone should have the same chance I had to cast their vote. Mail-in ballots would help."
- Ask questions so the reader thinks about the answers or so you can answer the questions. For example: "Lots of people complain about politics. Why do they just talk? Why don't they vote? Mail-in ballots would make voting easier for many people."
- Use a quotation to add someone else's voice to your own. For example: "Franklin D. Roosevelt once said, 'Nobody will ever deprive the American people of the right to vote except the American people themselves and the only way they could do this is by not voting.' A key objective in a democracy, then, is to make it easy to vote. Mail-in ballots would do that."

Notice that each technique starts with some sort of hook to grab the reader's attention, follows with details, then ends with the thesis (your topic and your point about that topic).

Exercise 1

Go to Ch. 7 and read just the **first** paragraph in these essays:

- “Black Exhaustion” by Pilot Viruet
- “Only Daughter” by Sandra Cisneros (note: read the first 2 paragraphs in this one)

Then, consider what each introduction is doing and answer these questions in your notebook:

- Which of the techniques listed above is each author using?
- Which paragraph most engaged you and why?
- Did you find yourself wanting to know more after reading the introduction, or did you at least clearly understand the subject of the rest of the essay?

Body Paragraphs

A body paragraph is just like the stand-alone paragraphs we worked on in Ch. 5.2, except most body paragraphs either end with a transition to the next paragraph or begin with a transition from the previous paragraph.

Topic sentences are vital to body paragraphs because they connect readers to your thesis and remind them what your essay is about. A paragraph without a clearly identified topic sentence will often be unfocused and scattered.

The information in body paragraphs should do the following:

- Be specific. The main points you make and the examples you use to expand on those points need to be clear and detailed. General examples are not nearly as compelling or useful. To say that “most students worry about exams” is not as effective as saying “the average community college student often feels overwhelmed during finals.”
- Be selective. When faced with lots of examples or explanations that could prove your thesis, you may think you need to include everything. But effective writers resist the temptation to overwhelm. Choose wisely. If you have five reasons why exercise programs fail, pick the best three.

Concluding Paragraphs

Conclusions are more than just stopping. A strong concluding paragraph should convey a sense of completeness or closure. What do you conclude based on the points you made? Leave a good final impression.

There are several ways to write an effective conclusion:

- Philosophize. What does this all mean? End with a thought-provoking insight that asks your reader to think further about what you have written—why the subject is important, what choice should be made.
- Synthesize, but don’t summarize and don’t repeat yourself. Show the reader how the points you made fit together.
- Predict (what may happen) or make a recommendation (what should be done). Help your reader see the topic differently.

It might be easier to consider what NOT to do in a conclusion:

- Do not use the phrase “In conclusion.” Readers can see that your essay is about to end. You don’t have to point it out.
- Do not simply restate your original point. You have referred to it throughout the paper; repeating it one more time can actually be

annoying to the reader.

- Do not introduce a new idea. A conclusion can expand the reader's sense of the topic, but it shouldn't jump to a different topic altogether.
- Do not make sentimental, emotional appeals. If your argument is well-argued, the reader already agrees with you (or at least has agreed to consider your point).
- Do not directly address the reader. An essay is written for the general reader. Do not use "you." If you want to express your point, say "I." If you want the reader to feel included, say "we." If you want to look objective, say "most people" or "students in college."

Think of an essay like this:

introduction + body paragraphs = conclusion

The equal sign is important. Your point and your support should lead to the conclusion, just like $2 + 2 = 4$.

Exercise 2

Go back to Ch. 7 and read just the **last** paragraph in these essays:

- “Black Exhaustion” by Pilot Viruet
- “Only Daughter” by Sandra Cisneros

In your notebook, consider what each concluding paragraph is doing and answer these questions:

- Which of the techniques listed above is each author using?
- Which paragraph most engaged you and why?
- Could you feel the sense of finality, of being finished, in each of these paragraphs?

Takeaways

- Most documents are built with three types of paragraphs: introductions, body paragraphs, and conclusions.
- The job of introductory paragraphs is to engage the reader and present the paper’s topic in a thesis.
- Body paragraphs develop the topic with supporting details.
- Concluding paragraphs wrap the paper up gracefully.

CHAPTER 6: ESSAYS

6.1 Getting Started

6.2 Organizing Ideas

6.3 Writing the Draft

6.4 Polishing the Draft

6.5 Correcting the Final

6.1 Getting Started

Preview

This section of Ch. 6 will introduce the following topics:

- using a writing process
- the purpose of prewriting
- four types of prewriting
- choosing a good topic

Effective writing is simply good ideas expressed well and arranged clearly. But effective writing is not something one just sits down and does. You can write a shopping list like that or a text, but anything you are going to submit to a reader who will evaluate your work should be planned and polished.

Good writers use a writing process. Students who want to improve their writing discover that a writing process will help them achieve that goal. (It also reduces stress and improves grades.)

The Writing Process

The writing process outlined here is not difficult. It involves five steps and it takes several sessions, but ultimately it will make writing easier, faster, and more successful for you.

Here are the five steps of the writing process:

1. **Prewriting:** generate and begin developing ideas.
2. **Outlining:** identify the document's purpose and determine the thesis, basic content, and organizational structure.
3. **Drafting:** develop the points identified in the outline, adding detail, examples, and commentary, then write an engaging introduction and a useful conclusion. After this step, the writer has a first draft.
4. **Revising:** review and reshape the draft. This involves moderate to major changes: adding or deleting sentences or even paragraphs, expanding an important idea, replacing a vague word with a more precise one, reorganizing points. The goal is to improve the document's quality and clarity.
5. **Editing:** make final changes to ensure adherence to standard writing conventions, fixing errors in grammar and spelling, then formatting the document. The goal of editing is correctness.

Once these five steps have been completed, a careful writer will seek the advice of knowledgeable others before considering the document complete. In college, this advice usually takes the form of peer editing groups or tutors.

Common Misconceptions

Some students have had good experience with a writing process in the past. Some have never heard of “a writing process.” Others are doubtful that anything can help. Following are common misconceptions about the writing process:

- “I do not have to waste time on prewriting if I understand the assignment.” Even if the task is straightforward and you feel ready to start, taking time to develop ideas before you write a draft gives you an opportunity to consider what you want to say before you jump in (and then have to back up). It actually saves time overall.
- “It is important to complete a formal, numbered outline for every writing assignment.” For lengthy research papers, a formal outline

can be helpful. For shorter assignments, a scratch outline like the one recommended in this process is sufficient. The important thing is to plan the document before starting to write, to know where you are going and how you want to get there.

- “My draft will be better if I write it when I am feeling inspired.” By all means, take advantage of moments of inspiration. But understand that “inspired” work is often disorganized, incomplete, and unclear. Also, in college you often have to write when you are not in the mood.
- “My instructor will tell me everything I need to revise.” It is your job, not your instructor’s, to transform a rough draft into a final, polished piece of writing.
- “I am a good writer, so I do not need to revise or edit.” Great writers all revise their work. Shakespeare, J.K. Rowling, Atul Gawande, and George R.R. Martin all revise their writing.

Planning Backward

Using a writing process requires multiple sessions of writing time. Do not try to move from Step 1 to Step 5 too fast. Trying to work fast is stressful, and it does not yield great results.

When your instructor gives you a writing assignment, write the due date on your calendar. Then work backward to set aside blocks of time when you will work on the assignment. Schedule at least six work sessions. (Step 3 often takes two sessions.) Each session should be an hour or two. Less time won’t let you get any important work done, but longer is exhausting, and exhausted writers don’t write well.

If you find you need additional time, add it in small chunks throughout the process rather than trying to do a lot of work the night before the deadline. If things go smoothly and you end up with extra time, spend it on additional revision and editing.

Step 1: Prewriting

If you think a blank sheet of paper or a blinking cursor on a blank computer screen is scary, you are not alone. Beginning to write can be intimidating. However, experienced writers remind themselves that writing is a process. Any big project can be accomplished if you take it one step at a time.

Prewriting is the first stage of the writing process. Prewriting can help you get started if you don't know where to begin. It can help you narrow a topic that is too broad, explore what you know about your chosen topic, and find interesting details. It is brainstorming in writing.

We get our ideas from many places: what we read, what we hear, what we see and experience, our imagination. Prewriting helps us turn all of that information into words on a page. Prewriting is a way to break through writing blocks, to get ideas out of your head and down on paper so you have something with which to work.

There are a few, very simple rules for prewriting:

- Use paper and pencil or a computer, whichever allows you to write more quickly.
- Write your topic at the top of the page to remind yourself to stick to it. If you wander off, just look at your topic and wander back.
- Don't worry about spelling, punctuation, repetition, or exact wording. Your goal is to simply get as much information on the page as you can.
- Write for ten minutes. More is unnecessary; less is not enough time to find unexpected ideas.
- Don't stop writing once you start. Keep pushing your brain to come up with one more idea and one more idea. That is when you find interesting and even surprising stuff.

Tip

If you get interrupted while prewriting, stop and start over later. Don't try to continue a prewrite. The value comes from writing for ten minutes uninterrupted.

Three types of prewriting are explained here: Freewriting, Listing, and Clustering. Try them all, then use the technique that works best for your thinking process or for the specific assignment you've been given.

Freewriting

In Freewriting, you jot down thoughts that come to mind in rough sentences or phrases. Try not to doubt or question your ideas. Allow yourself to write freely. Don't be self-conscious. Nobody is going to grade this. Once you start writing without limitations, you may find you have more to say than you thought. If you get stuck, look at your topic again and write some more.

Here is an example of Freewriting on the topic of the media. Notice the

writer isn't worrying about grammar, fragments, or even staying on topic. She is just writing down everything that comes to mind on her topic.

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

Listing

Listing is like Freewriting, but instead of writing across the page, you write in columns, top to bottom, listing topics or details, one after another, without trying to sort or organize.

Here is an example of Listing on the topic of the media. Notice the ideas bounce from one to another, then off in a different direction. That's the point: to get as many ideas on the page as possible.

“The Media”	silencing dissent	SNL
news magazines	John Lewis	FOX
newspapers	fear	BBC
pop magazines	silence the press	news cycle
journalists	state media	reputation
paparazzi	power	4 th Estate
gossip	control	social media
“fake news”	information	honesty
ethics	trustworthy	“medium/message”
trust	online media	press secretary
lies	bias	retractions
Walter Cronkite	what else????	no ideas!
Edward R. Murrow	investigation	editorial staff
multiple sources	New York Times	yellow journalism
single sources	Washington Post	trust
politics	too much information	advertising
protests	too little information	too much information
Vietnam	conspiracy theories	the truth
civil rights	White House press sec.	who says so?
riots in Ferguson	commentary vs. news	reputations/awards
protests in Portland	misinformation	fact checking
	Rachel Maddow	

Exercise 1

In your notebook, prewrite about the broad topic of Mt. Hood Community College, using either Freewriting or Listing. Follow the directions above and write without stopping for ten minutes. After you finish, read over what you wrote. Find a few ideas that stand out, that you have an opinion on, and that might make a good essay. Circle them.

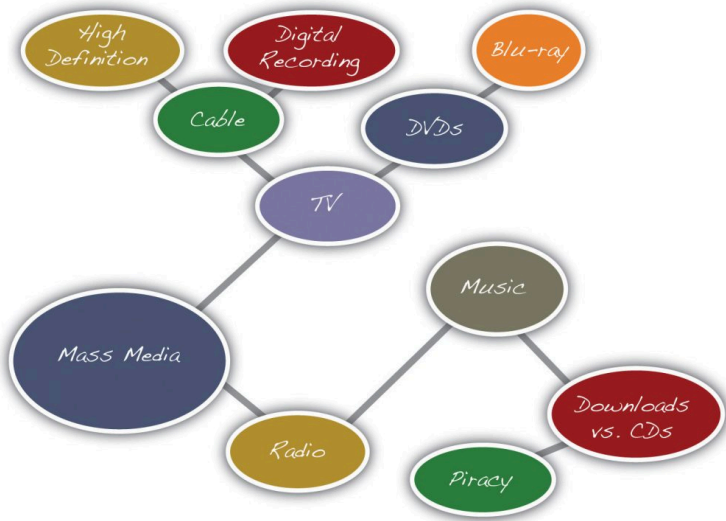
Your goal is to take a broad topic given by your instructor and narrow it down to something you can cover thoroughly in the assigned length. Writing about the media could run 300 pages easily, but looking at the difference between “news” and “commentary” or explaining the term “fake news” would make a good essay.

Clustering

Clustering allows you to visualize related ideas. Many writers like this prewriting method because it shows how ideas connect.

To do Clustering, write your general topic in the center of a blank sheet of paper. Then brainstorm specific ideas around it and use lines or arrows to connect them. Add as many ideas and sub-ideas as you can think of. Write for ten minutes; fill the page.

Note: You can do this on a computer (like the example below) but it’s much easier on paper. On a computer, you spend too much time making little circles and choosing colors. On paper, you spend the time coming up with new ideas.



Exercise 2

In your notebook, do a Clustering prewrite on one of the topics that interested you in Exercise 1. Your goal with this prewrite is to identify lots of details about that topic.

- Put the narrowed topic in the center of the page.
- Brainstorm different sub-topics, moving in different directions. Fill up the page. Don't hesitate to go on to two or even three pages.
- After ten minutes, read what you wrote. Circle ideas that might be usable.

If you succeeded with this prewrite, you should have a narrow topic for an essay (from Ex. 1) and lots of details to help you explain your point (from Ex. 2). If that hasn't happened yet, repeat one of the types of prewriting above. Don't move on to the next section of this text until you have a topic that works.

Be prepared to show your prewrites to the instructor and have her approve your chosen topic.

Prewriting can be used when you begin a project to brainstorm possible topics. It can also be used to narrow a large topic. And it can be used to come up with details on your chosen topic. If you hit a dead end on your first prewrite, go do something else for a while (math homework or the laundry), then try again, using a different type of prewriting. The goal of prewriting is to get information out of your head and onto a piece of paper where you can work with it.

Choosing a Topic

Before you decide firmly on your topic, put it through a simple test by answering these questions:

- Am I interested in this topic?
Would my audience be interested?
- Do I have prior knowledge of or experience with this topic, or do I have the time to learn more about it?
- Is this topic narrow enough to dig into deeply, but large enough to provide me with ideas to explore?
- Does it meet the assignment requirements? (Go back and re-read the assignment instructions.)

Tip

If a topic is not working, do another prewrite **now** to find a better one. Changing topics later is a huge waste of time.

Once you have completed this step, you should feel less anxious about starting an essay. With some ideas on paper, writers are often more comfortable continuing to write.

Takeaways

- The writing process helps students complete any writing assignment more successfully.
- This writing process includes five steps: prewriting, organizing, drafting, revising, and editing. Allow enough time to complete each step successfully.
- Prewriting is the transfer of ideas from abstract thoughts into words, phrases, and sentences on paper.
- Types of prewriting include Freewriting, Listing, and Clustering.

6.2 Organizing Ideas

Preview

This section of Ch. 6 covers the following topics:

- developing a **thesis**
- using a critical question
- constructing an outline
- organizing options

Prewriting helps a writer explore possible topics and figure out what to say. But to communicate ideas to someone else, those ideas have to be organized. That is the goal of a thesis statement and an outline.

Step 2: Organizing

The first step in organizing is to **articulate** your purpose. What are you going to say about this topic?

Thesis Statement

A thesis is a clear statement of the essay's main idea. It is the essay topic and the writer's position or opinion on that topic. It's sort of like the topic sentence of a paragraph, but it's the topic sentence for the entire essay.

Here is an example thesis:

Urban trees are key to a healthy environment for humans. (The topic is “trees in the city” and your opinion is that they are crucial to human health.)

A thesis is not just the essay’s topic; it is what you have to say about that topic, your point. Look at the following table to see the difference.

Topic	Thesis Statement
The impact of music piracy on musicians	Financial success as a musician is still possible despite music piracy.
The future of journalism	Online newspapers will mean the end of print media.
Educational delivery systems	The benefits of face-to-face learning cannot be completely duplicated in online classes.

Each thesis states an opinion. It is not just a fact; it is the writer’s thoughts, feelings, or position about the topic.

The job of a thesis is to generate and govern the essay. To generate something is to cause it to be created. To govern something is to control it. A thesis statement creates and controls the essay.

Following are guidelines for a strong, clear thesis statement:

- A thesis is one sentence. The subject of the thesis is the subject of your essay. Write it first. (For example: “Mail-in voting...”)
- A thesis **must** include an opinion, the point you will make about your subject. Write it second. (For example: “...should be required in every state.”) If the thesis is simply a fact (“Americans over the age of 18 can vote.”), you have nowhere to go.
- A good thesis will **generate** a critical question, either “How?” or “Why?” This is the question you will answer in the body of the essay. A good critical question for our example thesis is “Why?” The body paragraphs will explain **why** mail-in voting should be required.
- A good thesis is clear and specific. Avoid vague language (“interesting,” “terrible,” “good”). In our example, “should be required” is much clearer than “would be a good idea.”

- Keep the thesis short and simple: Don't tackle two or three ideas. Our example thesis does not say mail-in voting should be "encouraged and monitored"—it picks one focus: "required."
- Express the thesis as a statement, not a question (don't write "What should we do about...?") or an announcement (don't write "The subject of this paper is...").
- Be aware of your audience. Take a stand without insulting the reader. ("Only anarchists support mail-in voting" is unnecessarily offensive.) The goal of an essay is to inform and persuade, not be belligerent. If you can't make a point without insulting people who disagree with you, you will never persuade anyone.

The thesis is usually presented in the essay's introductory paragraph, often as the last sentence.

Exercise 1

Using the topic you identified in Ch. 6.1, write a thesis statement for your essay. Follow the above guidelines carefully. Your goal is to explain your position on this topic clearly and succinctly.

Although you are only writing a single sentence, this will likely take you some time to do well. Creating a good, clear thesis is the first step in producing a good, clear essay.

Write your thesis in your notebook. Figure out whether you are going to answer "Why?" or "How?" in the essay, and write that word at the end of your thesis. Submit this to the instructor for approval before proceeding to the next step.

Outlining

Without clear organization, your reader can become confused and lose interest. **An outline is a written plan for the essay.** We use the critical question generated by the thesis to create the outline. For example:

Thesis: Mail-in voting should be required in every state.

Critical question: Why?

Answer: Because it is cheaper, easier, and safer.

Those three answers become the three main points in the outline and, eventually, the topic sentences of the body paragraphs.

A short, informal “scratch” outline, where you list key ideas in the order you will present them, will help you visualize your argument and ensure the structure will be clear to a reader. Here is a basic structure for a five-paragraph essay:

Paragraph 1: introduction, thesis statement

Paragraph 2: first main point and supporting detail

Paragraph 3: next main point and supporting detail

Paragraph 4: last main point and supporting detail

Paragraph 5: conclusion

Here is an example of a scratch outline on the topic of mail-in voting:

- Introduction: hook that leads to thesis: Mail-in voting should be required in every state. Why?
- First body paragraph: less expensive
 - setting up and staffing polling places
 - expensive voting machines
 - minimal cost of mailing
- Second body paragraph: easier
 - eliminates barriers (work schedules, family responsibilities, disabilities, travel, long lines)
 - increases number who vote, more reflective of popular opinion
 - time to evaluate and research options at home
- Third body paragraph: safer
 - paper trail to verify vote count
 - potential for voting machine interference eliminated
 - no personal risk during an epidemic
- Conclusion: lots of benefits, few downsides

It would be easy to turn this outline into an essay draft by simply adding explanations and details to each paragraph.

Ordering Information

Once you know **what** you want to say, you have to decide in **what order** to present the information.

There are three basic ways to organize the body of an essay: chronological order, emphatic order, and spatial order.

Chronological order is when events are arranged in the order they actually happen. Chronological order is used for the following purposes:

- to explain the history of an event or a topic
- to tell a story or relate an experience
- to explain how to do or to make something

For example, an essay about the history of the airline industry would begin with its conception and progress through essential events up to present day. This method uses transition words such as “then,” “after that,” and “finally.”

Emphatic order is when your points start with the least important and

build to the most important argument last. Emphatic order is best used for the following purposes:

- persuading and convincing
- ranking items by their benefit or significance
- illustrating a situation, problem, or solution

For example, an essay about registering firearms could develop several answers to “Why?” Key transitions with this pattern might be “one reason is,” “just as importantly,” and “but the most important.”

The example outline above on mail-in voting is organized emphatically: it moves from a good reason, to a better one, to the best one. Emphatic order is common in persuasive essays because it allows the writer to increasingly strengthen her argument.

Spatial order means explaining or describing objects as they are arranged in space. Spatial order is less common in college writing and best used for the following purposes:

- helping readers visualize something as you want them to see it
- evoking a scene using the senses (sight, touch, taste, smell, sound)

For example, an essay that describes a microscope or the parts of a guitar would use spatial order. You create a picture for the reader. The view must move in an orderly, logical progression, giving the reader clear directional signals (“to the left is...,” “above that...,” “on the back is...”)

These three options can be used alone or, in a long paper, they can be combined. The key for writers is to choose an organizational pattern consciously, one that will best help them achieve their purpose.

Exercise 2

Now it's time to create an outline for your essay. Your outline should end up looking like the scratch outline above, but it will take several steps to get there.

In your notebook, do the following:

- Start with the word “Introduction” followed by your thesis. (Don’t write the actual introduction, just the word. Do write your thesis and the critical question.)
- Look at the three options for an organizational pattern listed above: chronological, emphatic, or spatial. Which pattern would best help you explain your point? Pick one. The emphatic pattern is the most common for college writing, but which one you choose is driven by what your topic is. For example, if you decided to write about why the gym facilities at MHCC are great, you might explain how you learned to love the gym over time (chronological), or identify your three favorite pieces of equipment (emphatic), or describe the gym layout so the reader can see it (spatial).
- Answer your critical question three times using the details you identified in Ch. 6.1. Leave a few blank lines between the three points.
 - If you chose a chronological pattern, identify three moments in time.
 - If you chose an emphatic pattern, list three examples and order them from least important to most.
 - If you chose a spatial pattern, list three parts of your

topic following a logical progression.

- If the pattern you chose isn't working, now is the time to change it.
- Add some details to each of the three points. As in the example above, don't write full paragraphs or even full sentences, just words or phrases. This is just a plan, not the actual essay.
- Write the word "Conclusion" at the end. (Don't write the conclusion, just the word.)

This process will take you a couple of hours to do well. Your final product should look like the example scratch outline above. This is the point when you figure out if the essay is going to work. Is your topic panning out? Is your thesis clear enough? Do you have sufficient details? If not, go back to Ch. 6.1 and do some more prewriting. Do not proceed to Ch. 6.3 until your thesis and outline have been approved by the instructor.

Exercise 3

To review how to structure an essay, this exercise asks you to find the structure in an existing essay.

Read the student essay called “The Best Place to Study” by Pablo Medina, linked in Ch. 7.

Create a “reverse outline” for his essay. Dig into the essay to discover the structure: find his thesis, his main points, and his supporting points.

- First, find the thesis statement and write it in your notebook. (Hint: It is where it should be: in the introductory paragraph.)
- Briefly describe which technique Pablo uses in his introduction (check Ch. 5.3 for a list of options).
- Read the first body paragraph, identify the topic sentence, and write it in your notebook. Briefly list the examples Pablo uses in that paragraph.
- Do the same for paragraphs three and four.
- Identify which organizing structure Pablo used (chronological, emphatic, or spatial) for the essay.
- Look at the concluding paragraph. What is he doing there?

You should end up with Pablo’s outline for his essay. Notice how smoothly his essay reads and yet we can easily deconstruct it.

That is because he did the work you just created before he drafted his essay. The essay is carefully and clearly built.

Takeaways

- A thesis statement is a topic and the writer's opinion on that topic.
- An outline is a plan, a structure for the essay.
- Chronological order is common in expository writing.
- Emphatic order is most appropriate in a persuasive paper.
- Spatial order is best for helping readers visualize something.

6.3 Writing the Draft

Preview

This section of Ch. 6 will cover the following topics:

- turning the thesis and outline into a **draft**
- using topic sentences to generate content
- choosing a title

The first two steps in the writing process—prewriting and organizing—are crucial. If a writer just sits down and starts writing a draft, it is likely to be disorganized and unfocused. The purpose of prewriting and organizing is to get you started, provide a clear direction, generate lots of details, and figure out the best organizational pattern to make your point **before** putting in a ton of time on drafting. With that start, writing the draft is much easier and the resulting document is clearer and more interesting.

Step 3: Drafting

Drafting is the stage of the writing process when you develop the first complete version of the document. An essay draft will include the following:

- an introduction that stimulates the audience's interest, tells what the essay is about, and motivates readers to keep reading

- a thesis that presents the main point of the essay
- a logically organized body
 - where each paragraph has a topic sentence that states the main idea of the paragraph, with supporting details (facts, examples, explanations) that develop or explain the topic sentence
- a conclusion that reinforces the thesis and leaves the audience with a feeling of completion

This basic format is valid for most essays, regardless of length, that you will write in college.

Start with the Body

Although many students assume an essay is written from beginning to end in one sitting, most well-written essays are built one section at a time, not necessarily in order, and over several sessions.

Always write the body of your essay first, before the introduction.

This may seem odd. Why write the middle before the beginning? Because the body IS the essay. Think of the introduction and conclusion as an appetizer and dessert for the main course. The body of your essay is the meat, potatoes and vegetables. Besides, how can you write an introduction if you don't yet know what you are going to introduce? Write the body first.

The body of your essay is where you explain, expand upon, detail, and support your thesis. Each point in your outline can be turned into a topic sentence, which then becomes a paragraph by adding details that clarify and demonstrate your point.

Work on the body of your essay in several separate sessions. You'll be surprised the kind of changes you want to make to something you wrote yesterday when you look at it again today.

Keep working on the body until it says what you want.

Exercise 1

Using the thesis and outline you created in Ch. 6.2, draft your body paragraphs. This step is going to take some time. Plan on at least a couple of hours, and two sessions is best.

(Note: From here on, you should be working on your computer, not in your notebook. This draft is typed.)

Before you finish, review the instructions on topic sentences, supporting ideas, and transitions in Ch. 5.1.; on audience and tone in Ch. 5.2; and on body paragraphs in Ch. 5.3. Be sure that information is evident in your body paragraphs.

Do not go on to the next step until you have the body of your essay written and you are happy with it.

Write the Introduction Next

The introductory paragraph has a very specific job: it **attracts the reader's interest, presents the thesis, and supplies any necessary background information**. In a long paper, it might also preview major points.

There are lots of ways to write a good introduction. Read through the body of your essay and think about what you could say to invite your reader in. How could you make the reader curious? Remember these different options for introductions that we looked at in Ch. 5.3:

- Begin with a broad, general statement of the topic, narrowing to the thesis.
- Start with an idea or a situation the opposite of the one you will develop.
- Convince the readers that the subject applies to them or is something

they should know about.

- Use an incident or brief story—something that happened to you or that you heard about.
- Ask questions so the reader thinks about the answers or so you can answer the questions.
- Use a quotation to add someone else's voice to your own.

Exercise 2

Before you write your introduction, take another look at the introduction Pablo Medina wrote for his essay (in Ch. 7). Notice which technique he uses and how he transitions from his hook to his thesis.

Now, write your introduction.

- Decide which technique from the list above would work best to introduce your essay.
- Write the paragraph, starting with a hook and ending with your thesis.

Work on your introduction until it is clear, focused, and engaging. It is a good idea to schedule at least two sessions to write your introduction. Coming back to reconsider what you've said gives you a new perspective.

Do not go on to the next step until you like what you have so far: the introduction and the body.

Then, Write the Conclusion

Once you have put together your body paragraphs and attached your introduction at the beginning, it is time to write a conclusion. It is vital to

put as much effort into the conclusion as you did on the rest of the essay. A conclusion that is unorganized or repetitive can undercut even the best essay.

A conclusion's job is to wrap the essay up in an attractive package so the reader is left with a good final impression. A strong concluding paragraph brings the paper to a graceful end. We discussed several approaches in Ch. 5.3: philosophize, synthesize, predict. Please review that information.

Exercise 3

Write a concluding paragraph for your essay.
Work on your conclusion until it is clear, focused, and engaging.
It can be helpful to schedule two sessions to write your conclusion. Coming back to reconsider what you've said gives you a new perspective.

Add the Title

Titles are a brief and interesting summary of what the document is about. Titles are generally more than one word but no more than several words.

Like the headline in a newspaper or magazine, an essay's title gives the audience a first peek at the content. If readers like the title, they are likely to keep reading.

Caution: Don't be too clever. A clear title is better than something creative but weird or confusing.

Exercise 4

Go to the essays in Ch. 7 and read **just** the essay titles. In your notebook, answer these questions:

- Which title is the most interesting to you? Why?
- Which is the least interesting or most confusing? Why?

Then, pick a title for your essay and add it to your draft.

What you have now is a first draft. This is a complete piece of writing, but it is not the final version. A first draft gives you a working version to improve.

The best writing goes through multiple drafts before it is complete. The final two steps of the writing process—revising and editing—are crucial to the quality of the final document (and your grade). During the final two steps, you will have the opportunity to make changes to this first draft.

Do not go on to Ch. 6.4 until you really feel you have a solid draft. In fact, even if your draft is great, put it away overnight before you try to revise.

Takeaways

- The key parts of an essay are a thesis in an engaging introductory paragraph, logically organized body paragraphs with supporting details, and a concluding paragraph that ends the essay gracefully.
- When drafting, write the body paragraphs first, then the introduction. Write the conclusion last.
- Titles should be clear and concise.

6.4 Polishing the Draft

Preview

This section of Ch. 6 will cover the following topics:

- the difference between revision and editing
- the steps of revision
- effective word choice

You may think a completed first draft means you are finished. Experienced writers know that first draft is just half-way to the finish line.

Revising and editing are the final two steps in the writing process:

- When you revise, you add, cut, move, or change information to make your ideas more accurate, more interesting, or more convincing. **The goal of revision is clarity.**
- When you edit, you fix problems in grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, and formatting. **The goal of editing is correctness.**

This section of Ch. 6 covers revision. The next section will cover editing.

Step 4: Revising

The word “revision” tells you what the process is: “vision” is seeing, and you will look closely at your draft during this step.

When you revise, you are an editor, not a writer. Your job is to look for things to improve, not things to admire.

Many people hear the words “critical” and “criticism” and think of negative feelings that make them blush or grumble. However, as a writer you need to **be critical of yourself in a positive way**. You need to train your eye to see problems and learn to trust your ability to fix what needs fixing. “Critical” also means “important and crucial.”

When revising, consider organization, clarity, and writing quality.

First Read

All the ideas in each paragraph and the essay as a whole should be arranged in a way that makes logical sense.

- Read the introductory paragraph. Is it as strong as you can make it? Is the thesis clearly stated in the introduction (usually as the last sentence)?
- Read the topic sentence of each body paragraph and ask yourself if it is clearly tied to the thesis.
- Then read the three topic sentences, one after the other, and ask yourself if the order is effective. Would your point be clearer if you changed the order?

Tip

When you finish a draft, you are too close to it to make changes. Put the draft away, preferably overnight but at least for several hours, before attempting to revise.

- Read each paragraph by itself. Have you provided adequate details and examples to explain the topic sentence, without repeating yourself?
- Read the concluding paragraph. Does it provide a sense of closure rather than repeating what has already been said?

Second Read

Trees grow well with sufficient sunshine and rain. Sometimes, though, they grow so vigorously that their roots invade the foundation of the house, branches knock against windows, and leaves fall into rain gutters, clogging them. To ensure the tree remains attractive and healthy, it often needs pruning.

That is true about writing too. Many student writers are worried about not having enough to say. A more serious problem with student writing is wordiness. A second read is a good time to prune.

Three problems common in student writing are focus, transitions, and clarity.

Problem #1: Focus

Sometimes writers cannot resist a good digression. Even though you might enjoy such detours when you chat with friends, unplanned digressions usually harm a piece of writing.

Read the following paragraph twice. The first time, include the words that are lined out. The second time, skip them. Notice the information about the shopping experience gets the reader off track. The paragraph is clearer and more focused without the digression.

Buying a television can be confusing. The first important decision ~~as the shopper walks around the sales floor~~ is whether to get a plasma screen or an LCD screen. ~~The salespeople may give you decent info.~~ Plasma flat-panel television screens can be much larger in diameter than their LCD rivals. Plasma screens show truer blacks and can be viewed at a wider angle than current LCD screens. But ~~be careful and tell the salesperson you have budget constraints.~~ Large flat-panel plasma screens are much more expensive than flat-screen LCD models. Don't ~~let someone make you~~ buy more television than you need!

Tip

One way to revise is to read the essay aloud to yourself and listen for problems. Often your ear will hear something your eye doesn't see.

Problem #2: Conciseness

Sometimes writers use too many words ~~when fewer words will appeal more to their audience and better fit their purpose in a given piece of writing.~~

The sentence above is much clearer without the crossed out words. Our goal is not simply to make sentences shorter; it's to make them stronger—but tightening sentences often makes them stronger.

Here are some common examples of wordiness to look for in your draft.

- Sentences that begin with “There are” or “It is”
 - Wordy: There are two major experiments that the Biology Department sponsors.
 - Revised: The Biology Department sponsors two major experiments.
- Sentences with unnecessary modifiers
 - Wordy: Two extremely famous and well-known consumer advocates spoke in favor of the legislation.
 - Revised: Two well-known consumer advocates spoke in favor of the legislation. (“extremely famous” and “well-known” mean the same thing)
- Sentences in the passive voice or with forms of the verb “to be”
 - Wordy: It might perhaps be said that using a GPS device is something that is a benefit to drivers who have a poor sense of direction.
 - Revised: A GPS device can benefit drivers who have a poor sense of direction.
- Sentences with round-about phrases
 - Wordy: The e-book reader, which is a recent invention, may become as commonplace as the cell phone. My grandfather bought an e-book reader, and his wife bought an e-book reader, too.
 - Revised: The new e-book readers may become as commonplace as the cell phone. Both my grandparents have bought e-book readers.

Here are some wordy phrases to avoid. Use the simpler, clearer option.

Wordy	Concise
a majority of	most
at this point in time	now

Wordy	Concise
based on the fact that	because
during the course of	during
in connection with	about
in order to	to
in the event that	if
a number of	some/many
at the conclusion of	after
despite the fact that	although
on a daily basis	daily
so as to	to
prior to	before
take into consideration	consider
until such time as	until

George Orwell, a perceptive and deliberate writer, once wrote, “Never use a long word where a short one will do.” Student writers often think fancier words are better just because they are fancy. They aren’t.

Fancy words	Their plain replacements
accompany	go with
accomplish	do
advise	tell
attempt	try
benefit	help
demonstrate	show
due to	because of
finalize	end/finish
furnish	provide, give
initiate	begin

Fancy words	Their plain replacements
perform	do
utilize	use

Problem #3: Appropriateness

College essays should be written in semi-formal, academic English. Review Ch. 2.2 for more on word choice. Remember these guidelines:

- Avoid language that is overly casual, including slang and contractions.
- Avoid clichés. Overused expressions are often empty of meaning.
- Use specific words rather than overly general words.
- Use nonsexist language. Change words like “policemen” to “police.” Either switch back and forth between “he” and “she,” or use plural, non-gender pronouns (such as “they”), or just use nouns (such as “students” or “people”).
- When referring to people with disabilities, put the person first (“a woman who is blind” rather than “a blind woman”). A disability is something a person has, not what a person is.

Thorough and detailed revision is what differentiates weak writing from strong writing. Professional writers know this and often dedicate **most** of their time to revision. How long should you spend on revising? As long as you can. This step sometimes takes longer than the other four steps combined.

Exercise 1

Now it's time to revise that draft.

- First, make a copy of your “first draft” so you have a new document to work on. Call this copy the “revision draft.” Keep the original “first draft” somewhere safe so you can refer to it if necessary.
- On the “revision draft,” work through all of the steps outlined above, making changes to improve the clarity and quality of your essay. This process can take several sessions. Focus on one type of revision at a time.
- Note: If you want to print out your “first draft” and revise on paper rather than on the computer, that is fine (many writers do this). When you have finished revising on paper, put those changes in your “revision draft.”

Be prepared to show your “first draft” and your “revision draft” in class.

Remember: The difference between a good piece of writing and a great piece of writing is revising!

Do not go on to Ch. 6.5 until you feel confident that your essay says what you want it to say, that there is no way to make it clearer or more interesting.

Takeaways

- Revising and editing are when you improve your work.
- A polished essay is clearly organized and concisely worded.
- Revision takes time.

6.5 Correcting the Final

Preview

This section of Ch. 6 will cover the following topics:

- editing for grammar, usage, and punctuation
- formatting
- peer editing
- using feedback

Readers do not notice correct spelling, but they notice misspellings. They look past your sentences to get to your ideas, unless the sentences are awkward and poorly constructed. They do not cheer when you use “there,” “their,” and “they’re” correctly, but they notice when you do not. Readers (including teachers, bosses, and customers) are impressed by an error-free document.

The first chapters of this book will help you eliminate mechanical errors in your writing. Track which topics you master and which you still don’t understand, then keep working on the ones that challenge you. Do not hesitate to ask for help from your instructor, peer editors, or the college tutors.

Step 5: Editing

The final step after revising content is editing. When you edit, you examine the mechanical parts of the paper: spelling, grammar, punctuation, and formatting. **The goal of editing is correctness.**

Do not begin editing until you are sure the content is complete. Then, do your first round of edits on the computer so you can fix problems as you go. But always do a final read-through on the printed page; you will see things you miss on the computer.

Look for problems you know you have, as well as the following common errors:

- Check capitalization and punctuation, especially commas, apostrophes, quotation marks, and italics.
- Use words correctly. Avoid clichés and generalizations. Don't use "you."
- Be sure sentences are complete, no run-ons or fragments.
- Look for common grammar problems, including parallel structure, pronoun errors, subject-verb agreement, misplaced or dangling modifiers, and verb tense consistency.
- Run a spellcheck, but double check to be sure it hasn't overlooked words.

Tip

Use the spell checker on your computer. It will catch most of your misspellings. Turn off the grammar checker on your computer. Grammar checkers are wrong about half the time.

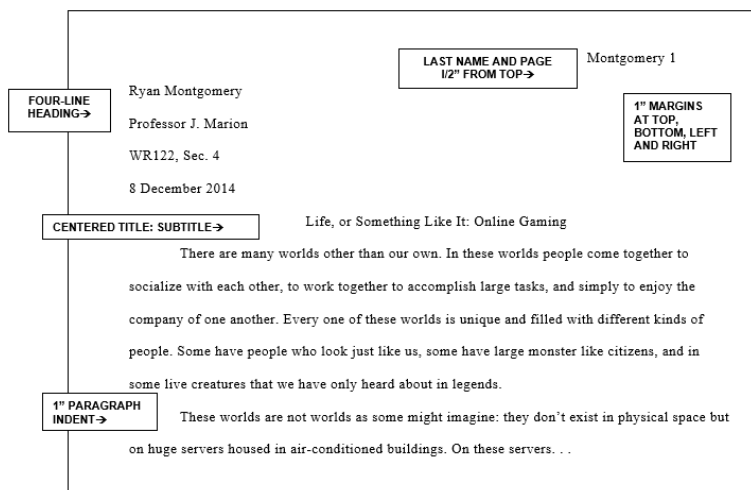
Formatting

Write your documents in Word (the college will provide you with Word

for free, if you don't already have it). Many teachers will also want you to submit your final document as a PDF. If you don't know how to do this, contact the computer lab at the college.

The format of a document is how it is laid out, what it looks like. An instructor or a department will often require students to follow a specific formatting style. The most common are APA (American Psychological Association) and MLA (Modern Language Association). Guides like Diana Hacker's *A Pocket Style Manual* and websites like the Purdue Online Writing Lab can help you understand formatting. Following is a brief overview.

This is an example of MLA formatting (commonly used in writing classes):



Here is a description of the formatting above:

- Use standard-sized paper (8.5" x 11").
- Double-space all of the paper, from the heading through the last page.
- Set the document margins to 1" on all sides.
- Do not use a title page unless requested by your instructor.
- Create a running header with your last name and the page number in

the upper right-hand corner, 1" from the top and aligned with the right margin. Number all pages consecutively.

- List your name, the instructor's name and title, the course name and section, and the due date in the heading on the top left of the first page only. (Notice the date is written in day, month, year order.)
- Center the essay title on the next line below the heading. Follow the rules on capitalization in Ch. 3. Do not increase font size, use bold, or underline.
- Begin the paper below the title. No extra spaces.
- Indent paragraphs 1" from the left margin.

Proofreading requires patience; it is very easy to miss a mistake. Wait at least a day after you have finished revising to proofread. Some professional proofreaders read a text backward (the last paragraph, then the one before that, and so on) so they can concentrate on mechanics rather than being distracted by content.

Editing takes time, but the benefits can be seen in the quality of your work, the response of your readers, and the grade you earn.

Peer Editing

After working closely with a piece of writing, we need to step back and show our work to someone who can give us an honest response about its strengths and weaknesses. Every professional writer does this. Every student writer would benefit from doing this.

An editor is your first real audience. This is your opportunity to learn what confuses and delights a reader so you can fix problems before sharing the final draft with a wider audience (and the teacher).

The best editors for students are other students in the same class. A college instructor rarely has time to go over drafts in detail with students. Your mom and your best friend aren't going to say anything bad. Even a tutor, though helpful, is only going to give you one opinion. But a small group of students who are working on (maybe struggling with) the same

assignment, who are learning the same information, and who are as invested as you are in succeeding is a perfect group to give helpful feedback.

How many peer editors do you need? Three or four is plenty. Fewer, and you will have a hard time separating subjective reactions from objective advice. More, and you will just get duplicate information.

“Peer editing” is not just asking someone for feedback. You should trade papers and edit their work as they edit yours. Trading papers has a hidden benefit: the best way to become a good editor of your own writing is to practice editing someone else’s work. It is much easier to see problems in someone else’s writing, but also your editing “muscles” get exercised and trained. You will learn almost as much from **doing** a peer edit as you will from **getting** one.

Guidelines for Peer Editing

The purpose of peer editing is to receive constructive criticism, not just compliments. You may be uncomfortable sharing your writing at first, but you’ll find it gets easier and the value is immeasurable.

Becoming a good editor does not happen spontaneously; it is a skill that has to be learned and practiced. But the more you do it, the better you get at it.

Our initial tendency may be to say only what is wrong with the work, to praise it excessively, to remain silent, to argue every point, or to say what we think the writer wants to hear. Try to avoid those pitfalls.

The following guidelines will help you become a better editor and a better writer.

First, as the writer

When you give your essay to a reader for peer editing, you are saying, “I think I am finished. Do you see any problems I have missed?”

- Don’t apologize for how bad or unworthy it is. (If it’s that bad, it isn’t ready for peer editing.)
- Don’t explain your intention; it should be clear. In fact, it can be helpful to ask your editor to tell you what they think your intention is.
- You may ask a reader to pay particular attention to something that has caused you problems.
- Otherwise, just say, “Thank you” and let go.

Tip

The draft you give a peer editor should be as finished as you can make it. If it isn’t finished, that’s what your peer editors will say: It isn’t finished yet.

Then, as the reader

- Be respectful. Don’t criticize in a way that makes a writer feel stupid. Believe in the possibilities of the essay. Avoid sweeping judgments (“this is good,” “this is bad”); if you can’t say why, the writer won’t know what to do. Give specific input (“I can’t find a thesis,” “The transitions were easy to follow.”) Avoid the word “you”; talk about the essay, not the writer.
- Try to say positive things as well as suggesting changes. It is helpful for writers to know what is working as well as what is not working.
- Write on the essay. In fact, write all over it!
- Read the essay at least twice. The first time, get familiar with the topic and do a little light commentary. Maybe note errors in mechanics.
- Then, go over the essay a second time. Look deeper. Consider organization, clarity, and writing quality. Note anything that confuses you, interests you, or bores you. At the very least, answer

the following questions. But don't hesitate to offer other thoughts that will help the writer achieve her purpose.

- Is the formatting correct?
- Is the title interesting?
- Is the introductory paragraph engaging and does it indicate the direction of the paper?
- Is the thesis clear and specific?
- Does the body of the essay develop and support the main idea?
- Are transitions clear?
- Does the essay include extra, unnecessary material, or is more detail needed? If so, where?
- Does the conclusion feel meaningful?
- Finally, answer these two questions. Every writer needs to hear something good, but nobody ever produces a perfect document on a first try.
 - What one thing most needs to be improved in this essay?
 - What one thing did you like best or remember most clearly?

Lastly, as the writer again

After your essay has been critiqued, read the input you receive.

- If you don't understand a comment, ask the editor to clarify. But it is unnecessary to debate a point or explain yourself.
- If the mechanical suggestions are correct, make those changes. Always double check; do not simply take an editor's word for a grammar or punctuation rule!
- Decide which suggestions on the content will improve your essay and which will not. Incorporate the ideas you like. If several readers note the same problem, take the advice seriously. However, you are always the final judge about what you do in your own essay.

Using Tutors

The best time to get help from a tutor is...any time. Tutors can help in the writing process if you are struggling. They can help by going over your draft with you so you give peer editor a more polished version. They can help after peer editing by providing feedback on changes you've made. They can also help with any overall grammar or mechanical problems.

What they won't do is fix your paper for you. Don't expect that. But they will help **you** fix your paper. And the one-on-one support can be invaluable.

Exercise 1

Once you are confident the content of your essay is solid, edit it. A writer is responsible for their own writing. Go through the document yourself, checking formatting, grammar, punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure. Run a spellcheck.

If you need additional help, put a peer editing group together or go to a tutor.

When you have finished editing your essay, respond to the following in your notebook:

- Identify two things you changed or fixed in **revising** your essay. Be specific. Don't just say, "It is clearer." Instead, explain how you revised your conclusion so it was stronger or how you added more detail to one of the body paragraphs.
- Identify two things you changed or fixed in **editing** your essay. Be specific. Don't just say, "I checked the grammar." Explain how you identified and corrected fragments and run-ons or checked to be sure verb tense was consistent or fixed formatting problems you had on earlier assignments.

Am I Done?

The writing process is "recursive." That means you can repeat steps at any point if you need to do so. If you start drafting and realize your thesis needs to be clearer, go back and work on Step 2 again. If you are in the middle of revising and think a paragraph needs more detail, do a quick prewrite to see what other details you can discover.

When should you consider your essay finished? Donald Murray wrote this in his essay about revising called “The Maker’s Eye”:

“A piece of writing is never finished. It is delivered to a deadline.”

The best writers always have an urge to keep tinkering. If you give yourself enough time to work through this process, however, you WILL reach a point where you have a good product, and you will do so before the assignment is due.

Takeaways

- Peer editing is a skill that improves with practice.
- Providing a peer edit requires you to be respectful, thorough, and specific.
- Tutors can provide invaluable one-on-one support at any point in the process.
- Using feedback from peer editors requires you to be open to input but also able to identify what will help you achieve your purpose.
- If you use this writing process, your final document will be much better than it would have been otherwise.

CHAPTER 7: READINGS

7.1 Readings

7.1 Readings

Preview

Ch. 7 includes links to example professional and student essays.

Reading excellent writers is not just entertaining or informative. It embeds their style, their vocabulary, and the structure of their writing into your sub-conscious. We learn from watching others.

Following are example essays from professional and student writers. We will read some for assignments and others for discussion.

Professional Essays

“Accomplishing Big Things in Small Places” by William Wisemann is available at <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=94566019>

“Black Exhaustion” by Pilot Viruet is available at <https://medium.com/matter/black-exhaustion-eb90b87c4476>

“Fun. Oh Boy. Fun. You Could Die from It” by Suzanne Britt Jordan is available at <https://www.nytimes.com/1979/12/23/archives/fun-oh-boy-fun-you-could-die-from-it.html>

“How to Mark a Book” by Mortimer Adler is available at <https://www.unz.com/print/SaturdayRev-1940julo6-00011/>

“Only Daughter” by Sandra Cisneros is available at http://chawkinsteaching.weebly.com/uploads/1/2/9/7/12977279/only_daughter.pdf

Student Essay

“The Best Place to Study” by Pablo Medina. This essay was written for WR115, and the assigned topic was broadly “Mt. Hood Community College.” Notice that Pablo narrowed the subject to an appropriate size. His thesis is clearly stated in the introduction, his body paragraphs each have a topic sentence and specific details, and the conclusion is relevant without being repetitive. He provides three examples to support his thesis, with each example more important than the previous one (emphatic order). The essay is available at https://saintsmhcc-my.sharepoint.com/:b/g/personal/monteveg_mhcc.edu/EWnShSZ6lolHn_QRNYUbgcwBF7gEIBxmlN4oryx_pTlbJQ?e=k0jjrU

Tip

When you log in to an essay, consider printing it out to read it. Why?

- Some sites limit the number of times you can access materials on their site before they require you to subscribe. Often a subscription is free, but sometimes it is not. If you log in to check out an essay, then log in again later to read it, then log in again to check something, you may find the site won't let you back in.
- Also, it's always better to read print copies and take notes on the document as you read rather than to try to take notes on a separate sheet. However, if you can't print out an essay to read, get paper and pen and take good notes.

CHAPTER 8: ANSWERS TO EXERCISES

8.1 Answers to Exercises

8.1 Answers to Exercises

Preview

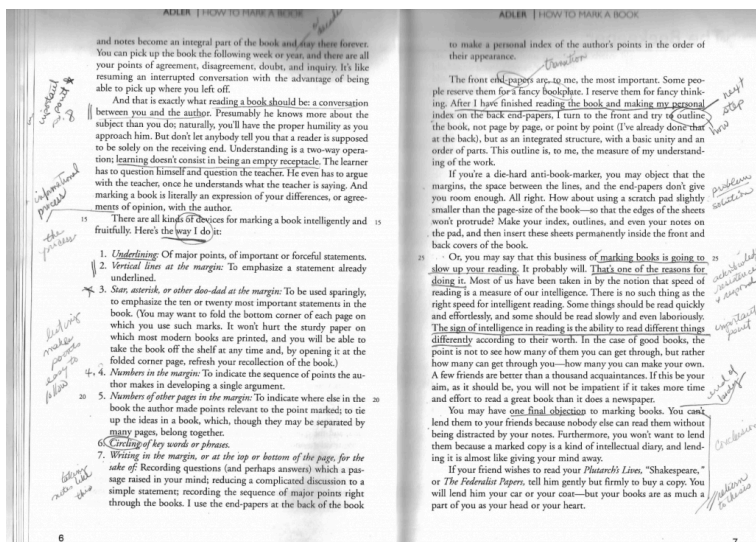
This chapter includes answers to the exercises that have right or wrong answers. Once you have completed an exercise, check your answers here. If you made a mistake, see if you can figure out why. If you can't figure it out, ask the instructor or a tutor to explain. If you got the exercise correct, good job!

This section does not include answers to exercises that are based on your personal experience, like those in Ch. 1, because those answers will differ from student to student. It also does not include exercises that are steps in a writing assignment, like those in Ch. 6, because your answers will differ from those of other students.

Ch. 1.1

Ex. 2

You were asked to print out and read the essay “How to Mark a Book” by Mortimer Adler. Then, use the process Adler explains to mark his essay up as you read it a second time. Your marked up essay should look something like this:



Ch. 2.1

Ex. 1

The nine misspelled words in the paragraphs about Alexie are as follows (the correct spelling is in parentheses):

likly (likely)

disabilitys (disabilities)

plagud (plagued)

aleinated (alienated)

socializeing (socializing)

displaid (displayed)

anthologeis (anthologies)

noteably (notably)

Ch. 2.2

Ex. 1

The correct word is in red.

1. The news predicts good **weather** for our trip.
2. My little cousin turns **two** years old tomorrow.
3. The next-door neighbor's dog is **quite** loud. He barks constantly.
4. **Your** mother called this morning to talk about the party.
5. I like to **wear** unique clothing from thrift stores with no company logos.
6. I would rather eat a slice of chocolate cake **than** eat a chocolate muffin.
7. Everyone goes **through** hardships in life.
8. I don't care **who's** coming to the party.
9. Do you have any **loose** change to pay the parking meter?
10. Father must **have** left his briefcase at the office.
11. Marjorie felt like she was being **led** on a wild goose chase, and she did not like it one bit.
12. Before playing ice hockey, I was supposed to read the contract, but I only skimmed it, which may **affect** my understanding.
13. The party **they're** hosting will be in June at **their** ranch.
14. **Except** for Ajay, we all had tickets to the game.
15. It must be fall, because **it's** getting darker earlier.

Ex. 2

The slang words that should be changed are "airhead," "bombed," "going off," "wow," "boo," and "guts."

Ex. 3

The clichés that need replacing are “ax to grind,” “wit’s end,” “bottom line,” “make ends meet,” “my brain is fried,” “pulling an all-nighter,” and “tongue tied.”

Ch. 2.3

Ex. 1

The proper nouns in these sentences are as follows:

1. Catholic, Church of England
2. Dad, Mom
3. none
4. Aquarius
5. none

The common nouns in these sentences are as follows:

1. sister
2. gifts, toaster, blender, bathrobe
3. telephone, indicators, types, messages
4. astrology, sign
5. wind, night, house

Ex. 2

The correct pronouns are in red. The antecedent is identified in the parentheses that follows.

1. In the current economy, workers don’t want to waste **their** money.
(The antecedent of “their” is “workers.”)
2. If my sister goes to medical school, **she** must be prepared for the long hours. (The antecedent of “she” is “sister.”)

3. The plumbing crew did **their** best to repair the broken pipes. (The antecedent of “their” is “crew.”)
4. The commencement speaker said students have an opportunity to improve **their** lives. (The antecedent of “their” is “students.”)
5. Aunt Norma was a talented gardener and **she** worked in the yard nearly every day. (The antecedent of “she” is “Aunt Norma.”)
6. My computer is nearly ten years old. **It** really needs to be replaced. (The antecedent of “It” is “computer.”)

Ex. 3

The pronoun errors are crossed out and any necessary changes are inserted in red.

1. The eighth grade students ~~they~~ were behaving mysteriously.
2. Twyla and ~~me~~ I went to the circus on Friday.
3. The instructor gave ~~her notes to~~ Marilyn ~~her notes~~.
4. Juan is a man ~~that~~ **who** has high standards.
5. ~~A gardener is~~ **Gardeners are only successful if** ~~he or she has~~ **they have** good soil.

Ex. 4

The correct verb form is in red.

1. The Dust Bowl **was** a name given to a period of destructive dust storms in the United States during the 1930s.
2. Today, historians **consider** The Dust Bowl to be one of the worst weather events in American history.
3. The Dust Bowl mostly **affected** Kansas, Colorado, Oklahoma, Texas, and New Mexico.
4. Dust storms **continue** to occur in these dry regions, but not to the devastating degree of the 1930s.
5. The Dust Bowl era finally came to end in 1939 when the rains **arrived**.

Ch. 2.4

Ex. 1 & Ex. 2

In Ex. 1, you labeled the common and proper nouns and the pronouns. Then you identified any adjectives that modified those nouns or pronouns and drew an arrow from the adjective to the word it modified.

In Ex. 2, you identified which words were verbs. Then, you found any adverbs that modified verbs, adjectives or other adverbs and drew an arrow from the modifier to the word modified.

(I have labeled conjunctions and prepositions and enclosed prepositional phrases in parentheses, for your information; that was not required on the assignment.)

1. Lily works seven shifts every week (at the clinic)

2. The book is fairly new, but it is damaged.

3. Flowers make a very special gift.

4. He is my favorite musician.

5. That little black dog is noisy.

The image shows five sentences with handwritten grammatical labels and arrows. Sentence 1: 'Lily' is labeled NP, 'works' is V, 'seven' is ADJ, 'shifts' is NC, 'every' is ADJ, 'week' is NC, and '(at the clinic)' is a prepositional phrase. Sentence 2: 'The' is ADJ, 'book' is NC, 'is' is V, 'fairly' is ADV, 'new' is ADJ, 'but' is CONJ, 'it' is PRO, and 'is' is V. Sentence 3: 'Flowers' is NC, 'make' is V, 'a' is ADJ, 'very' is ADV, 'special' is ADJ, and 'gift' is NC. Sentence 4: 'He' is PRO, 'is' is V, 'my' is ADJ, 'favorite' is ADJ, and 'musician' is NC. Sentence 5: 'That' is ADJ, 'little' is ADJ, 'black' is ADJ, 'dog' is NC, 'is' is V, and 'noisy' is ADJ. Arrows indicate the relationship between modifiers and the words they modify.

Ex. 3

In this exercise, you identified prepositional phrases by enclosing them in

parentheses. Then you labeled the words in the prepositional phrase: the preposition, the nouns or pronouns, and any adjectives or adverbs.

1. Meera was deeply interested (in marine biology)
(prep adj NC)
2. I just watched the season finale (of my favorite show).
(prep adj adj NC)
3. Jordan won the race, and I am happy (for him).
(prep pron)
4. The lawyer appeared (before the court) (on Monday).
(prep adj NC) (prep NP)
5. Chloe wore a comfortable blue tunic (for the party).
(prep adj NC)

Ex. 4

This exercise asked you to find and label any conjunctions.

1. I don't mean to brag, but I am the best cook in my family.
2. Italy experienced the worst heat wave in its history last year when I visited my family.
3. Ms. Beckett is strange, yet she is also smart.
4. Hilton's soccer team lost last season so they will have to practice more next year.
5. Jose writes letters by hand, and his grandparents love receiving them.
6. I felt lucky because I got into the college of my choice.

Ch. 3.1

Ex. 1

You labeled all the nouns or pronouns in the sentence. Then, you decided which nouns or pronouns were the sentence subject and underlined subjects once. Finally, you identified what the subject was doing the sentence (the verb) and underlined verbs twice.

1. ^NLinda and ^NJavier ^Vdanced under the ^Nstars.

2. ^{ppd}I ^Vhave an ^Nopinion about the ^Ntopic.

3. The ^Nfans ^Vwalked through the ^Ngates.

4. ^NJamyra ^Vran around the ^Ntrack.

5. In ^NApril, ^NToby ^Vcelebrated his ^Nbirthday.

Ex. 2

Complete sentences are marked. Fragments have missing information explained. Corrections will vary from student to student.

1. The band arrived in a limo with their guitars in the trunk. **Complete.**
2. Entered the classroom and took off his backpack. **Missing a subject.**
Who entered the classroom?
3. Taking a family cruise to Puerto Vallarta. **Missing a subject.** Who is taking the cruise?
4. A kite in the shape of an eagle. **Missing a verb.** What is the kite doing?
5. In the park last night, I saw a bat. **Complete.**
6. Bentley, the next door neighbor, likes. **This has a subject and a verb, but it doesn't have a complete thought.** What does Bentley like?
7. Blew down in the high wind, but the maple tree was unharmed.

Missing a subject. What blew down?

Ch. 3.2

Ex. 1

Corrections to subject-verb agreement errors are in red.

1. My dog and cat ~~chases~~ chase each other in the house.
2. The books in my library ~~is~~ are the best I have ever read.
3. There ~~is~~ are the newspapers I was supposed to deliver.
4. Some of the clothes ~~is~~ are packed away in the attic.
5. Crows in my white maple tree and on the electrical line ~~is~~ are annoying.

Ex. 2

Misplaced modifiers have been corrected in red.

1. The young lady ~~on the telephone~~ was walking the dog ~~on the telephone~~.
2. I heard ~~on the evening news~~ there was a robbery ~~on the evening news~~.
3. ~~Rolling down the mountain~~, the explorer stopped the rock ~~rolling down the mountain~~ with his foot.
4. We are looking for a babysitter ~~who doesn't smoke and owns a car~~ for our six-year-old ~~who doesn't smoke and owns a car~~.
5. The teacher served cookies ~~wrapped in aluminum foil~~ to the children ~~wrapped in aluminum foil~~.
6. ~~Driving home from work~~, Charlie spotted a stray puppy ~~driving home from work~~.

Ex. 3

There are several ways to correct the dangling modifiers in these sentences. The answers presented are one option.

1. ~~Playing a guitar in the bedroom, the cat was seen under the bed.~~
While playing a guitar in the bedroom, I saw a cat under the bed.
2. ~~Packing for a trip, a cockroach scurried down the hallway. As Marnie was packing for a trip, she saw a cockroach scurry down the hallway.~~
3. ~~While driving to the veterinarian's office, the dog nervously whined.~~
The dog nervously whined as he was being driven to the veterinarian's office.
4. ~~Piled up next to the bookshelf, I chose a romance novel.~~ From the books piled next to the shelf, I chose a romance novel.
5. ~~Chewing furiously, the gum fell out of my mouth.~~ The gum fell out of my mouth as I chewed furiously.

Ex. 4

There are several ways to correct the parallel structure in the following sentences. These answers present one option.

1. ~~I would rather work at a second job to pay for a new car than a loan.~~ I would rather work at a second job to pay for a new car than take out a loan.
2. ~~How you look in the workplace is just as important as your behavior.~~
How you look in the workplace is just as important as how you behave.
3. ~~Indian cuisine is tastier than the food of Great Britain.~~ The food of India is tastier than the food of Great Britain.
4. ~~Jim's opponent in the ring was taller, carried more weight, and not as strong.~~ Jim's opponent in the ring was taller and heavier but weaker.
5. ~~Working for a living is much harder than school.~~ Working for a living is much harder than going to school.

Ch. 4.1

Ex. 1

End punctuation is added in red.

1. Valivann brought pulled pork, salad rolls, and rice to the picnic.
2. Will John be on time?
3. Chris always says John has his own clock.
4. I still have to clean and move the table and chairs that have been sitting in the basement since last summer.
5. Rain! On my birthday! Such bad luck!
6. The good news is we can still eat cake, even in the rain.

Ch. 4.2

Ex. 1

Commas and conjunctions have been added to these sentences. Some words have been changed where necessary.

1. John wanted a snack before bedtime, **so** he ate some fruit.
2. We could go camping for vacation, **or** we could go to the beach ~~for~~ **vacation**.
3. I want to get a better job, **so** I want to finish college.
4. I cannot move forward on this project, **but** I cannot afford to stop ~~on~~ **this project**.
5. The weather was clear yesterday, **and** we decided to go on a picnic.
(The conjunction "so" would also work here.)

Ex. 2

Commas have been added in red where necessary. If a sentence was correct, it has been marked as such.

1. The letter was postmarked May 4, 2001, but I didn't receive it until June.
2. He visited Italy in July 2009. correct
3. We looked at the dark, dangerous sky and wondered if we would make it home safely.
4. I recently moved to 4542 Larkspur Lane, Hope, Missouri 70832.
5. Eric lives in Boston, Massachusetts, and uses public transportation.

Ex. 3

Commas have been added in red.

1. In the blink of an eye, the kids were ready to go to the movies.
2. Confused, he tried opening the box from the other end.
3. I prefer ice cream to vegetables, don't you?
4. Without a doubt, green is my favorite color.
5. The best dogs are loyal and sweet, not just beautiful.

Ex. 4

Commas have been added in red. At the end of each sentence, the number of the rule is listed.

1. Our meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 20. (Rule 2) Before that time, we need to gather all our documents. (Rule 3) To prepare for this meeting, please print any e-mails, faxes, or documents referred to in your report. (Rule 3, then Rule 2)
2. The leader of the group, Garth, kept checking their GPS location. (Rule 7) Isabelle, Raoul, and Maggie carried the equipment. (Rule 2) As a result, no one noticed the darkening sky until the first drops of rain. (Rule 3)
3. Please have your application submitted by April 15, 2020. (Rule 2) In your cover letter, include contact information the position you are applying for and two references. (Rule 3) We will not be available for consultation after April 10, but you may contact the office before then. (Rule 1)

Ch. 4.3

Exercise 1

Apostrophes have been added in red.

1. Colin was a hippie in the '60s.
2. My brother's wife is one of my best friends.
3. It's my parents' house, but it's my bedroom.
4. I couldn't believe that I got the job!
5. My supervisors informed me that I wouldn't be able to take the day off.
6. Won't you please join me for dinner tonight?
7. Sarah's job just disappeared due to the pandemic.
8. Texas's state flower is a bluebonnet, not a yellow rose.

Ch. 4.4

Ex. 1

Quotation marks have been added in red. Notice whether they appear before or after other punctuation. Correct sentences are marked "Correct."

1. Yasmin said, "Let's go out to eat."
2. "Where should we go?" asked Russell.
3. Yasmin said it didn't matter to her. **Correct.**
4. "I know, let's go to the Two Roads Juice Bar. Did you know that the name is a reference to a poem?" asked Russell.
5. Yasmin was surprised and asked the poem's title. **Correct.**
6. "The Road Not Taken" by Robert Frost," Russell explained.
7. "Oh!" said Yasmin, "Is that the one that starts with the line, 'Two roads diverged in a yellow wood'?"
8. Russell nodded in agreement. **Correct.**

Ex. 2

The following are correctly italicized or enclosed in quotation marks.

- *Queen Mary 2*
- *The Washington Post*
- *BBC News*
- *Breaking Bad*
- “On the Road Again” by Willie Nelson
- “The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Perkins Gilman
- *The New Yorker*
- “The Raven” by Edgar Allen Poe
- *aloha*
- *Bigger Love* or “Bigger Love” by John Legend (This one is tricky because “Bigger Love” is a song on the album *Bigger Love*)
- *Overcooked*
- *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare
- *Netflix*
- *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* by Maya Angelou

Ch. 4.5

Ex. 1

Capital letters have been corrected in red. Notice that some errors are missing capitals and other errors are capitals that should be lower case.

David Grann’s *The Lost City of Z* mimics the snake-like winding of the Amazon River. The three distinct stories that are introduced are like twists in the river. First, the author describes his own journey to the Amazon in the present day, which is contrasted by an account of Percy Fawcett’s voyage in 1925 and a depiction of James Lynch’s expedition in 1996. Where does the river lead these explorers? The answer is one that both the author and the reader are hungry to discover.

The first lines of the preface pull the reader in immediately because we know the author, David Grann, is lost in the Amazon. It is a compelling beginning not only because it's thrilling but also because this is a true account of Grann's experience. Grann has dropped the reader smack in the middle of his conflict by admitting the recklessness of his decision to come to this place.

The suspense is further perpetuated by his unnerving observation that he always considered himself a neutral witness, never getting personally involved in his stories, a notion that is swiftly contradicted in the opening pages, as the reader can clearly perceive that he is in a dire predicament—and frighteningly involved.

Glossary

adjective

a word used to describe a noun or pronoun

adverb

a word that modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb

annotate

add notes to, comment on

antecedent

a word the pronoun refers to

antonym

a word that means the opposite of another word

article

a specific type of adjective; there are three articles in English: “the,” “a,” and “an.”

articulate

express an idea fluently and coherently

barbarous

uncivilized, discordant, harsh

chronological

according to time

clause

a group of words that includes both a subject and a verb

cliché

an overused or unoriginal word or phrase

comma splice

when a comma is used incorrectly between two independent clauses

compound noun

a noun made up of more than one word

comprehension

the act of understanding

concisely

briefly

condense

shorten

conjunction

a word that joins or connects

connotation

ideas or feelings generated by a word that go beyond its literal meaning

consonant

any letter other than a, e, i, o, u, and sometimes y

constructive

useful, helpful

contraction

a word created by combining two words, deleting some letters, and adding an apostrophe

criteria

the standard or model used for comparison

dependent clause

a group of words that contains a subject and a verb but is dependent on the rest of the sentence to finish the thought

digression

a departure or a shift from the main point

draft

the preliminary or early version of a document

edit

correct errors

emphatic

based on importance

essay

a short, subjective piece of writing that analyzes or interprets a topic

expository

a type of writing that investigates, evaluates, and explains an idea or topic

format

arrangement on the page

fragment

an incomplete sentence, missing a subject, a verb, and/or a complete thought

generate

create

glossary

a list of words and their meanings

govern

control

grammar

the system and structure of a language

homonym

words that sound like each other but have different meanings

independent clause

a group of words that includes a subject, a verb, and a complete thought

integrate

combine with other information

interjection

a word inserted into a sentence to express surprise or emotion

irregular

different from other, more common forms

isolate

separate, remove from the context

literal

actual

misplaced modifier

a phrase or clause that is awkwardly placed in a sentence so that it seems to refer to an unintended word

modify

add information to

noun

the name of a person, place, thing, or idea

object

a noun, noun phrase, or pronoun affected by the action of the verb

objective

not influenced by personal feelings

parts of speech

the system used to classify English words based on what they do in a sentence

past tense

a verb form that expresses an action which took place in the past

phrase

a groups of words that does not include the sentence subject or verb

possessive

words that show ownership

predicate

the part of the sentence that contains the verb and that tells what happened to the subject or what state the subject is in

preposition

a word that describes the relationship between a noun or a pronoun and something else in the sentence

prepositional phrase

a group of words that begins with a preposition and ends with a noun or pronoun

procrastinate

delay or postpone

pronoun

a word used in place of a noun

proofreading

examining writing carefully to find and correct mechanical errors such as spelling, grammar, punctuation, and typing errors

Red

Definition will appear here

revise

re-examine for clarity and quality

run-on

two or more independent clauses merged together with insufficient punctuation between them

spatial

as arranged in space

strategy

plan of action

subject

the main noun or pronoun which performs the action in a sentence

subjective

based on personal taste or opinion

summarize

a brief statement of the main points of a longer work

synonym

a word or phrase that means exactly or almost exactly the same thing as another word or phrase

thesis

a brief statement of the essay's main point

unethical

lacking moral principles

verb

a word that expresses action or a state of being

verb phrase

a verb comprised of two or more words

verb tense

the form of the verb that tells us when the action is occurring

vowel

the letters a, e, i, o, u, and sometimes y

works

something done or made