

UNIT 1: SENTENCE SKILLS

English Degree Entrance Preparation compiled by Carrie Molinski & Sue Slessor.

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RUN-ON SENTENCES

Introduction

In this module, you will learn how to identify run-on sentences and comma splices. You will have the opportunity to make corrections avoiding run-on sentences using punctuation, coordinating and subordinating conjunctions.

Learning Objectives

- Review the basics of run-ons and comma splices.
- Identify various fixes for run-ons and comma splices.
- Apply fixes to sentences and paragraphs.

To Do List

- Read “Run on Sentences” in Blackboard.
- Read “Commas” in *Communications Essentials for College*.
- Read “Applying Subordinating Conjunctions” in Advanced English
- Complete the Run-Ons and Splices Test in Blackboard.

Attribution & References

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FIXING RUN-ONS & COMMA SPLICES

It's inevitable. In using a variety of sentence types in your writing, you will have errors. One of the most common errors students have are **run-on sentences**.

The Basics

Just as short, incomplete sentences can be problematic, lengthy sentences can be problematic too.

As writers we want to ensure our sentences are always form a complete idea to avoid confusion for our reader. A “complete sentence” is also known as an **independent clause** which we learned about in the previous chapter. Here's an example:

I have to complete my project by tomorrow. It is worth 30% of my grade.

Both sentences are independent clauses. They both express a complete idea.

However, many people make mistakes when they incorrectly combine two or more independent clauses. This is what is known as a **run-on sentence**.

A **run-on sentence** can take two main forms. Before we tell you what those are, see if you articulate it on your own. Read the examples below and see if you can identify what is wrong with each.

Example 1: I have to complete my project by tomorrow it is worth 30% of my grade.

Example 2: I have to complete my project by tomorrow, it is worth 30% of my grade.

Example 1 is known as a **fused sentence**. This means that two independent clauses are combined without any punctuation.

Example 2 is known as **comma splice**. This means that two independent clauses are incorrectly joined by a comma.

Look at two more examples below. Can you tell which one is a **fused sentence** and which is a **comma splice**?

Example 1: We looked outside, the kids were hopping on the trampoline.

Example 2: A family of foxes lived under our shed young foxes play all over the yard.

Example 1 is a **comma splice**. Example 2 is a **fused sentence**. Let's do some more practice identifying the two.

Check Your Understanding: Fused Sentence or Comma Splice?

Read the run-on sentences below. Decide if they are an example of a fused sentence or a comma splice.

Fused Sentence or Comma Splice? (Text Version)

1. I think we will finish the report in time we will get a good grade on it.
 - a. Fused Sentence
 - b. Comma Sentence
2. The results of the study are inclusive we have decided that we cannot move forward with the project.
 - a. Comma Splice
 - b. Fused Sentence
3. It is our recommendation that your company follow this design, it will save you money in the long run.
 - a. Comma Splice
 - b. Fused Sentence
4. The research shows a need for this service, we can start rolling it out at anytime.
 - a. Comma Splice
 - b. Fused Sentence

5. My supervisor really liked my report, he wants me to present it to the board next week.
 - a. Fused Sentence
 - b. Comma Splice
6. I enjoy writing reports they give me a chance to process my ideas.
 - a. Comma Splice
 - b. Fused Sentence

Check your answer¹

Activity source: “Fused Sentence or Comma Splice?” from “Chapter 11: Run-on Sentences” In *Effective Professional Communication: A Rhetorical Approach* by Rebekah Bennetch, Corey Owen and Zachary Keeseey, licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/)

Fixes for Run-on Sentences

While **run-on sentences** are extremely common, they are also easily fixed by using punctuation, **coordinating conjunctions**, or **subordinate conjunctions**.

Punctuation

A period and a semicolon are the most common punctuation marks used to fix **run-on sentences**.

A period will correct the error by creating two separate sentences.

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

Complete Sentence: There were no seats left. We had to stand in the back.

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

Many people mistakenly assume a semicolon can be used like a comma, and that is not correct.

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

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

Make sure that both ideas are closely related before you use a semicolon. If they are not related, you cannot use a semicolon.

For example, a semicolon can't be used in the following sentence because both ideas are not related:

Incorrect semicolon use: The accident closed both lanes of traffic; we ate fast food for dinner.

Now, you might be saying, "What if they ate fast food because of the accident? Wouldn't the two sentences be related then?"

In such a case, you may be right. But it falls on the writer to make that distinction clear to the reader. It's **your job** to make sure the connection between your ideas is clear! This can be done with **transition words**.

When you use a semicolon to separate two independent clauses, you may wish to add a transition word [New Tab] to show the connection between the two thoughts.

After the semicolon, add the transition word and follow it with a comma:

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

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

We can also apply this to our incorrect example above:

Incorrect Semicolon Use: The accident closed both lanes of traffic; we ate fast food for dinner.

Correct Semicolon Use: The accident closed both lanes of traffic; therefore, we ate fast food for dinner.

Coordinating Conjunctions

You can also fix **run-on sentences** by adding a comma and a coordinating conjunction.

Remember, a **coordinating conjunction** acts as a link between two clauses.

These are the seven **coordinating conjunctions** that you can use: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, and so*.

Use these words appropriately when you want to link the two independent clauses.

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

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

Subordinate Conjunctions

Adding **subordinate conjunctions** is another way to link independent clauses. Like the **coordinating conjunctions**, **subordinate conjunctions** show a relationship between two independent clauses. There are many different **subordinate conjunctions**. Check out “[What Is a Subordinating Conjunction? \[New Tab\]](https://www.grammarly.com/blog/subordinating-conjunctions/) (<https://www.grammarly.com/blog/subordinating-conjunctions/>)” from Grammarly.com to see a list.

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

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

In the example above, the run-on is a **comma splice**, which results from joining two complete ideas with a comma. In the correct example, the subordinating conjunction *although* appears at the start to show the relationship between the sentences. Now, it’s okay to combine both sentences with a comma.

Here’s another example:

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

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

In this example, the run-on is a **fused sentence**. We fixed this issue by inserting the **subordinate conjunction** *because* in-between both sentences.

Check Your Understanding: Fixing Run-on Sentences

A reader can get lost or lose interest in material that is too dense and rambling. This can easily happen when there are too many **run-on sentences** in a paragraph. Use what you have learned to correct the following passages. When you think you have a solution, compare it to the possible answer. Changes are bolded and colored purple.

If your answers are a little different, that's okay, as long as you followed the strategies discussed. If you're not sure, please ask your instructor.

The report is due on Wednesday, but we're flying back from Miami that morning. I told the project manager that we would be able to get the report to her later that day she suggested that we come back a day early to get the report done and I told her we had meetings until our flight took off. We e-mailed our contact who said that they would check with his boss, she said that the project could afford a delay as long as they wouldn't have to make any edits or changes to the file our new deadline is next Friday.

Run-On Sentence Review 1 – Possible Solution²

Anna tried getting a reservation at the restaurant, but when she called they said that there was a waiting list so she put our names down on the list when the day of our reservation arrived we only had to wait thirty minutes because a table opened up unexpectedly which was good because we were able to catch a movie after dinner in the time we'd expected to wait to be seated.

Run-On Sentence Review 2 – Possible Solution:³

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

the paintings' original colors, the result of which are stunningly vibrant and yet delicate displays of the man's genius.

Run-On Sentence Review 3 – Possible Solution ⁴

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Commas

Check Your Understanding: Commas

Check Your Understanding: Commas (Text Version)

1. Choose the sentence that is punctuated correctly
 - a. Gerry, the team captain, took in the equipment.
 - b. Gerry the team captain took in the equipment.
 - c. Gerry the team captain, took in the equipment.
2. True or false, the following sentence is correct:
On Monday March 7 2010 we will open a new branch of our business in Winnipeg Manitoba.
3. True or false, in order to correct the following sentence (below), a total of four commas should be used:
On Monday March 7 2010 we will open a new branch of our business in Winnipeg Manitoba.
4. Which sentence is correct?

- a. Moreover I'd like to have my uncle Bill at the hearing also.
 - b. Moreover, I'd like to have my uncle Bill at the hearing also.
5. Which sentence is correct?
- a. If you refer to the operating manual you will find the instructions for automatic sheet feeding on page 31.
 - b. If you refer to the operating manual, you will find the instructions for automatic sheet feeding on page 31.
6. After which words should commas be added in this sentence?
Our lawyer advises however that July Chan whose fence was damaged in the car accident be present at the hearing.
- a. advises; however; chan
 - b. however; chan
 - c. advises; however; chan; accident
7. Which of the following sentences using commas is correct?
- a. Air Canada now offers flights to Milan Frankfurt, and Cairo.
 - b. Air Canada now offers flights to Milan, Frankfurt, and Cairo.
 - c. Air Canada now offers flights to London Frankfurt and Rome.
8. Where in this sentence should a comma be placed?
We provide sophisticated document handling and we also supply advanced finishing capabilities for complete stapled sets at the touch of a button.
- a. after handling
 - b. after sets
 - c. after capabilities
9. True or false, the following sentence is correct:
Mail the software to Ms. Kathleen Smith, 3540 Avocado Road, Regina, Saskatchewan S4R 2S5, immediately.
10. Where should a comma be placed in the following sentence?
If your account exceeds \$100000 it will continue to be insured for six months.
- a. \$100,000
 - b. \$100000,

Check your answers⁵

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Check Your Understanding: Using Commas Correctly

Check Your Understanding: Using Commas Correctly (Text Version)

Fill in the missing words using the words below:

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----------|-------------|
| • for instance | • because | • because |
| • because | • if | • meanwhile |
| • 20 commas (,) | • but | |
| • but | • so | |

Commas do a lot of work in sentences _____ such as separating independent clauses in compound sentences. _____ take a look at where the comma goes in this sentence: Much of Canada’s industry depends on the international economy _____ it is difficult to predict which fields will offer increased employment in the near future and which will decline.

We also use commas to separate independent and dependent clauses in complex sentences. Take a look at where the comma goes in this sentence: _____technology-based industries are growing _____ many people choose to go into this field of work.

Drag words and commas into the right places in the following sentences:

_____ some couples may find they must depend on two incomes for survival
 _____ they may find that they need to hire others to take care of their children
 _____ aging parents _____ finances _____ and possibly even house and garden maintenance. This is a reality that higher education students should keep in mind as they decide which industry to go into. Service industries _____ such as health care
 _____ tourism _____ and hospitality are growing fields. It’s safe to say that people trained in health care _____ hospitality _____ child care (and pet care!) will find lots of job opportunities in the next three to five years. _____
 job prospects in the aviation industry are hard to predict _____ they depend on export sales

and on business and holiday travel. We also know that people with digital skills will be needed in plastics processing _____ mould making _____and environmental technology. For college students in technology and service programs _____the future looks bright _____ they must remember that a degree or diploma does not guarantee job security. New graduates must remember that adaptability and flexibility are crucial to success in today’s workplace. It’s true that qualified workers will find their skills in high demand _____ they wish to maintain their employer’s interest in them _____ they must be prepared to commit themselves to continuous professional development.

Check your answers⁶

Activity source: “Grammar: Using Commas Correctly” by Sarika Narinesingh, licensed under [CC BY NC SA 4.0](#).

Attribution & References

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Attribution & References

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Notes

1. 1) b 2) a 3) b 4) b 5) a 6) a
 2. The report is due on Wednesday, but we're flying back from Miami that morning. I told the project manager that we would be able to get the report to her later that **day**. **She** suggested that we come back a day early to get the report **done**. **However**, I told her we had meetings until our flight took off. We e-mailed our contact who said that they would check with his **boss**, **and** she said that the project could afford a delay as long as they wouldn't have to make any edits or changes to the **file**. **Our** new deadline is next Friday.
 3. Anna tried getting a reservation at the restaurant, but when she called they said that there was a waiting **list**. **She** put our names down on the **list**. **When** the day of our reservation arrived, we only had to wait thirty minutes because a table opened up **unexpectedly**. **As a result**, we were able to catch a movie after dinner in the time we'd expected to wait to be seated.
 4. Without a doubt, my favorite artist is Leonardo da **Vinci**. **Not** because of his paintings but because of his fascinating designs, models, and **sketches**. **These** include plans for scuba gear, a flying machine, and a life-size mechanical lion that actually walked and moved its head. His paintings are beautiful too, especially when you see the computer enhanced **versions**. **Researchers** use a variety of methods to discover and enhance the paintings' original colors, the result of which are stunningly vibrant and yet delicate displays of the man's genius.
- 5.
- | | | |
|----------|-------|---------|
| 1. a. | 5. b. | 9. True |
| 2. False | 6. c. | 10. a. |
| 3. True | 7. b. | |
| 4. b. | 8. a. | |
6. Commas do a lot of work in sentences, such as separating independent clauses in compound sentences. For instance, take a look at where the comma goes in this sentence: Much of Canada's industry depends on the international economy *,*SO* it is difficult to predict which fields will offer increased employment in the near future and which will decline. We also use commas to separate independent and dependent clauses in complex sentences. Take a look at where the comma goes in this sentence: *BECAUSE* technology-based industries are growing, many people choose to go into this field of work. Drag words and commas into the right places in the following sentences: Because some couples may find they must depend on two incomes for survival, they may find that they need to hire others to take care of their children, aging parents, finances, and possibly even house and garden maintenance. This is a reality that higher education students should keep in mind as they decide which industry to go into. Service industries, such as health care, tourism, and hospitality are growing fields. It's safe to say that people trained in health care, hospitality, child care (and pet care!) will find lots of job opportunities in the next three to five years. Meanwhile, job prospects in the aviation industry are hard to predict because they depend on export sales and on business and holiday travel. We also know that people with digital skills will be needed in plastics processing, mould making, and environmental technology. For college students in technology and service programs, the future looks bright, but they must remember that a degree or diploma does not guarantee job security. New graduates must remember that adaptability and flexibility are crucial to success in today's workplace. It's true that qualified workers will find their skills in high demand, but, if they wish to maintain their employer's interest in them, they must be prepared to commit themselves to continuous professional development.

COMMAS

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

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

Commas after an Introductory Word or Phrase

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

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

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

Ironically, she already had plans for that day.

Check Your Understanding: Introductory Word or Phrase

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

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

Commas in a List of Items

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

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

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

Commas and Coordinating Adjectives

You can use commas to list both adjectives and nouns. A string of adjectives that describe a noun are called coordinating adjectives. These adjectives come before the noun they modify and are separated by commas.

Note: when listing adjectives, unlike nouns, the word *and* does not always need to appear before the last adjective.

It was a bright, windy, clear day.

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

Check Your Understanding: Comma Placement

Exercise 2 (Text Version)

Identify whether the given statement has correct comma placement.

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

Check Your Answers: ¹

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Commas Before Conjunctions in Compound Sentences

Commas are sometimes used to separate two independent clauses. The comma comes after the first independent clause and is followed by a conjunction, such as *for*, *and*, or *but*. For a full list of conjunctions, see [Chapter 11 “Writing Basics: What Makes a Good Sentence?”](#).

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

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

Check Your Understanding: Compound Sentences

Exercise 3 (Text Version)

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

1. The presentation was scheduled for Monday. The weather delayed the presentation for four days.
2. He wanted a snack before bedtime. He ate some fruit.
3. The patient is in the next room. I can hardly hear anything.
4. We could go camping for vacation. We could go to the beach for vacation.
5. I want to get a better job. I am taking courses at night.
6. I cannot move forward on this project. I cannot afford to stop on this project.
7. Patrice wants to stop for lunch. We will take the next exit to look for a restaurant.
8. I've got to get this paper done. I have class in ten minutes.
9. The weather was clear yesterday. We decided to go on a picnic.
10. I have never dealt with this client before. I know Leonardo has worked with them. Let's ask Leonardo for his help.

Check Your Answers:²

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Commas before and after Interrupting Words

In conversations, you might interrupt your train of thought by giving more details about what you are talking

about. In a sentence, you might interrupt your train of thought with a word or phrase called interrupting words. Interrupting words can come at the beginning or in the middle of a sentence. When the interrupting words appear at the beginning of the sentence, a comma appears after the word or phrase.

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

Luckily, some people questioned that theory.

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

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

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

Check Your Understanding: Inserting Commas

Exercise 4 (Text Version)

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

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

Check Your Answers: ³

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

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

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

The letter is postmarked May 4, 2001.

Her birthday is May 5.

He visited the country in July 2009.

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

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

We moved to 4542 Boxcutter Lane, Hamilton, Ontario L0P 1B0.

After moving to Victoria, British Columbia, Eric used public transportation to get to work.

Greetings are also separated by commas. When you write an email or a letter, you add a comma after the

greeting word or the person's name. You also need to include a comma after the closing, which is the word or phrase you put before your signature.

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

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

Check Your Understanding: Commas to Edit Letters

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

March 27 2010
Alexa Marché
14 Taylor Drive Apt. 6
Beauceville Quebec G0M 1K0
Dear Mr. Timmons
Thank you for agreeing to meet with me. I am available on Monday the fifth. I can stop by your office at any time.
Is your address still 7309 Marcourt Circle #501? Please get back to me at your earliest convenience.
Thank you
Alexa

Check Your Understanding: Commas to Edit Paragraphs

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

1. My brother Nathaniel is a collector of many rare unusual things. He has collected lunch boxes limited edition books and hatpins at various points of his life. His current collection of unusual bottles has over fifty pieces. Usually he sells one collection before starting another.
2. Our meeting is scheduled for Thursday March 20. In that time we need to gather all our documents together. Alice is in charge of the timetables and schedules. Tom is in charge of updating the guidelines. I am in charge of the presentation. To prepare for this meeting please print out any e-mails faxes or documents you have referred to when writing your sample.
3. It was a cool crisp autumn day when the group set out. They needed to cover several miles before they made camp so they walked at a brisk pace. The leader of the group Garth kept checking his watch and their GPS location. Isabelle Wei and Maggie took turns carrying the equipment while Mohammed took notes about the wildlife they saw. As a result no one noticed the darkening sky until the first drops of rain splattered on their faces.
4. Please have your report complete and filed by April 15 2023. In your submission letter please include your contact information the position you are applying for and two people we can contact as references. We will not be available for consultation after April 10 but you may contact the office if you have any questions. Thank you HR Department.

Watch It: Comma Story

Watch Comma story-Terisa Folaron (5 mins) on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/GHnl1O3NGJk>)

Attributions & References

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Notes

1.
 1. Correct.
 2. Incorrect.
 3. Incorrect.
 4. Correct.
 5. Correct.
 6. Incorrect.
2.
 1. The presentation was scheduled for Monday, but the weather delayed the presentation for four days.
 2. He wanted a snack before bedtime, so he ate some fruit.
 3. The patient is in the next room, so I can hardly hear anything. / The patient is in the next room, but I can hardly hear anything.
 4. We could go camping for vacation, or we could go to the beach for vacation.
 5. I want to get a better job, so I am taking courses at night.
 6. I cannot move forward on this project, but I cannot afford to stop on this project.
 7. Patrice wants to stop for lunch, so we will take the next exit to look for a restaurant.
 8. I’ve got to get this paper done, but I have class in ten minutes.
 9. The weather was clear yesterday, so we decided to go on a picnic.
 10. I have never dealt with this client before, but I know Leonardo has worked with them, so let’s ask Leonardo for his help.
3.
 1. I asked my neighbors, the retired couple from Florida, to bring in my mail.
 2. Without a doubt, his work has improved over the last few weeks.
 3. Our professor, Mr. Alamut, drilled the lessons into our heads.
 4. The meeting is at noon, unfortunately, which means I will be late for lunch.
 5. We came in time for the last part of dinner, but most importantly we came in time for dessert.
 6. All of a sudden, our network crashed and we lost our files.
 7. Alex, hand the wrench to me before the pipe comes loose again.

APPLYING COORDINATION CONJUNCTIONS

Connecting sentences with coordinate or subordinate clauses creates more coherent paragraphs, and in turn, produces more effective writing. Read the following writing excerpt:

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

This section examines several ways to combine sentences with coordination and subordination, using this excerpt as an example.

Coordination

Coordination joins two independent clauses that contain related ideas of equal importance.

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

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

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

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

Coordinating conjunctions

A coordinating conjunction is a word that joins two independent clauses. The most common coordinating

conjunctions are *for*, *and*, *nor*, *but*, *or*, *yet*, and *so*. Note that a comma precedes the coordinating conjunction when joining two clauses.

Using Coordinating Conjunctions to join Clauses

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

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

Conjunctive adverbs

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

Original sentences: Bridget wants to take part in the next Olympics. They train every day.

Since these sentences contain two equal and related ideas, they may be joined using a conjunctive adverb.

Now, read the revised sentence:

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

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

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

Common Conjunctive Adverbs

Function	Conjunctive Adverb	Example
Addition	also, furthermore, moreover, besides	Alicia was late for class and stuck in traffic; furthermore, her shoe heel had broken and she had forgotten her lunch.
Comparison	similarly, likewise	Recycling aluminum cans is beneficial to the environment; similarly, reusing plastic bags and switching off lights reduces waste.
Contrast	instead, however, conversely	Most people do not walk to work; instead, they drive or take public transit.
Emphasis	namely, certainly, indeed	The Siberian tiger is a rare creature; indeed, there are fewer than five hundred left in the wild.
Cause and Effect	accordingly, consequently, hence, thus	I missed my train this morning; consequently, I was late for my meeting.
Time	finally, next, subsequently, then	Danzel crossed the barrier, jumped over the wall, and pushed through the hole in the fence; finally, he made it to the station.

Take a look at the excerpt on wine production and identify some areas in which the writer might use coordination:

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

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

When the red grapes arrive at the winery, they are destemmed and crushed. The liquid that is left is made up of

skins, seeds, and juice. **The stems are removed, for they contain harsh-tasting tannins.** Once the grapes are destemmed and crushed, the liquid is pumped into a fermentation container. Here, sulfur dioxide is added. **It prevents the liquid from becoming oxidized and also destroys bacteria. Some winemakers carry out the fermenting process by using yeast that is naturally present on the grapes, however, many add a yeast that is cultivated in a laboratory.**

Check Your Understanding: Using Coordinating Conjunctions and Conjunctive Adverbs

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

1. Pets are not allowed in Mr. Taylor’s building. He owns several cats and a parrot.
2. New legislation prevents drivers from sending or reading text messages while driving. Many people continue to use their phones illegally.
3. The professor concluded that the student had forgotten to submit his assignment. By the time the deadline had passed, there was still no assignment.
4. Amphibians are vertebrates that live on land and in the water. Flatworms are invertebrates that live only in water.
5. Tara carefully fed and watered her tomato plants all summer. The tomatoes grew juicy and ripe.
6. When he lost his car key, Simon attempted to open the door with a wire hanger, a credit card, and a paper clip. He called the manufacturer for advice.

Collaboration

Please share with a classmate and compare your answers.

Attribution & References

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ADDING SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

Subordination

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Subordinating Conjunctions

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

Common Subordinating Conjunctions with Examples

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

Take a look at the excerpt and identify some areas in which the writer might use subordination:

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

Now look at this revised paragraph and compare your answers. You will probably notice that there are many different ways to subordinate sentences.

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

Check Your Understanding: Combining Sentences

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

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

Check Your Understanding: Coordination or Subordination

Join the bolded sentences using coordination or subordination. Check your revised sentences for punctuation.

The yeast is added to the must. Alcoholic fermentation then begins. Here, the red wine production process differs from the method used in white wine production. **Red wine is fermented for a shorter time. It is fermented at a higher temperature.** Whereas white wines may ferment for over a month, red wines typically ferment for less than two weeks. **During fermentation, contact between the skins and the juice releases tannins and flavor compounds into the must. This process is known as maceration.** Maceration may occur before, during, or after fermentation. **The fermentation process is completed. The next stage is pressing.** Many methods are used for pressing, the most common of which is basket pressing.

Check your Understanding: Subordinating Conjunctions

Using subordinating conjunctions to connect ideas – Strategy # 3 (Text Version)

The nice thing about subordinating conjunctions is that you can usually play with their organization. The connecting word can come at the beginning of a sentence or in the middle.

Always compare the two structures and decide which one you think is more effective. Using different structures can add variety to your writing.

Let's see if you can identify subordinating conjunctions and their positions in sentences.

1. Identify all the subordinating conjunctions in the following sentences:
 - a. Because the winter storm came so suddenly, no one had time to prepare for it.
 - b. No one had time to prepare for the winter storm because it came so suddenly.
 - c. After he discovered she didn't have any money, he decided not to marry her.
 - d. He decided not to marry her after he discovered she had no money.
 - e. Even if you don't follow the recipe exactly, the bread will turn out fine.
 - f. Some people are afraid of challenges while others embrace them.
 - g. Even though he understands the dangers of smoking, he refuses to quit.
 - h. I will go running even if it is freezing cold.

Subordinating conjunctions serve different purposes. You need to understand the meanings of subordinating conjunctions to use them effectively.

Answer the following questions to check your understanding of the meanings of different subordinating conjunctions.

2. Organize the different subordinate conjunctions listed below into the Subordinate Conjunctions table.

◦ whenever	◦ even though	◦ unless
◦ after	◦ whereas	◦ only if
◦ now that	◦ although	◦ even if
◦ because	◦ if	

Subordinate Conjunctions

Time	Cause/Effect	Opposition	Condition
-------------	---------------------	-------------------	------------------

3. Fill in the blanks with logical subordinating conjunctions. Choose one of the following: in case, even though, since, only if, when, while, whereas, even if. Choose a different word each time.
1. You can go on to the next slide _____ you finish this one first.
 2. _____ we were walking through the park, we saw many deer.
 3. _____most restaurants close by 10:00, many clubs stay open until 3:00 am.
 4. I refuse to go that party _____ you pay me.
 5. _____ no one was interested in the meetings, they were cancelled.
 6. Jamil refused to wear a tie to the restaurant _____ it was required.
 7. _____ we can't guarantee your tree will live forever, we can promise it will last as long as your house.
 8. We brought an umbrella _____ it rains.

Activity source: “Using Subordinating Conjunctions” by Paul Van Raay, licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

Summary

In this module, you looked at what run-on sentences are and how they can impede fluency and coherence in writing. Next, you examined how to avoid run-on sentences by adding correct punctuation, and/or coordinating and subordinating conjunctions. You also reviewed all uses of the comma and practiced including them correctly in our writing.

Remember to apply these sentence skills in all your future writing pieces and edit for run-on sentences specifically.

In the next module, you will be learning about parallelism in your writing.

Attribution & References

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PARALELLISM

Introduction

In the previous module, you practiced avoiding run-on sentences and using commas correctly. Be sure to implement these concepts in all your writing tasks moving forward.

In this module, you will learn about parallel writing: a method of writing that uses similar structures in one sentence in order to create balance. This type of grammar is considered a more advanced concept, for more academic and professional, polished writing.

Learning Objectives

- Study parallelism in writing.
- Identify faulty parallelism.
- Apply ways to correct faulty parallelism.

To Do List

- Watch the videos and read the information about parallelism.
- Complete the practice activities.
- Complete the Parallelism Assignment in Blackboard.

Attribution & References

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PARALLELISM IN WRITING

Watch it: Parallelism

Watch Parallelism in writing (4 minutes) on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/NSaGHoKBcfc&t=1s>)

Watch It: Parallel Structure or Parallelism

Watch Parallel structure or parallelism (4 mins) on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/qvDNvS2M3QA>)

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PARALLEL STRUCTURE

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

Using Parallelism

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

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

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

Faulty parallelism: Ali prefers jeans to wearing a suit.

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

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

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

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

When these sentences are written using a parallel structure, they sound more aesthetically pleasing because they are balanced. Repetition of grammatical construction also minimizes the amount of work the reader has

to do to decode the sentence. This enables the reader to focus on the main idea in the sentence and not on how the sentence is put together.

Tip

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

Creating Parallelism Using Coordinating Conjunctions

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

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

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

The first sentence uses two different verb forms (*to listen, talking*). In the second sentence, the grammatical construction on each side of the coordinating conjunction (*and*) is the same, creating a parallel sentence.

The same technique should be used for joining items or lists in a series:

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

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

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

Check Your Understanding: Create Parallel Structure Using Coordinating Conjunctions

Create Parallel Structure Using Coordinating Conjunctions (Text Version)

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

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

Check Your Answers:¹

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Creating Parallelism Using *Than* or *As*

When you are making a comparison, the two items being compared should have a parallel structure.

Comparing two items without using parallel structure can lead to confusion about what is being compared.

Comparisons frequently use the words *than* or *as*, and the items on each side of these comparison words should be parallel. Take a look at the following example:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Check Your Understanding: Create Parallel Structure Using *Than* or *As*

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

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

Creating Parallelism Using Correlative Conjunctions

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

- either...or
- not only...but also

- neither...nor
- whether...or
- rather...than
- both...and

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

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

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

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

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

Correct parallelism: The movie was both long and poorly written.

Tip

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

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

Writing at Work

Speechwriters use parallelism not only within sentences but also throughout paragraphs and beyond. Repeating particular key phrases throughout a speech is an effective way of tying a paragraph together as a cohesive whole and creating a sense of importance. This technique can be adapted to any piece of writing, but it may be especially useful for creating a proposal or other type of persuasive workplace document.

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

Check Your Understanding: Create Parallel Structure Using Correlative Conjunctions

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

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

Check Your Understanding: Revising Faulty Parallelism

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

Owning a pet has proven to be extremely beneficial to people's health. Pets help lower blood pressure, boost immunity, and are lessening anxiety. Studies indicate that children who grow up in a household with cats or dogs are at a lower risk of developing allergies or suffer from asthma. Owning a dog offers an additional bonus; it makes people more sociable. Dogs are natural conversation starters and this not only helps to draw people out of social isolation but also they are more likely to find a romantic partner.

Benefits of pet ownership for elderly people include less anxiety, lower insurance costs, and they also gain peace of mind. A study of Alzheimer's patients showed that patients have fewer anxious outbursts if there is an animal in the home. Some doctors even keep dogs in the office to act as on-site therapists. In short, owning a pet keeps you healthy, happy, and is a great way to help you relax.

Summary

Parallelism is the use of similar structures within a sentence in order to create flow, rhythm, and balance.

Faulty parallelism is awkward and lacks the cohesion for smooth reading.

Parallelism may be created by connecting two clauses or making a list using coordinating conjunctions; by comparing two items using *than* or *as*; or by connecting two parts of a sentence using correlative conjunctions.

Remember to edit all your future writing for this advanced and balanced sentence skill.

Module 3 reviews misplaced and dangling modifiers.

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Notes

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

MISPLACED AND DANGLING MODIFIERS

Introduction

So far in this unit, you have looked at run-on sentences and how to avoid them, as well as parallelism in writing.

In this module, you will explore modifiers in sentences and how they are sometimes misplaced which can unintentionally change the meaning or cause confusion.

Learning Objectives

- Review the meaning of modifiers.
- Recognize misplaced and dangling modifiers.
- Apply correct use of modifiers in sentences and paragraphs.

To Do List

- Read Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers and complete the Check Your Understanding exercises.
- Watch Misplaced & Dangling Modifier Videos: Introduction Parts 1 and 2.
- Review Learning Activity 1: Modifiers and complete the interactive activities.
- Complete the Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers Assignment in Blackboard.

Attribution & References

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MISPLACED AND DANGLING MODIFIERS

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

Misplaced Modifiers

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

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

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

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

Look at the following two examples:

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tip

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

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

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

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

Check Your Understanding: Correcting Misplaced Modifiers

Correcting Misplaced Modifiers (Text Version)

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

1. The young lady was walking the dog on the telephone.
2. I heard that there was a robbery on the evening news.
3. Uncle Louie bought a running stroller for the baby that he called "Speed Racer."
4. Rolling down the mountain, the explorer stopped the boulder with his powerful foot.
5. We are looking for a babysitter for our precious six-year-old who doesn't drink or smoke and owns a car.
6. The teacher served cookies to the children wrapped in aluminum foil.

7. The mysterious woman walked toward the car holding an umbrella.
8. We returned the wine to the waiter that was sour.
9. Charlie spotted a stray puppy driving home from work.
10. I ate nothing but a cold bowl of noodles for dinner.

Check your answers:¹

Activity source: “11.7: Exercise 1” adapted into H5P activity by Shaima and oeratgc for “11.7 – Misplaced And Dangling Modifiers” In *Communication Essentials for College* by Emily Cramer & Amanda Quibell, licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#) based on content from “2.7 Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers” In *Writing for Success* by University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing, licensed under [CC BY-NC- 4.0](#).

Dangling Modifiers

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tip

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

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

2. Underline the first noun that follows it:

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

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

After identifying the dangling modifier, rewrite the sentence.

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

Check Your Understanding: Correcting Dangling Modifiers

Correcting Dangling Modifiers (Text Version)

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

1. Bent over backward, the posture was very challenging.
2. Making discoveries about new creatures, this is an interesting time to be a biologist.
3. Walking in the dark, the picture fell off the wall.

4. Playing a guitar in the bedroom, the cat was seen under the bed.
5. Packing for a trip, a cockroach scurried down the hallway.
6. While looking in the mirror, the towel swayed in the breeze.
7. While driving to the veterinarian's office, the dog nervously whined.
8. The priceless painting drew large crowds when walking into the museum.
9. Piled up next to the bookshelf, I chose a romance novel.
10. Chewing furiously, the gum fell out of my mouth.

Check your answers:²

Activity source: “11.7: Exercise 2” adapted into H5P activity by Shaima and oeratgc for “11.7– Misplaced And Dangling Modifiers” In *Communication Essentials for College* by Amanda Quibell and Emily Cramer, licensed under [CC BY-NC- 4.0](#) based on content from “2.7 Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers” In *Writing for Success* by University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing, licensed under [CC BY-NC- 4.0](#).

Check Your Understanding: Rewrite to Correct Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

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

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

Writing Application

See how creative and humorous you can get by writing ten sentences with misplaced and dangling modifiers. This is a deceptively simple task, but rise to the challenge. Your writing will be stronger for it.

Attributions & References

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Notes

1.
 1. The young lady on the telephone was walking the dog.
 2. I heard on the evening news that there was a robbery.
 3. Uncle Louie bought a running stroller that he called “Speed Racer” for the baby.
 4. The explorer stopped the boulder rolling down the mountain with his powerful foot.
 5. We are looking for a babysitter who doesn’t drink or smoke and owns a car for our precious six-year-old.
 6. The teacher served cookies wrapped in aluminum foil to the children.
 7. The mysterious woman holding an umbrella walked toward the car.
 8. We returned the wine that was sour to the waiter.
 9. Driving home from work Charlie spotted a stray puppy.
10. I ate nothing but a cold bowl of noodles for dinner.
2.
 1. Bent over backward, the posture was very challenging.
 2. Making discoveries about new creatures, this is an interesting time to be a biologist.
 3. Walking in the dark, the picture fell off the wall.
 4. Playing a guitar in the bedroom, the cat was seen under the bed.
 5. Packing for a trip, a cockroach scurried down the hallway.

6. While looking in the mirror, the towel swayed in the breeze.
7. While driving to the veterinarian's office, the dog nervously whined.
8. The priceless painting drew large crowds when walking into the museum.
9. Piled up next to the bookshelf, I chose a romance novel.
10. Chewing furiously, the gum fell out of my mouth.

MISPLACED AND DANGLING MODIFIERS: PART 1

Watch It: Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers (Part 1)

Watch Misplaced and dangling modifiers (part 1) (1 min) on YouTube (https://youtu.be/y088_oOZwCo)

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MISPLACED AND DANGLING MODIFIERS: PART 2

Watch It: Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers (Part 2)

Watch Misplaced and dangling modifiers (part 2) (3 min) on YouTube (https://youtu.be/JsKJ_is_cjw)

Check Your Understanding: Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

Unit 6: Modifiers – Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers (Text Version)

Learning Outcomes:

1. Examine a variety of sentences containing misplaced or dangling modifiers
2. Identify if a sentence contains a misplaced modifier, a dangling modifier or no modifier errors

Modifiers introduction:

A modifier adds information to an element in a sentence. It can be an adverb, an adjective, a

phrases or a clause.

Using modifiers correctly is important to convey a clear message. Incorrect use of modifiers can alter the meaning of a sentence, which can sometimes lead to confusion or unintended humour.

Example: The zombies **almost** ate all of the students' brains.

Almost is the modifier.

Note: The placement of the word “almost” before the verb “ate” implies that the zombie **almost ate** the brains, but then didn't. If we place the word almost *after* the verb, “The zombie ate almost all the students' brains.”, this implies that the zombie ate most of the brains, but left some behind. Do you see the difference? The placement of the word “almost” matters.

Misplaced modifiers:

A **misplaced modifier** is a modifier that is in the wrong place within a sentence. Essentially, it is modifying the wrong word.

In order to fix a misplaced modifier, move it closer to the word it is intended to modify.

Example 1: I showed my arm to the professor **with bite marks**.

Note: Who has the bite marks here? By placing the phrase “with bite marks” after the word “professor”, the sentence implies that it is the **professor** who has the bite marks. Is that the intended meaning?

Example 2: I showed my arm **with bite marks** to the professor.

Note: Now that the phrase “with bite marks” is placed closer to its subject “my arm”, it is clear that the professor is not the one with the bite marks.

Here is another example of a misplaced modifier:

Example 1: Ms. Modifier kept her costume in a drawer **that had been made for her**.

Note: The location of the modifier phrase “that had been made for her” next to the word “drawer” implies that the drawer was made for Ms. Modifier. Is that the intended meaning?

Example 2: Ms. Modifier kept her costume **that had been made for her** in a drawer.

Note: Now that the modifier is moved next to the word “costume”, it is clear that the **costume** was made for Ms Modifier, **not** the drawer.

Dangling modifiers:

A **dangling modifier** means the word to be modified doesn't appear in the sentence.

To fix this problem, add a subject for the modifier to describe.

Example 1: Biking through the courtyard, a zombie appeared.

Note: **Who** is biking? The sentence is missing a subject, so the clause modifier “biking through the courtyard” is confusing.

Example 2: As the student **was biking through the courtyard**, a zombie appeared.

Note: By adding a subject, the student, the modifier makes sense.

Here is another example of a dangling modifier:

Example 1: Entering the cafeteria, a group of zombies were seen.

Note: **Who** is entering the cafeteria? Not the zombies because they're already there. The subject of the modifier is missing.

Example 2: As Ms. Modifier **entered the cafeteria**, she saw a group of zombies.

Note: Now a subject is added with a few other grammatical changes to the sentence. See the difference?

Check your understanding:

Determine if the following sentences contains a misplaced modifier, a dangling modifier, or no modifier errors.

1. While at the library, the lights shone brightly on the zombies between the stacks of books.
 1. misplaced modifier
 2. dangling modifier
 3. no modifier errors

2. The English professor started the lesson at the door while zombies could be heard.
 1. misplaced modifier
 2. dangling modifier
 3. no modifier errors

3. It was up to Ms. Modifier to save everyone from the mass of hungry zombies.
 1. misplaced modifier
 2. dangling modifier
 3. no modifier errors

4. Gathering all the best grammar weapons, the zombie apocalypse was stopped.
 1. misplaced modifier
 2. dangling modifier
 3. no modifier errors

Check your answer¹

Activity source: “[Grammar Lesson: Modifiers](#)” by Krista Ceccolini, licensed under [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0](#).

Summary

In this module, you studied modifiers and how they are often misused in writing. You examined examples of misplaced and dangling modifiers which can change the meaning of a sentence. This may result in some humour, at times, but it may also be confusing to the reader if the modifier is quite distant from the noun it should be describing.

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Notes

- 1) B) The modifier “while at the library” is missing a subject. To make this sentence correct, you could add something like “While Ms. Modifier was at the library...”. 2) A) The modifier “at the door” is in the wrong place. The sentence should read “The English professor started the lesson while zombies could be heard at the door.” 3) C) This sentence contains no modifier errors. 4) B) The modifier “gathering all the best grammar weapons” is missing a subject. You could add something like “As Ms. Modifier gathered all the best grammar weapons...”

PERSON PERSPECTIVE

Introduction

In Unit 1 so far you have practiced run-on sentences and comma use, parallelism, misplaced and/or dangling modifiers, and punctuation. Please continue to use those features and skills in your current writing, and in this module's assignment.

In this module, you will look at person perspective or point of view in writing. It is important to remember that some styles of writing allow for any kind of perspective, but formal, argumentative writing, such as research papers, only suit third person perspective, as the writer is 'removed' from the writing and refrains from giving personal perspectives to remain objective.

Learning Objectives

- Differentiate different person perspectives in writing.
- Change the person perspective in a piece of writing.

To Do List

- Read "Putting the Pieces Together" in *Putting the Pieces Together* to learn about pronouns and point of view.
- Watch the video "First Person vs. Second Person vs. Third Person."
- Read "Point of View in *Advanced English*."
- Complete the Person Perspective Quiz in Blackboard.

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PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER: PRONOUN REVIEW

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

Pronoun Agreement

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Pronoun agreement errors occur when the pronoun and the antecedent do not match or agree with each other. There are several types of pronoun agreement. Keep in mind to be more inclusive, the writer can purposefully use the pronoun “they” to refer to a single subject especially if the gender is not known, as assumptions should not be made; instead, the writer would choose to use the pronoun, “they”.

Agreement in Number

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

Note: this section uses *they* as a plural pronoun to demonstrate incorrect pronoun number agreements. However, *they* can also be used as a singular pronoun (e.g., in cases where someone's personal pronouns are *they/them* or if a person's pronouns cannot be obtained). In your writing, it is advisable to change the singular subject to a plural subject, so they are in agreement in number.

Incorrect: If a *student* (sing.) wants to return a book to the bookstore, *they* (plur.) must have a receipt.

Correct: If a *student* (sing.) wants to return a book to the bookstore, *he or she* (sing.) must have a receipt.

*If it seems too wordy to use *he or she*, change the antecedent to a plural noun.

Correct: If *students* (plur.) want to return a book to the bookstore, *they* (plur.) must have a receipt.

Agreement in Person

Singular Pronouns

Person	Subject Pronoun	Object Pronoun	Possessive Pronoun
First Person	I	me	my (mine)
Second Person	you	you	your (yours)
Third Person	he, she, it	him, her, it	his, her, its

Plural Pronouns

Person	Subject Pronoun	Object Pronoun	Possessive Pronoun
First Person	we	us	our (ours)
Second Person	you	you	your (your)
Third Person	they	them	their (theirs)

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

Incorrect: When a *person* (3rd) goes to a restaurant, *you* (2nd) should leave a tip.

Correct: When a *person* (3rd) goes to a restaurant, *he or she* (3rd) should leave a tip.

Correct: When *we* (1st) go to a restaurant, *I* (1st) should leave a tip.

Check Your Understanding: Number and Person Agreement

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

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

Indefinite Pronouns and Agreement

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

Common Indefinite Pronouns

- all
- any
- anybody
- anything
- both
- each
- each one
- each other
- either
- everybody
- everyone
- everything
- few
- many
- neither
- nobody
- none
- no one
- nothing
- one
- one another
- oneself
- other
- others
- several
- some
- somebody

- someone
- something
- anyone

Indefinite pronoun agreement

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

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

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

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

Collective Nouns

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

Common Collective Nouns

- audience
- band
- class
- committee
- company
- faculty
- family
- government
- group
- jury
- public
- school
- society
- team
- tribe

Collective noun agreement

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

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

Check Your Understanding: Choosing the correct pronouns

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

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

Subject and Object Pronouns

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

Singular Pronouns

Subject	Object
I	me
you	you
he, she, it	him, her, it

Plural Pronouns

Subject	Object
we	us
you	you
they	them

The following sentences show pronouns as subjects:

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

The following sentences show pronouns as objects:

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



Tip

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

Near *them*, the children played.

My mother stood between *us*.

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

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

The following sentences show pronouns with compound subjects:

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

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

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

Tip

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



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

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

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

Tip

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



Connecting the Pieces: Writing at Work

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



Check Your Understanding: Correcting Subject and Object Pronoun Use

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

1. Meera and me enjoy doing yoga together on Sundays.
2. She and him have decided to sell their house.
3. Between you and I, I do not think Jeffrey will win the election.
4. Us and our friends have game night the first Thursday of every month.
5. They and I met while on vacation in Mexico.
6. Napping on the beach never gets boring for Alice and I.
7. New Year's Eve is not a good time for she and I to have a serious talk.
8. You exercise much more often than me.
9. I am going to the comedy club with Yolanda and she.
10. The cooking instructor taught her and me a lot.

Who versus Whom

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

Who won the marathon last Tuesday?

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

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

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

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

Tip

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

Who/Whom do I consider my best friend?

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

I consider *him* my best friend.

I consider *he* my best friend.

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



Check Your Understanding: Using *Who* and *Whom*

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

1. _____ hit the home run?
2. I remember _____ won the Academy Award for Best Actor last year.
3. To _____ is the letter addressed?
4. I have no idea _____ left the iron on, but I am going to find out.
5. _____ are you going to recommend for the internship?
6. With _____ are you going to Hawaii?
7. No one knew _____ the famous actor was.

8. _____ in the office knows how to fix the copy machine?
9. From _____ did you get the concert tickets?
10. No one knew _____ ate the cake mom was saving.

Check Your Understanding: Writing Application

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



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POINTS OF VIEW: FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD PERSON VIDEO

Watch It: The Difference between First, Second and Third Person

Watch First person vs. second person vs. third person- Rebekah Bergman (5 minutes) on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/B5vEfuLS2Oc>)

Attributions & References

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POINT OF VIEW

Your voice can't actually be heard when you write, but it can be conveyed through the words you choose, the order you place them in, and the point of view from which you write. When you decide to write something for a specific audience, you often know instinctively what tone of voice will be most appropriate for that audience: serious, professional, funny, friendly, neutral, etc.

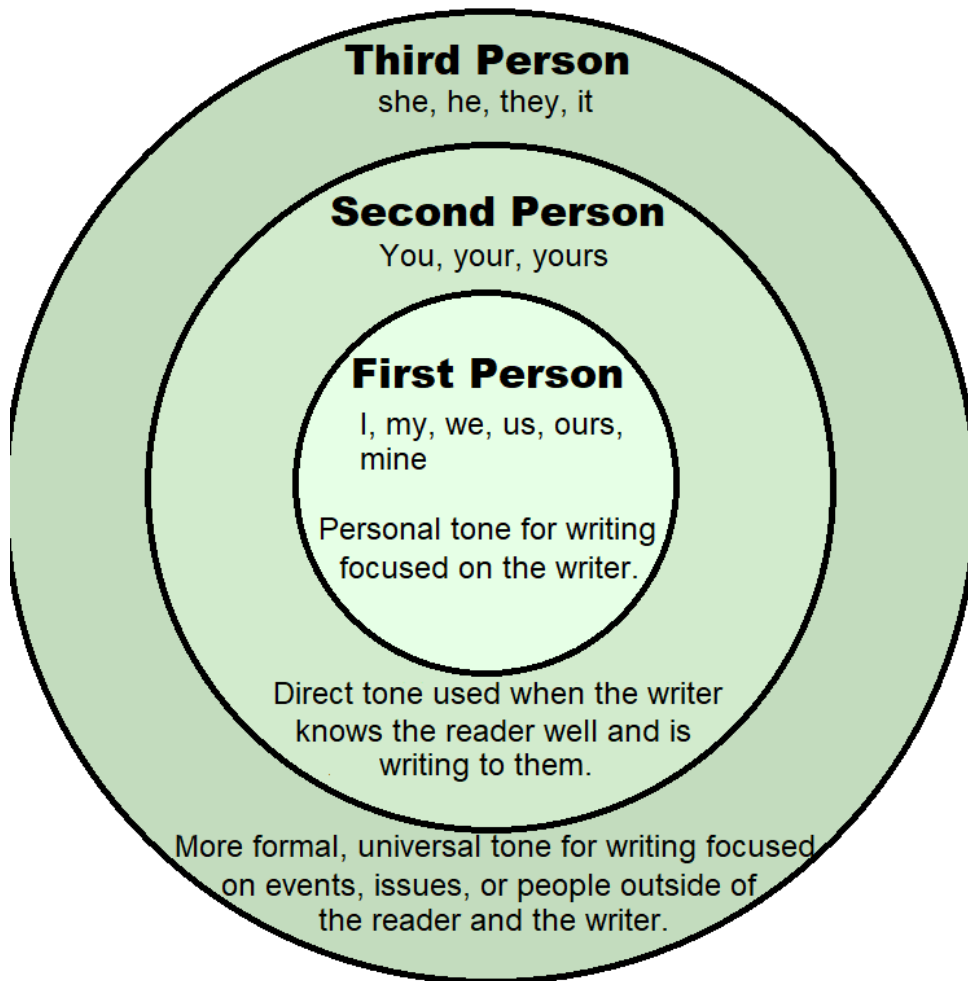
What is Point of View, and How Do I Know Which One to Use?

Point of view can be tricky, so this is a good question. Point of view is the perspective from which you're writing, and it dictates what your focus is. Consider the following examples:

- *I* love watching the leaves change in the fall. (First person point of view)
- *You* will love watching the leaves change colour. (Second person)
- *The leaves* in fall turn many vibrant colours. (Third person)

Which of the above sentences focuses most clearly on the leaves? Third person, right? The first person sentence focuses on what “I” love and the second person sentence focuses on what “you” will love.

- **First person** uses the following pronouns: I, me, my, us, we, myself, our, ours... any words that include the speaker/writer turn the sentence into first person.
- **Second person** uses any form of the word “you,” which has the effect of addressing the reader.
- **Third person** uses pronouns like he, she, it, they, or nouns... any words that direct the reader to a person or thing that is not the writer or reader turn the sentence into third person.



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When is it Okay to Use Each of These Points of View?

Most Common: Third Person

Many of your instructors will ask you to write in third person only and will want you to avoid first or second person. One important reason is that third person point of view focuses on a person or topic outside yourself or the reader, making it the most professional, academic, and objective way to write. The goal of third person point of view is to remove personal, subjective bias from your writing, at least in theory. Most of the writing you will do in academics will require you to focus on ideas, people, and issues outside yourself, so third person will be the most appropriate. This point of view also helps your readers stay focused on the topic instead of thinking about you or themselves.

Occasional: First Person

The point of view you choose to write in will depend on your audience and purpose. If your goal is to relate to your audience in a personal way about a topic that you have experience with, then it may be appropriate to use first person point of view to share your experience and connect with your audience. Otherwise, first person may not be appropriate—especially for the thesis statement. You want to eliminate the first person because it moves the focus to the writer rather than the main point. That weakens the point because it focuses on the least important aspect of the sentence and also because it sounds like a disclaimer. You might say “I think” because you’re not sure, or “I believe” because you want to stress the point that this is only your opinion. Of course, it’s okay to use a disclaimer if you really mean to do so, and it’s also fine to use first person to render personal experience or give an anecdote.

Least Common: Second Person

Second person is used least, especially in academic writing, because most of the time you will not know your audience well enough to write directly to them. The exception is if you’re writing a letter or directing your writing to a very specific group whom you know well.

Notice that this textbook uses second person in this paragraph because it directly addresses you. It is okay to do this because the textbook wants *you* to do specific things, and its audience is reading and writing students.

The danger of using second person is that this point of view can implicate readers in your topic when you don’t mean to do that. If you’re talking about crime rates in your city, and you write something like, “When you break into someone’s house, this affects their property value,” you are literally saying that the reader breaks into people’s houses. Of course, that’s not what you mean. You didn’t intend to implicate the readers this way, but that’s one possible consequence of using second person.

Tip

If you’re having a hard time getting started using third person in an academic essay, use your rough draft to write “I think that” or “I believe” and then delete these phrases in the final draft.

Does anything else affect the tone of your writing?

Many times writers are so focused on the ideas they want to convey that they forget the importance of

something they may never think about: sentence variety. The length of your sentences matters. If you start every sentence with the same words, readers may get bored. If all of your sentences are short and choppy, your writing may sound unsophisticated or rushed. Some short sentences are nice though. They help readers' brains catch up. This is a lot to think about while you're writing your first draft though, so I recommend saving this concern for your second or third draft.

Image Descriptions

Three circles labelled with the three points of view: third person, second person, and first person, and when to use them:

- First person uses the pronouns I, me, us, we, my, ours, and mine, and conveys a personal tone for writing focused on the writer.
- Second person includes you, your, and yours, and conveys a direct tone used when the writer knows the reader well and is writing to them.
- Third person includes she, he, it, they, them, their, and theirs and conveys a more formal and universal tone for writing focused on events, issues, or people outside the reader and writer.

[\[Return to Image\]](#)

Summary

In this module, you looked at points of view or person perspective in writing. You determined that formal, academic writing is better suited to have third person perspective, but other, more creative genres like narrative writing, can use any perspective.

Attribution & References

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PUNCTUATION

Introduction

Now that you have reviewed misplaced and dangling modifiers in Module 3, you will move on to punctuation in general.

In this module, you will learn about punctuation: semicolons, colons, quotation marks, and apostrophes. If you need to, please review Unit 1, Module 1 for comma use.

Learning Objectives

- Review punctuation rules—apostrophe, comma, semi-colon, and quotation marks.
- Study the use of these punctuation marks.
- Apply accurate punctuation to sentences.

To Do List

- Watch “The 13 Basic Punctuation Rules” Video.
- Read “Semi-Colons” in *Communication Essentials for College* and do the practice exercises.
- Read “Quotes” in *Communication Essentials for College* and do the practice exercises.
- Read “Apostrophes” in *Communication Essentials for College* and do the practice exercises.
- Complete the Punctuation Test in Blackboard.

Attribution & References

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BASIC PUNCTUATION RULES

Watch it: Basic Punctuation Rules in English

Watch 13 Basic punctuation rules in English | Essential writing essential series & punctuation guide (18 minutes) on YouTube (<https://youtu.be/zVu-XvULZNg>)

Attribution & References

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SEMICOLONS

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

Semicolons to Join Two Independent Clauses

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

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

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

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

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

Semicolons to Join Items in a List

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

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

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

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

Tip:

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

Check Your Understanding: Semicolon Placement

Check Your Understanding: Semicolon Placement (Text Version)

Identify whether the given statement has correct semicolon placement or not

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

Check your answers:¹

Activity source: “12.2: Exercise 1” adapted into H5P activity by Shaima and oeratgc for “12.2 – Semicolons” In *Communication Essentials for College* by Amanda Quibell and Emily Cramer, licensed under [CC BY-NC- 4.0](#) based on content from “3.2 Semicolons” In *Writing for Success* by University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing, licensed under [CC BY-NC- 4.0](#).

Summary

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

Attribution & References

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Notes

- | | | | |
|----|----------|---------|---------|
| 1. | 1. True | 3. True | 5. True |
| | 2. False | 4. True | 6. True |

QUOTES

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

Direct Quotations

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

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

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

Writing at work

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

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

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

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

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

Punctuating Direct Quotations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Quotations within Quotations

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

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

“When you say, ‘I can’t help it,’ what exactly does that mean?”

“The instructions say, ‘Tighten the screws one at a time.’”

Titles

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

“Annabelle Lee” is one of my favorite romantic poems.

The *Halifax Gazette* has been in publication since 1752.

Writing at Work

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

Check Your Understanding: Applying Quotation Marks

Check Your Understanding: Applying Quotation Marks (Text Version)

Identify whether the given statement has correct quotation marks placement

1. Yasmin said, "I don't feel like cooking. Let's go out to eat."
2. "Where should we go?" said Russell.
3. Yasmin said "it didn't matter to her."
4. "I know", said Russell, "let's go to the Two Roads Juice Bar."
5. "Did you know that the name of the Juice Bar is a reference to a poem?" asked Russell.
6. "I didn't!" exclaimed Yasmin. Which poem?
7. The Road Not Taken, by Robert Frost Russell explained.
8. Oh! said Yasmin, "Is that the one that starts with the line, Two roads diverged in a yellow wood?"
9. That's the one said Russell."

Check your answers:¹

Activity source: "12.3: Exercise 1" adapted into H5P activity by Shaima and oeratgc for "12.3 – Quotes" In *Communication Essentials for College* by Emily Cramer & Amanda Quibell, licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#) based on content from "3.4 Quotes" In *Writing for Success* by University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing, licensed under [CC BY-NC- 4.0](#).

Summary

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

Attribution & References

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Notes

- | | | | |
|----|---------|----------|----------|
| 1. | 1. True | 4. True | 7. False |
| | 2. True | 5. True | 8. False |
| | 3. True | 6. False | 9. False |

APOSTROPHES

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

Possession

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

Jen'**s** dance routine mesmerized everyone in the room.

The dog'**s** leash is hanging on the hook beside the door.

Jess'**s** sister is also coming to the party.

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

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

Plural noun that ends in *s*: The drummers'**s** sticks all moved in the same rhythm, like a machine.

Plural noun that does not end in *s*: The people'**s** votes clearly showed that no one supported the management decision.

Contractions

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

I do not like ice cream.

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

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

We will see you later.

We'll see you later.

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

**Common contractions and the
words they combine**

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

Tip

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

It's cold and rainy outside. (It is cold and rainy outside.)

The cat was chasing its tail. (Shows that the tail belongs to the cat.)

When in doubt, substitute the words *it is* in a sentence. If sentence still makes sense, use the contraction *it's*.

Check Your Understanding: Adding Apostrophes

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

1. "What a beautiful child! She has her mothers eyes."
2. My brothers wife is one of my best friends.
3. I couldnt believe it when I found out that I got the job!
4. My supervisors informed me that I wouldnt be able to take the days off.
5. Each of the students responses were unique.
6. Wont you please join me for dinner tonight?

Summary

In this module, you looked at more punctuation use with semicolons, colons, quotation marks, and

apostrophes to further perfect your writing.
The next module focuses on person perspective or point of view in writing.

Attribution & References

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