

ESSENTIAL
WRITING
KNOWLEDGE

BY

Regis University College for Professional Studies

Key to Abbreviations:

Subjectsub
Transitive verb.....tv
Intransitive verb.....iv
Linking verb.....lv
Direct Object.....do
Indirect Object.....io
Subject complement.....sc
Object complement.....oc
Prepositional phrase.....pp
Adjective.....adj
Adverb.....adv

Five Levels of Communication in Essay (or other short written work)

A written document is a form of verbal communication. The purpose of its existence is to convey information from its author (the person who writes it) to its audience (the person(s) who reads it). Within each written document we find five levels of communication; that is, we can break down the document into five areas through which our message is carried. Each level exists in all verbal communication, and each level provides progressively more--and more precise--information than the preceding level. The three most important of these levels of communication are found within the individual sentence itself.

These **five levels** are as follows, beginning with the most basic:

1. Words: Words are building blocks on which our verbal communication is based. Every word carries its own definition(s)--both denotation and connotation--which when used in conjunction with other words (context), creates a specific message. We choose the words we use when we speak or write as well as the order in which we place them within the sentence (grammar); skillful use of words (rhetoric) within the sentence enhances or manipulates the message, not only of the sentence, but of the entire communication structure (paragraph, report, essay, etc.). Words in their first definition (the one provided first in the dictionary) are classified into one of seven categories (parts of speech) which identify their most common role in a sentence; however, like a person who remains him or herself while functioning in a number of roles throughout the day, words often function as--or play roles as--other parts of speech (a noun may function as an adjective just as a secretary may occasionally function as a delivery person).

2. Essential sentence/clause: This consists only of the subject (noun or pronoun), the verb (transitive, intransitive, linking), its objects (direct object, indirect object), and complements (object complement, subject complement). It does not include any modifiers or modifying constructions (verbal phrases, prepositional phrases, etc.). The essential clauses in the sentence tell us what is going on within the sentence: for example, who is doing what to whom.

| | | | |
|---------|-----|-------|------------|
| | sub | tv | do |
| Example | Bob | likes | chocolate. |

It is important to remember that the unique meaning of each sentence depends upon the meaning--denotation and connotation--of each word the writer chooses to include in the sentence as well as the way he/she arranges the words within the sentence.

Example: *The cute, brown puppy barked loudly.*

does not present quite the same message as:

The loudly barking puppy was cute and brown.

3. Modifying sentence structures: Modifiers embellish and qualify the essential meaning of the sentence. Modifiers consist of simple modifiers (adjective, adverbs) and modifying constructions (prepositional phrases, absolute phrases, verbal phrases, subordinate or relative clauses).

| | | | | | | | |
|----------|------------|-----|------------|-------|--------|------|------------|
| | pp (adj) | sub | adv | tv | adj | adj | do |
| Example: | As a child | Bob | undeniably | liked | creamy | milk | chocolate. |

4. Punctuation: We traditionally think of punctuation as a skeletal format around which we arrange our words. While this is true, punctuation serves a further and more important function in that each punctuation mark carries its own specific meaning which, in turn, adds meaning to the sentence. Punctuation marks carry the following specific meanings:

Period (.) - *separation* mark. It separates sentences (and the ideas contained within) from one another. It does not indicate any relationship between the ideas contained within the unit of each sentence.

Example: *John has been without work for six months. He is having trouble paying his bills.*

Semicolon (;) - *relationship* mark. This punctuation mark keeps the ideas within the two clauses separate from one another while it shows us that the ideas contained within the clauses are related.

Example: *John has been without work for six months; he is having trouble paying his bills.*

Colon (:) - *explanation* mark. The colon always carries the message "more information to come." While it may be used to introduce a list or a direct quotation, it may also be used between main clauses to indicate that the second clause explains the first.

Example: *John is having trouble paying his bills: he has been without work for six months.*

Comma (,) - *joining* mark. Commonly called the "pause mark," the comma's *actual* function is to show that ideas, parts of a sentence, or clauses must be joined to provide the complete meaning of the compound, complex, or compound-complex sentence or of the part of a sentence where it is located. A common myth concerning commas is that we place a comma where we wish to pause. This is NOT the case. While we pause slightly at a comma, we must follow the basic rules of comma placement (see *Eight Places to Use Commas* below). In *formal* written English (may not be so in journalistic or business English which may use only a coordinating conjunction), **a comma cannot be used alone to join two independent clauses** (this creates an error called a "**comma splice**") and is always accompanied by a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).

Example: *John has been without work for six months, so he is having trouble paying his bills.*

Conjunction - In a sense, conjunctions are also extended punctuation marks since their function is to join sentence elements. The coordinating conjunctions (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*) join equal parts of a sentence or main (independent) clauses as in the example above. Subordinating conjunctions (*because, since, after, when, etc.*) also join clauses, making one clause (the subordinate clause) less important than (or subordinate to) another (the main clause).

Example: *John has been without work for six months, and he is having trouble paying his bills.*

Because John has been without work for six months, he is having trouble paying his bills.

OR

John is having trouble paying his bills because he has been without work for six months.

Dash (--) - *Change of direction* (tangent) mark. The dash (two consecutive hyphens) should be used sparingly, and is used to show a change in direction or train of thought, in other words, to indicate a slight tangent.

Example: *John has been without work for six months--he is also having difficulty with his school work.*

Exclamation mark (!) - *excitement* mark. The exclamation mark shows us that the sentence carries some kind of strong (negative or positive) emotion. We must learn from the context whether the message is negative or positive.

Example: *Because John has been without work for six months, he is having trouble paying his bills!*

Question mark(?) - *question* mark. The question mark does exactly as its name indicates: it shows the reader that the writer is asking a question. Be careful to **use a question mark only after an actual question**, not after a statement about a question.

Examples:

Correct: *Was John having trouble paying his bills because he had been out of work for six months?*

Incorrect: *Marilyn asked why John was having trouble paying his bills?*
(This is not a question; it is a statement about a question).

Correct: *Marilyn asked why John was having trouble paying his bills.*

5. Expository or message groupings: sentences rarely provide enough information for extensive communication or long messages; therefore, we arrange sentences into larger structures for the purpose of organizing larger amounts of information.

Paragraph: Each paragraph is a group of sentences about **one** designated part of the overall topic dealt with in the complete document. Each paragraph has its own introduction (topic sentence), its own body (sentences which add detail, example, or chronological unfolding of process information), and its own concluding or summary sentence which may also serve or lead to a sentence serving as a transition into the following paragraph. Because each paragraph concerns one, and only one, idea, the paragraph itself serves as a subsection of information of the whole essay, report, etc. In general, paragraphs consist of approximately 100 - 200 words each (**always at least three sentences**--usually 12-15 sentences or more).

Essay: (report, memo, chapter, story, play, proposal etc.). The final level of communication is the entire essay or other written format. The essay includes a thesis (or topic on which it is written), support (several paragraphs explaining and supporting the thesis by use of subtopics), and a conclusion which together with the three levels of communication within the sentences and the fourth level of communication provided by the paragraph, provide the overall communication intended by the writer. Any or all of these forms can be gathered together in yet a larger format, for example a thesis, a dissertation, or book. Every time we add more information, regardless how large it becomes, it still contains these five communication levels. The goal of the writer or speaker is to utilize all the tools of grammar, punctuation, and mechanics to make every message as precise as possible. This will assure that our verbal communication provides to our audience as much of our intended message as possible.

It is important to note here that due to the nature both of human beings and of communication itself, two truths must be recognized:

First, if grammatically correct, there are many ways to write a sentence, none of which is wrong. The writer of the sentence is its author and can to a large extent control the impact of the message within a given sentence by exercising word choice (based on aspects of definition) and manipulating word order.

Second, the writer may have little control over the reader's interpretation of the written material. Since every person is unique, not only genetically but having experienced life differently from every other person, he or she will interpret every message from his or her own viewpoint. Thus, every person's interpretation of a given sentence will vary slightly from that of every other person.

Generally, precision writing can be presumed to provide the intended message, but many factors act continually on the message to affect its interpretation. It is therefore extremely important that writers learn to make their communication as precise as possible.

It is also important to keep in mind while writing or reading four aspects of the communication that work together in the sentence: purpose, audience, information, and message. Learn to distinguish between information and message. Information consists of the “facts” provided. The message is dependent both upon the author’s intention and the reader’s perception based on both word choice and word order. Consider the following examples:

The cute little brown puppy barked loudly.

The loudly barking puppy was cute, little and brown.

While these two sentences provide the same information (facts), they provide two essentially different messages.

Words

Words are the building blocks with which we speak or write. Most of the time, we take them for granted. Sometimes, we use words that are inappropriate because we don't take the time to consider our word choice or because we do not know what a word means or because we use a word that sounds similar to the one we wish to use (affect, effect) or is the incorrect choice from a group of similarly spelled words (their, there, they're). Consciously making the best possible word choice in a sentence can make the difference between a reader's total understanding of an idea and his or her total confusion. Incorrect word choice (or incorrect placement of a correctly chosen word) can completely change the meaning of a sentence. The process of choosing the best possible word can be compared to the professional artist who, having studied Color Theory, is able to choose and mix color appropriate to the best possible completion of a painting. Precision writing is a result of carefully considered word choice and placement.

Several factors contribute to the word choices we make. (There is, in fact, an entire field of study, *Semantics*, that deals with factors contributing to word choice and usage). We will be considering some of these factors. We must remember here that the word is merely a representation of what it describes; it is *not* the thing it describes. For example, the word "death" merely describes the process of the end of life. The word "death" in itself is not death nor does using it create the situation of death. This concept is true of *all* words.

Denotation - The "dictionary" definition of a word. This is the formal definition of the word. This is a general definition. For example, if we were to look up the word "table" in a dictionary, we would discover that a "table" is a piece of furniture consisting of a flat board mounted on several legs and is used for a number of activities such as eating or work.

We must be careful, however, when accepting this type of definition because most words have more than one definition which is determined by its placement and function in the sentence. "Table," according to one dictionary, has 15 different meanings. In addition to being a "piece of furniture," a "table" may be a chart (See Table 2) or it may be an activity (let's table this discussion until the next meeting).

Grammatical Usage - Some of the various definitions of a word are related to our ability to use a word in several grammatical contexts. For instance, most words can be used as nouns, verbs, or modifiers. Let's look at the word "running" in the following examples:

*Mary is **running** in the 10K race tomorrow.*
(With auxiliary verb *is*, *running* serves as the verb of the sentence)

*Susan bought a new pair of **running** shoes.*
(*Running* is now a participle [a verb acting as another part of speech] and serves here as an adjective modifying the noun *shoes*).

***Running** is Bob's favorite sport.*
(*Running* in this instance is a gerund [a verb acting as another part of speech] and serves here as a noun--the subject of the sentence).

The fact that words can function in different roles in different sentences is a concept that many people find difficult to understand. However, if we consider the following analogy, we can relate the same idea to words. Consider this example: you are one human being. From the moment of your birth, you have always been the same person. This never changes. Nevertheless, you continuously and often simultaneously play a number of different roles while living your life; you are the child of your parents, the parent of your children, a sibling to your brothers or sisters, a partner to your spouse or significant other, an employee to your employer, and a customer when you go into the grocery store to purchase food (true even if you work for the grocery store). The same is true of words. A word which in its first definition is a noun will always remain a noun, but used in a different context, it may function as a different part of speech, for example as an adjective.

“dog” used alone is a noun
Example: *“dog” used with “food”—“dog food”—is a noun functioning as an adjective*

Connotation - The connotation of a word is the implied or emotional definition of the word. The connotation of the word may be different from or totally unrelated to the actual denotation of the word and is affected by many factors including personal experience and background, social or political factors, group dynamics (age, geographical location, or colloquial influences). For example, the denotation of the word “mother” is “a female parent”; a general connotation may show us a kindly female caretaker. A more personal connotation would include our personal experiences, including good (or bad) experiences with our own mother or another person’s mother, or the fact that if female, we may be mothers and include in our connotation our experiences as mothers to our children. Connotation often carries with it a value judgment, meaning that it includes implications of good or bad as well as personal definition. For example, if a person has had a bad experience in relation to a given word, his or her connotation will likely be negative. Because I was bitten by a crow when I was a very small child, I tend to think of a crow in negative terms, despite the fact that I now understand both the denotation of the word “crow” and that I have learned a great deal about the behavior of crows, which in general is not negative.

Concrete/Abstract - As representations of objects, activities, and concepts, words may be either concrete or abstract in nature.

A concrete word defines something which can be clearly delineated: we can touch it, measure it, weigh it, etc. “Table” is a concrete noun.

An abstract word defines something which we cannot delineate: we cannot see it, touch it, measure it. Furthermore, abstract words are very difficult to define. Often, each individual has his own definition for these abstract terms. “Loyalty” is an abstract word.

Parts of Speech

Every word in the English language falls into one of nine categories. We call these categories the **Parts of Speech**. These categories define the role each word plays in the sentence. The function of a given word may change from sentence to sentence depending upon how the word is used in the specific instance. For example:

The dog jumped over the fence. In this sentence, *dog* is a noun.

Mary opened the dog food. In this sentence, *dog* (while remaining a noun) functions as an adjective.

Essential Sentence Parts

Nouns - a noun is the name of something--a person, a place, a thing, a concept, an activity, etc. A noun usually functions as the subject of the sentence or of a clause, or as an object--direct object, indirect object of a sentence or clause, object of preposition (prepositional phrase), or object of a verbal (verbal phrase). Nouns also occasionally function as subject or object complements, as appositives, or as modifiers. (Refer to later segments of this booklet for definitions and discussion of these functions and applications.)

Nouns change their form to indicate number: *regular singular* nouns (designating one) add “s” to indicate *plural* (more than one): book = singular, books = plural. Irregular singular nouns change their spelling to indicate plural: man = singular, men = plural.

A few nouns do not form plurals. **Mass** nouns name uncountable materials such as sand or salt (in general usage; this does not apply in scientific or specialized usages), or name qualities such as anger, courage, etc. **Collective** nouns name groups of objects or persons, which although they appear plural because they consist of a number of members, are singular entities unto themselves (family, team, class).

Nouns are separated into classes which include proper (a noun with special significance, always beginning with a capital letter), common nouns (most nouns begin with a lower case letter unless used at the beginning of a sentence or other specified situation), concrete nouns which name tangible, concrete objects or persons, and abstract nouns which name intangibles such as concepts, ideas, etc.

Pronouns - A pronoun is usually said to “take the place of a noun.” More precisely, it is a word that *functions* as a noun. A pronoun must have a *reference*, a noun to which it refers (the pronoun “he” could refer to “Tom”) and without which it should not be used (using “he” in a sentence without having previously referred to “Tom” will leave the reader confused, not knowing who “he” is). Pronouns are classified into several subclasses, each of which has its own specific function:

Personal pronouns refer to persons (he, she, they).

Demonstrative pronouns identify specific nouns and often function as adjectives (this, those, that).

Interrogative pronouns ask a question (whose, which, what).

Intensive pronouns rename and emphasize a preceding noun or pronoun (she, herself; Bob, himself).

Reflexive pronouns indicate that the subject and the object of the sentence are one and the same (Don’t hurt yourself).

Relative pronouns relate groups of words to other nouns or pronouns (Mary is the student *who* was late to class. Notice that “who,” the relative pronoun, not only fulfills its job as pronoun by referring to Mary, but also functions both as a subordinating conjunction and as the subject of the second clause). “Who” is used to refer to persons only. “Which” is used to refer to animals or objects. “That” can refer to either, although using “that” to refer to a person tends to eliminate the “human” quality from its reference. Occasionally, we may refer to special animals (pets, for example) as “who.”

Indefinite pronouns (someone, anything) refer to unknown individuals or objects. The **do not** refer to a previous noun. They function as **singular** nouns.

Verbs - show us action or a state of being. Verbs are the most important word(s) in a sentence. They provide us with a picture of the action occurring in the sentence. This is true of both the main verb of the sentence or clause and additional verbals [verbs used as other parts of speech]. Refer to the next section for a more detailed explanation of verbs and their use in the sentence.

Auxiliary verbs, sometimes called **helping verbs**, are non-action verbs added to the main verb to create **tense** (time have/has/had, will/shall), **voice** (being verb is, all forms), or **mood** (had, were, would/could/should). These *do not* change the function of the verb in the sentence; i.e., a transitive verb is a transitive verb regardless of its tense, voice, or mood. Generally, auxiliary verbs (have, for example) should not be used as the main verb in the sentence where a clear, active verb will strengthen the message being presented.

Modifiers

Adjectives - are words (or groups of words) that modify nouns and pronouns. This is their only function. Most adjectives are *simple*, meaning that most are single words that modify a single word. **Simple adjectives are found in two forms:**

Coordinate adjectives are adjectives between which we can use a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so). When we do not use the coordinate conjunction between these, we replace the conjunction with a comma.

Example: *the old and faded and wrinkled shirt. . .*

OR

the old, faded, wrinkled, shirt. . .

Collective adjectives are adjectives between which we cannot put a conjunction; in other words, each adjective builds its description on the following adjective.

Example: *The blue suede shoes.* (Notice that we cannot say “the blue and suede shoes.”)

Adjectives also come in other forms. Prepositional phrases, verbals (participles and infinitives) and verbal phrases can also serve as adjectives; occasionally other parts of speech such as nouns act as adjectives as well.

Examples:

Prepositional phrase: *The book on the table*

Verbals:

Past participle: *The burned toast tasted awful.*

Present participle: *The flying saucer surprised everyone.*

Infinitive: *John is the man to follow.*

Noun as adjective: *The log cabin lay deep in the woods.*

Adverbs - describe, qualify, or limit the action of verbs. In addition, they modify other adverbs, adjectives, and sometimes whole groups of words including entire clauses. *Most, though not all*, adverbs end in “ly.” (Be careful here; some adverbs such as *very, soon, never, and always* do not end in “ly.” On the other hand, some adjectives such as *lovely* and *likely* also end in “ly”). Like adjectives, adverbs may be simple (one word) modifiers; they may also be found in the form of prepositional phrases and verbals [infinitives or infinitive phrases]. Many times, adverbs are adjectives to which we add “ly.” The adjective “quick” becomes the adverb “quickly.”

Examples:

- Simple adverb modifying verb: *The boy ran quickly.*
- Simple adverb modifying adverb: *The boy ran rather quickly.*
- Simple adverb modifying adjective: *The very angry man shouted at Alex.*
- Simple verb modifying clause: *Unfortunately, we have to leave.*
- Prepositional phrase modifying verb: *Dave stores his snowboard in the garage.*
- Infinitive modifying adjective: *The house is difficult to locate.*

Both adjectives and adverbs change to indicate **degree**. There are three degrees: **positive** (basic format), **comparative** (used to compare two items or actions), and **superlative** (used to compare three or more items or actions). In the superlative, one item or action must be the best or greatest). We create the comparative degree by adding “er” or “more” to the positive form. We create the superlative degree by adding “est” or “most” to the positive form.

Examples:

| Positive | Comparative | Superlative |
|-----------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| good | better | best |
| happy | happier | happiest |
| quickly | more quickly | most quickly |
| angry | angrier | angriest |
| angrily | more angrily | most angrily |

Note: Be very careful of using the adverb *hopefully* as a sentence introduction :

Incorrect: *Hopefully, we’ll win the lottery.* (This usage, though common, is incorrect.

Correct: [Proper usage would be] *The little boy looked hopefully at his mother.*

Conjunctions

Conjunctions are words that join words, phrases, or clauses. There are two groups of words specifically considered basic conjunctions (coordinating and subordinating) and another group considered a special class of conjunction (preposition).

Coordinating conjunctions (FANBOYS - for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) join equals, i.e. two words to form compound subject or object, (*Bill and Bob*), compound modifier (*red and blue* or *over the meadow and through the wood*), compound verb (*run or jump*), or compound sentence (*Jane overslept, so she missed class.*)

Subordinating conjunctions (these are actually adverbs) join two clauses, one of which (the dependent or subordinate clause) is of less importance than the other (the main or independent clause), i.e., *Because Mary was late for school, she decided not to go at all.* Words like *because, after, when, and if* are common subordinating conjunctions.

Prepositions - Prepositions are, in a sense, a type of conjunction. Their function is to join a noun to another word in a sentence. They generally tell us *where* or *how* or *when* something occurs. Prepositions are unlike coordinating or subordinating conjunctions in that they cannot function alone; they must function within the constraints of a prepositional phrase, a phrase beginning with a preposition and ending with a noun (sometimes preceded by modifiers). We can always determine which word the prepositional phrase modifies by phrasing the sentence or clause in the form of a question.

Under the little wooden table is a prepositional phrase. *Under* is the preposition. *Table* is the object of the preposition. *The little wooden* are modifiers (adjectives modifying the object of the preposition). The entire phrase [preposition + optional modifier(s) + noun (object of preposition)] functions as a unit to tell us where another element of the sentence is located: The cat sleeps under the little wooden table. The entire prepositional phrase is functioning here as an adverb modifying “sleeps.” [Where does the cat sleep? He sleeps under the little wooden table.]

A prepositional phrase always functions *in its entirety* as a modifier - an adverb or an adjective. A prepositional phrase modifies the word to which the preposition connects it:

The *book* is under the little wooden table. The prepositional phrase serves as an adjective because it modifies or connects to the noun “book.” [Where is the book? It is under the little wooden table.]

Be careful of ending a sentence with a preposition. To do so indicates that the preposition is stranded alone without its object (an unacceptable situation) or that you have split the prepositional phrase from itself (a confusing sentence structure). “*Which* table did you place the book *on*?” would be better written as “*On which* table did you place the book?” Be aware that ending a sentence with a preposition makes the sentence awkward and difficult to understand.

Often Used Prepositions with Example Prepositional Phrases

Characteristics to remember about prepositions. Prepositions themselves are words which link a noun (object of the preposition) to another word in the sentence. Prepositions usually tell us where something occurs, but may tell us how or when. Prepositions are **never** found alone. They are always part of a prepositional phrase which consists of the preposition and its object, a noun or a pronoun. The phrase may also contain adjectives which modify or describe the noun (object of preposition). The *entire prepositional phrase* functions as a modifier--an adjective, if it is linked to a noun or an adverb, if it is linked to a verb, adverb, or adjective. If at all possible, do not split a prepositional phrase from itself. This usually results in a situation where the writer ends the sentence with a preposition or in which the preposition is placed after its object. This often produces an awkward or difficult to understand sentence.

About -- Bill told a story about the earthquake.

Above -- The shelf above the sink is painted green.

According to -- According to John, no one saw the accident.

Across -- I live across the street.

After -- We bought lunch after class.

Against -- Speeding is against the law. (In this sentence the entire prepositional phrase functions as the subject complement [adj.]).

Along -- Signs along the highway provide traffic information.

Along with -- Along with her book, Mary lost her assignment.

Among -- Jack wandered among the tall trees.

Around -- Susan ran around the corner.

As -- As a rule, we follow the written directions.

Aside from -- Aside from a slight cold, Mary felt fine.

At -- I bought this dress at the mall.

Because of -- I am late because of the traffic jam.

Before -- Finish your assignment before class.

Behind -- I sat behind Bob and Joe. (This prepositional phrase has a compound object).

Below -- The figures below the margin are correct.

Beneath -- Please place the book beneath the table.

Beside -- The table was located beside the bed.

Between -- Jill sat between Sue and Charlene. (This prepositional phrase has a compound object).

Beyond -- The cattle graze beyond the eastern fence line.

By -- Be back by evening.

Concerning -- The newspaper story concerning the president ran yesterday.

Despite -- Jennifer came to class despite her migraine headache.

Down -- Stan climbed down the ladder.

During -- Connie often slept during the long lectures.

Except -- Everyone except Troy attended the play.

Except for -- Except for Patricia, everyone had a good time.

Excepting -- Everyone, excepting Harry, rode the bus.

For -- Here is a dollar for bus fare. (Notice that the noun "bus" is acting as an adjective in this sentence).

From -- The student from Illinois loved the mild Florida weather.

In -- He kept his cigarettes in his shirt pocket. (Notice that the noun "shirt" is acting as an adjective in this sentence).

In addition to -- In addition to math, Ellen disliked history.

Inside -- Harold was trapped inside the burning building. (Notice that the verb [verbal- present participle] "burning" is acting as an adjective in this sentence, and that the verb building, a gerund is functioning as a noun [object of preposition]).

In spite of -- In spite of her poor grade, Jody enjoyed the class.

Instead of -- Danny asked Stacy instead of Denise.

Into -- Phil dropped his fishing pole into the lake.

Like -- Paul said that Sharon looked like Alisa.

Near -- The grocery store near my home is being remodeled.

Next to -- Fred placed the map [on the seat] next to him. (Notice that this sentence contains two prepositional phrases).

Of -- Please consult the book of rules.

Off -- Take your feet off the table. (Don't use *off of*. It is redundant)

On -- Place your exams on the desk.

Onto -- Drop your shoes onto the floor.

Out -- Marilyn stormed out the door.

Out of -- William dropped out of school last year.

Outside -- Andy remained outside the barn.

Outside of -- The old farm outside of town was their meeting place.

Over -- Drive over the hill to reach the hospital. (Don't confuse the preposition "to" with the word "to" which when combined with a verb creates an infinitive [verbal]).

Past -- Rebecca drove past the library. (Don't confused the preposition "past" with the past tense verb "passed").

Regarding -- The letter regarding the unpaid bill arrived Tuesday.

Since -- Carrie has been late three times since January.

Through -- Helen pulled the heavy box through the small opening.

Throughout -- Robert studied throughout the long night.

To -- Eddie gave the expensive ring to Judy yesterday. (Don't confuse the preposition "to" with the word "to" which when combined with a verb creates an infinitive [verbal]).

Toward -- The train sped toward its destination.

Under -- The little dog often hid under the bed.

Underneath -- I found the card underneath several large envelopes.

Unlike -- Unlike its counterparts, the new automobile was equipped with anti-lock brakes.

Until -- Donna stayed until 10 p.m.

Up -- The kitten climbed up the pole.

Upon -- Upon further consideration, Steve decided not to get involved. . (Don't confuse the preposition "to" with the word "to" which when combined with a verb creates an infinitive [verbal]).

With -- Betty attended the concert with Karen.

Within -- Place the star within the circle.

Without -- Marge left home without her briefcase.

Interjections - words that essentially function by themselves as exclamations. (Wow!)

Basic Sentence Structure Patterns

(see Key on page two for abbreviations)

Transitive Verb - (LIKE A TRAIN OR BUS - i.e. The BART System in San Francisco is called the Bay Area Rapid **Transit** system. The busses and trains move people and objects to another place). Similarly the **transitive** verb moves action from **SUBJECT** (actor) to **DIRECT OBJECT** (receiver) resulting in the following sentence pattern:

- | | | | |
|----|---------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. | sub (subject) | tv (transitive verb) | do (direct object) |
| | Tom | hit | Bill. |

The **transitive verb** **MUST** take a **direct object**. Additionally it may generate the following two possible (but not mandatory) sentence patterns:

- | | | | | |
|----|-------|------|----------------------|-----------|
| 2. | sub | tv | io (indirect object) | do |
| | Susan | gave | Mary | the book. |

The **INDIRECT OBJECT** **ALWAYS** comes **BEFORE** the Direct Object.

The indirect object receives the action secondarily or after the direct object. (Explanation: Susan picks up the book before she hands it to Mary. The book receives the action first; it is therefore the Direct Object. Mary receives the action secondarily (indirectly) or after the book; she is therefore the indirect object.

DO NOT confuse the indirect object with the object of the prepositional phrase as in the following sentence:

- | | | | |
|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <i>sub</i> | <i>tv</i> | <i>do</i> | <i>pp</i> |
| Susan | gave | the book | to Mary. |

In this sentence Mary is the object of the preposition, NOT the indirect object.

- | | | | | |
|----|------------|-----------|-----------|---------------------------------|
| 3. | <i>sub</i> | <i>tv</i> | <i>do</i> | <i>oc (Object Complement)</i> |
| | The club | elected | Bill | President (noun renames DO) |
| OR | Sam | calls | Jack | Stupid (adjective describes DO) |

An object complement is a word which complements (supplements, modifies, limits, qualifies [adjectives] or renames [nouns] the direct object of the clause or sentence.

The **OBJECT COMPLEMENT** **ALWAYS** comes **AFTER** the Direct Object. If a modifier is found before the Direct Object, it is **NOT** an object complement. It is nothing more than a common modifier (adj).

NOTE: YOU WILL NEVER HAVE BOTH AN INDIRECT OBJECT AND AN OBJECT COMPLEMENT IN THE SAME SENTENCE!

Clauses and Phrases

Phrases

A **phrase** is a group of words that is **not** a complete sentence. It may lack a subject, a verb, or both. A phrase may contain an object despite its lack of a subject; the object is always attached to the verb in any of its functions. Phrases function within the sentence as other parts of speech.

Prepositional phrase - Preposition followed by noun or pronoun (object of preposition) functions as an adjective or as an adverb (it may also occasionally function as a noun).

He placed the book on the table.

Verb Phrase - an action verb joined by one or more helping or auxiliary verbs. Auxiliary verbs are added to the main verb in the sentence or clause to change tense, mood, or voice (see pp. 28-30 of this handout for tense, mood, voice). The main verb including all its auxiliaries functions as the complete verb of the sentence or clause.

Bill has given his book to Jane.

In June, Mary will have been teaching for five years.

Absolute phrase - a phrase which consists of a noun (pronoun) and a participle; the absolute phrase modifies an entire clause. Although the absolute phrase technically contains a noun and a verb, it is **not** a complete sentence because the verb is a **verbal**--participle--acting as an adjective.

Her child screaming, the young mother hurried through the airport.

Verbal Phrases

Participle Phrase - consists of a participle (verb + ing [present participle] or verb + ed [past participle], its object(s), and modifiers. It functions as an adjective.

Gerund Phrase - consists of a gerund (verb + ing), its object(s), and modifiers. It functions as a noun in any capacity a noun serves (subject, object).

Infinitive phrase - consists of an infinitive (the word "to" + a verb), its object(s), and modifiers. It may function as a noun, an adjective, or an adverb.

Clauses

A **clause** is a group of words that **includes its own subject and its own verb**; in other words, a clause is a complete thought. *An independent or main clause is a complete simple sentence.*

Main or **independent** clauses are able to stand alone on their own internal merit; a main clause is, in fact, a complete *simple* sentence. Main clauses may be joined to one another with a coordinating conjunction (to create a *compound* sentence), a semi-colon(;), or, in specific instances, a colon(:). Main clauses also serve as the *stable* or essential clause in a *complex* (one main clause + one subordinate clause) or a *compound-complex* (two or more main clauses + one or more subordinate clauses) sentence.

Bill Smith registered for the class on Tuesday, and John Smith registered on Wednesday.
Bill Smith registered for the class on Tuesday; John Smith registered on Wednesday.

Subordinate or **dependent** clauses also contains complete subject and a complete verb, but are unable to stand alone in *written* English. They **must** be attached to a main clause to be considered complete and often to make sense. If they are not attached to a main clause, they are considered a sentence fragment and are, therefore, grammatically incorrect. (These may be acceptable in conversation because they will be found within context in such an instance).

Subordinate clauses are formed in two ways:

1. Attachment of a **subordinating conjunction** which joins it and subordinates it to (makes it less important than) the main clause.

Subordinate clause: *because she was tired*

Complete complex sentence: *Mary skipped class because she was tired.*

OR *Because she was tired, Mary skipped class.*

(Notice the variation in punctuation. If the main clause comes first, no comma is needed. If the subordinate clause comes first, it is followed with a comma).

2. Attachment of a **relative pronoun** (who, which, that, where) which joins the two clauses together, makes the relative (subordinate) clause less important than the main clause and **may** serve as the subject of the second clause.

Subordinate (relative) clause: *that was left at home*

Complete sentence: *Jack found the book that was left at home.*

Subordinate or dependent clauses (the whole clause) serve as adjectives, adverbs, or nouns within the sentence.

Adjective clause: *My family still lives in the town where I grew up.*

Adverb clause: *Jason was late to class because he overslept.*

Noun clause: *What Jack said infuriated Bill.*

Note: Do not eliminate a relative pronoun (who, that, which) serving as the subject of the relative (subordinate) clause.

Punctuation

Period (.) - *separation* mark. It separates sentences (and the ideas contained within) from one another. It does not indicate any relationship between the ideas contained within the unit of each sentence.

Example: *John has been without work for six months. He is having trouble paying his bills.*

Semicolon (;) - *relationship* mark. This punctuation mark keeps the ideas within the two clauses separate from one another while it shows us that the ideas contained within the clauses are related.

Example: *John has been without work for six months; he is having trouble paying his bills.*

Colon (:) - *explanation* mark. The colon always carries the message "more information to come." While it may be used to introduce a list or a direct quotation, it may also be used between main clauses to indicate that the second clause explains the first.

Example: *John is having trouble paying his bills: he has been without work for six months.*

Comma (,) - *joining* mark. Commonly called the "pause mark," the comma's *actual* function is to show that ideas, parts of a sentence, or clauses must be joined to provide the complete meaning of the compound, complex, or compound-complex sentence or of the part of a sentence where it is located. A common myth concerning commas is that we place a comma where we wish to pause. This is NOT the case. While we pause slightly at a comma, we must follow the basic rules of comma placement (see *Eight Places to Use Commas* below). In *formal* written English (may not be so in journalistic or business English which may use only a coordinating conjunction), **a comma cannot be used alone to join two independent clauses** (this creates an error called a "**comma splice**") and is always accompanied by a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).

Example: *John has been without work for six months, so he is having trouble paying his bills.*

Conjunction - In a sense, conjunctions are also extended punctuation marks since their function is to join sentence elements. The coordinating conjunctions (*for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*) join equal parts of a sentence or main (independent) clauses as in the example above. Subordinating conjunctions (*because, since, after, when, etc.*) also join clauses, making one clause (the subordinate clause) less important than (or subordinate to) another (the main clause).

Example: *John has been without work for six months, and he is having trouble paying his bills.*

Because John has been without work for six months, he is having trouble paying his bills.

OR

John is having trouble paying his bills because he has been without work for six months.

Dash (--) - *Change of direction* (tangent) mark. The dash (two consecutive hyphens) should be used sparingly, and is used to show a change in direction or train of thought, in other words, to indicate a slight tangent.

Example: *John has been without work for six months--he is also having difficulty with his school work.*

Exclamation mark (!) - *excitement* mark. The exclamation mark shows us that the sentence carries some kind of strong (negative or positive) emotion. We must learn from the context whether the message is negative or positive.

Example: *Because John has been without work for six months, he is having trouble paying his bills!*

Question mark(?) - *question* mark. The question mark does exactly as its name indicates: it shows the reader that the writer is asking a question. Be careful to **use a question mark only after an actual question**, not after a statement about a question.

Examples:

Correct: *Was John having trouble paying his bills because he had been out of work for six months?*

Incorrect: *Marilyn asked why John was having trouble paying his bills?*
(This is not a question; it is a statement about a question).

Correct: *Marilyn asked why John was having trouble paying his bills.*

Eight Places to Use Commas

1. **After introductory element** (word, phrase, or clause):

Yes, I plan to attend the lecture.
After class, I plan to go shopping.
Because he was tired, Bill overslept.

2. **Before coordinating conjunction** (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) which joins main clauses:

Jane purchased a new car, so she wouldn't need to ride the bus to work.

3. **Separate items** (words, phrases, or clauses) in a series :

Mary, Bill, and Jack missed the presentation.
Barry drove up hills, through forests, and across open plains to reach his destination.
Mary drove, Bill jogged, and Sam rode his bicycle to work.

When writing a sentence which contain series elements which include their own punctuation, use semi-colons to separate the segments of the series.

Jim, the cook; Bob, the waiter; Sam, the host; and Joe, the bartender ate dinner together.

4. **Set off interrupting elements** (appositives, conjunctive adverbs, non-restrictives, parenthetical elements):

My brother, George, is an attorney. (non restrictive appositive)
My brother George is an attorney. (restrictive appositive)
Jack, however, did not attend the concert. (interrupting conjunctive adverb)
Mary, who missed class, also missed the exam. (interrupting relative clause)

5. **Between coordinate adjectives** (old, wrinkled apple), **not** between collective adjectives (blue suede shoes):

Coordinate: *The old, faded, wrinkled dress hung in the closet.*
Collective: *The blue suede shoes gathered dust.*

6. **To set off contrasting elements:**

My name is Jack, not John.
Place the book on the table, not on the shelf.

7. **In dates:** "December 7, 1944 is a day that will live in infamy." (Franklin D. Roosevelt)

8. **In geographical names:** *I live in Denver, Colorado.*

Using Punctuation Marks to Contribute to Sentence Message

Traditionally, we have thought of punctuation as a framework in and around which we arrange the words within a sentence to provide structure, rather like the muscles and tissues within our bodies are attached to our skeletons to provide form to our bodies. While this is true, when we look at punctuation in this way, we are seeing only a part of the true function of punctuation in written communication.

Each punctuation mark carries with it a specific message. This message contributes a great deal--sometimes as much as the words we choose--to the overall meaning of the sentence and therefore, the entire written format (paragraph, essay etc.). Let's examine the message contained in each punctuation mark:

Period (.) - When used as sentence punctuation (between two main clauses [simple sentences]), the period is a separation mark. It indicates that the ideas contained in the two sentences are completely separate entities which may or may not be related to one another.

John has been without work for six weeks. He is having trouble paying his bills.

Colon (:) - When used between two main clauses, the colon (whose message is always "more information to come") indicates to the reader that the second clause explains the first.

John is having trouble paying his bills: he has been without work for six months.

Semi-colon (;) - When used as sentence punctuation (**only** between two main clauses [simple sentences]), the semi-colon is a relationship mark. While it delineates two separate ideas, it indicates to the reader that the two ideas are related. The semi-colon may precede a conjunctive adverb (therefore) or simply precede the second main clause.

*John has been without work for six weeks; he is having trouble paying his bills.
John has been without work for six weeks: therefore, he is having trouble paying his bills.*

Comma (,) - **The comma indicates to the reader that sentence parts are joined;** when used between two main clauses, a comma must be accompanied by a coordinating conjunction which reinforces the idea that the two ideas are inseparable.

John has been without work for six weeks, and he is having trouble paying his bills.

Dash (--) - The dash joins tangential or additional information, including strongly emphasized non-restrictive appositives or other interrupting constructions, to the sentence.

*Janet—she is Susan's sister—will be married next week.
My brother—George—is an attorney.*

(The non-restrictive appositive is usually placed within commas for normal emphasis. Dashes strongly emphasize the appositive. Placing the appositive within parentheses diminished its importance).

*My brother, George, lives in Tucson. (normal emphasis)
My brother—George—lives in Tucson. (emphasizes appositive)
My brother (George) lives in Tucson. (de-emphasizes appositive)*

PUNCTUATION

Punctuation is as important to the messages we are communicating as the words we use or the syntax (arrangement of the words in the sentence). Each punctuation mark has its own function and contributes a unique message of its own to the overall meaning of the sentence. This chart outlines how punctuation marks work from both a linguistic (scientific) and practical (what you and I see) standpoint. With this knowledge, we will always know how and where to use sentence punctuation.

| | | |
|--|-------------------|---|
| From a linguistic standpoint, the period creates a hard stop ; in other words, when we see a period, our thought process comes to a complete halt and momentarily goes back over the idea communicated in the sentence that precedes the period. | period (.) | From the practical standpoint, the period creates a separation . When we see a period ending a sentence, without context (previous and following information), there is no indication that the sentence and whatever message follows are even related to one another. <i>John went to the store. He needed milk.</i> (We see no indication here that he either went to a grocery store or went to buy milk). |
| A colon is a little less urgent from the linguistic standpoint and provides a semi-hard stop . Our thought process stops and pauses, but begins to move forward slightly because of the practical message we know is conveyed by the colon: <i>more information to follow</i> . | colon (:) | The colon presents the message “ more information will follow .” It is used to introduce an independent clause (simple sentence) that explains the previous independent clause. We can also use the colon to introduce a list or a direct quotation. <i>John went to the store: he needed milk.</i> (We see that he went to the store because he needed milk). |
| The semi-colon , sometimes called a hard comma, provides a semi-soft stop . We pause briefly, then our minds move on to the following idea; this creates a connection in our minds between the two independent ideas joined by the semi-colon. | semi-colon (;) | The semi-colon creates a relationship between two ideas; the second does not necessarily explain the first. We use the semi-colon only between two main clauses; we cannot use the colon and the semi-colon interchangeably. <i>Before class, John went to the store; he also attended a meeting.</i> (The semi-colon here creates the idea that there is a relationship in time relating to John’s activities). |
| The comma , contrary to popular opinion, is not a separation mark . Linguistically, it creates a soft stop , which means that our minds pause only slightly, then move forward, joining all the elements attached with commas to the main idea in the sentence. | comma (,) | The comma always joins elements of the sentence and is often found with a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so). <i>Bill, Bob, and John attended the class.</i> OR <i>Mary, who was tired, missed the class.</i> (Commas join elements of series or interrupting clause to the rest of the sentence). |
| The dash --also a semi-hard stop --creates a long pause that creates a question in our minds as we read. Because it joins interruptions or tangents of thought, the pause moves our minds forward to answer the question of how the idea linked by the dash fits into the overall message of the sentence. | dash (--) | The dash joins elements of the sentence that wouldn’t ordinarily fit together in ordinary syntax--a tangential or wayward thought, perhaps--or acts to emphasize interrupting constructions. <i>Bill continued to talk about his plans--I thought they were stupid--throughout the meeting.</i> (Tangent) <i>An attorney—George Jones--planned the meeting.</i> (Appositive [interrupter]) |

Sentence Errors: (see following page for corrections)

1. **Using Coordinating Conjunction to Begin Sentence**

*John has been out of work for six **months**. **And** he is having trouble paying his bills.*

While in many instances this is no longer considered an error, it is an example of weak and imprecise writing. Notice that the period and the coordinating conjunction are providing the reader with two conflicting messages. The period tells us that the two clauses contain two separate messages which may or may not be connected to one another. Immediately following, however, the coordinating conjunction tells us that the two ideas are, in fact, related and are to be joined. Logically, both these messages cannot be true simultaneously. The coordinating conjunction by its very nature wants to reach back and join to something, but it is prevented from doing so by the separation indicated by the period.

2. **Comma Splice**

*John has been without work for six **months**, **he** is having trouble paying his bills.*

This error is called a **comma splice**. Two main clauses [simple sentences] cannot be joined with a lone comma. They may be joined using a comma *with* a coordinating conjunction.

3. **Run-on Sentence**

*John has been without work for six **months** **he** is having trouble paying his bills.*

This error is known as a **run-on sentence** or **fused sentence**. It is the result of joining two main clauses [simple sentences] with no punctuation mark. Many students believe that a run on sentence is a sentence containing too many words. This is not the case. A sentence can be quite long if it is correctly punctuated. For instance, William Faulkner in his novel *Intruder in the Dust* created a sentence that is several pages long. It is merely a long sentence, not a run-on sentence.

4. **Placing an idea after colon which is unrelated to the first clause**

*John has been without work for six months: **he has blue eyes**.*

This is an error because in order to separate the clauses with a colon, the second clause must explain the first. Here, the fact that John has blue eyes does not explain anything about his being out of work.

Remedies:

The remedies for these errors follow and can be used to correct any of the errors described on the previous page.

Separate clauses with period and no coordinating conjunction:

John has been without work for six months. He is having trouble paying his bills.

Separate clauses with semi-colon:

John has been without work for six months; he is having trouble paying his bills.

Note: in this instance, a conjunctive adverb may also be used after the semi-colon to introduce the second clause; i.e., John has been without work for six months; therefore, he is having trouble paying his bills.

If the second clause explains the first, separate clauses with colon:

John has been without work for six months: he is having trouble paying his bills.

Separate clauses with comma and coordinating conjunction:

John has been without work for six months, and he is having trouble paying his bills.

Join the clauses using a subordinating conjunction:

Since John has been without work for six months, he is having trouble paying his bills.

or

John is having trouble paying his bills because he has been without work for six months.

Agreement

Subject/Verb Agreement - The subject of the sentence and the verb of the sentence must *agree* in number. In other words, if the subject is plural (more than one), the verb must also be in the plural form. A quick way to remember subject /verb agreement is as follows:

If the subject is singular (does not end in “s”) the verb does end in “s.”

Example: *The **boy runs.***
*The **man runs.***

If the subject is plural (does end in “s” or changes its spelling to indicate plural) the verb does not end in “s.”

Example: *The **boys run.***
*The **men run.***

Note: Some nouns and verbs change number irregularly. For example, “man” in the plural does not add “s,” but changes its spelling to “men.” The writer must know which words change number irregularly.

Additionally, a compound noun is treated as a plural: ***Bill and Joe run.***

One exception to this rule occurs when we use “or” or “nor” to join a compound. In this instance, the two entities are treated as singular entities: *Either **Bill or Joe runs.***

When both a singular and a plural entity are joined by “or” or “nor,” the verb will agree with the one closest to the verb: *Either **Bill or the boys run.***
*Either the boys or **Bill runs.***

Be careful not to make the verb agree with the object of a prepositional phrase that intervenes between the subject and the verb. To check correct agreement take out the prepositional phrase or other modifying structure; then check for correct agreement.

Incorrect: *The sound of the drumbeats build intensity within the crowd.* (“ the sound build”)
Correct: *The sound of the drumbeats builds intensity within the crowd.* (“the sound builds”)

Pronoun/Antecedent Agreement - Pronouns and their antecedents (the nouns to which they refer) must also agree in number. For example, if the referenced noun is singular, the pronoun(s) that refer to the singular noun must also be singular, or if the noun is plural, the pronoun(s) that refer to it must also be plural. If the noun is plural, the writer must also be careful to make sure that other words which are applicable to must also be plural.

Example: *The **boy** lost **his** library book.*
 *The **boys** lost **their** library **books**.*

Although we see this frequently, it is very important to be aware that the pronoun *their* cannot technically be applied to a singular entity, either a singular noun or a pronoun which is by nature singular such as an indefinite pronoun.

Incorrect: *Someone left **their** coat on the table.*

“Someone” is an indefinite pronoun . Indefinite pronouns are always singular. Therefore “their,” which is a plural pronoun, **cannot** refer to “someone.”

Technically Correct: *Someone left **his** coat on the table.*

This is technically correct. However, to address the issue of politically correct speech, the single pronoun “his” here is also incorrect.

Better: *Someone left **his/her** coat on the table.*

While politically correct, this is awkward and difficult to read. Try eliminating the pronoun completely and replacing it with an article.

Best: *Someone left **a** coat on the table.*

Characteristics of Nouns/Pronouns

Case - Nouns and pronouns take on the characteristic of *case*. There are three commonly identified cases: the *possessive*, the *subjective*, and the *objective*. In English, nouns do not change form to indicate case except to add an apostrophe to indicate possession.

The **possessive case** indicates ownership. Pronouns change their spelling to indicate possession.

My (mine), his, her (hers), their, our (ours), your (yours), and whose are the possessive pronouns.

The possessive case of “he” is “his.”

Nouns add an apostrophe to indicate possession.

Singular nouns add 's to form possessive

Dan's grade was lower than Tammy's.

Plural nouns add s' to form possessive

The boys' performance was superb.

The **subjective case** indicates that the noun or pronoun is being used as the subject of the sentence. The subjective case for nouns does not change in English. The subjective case of pronouns does change:

I, he, she, they, we, it, you, and who are the subjective pronouns

The **objective case** indicates that the noun or pronoun is being used as an object (direct object, indirect object) of the sentence or as the object of a verbal or prepositional phrase. In English, the objective case for nouns does not change in English. The objective case of pronouns does change:

Me, him, her, them, us, it, you, and whom are the objective pronouns

Subjective pronouns cannot be used as objects; objective pronouns cannot be used as subjects.

Incorrect: *Her and me* gave Bob a ride home.

Correct: *She and I* gave Bob a ride home.

Incorrect: Susan gave *her and I* the gift.

Correct: Susan gave *her and me* the gift.

Incorrect: Bill gave *who* a lecture?

Correct: Bill gave *whom* a lecture?

We rarely have difficulty using subjective or objective pronouns correctly unless they are found in a compound construction. Pronouns are the same case compounded as they are when used separately. The secret to discovering which pronoun to use is to split compound pronouns and use them in the sentence separately:

“Her and I gave Bob a ride home” is incorrect because “her,” an objective pronoun, cannot be used as a subject. “*Her* gave Bob a ride home” is obviously incorrect. “*She* gave Bob a ride home” is obviously correct. “*She*,” a subjective pronoun, is correctly used as a subject.

Verbals

Verbals are verbs that, while remaining verbs, act as other parts of speech. We identify three types of verbals: *gerunds*, *participles*, and *infinitives*.

A **gerund** is formed by adding “ing” to a verb. A **gerund** functions as a **noun**.

Running = the verb “run” + “ing”

Example: Running is my favorite sport. Here the gerund “running” functions as the subject of this sentence (a noun).

A **participle** is formed by adding “ing” (present) or “ed” (past) to the verb (or using the past tense form). **Participles** function as **adjectives**.

Running = the verb “run” + “ing”

Example: Running water is a luxury unknown in many locations.

Wanted = the verb “want” + “ed”

Example: Richard is a wanted man.

A **dangling participle** is an error common to participle use. Contrary to its description, the participle does not actually “dangle”; what does occur is that the participle, like all modifiers, wants to modify the word which comes directly before or directly after. When a dangling participle is present, it cannot do so and attaches itself to the wrong word; there is not enough information in the participle phrase to make a complete, logical statement.

Example: Driving through the dense forest, the lights of the town suddenly became visible.

“Driving through the dense forest” is a dangling modifier. It wants to modify “the lights.” This is not possible, because if it does so, the sentence makes no sense: the lights of the town cannot possibly drive through the forest (or anywhere else, for that matter).

To correct a dangling modifier:

(1) change the participle phrase into a subordinate clause which contains all the information necessary for the sentence to make sense

As Richard drove through the dense forest, the lights of the town suddenly became visible.

(2) keep the participle as it is and change the structure that follows

Driving through the forest, Richard suddenly saw the lights of the town.

(Note that Richard *can* drive, so this construction is correct).

An **infinitive** is formed by using the verb with the word “to.” An **infinitive** may function as a noun, as an adjective, or as an adverb.

To run = the verb “run” used with the word “to”

Examples: **To run** is enjoyable.

In this case the infinitive “to run” is acting as a noun, the subject of the sentence.

*He wants me **to run** to the store.*

Here “to run” is an adverb modifying “wants.”

*The first person **to cross** the finish line will win the race.*

Here “to cross” is an adjective modifying “person.”

Split Infinitives: DO not place words between the “to” and the verb that make up the infinitive. This error is known as a split infinitive and creates an awkward, confusing message to the reader.

Incorrect: *Jane decided to **quickly end** the conversation.*

Correct: *Jane decided to **end** the conversation **quickly**.*

Characteristics of Verbs

Subject/Verb Agreement - The subject of the sentence and the verb of the sentence must *agree* in number. In other words, if the subject is plural (more than one), the verb must also be in the plural form. A quick way to remember subject /verb agreement is as follows:

If the subject is singular (does not end in “s”) the verb does end in “s.”

Example: *The **boy runs.***
*The **man runs.***

If the subject is plural (does end in “s” or changes its spelling to indicate plural) the verb does not end in “s.”

Example: *The **boys run.***
*The **men run.***

Note: Some nouns and verbs change number irregularly. For example, “man” in the plural does not add “s,” but changes its spelling to “men.” The writer must know which words change number irregularly.

Additionally, a compound noun is treated as a plural: ***Bill and Joe run.***

One exception to this rule occurs when we use “or” or “nor” to join a compound. In this instance, the two entities are treated as singular entities: *Either **Bill or Joe runs.***

When both a singular and a plural entity are joined by “or” or “nor,” the verb will agree with the one closest to the verb: *Either **Bill or the boys run.***
*Either the boys or **Bill runs.***

Be careful not to make the verb agree with the object of a prepositional phrase that intervenes between the subject and the verb. To check correct agreement take out the prepositional phrase or other modifying structure; then check for correct agreement.

Incorrect: *The sound of the drumbeats build intensity within the crowd.* (“ the sound build”)
Correct: *The sound of the drumbeats builds intensity within the crowd.* (“the sound builds”)

Verb Tense

Tense is the characteristic of the verb which indicates time or tells us when something happens. The more precise the tense we use, the more specifically we can pinpoint the time frame in which an activity occurs.

| | Simple | | Progressive | |
|----------------|---------|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Past | | I ran | | I was running |
| Present | | I run | | I am running |
| Future | | I will run | | I will be running |
| | Perfect | | Perfect Progressive | |
| Past | | I had run | | I had been running |
| Present | | I have run | | I have been running |
| Future | | I will have run | | I will have been running |

Simple tense (no auxiliary verb except for future will or shall) - **provides a basic time frame for action in relation to the speaker/writer:**

I ran in one race last year.
I run every day.
I will run next week.

Perfect tense (verb + "have" auxiliary) - **narrows the time frame to show that one action is, was, or will be completed before another begins:**

I had run for three minutes when I saw him.
I have run in 10K races for three years.
I will have run in three races by the end of this summer.

Progressive Form or Tense is most often referred to as a form rather than a tense, though perhaps it is easier to understand when included in discussion of tenses because like the simple and perfect tenses also delineates a time frame within which the action occurs.

Progressive tense (verb + "ing" + "is" auxiliary) - **shows continuing action (progress):**

I was running in the five 10K when I hurt my knee.
I am running the 10k race today.
I will be running in the 10k race next Saturday.

Progressive Perfect tense (verb + "ing" + "have" + "is" auxiliary) - **shows continuous action completed at some point in time:**

I had been running 10K races for five years when I won the championship.
I have been running for five years this summer.
I will have been running for six years this July.

Tense is influenced /changed by addition of person, voice and/or mood:

Mary wrote the book. (Third person, active voice, simple past tense, indicative mood)
The book was written by Mary. (Third person, passive voice, simple past tense, indicative mood)
Mary has written the book. (Third person, active voice, present perfect tense, indicative mood)
Had Mary **written** the book, it would have been a best seller. (Third person, active voice, subjunctive mood, past perfect tense)

Note also that *write* as used in the above sentences is also always a transitive verb. Tense, mood, voice, and person do not change the basic function of the verb in the sentence.

Mood

All verbs are found in one of three moods: the *indicative*, the *imperative*, and the *subjunctive*. These are rather like the moods we as human beings feel emotionally.

The **indicative mood** is the most often used. It simply indicates to us that something is as it is.

John ate a hamburger and a taco for lunch.

The **imperative mood** indicates to us that it is necessary for the activity being written about to occur; in other words, it is imperative; there is no choice. This mood includes directives and commands.

Close the door.

The **subjunctive mood** is the most difficult of the three to understand. It deals with a state of being that does not exist; in other words it deals with a wish, a supposition, a suggestion or requirement, or a condition contrary to fact.

I wish I were wealthy.

OR

If I were you, I'd buy a new car.

OR

Law requires that taxes be mailed by April 15th.

OR

This essay could have been better written.

In the subjunctive mood, the verb “were” is always used, even if “was” sounds correct.

Avoid using subjunctive mood in any situation that is considered definite rather than tentative. In business, for example, it is better to write “I am the best candidate for this position” than “I think I would be the best candidate for this position.” The indicative mood makes the statement strong, focused, and confident. The subjunctive mood makes the statement appear indefinite, uncommitted, and questionable.

We also commit a logic error in a sentence that combines the subjunctive with the definite past. “When I was a child my father would often read to me” would be better written as “When I was a child, my father often read to me.” The first sentence combines something that actually happened (I was a child) with the tentative subjunctive (my father would read to me)--meaning, essentially that he intended to read to you but did not do so.

Important Note

Do not overuse pronouns or use a pronoun that does not refer to an earlier noun. Excessive pronoun use creates a confusing message:

Confusing: *He told him that he would not receive his final paycheck until he had given him a report on his final project.*

Better: *Jim told Sam that Sam's paycheck would not be available until Sam had provided a report on the final project.*

Voice

Verbs are also characterized by voice, either *active* or *passive*.

The **active voice** indicates that the subject of the sentence is clearly the actor or the doer of the action.

Example: *Ellen broke the pitcher.*

The **passive voice** places the actor in the sentence in a subordinate position or eliminates it completely, putting what would ordinarily be the direct object in the subject position.

Example: *The lamp was broken by Ellen.*

OR

The lamp was broken.

The passive voice can be identified by the fact that the main verb of the sentence is accompanied by some form of the being verb (be, is, was, were, am) and is usually followed by the preposition “by.”

In most instances, the passive voice should be used sparingly. It is awkward and wordy, and eliminates responsibility from the sentence. In most situations, the active voice is the much superior choice because it forces the writer to choose clear, active verbs, it is shorter and less wordy, and it makes sentences easy to understand and to read because it involves the straightforward approach.

There are some situations where a writer may *want* to use the passive voice:

- A. Sometimes there is no perpetrator; in other words, we may not know who broke the lamp.
- B. Sometimes we wish not to identify the perpetrator or to eliminate responsibility for the action.
- C. Occasionally the writer may want to emphasize the receiver of the action rather than the actor.
- D. When dealing with the law, we use passive voice because it is interpretable; our legal system is based on the interpretability of the situation at hand and the laws that pertain to it.

Be careful to note that the use of the being verb (be, is, was, were, am) in the sentence is not in itself an indication of passive voice. The being verb may be used as a linking verb (Carol *is* tired) or as an auxiliary verb (Bill *is* acting strangely). A linking verb is not in the passive voice. Linking verbs are generally in the active voice as indicated by the fact that the being verb used as a linking verb may be replaced by an active verb (Carol *feels* tired). Using the being verb as an auxiliary verb changes the tense of the verb.

[Note that if you use a computer program that includes a “grammar checker,” it will identify linking verbs as possible passive voice. This is because it is programmed to key on the being verbs to identify possible passive voice. The user must know the difference between a linking verb and passive voice for this function to be useful].

Characteristics of Modifiers

Degree

Many adjectives and adverbs are characterized by degree. There are three degrees: the *positive*, the *comparative*, and the *superlative*.

The **positive** degree is the simple, basic form of the modifier:

The old clothing hung in the closet.
This is a good book.

The **comparative** degree compares **two** entities (*only two*). It is created by adding “er” to regular modifiers or changing the spelling on irregular modifiers. Some modifiers add the word “more” rather than change spelling. Don’t forget when using the comparative degree to complete the comparison that there are always two entities involved in a comparison.

*This dress is **older** than Jack’s hat.*
*Stephen King’s **latest** book is **better** than James Michener’s first book.*
*Sam completed the tasks **more easily** than Joe did.*

The **superlative** degree compares **three** or more entities. There can be only *one* superlative. It is created by adding “est” to regular modifiers or changing the spelling on irregular modifiers. Some modifiers add the word “most” rather than change spelling.

*This dress from the 1900’s is the **oldest** one in the collection.*
*The Stand is Stephen King’s **best** book.*
*Andrea was the **most gracious** of the three candidates.*

Absolute Modifiers - Some adjectives are not characterized by degree. These are called **absolute** modifiers. These are words like “dead” “pregnant,” “unique,” and “perfect” of which there is only one or which describes a condition that cannot be measured in degrees. Such modifiers cannot be compared; for example one cannot be more or less dead. Dead *is* dead.

Modifiers in Sentence Structure

A good rule of thumb is to remember that **modifiers should be placed either directly before or directly after the words they are intended to modify**. If they are not, the following could result.

Misplaced Modifiers - A **misplaced modifier** is a modifier separated from the word it is supposed to modify, so that it modifies another part of the sentence.

Incorrect: *Mary Lou served soft drinks to the **children in paper cups**.*

“In paper cups” is a misplaced modifier. It states that the children were in the paper cups rather than the soft drinks (which was the intended meaning). To correct a misplaced modifier, simply move it to a position directly before or directly after the word it is intended to modify:

Correct: *Mary Lou served **soft drinks in paper cups** to the children.*

Squinting Modifiers - A **squinting modifier** is a modifier that is placed between two possible targets so that it is impossible for the reader to decipher which word it is intended to modify, and worse yet, makes it impossible for the reader to decipher the actual meaning of the sentence.

Incorrect: *People who drink alcohol **often** damage their health.*

“Often” is a squinting modifier here. The reader cannot tell if it is intended to modify “drink” or “damage.” To correct a squinting modifier, move it to a position directly before or directly after the word it is intended to modify or add a comma to clarify the sentence:

Correct: *People who **often drink** alcohol damage their health.*

Correct: *People who drink alcohol **often damage** their health.*

Correct: *People who drink **alcohol, often** damage their health.*

OR

*People who drink alcohol **often, damage** their health.*

Dangling Modifiers - Dangling modifiers are modifying phrases that are unable, because of incorrect placement, to modify the part of the sentence their placement requires. They are usually the result of the writer assuming that the reader will think as he/she does, or that the reader will be able to insert the necessary information.

A **dangling participle** is perhaps the most common sentence structure error. Contrary to its description, the participle does not actually “dangle;” what does occur is that the participle, like all modifiers, wants to modify the word placed directly before or directly after. When a dangling participle is present, it cannot do so; the participle is attached to and modifies the wrong word.

Example: Driving through the dense forest, the lights of the town suddenly became visible.

Driving through the dense forest is a dangling modifier. It wants to modify “the lights.” This is not possible, because if it does so, the sentence makes no sense: the lights of the town cannot possibly drive through the forest (or anywhere else, for that matter). To correct a dangling modifier, change the participle phrase to a subordinate clause which contains all the information necessary for the sentence to make sense:

As we drove through the dense forest, the lights of the town suddenly became visible.

OR

Keep the participle and change the syntax of the main clause:

Driving through the forest, we could see the lights of the town.

Other verbal phrases--gerund phrases and infinitive phrases as well as prepositional phrases--may also dangle.

Incorrect: *As a child, my father read to me.*

In this sentence, the prepositional phrase *as a child* modifies father, indicating that *my father was a child when he read to me*. This is an impossibility and, therefore, a logic fault. The sentence should be written as follows:

Correct: *When I was a child, my father often read to me.*

Limiting Modifiers - Limiting modifiers are words like “just,” “only,” and “almost” which must be placed in immediate proximity to the specific word(s) they are intended to modify. These must be placed carefully, or the meaning of the sentence may be changed drastically:

Example: *Buffalo Benny **just** died with his boots on.*

***Just** Buffalo Benny died with his boots on.*

*Buffalo Benny died with **just** his boots on.*

*Buffalo Benny dies with his boots **just** on.*

When using limiting modifiers, think carefully about where to place the modifier for the best total sentence impact.

Parallel Structure

Parallel structure is a repeated grammatical structure, often accompanied by repeated words and sounds; it is used to balance a compound structure and to gain the best possible impact through reiteration and repetition.

Perhaps the best known example of parallel structure is this one:

“Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.” (John F. Kennedy)

Parallel structure is a favorite tool of charismatic speakers because the repetitive qualities of the structure reinforce key words and ideas within the audience’s mind. In addition to providing balance (comfort), it improves the flow of words and ideas as it clearly separates and emphasizes each idea. Parallel structure is often used in memorable poetry (Dr. Suess) and speeches (Dr. Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech), but can easily and effectively be adapted to academic writing as well.

General tips for good writing

1. Always begin with a purpose and an audience in mind. This will help you to clearly focus on your topic.
2. Be as **specific** and **precise** as possible. This does not necessarily mean using a great many words. This *does* mean providing complete information in well thought out, well written sentences, paragraphs, and longer structures. Remember that in some instances, we must add words for clarity and precision.
3. Use **clear active verbs** whenever possible. Active verbs provide a picture (rather like a video tape playing in the mind) the reader can easily see, improving sentence clarity and impact.
4. **Avoid the being verb** in all its forms (be, is, was, were, am, etc.) when possible. It is vague and allows the writer to be lazy. Once again, take the time to find clear, active, precise verbs. This alone will improve your writing 150%.
5. **Avoid excessive use of pronouns.** Too many pronouns allow the writer to take the lazy approach and lead to confusion on the part of the reader.
6. **Avoid clichés and overused language.** Figurative language is useful, but be creative. Don't use the same old words and phrases over and over.
7. **Avoid vague language** such as *a lot, stuff, things*. These are "catch all" words and allow the writer to be lazy. They mean nothing. Take the time to choose precise clear words.
8. **Avoid using too many words.** This is called padding and is generally used by persons *trying to impress the reader* or persons *trying to fulfill assignment guidelines*. This includes such errors as redundancy (saying the same things twice, i.e. *puppy dog* or *end result*) and use of erudite language (too large or overly complicated words).
9. **Relax.** Write as if you are speaking in a formal situation, explaining or teaching another individual to do something you know well.
10. **Don't assume that your reader knows or understands what you do or that the reader thinks as you do.** Explain thoroughly and include all necessary details. Sometimes you need to use more words to write clear, precise sentences. Be sure to include all necessary steps when writing instructions or explaining a process.
11. **Beware of ending a sentence with a preposition.** When this occurs, we are either using a preposition without its required phrase structure and thus stranding the preposition by itself with no connection in the sentence, or we have split the prepositional phrase from itself, creating a confusing sentence structure, i.e. "*Which* table did you put the book *on*?" would be better written as "*On which* table did you place the book?"
12. Avoid overused words such as **VERY**. **They don't convey a clear message to the reader. Take the time to choose clear, precise words.**

COMMON STUDENT WRITING ERRORS

Sentence fragment: clause fragment, participle or other verbal phrase used in place of sentence

Run-on sentence: this is a punctuation error, not a long, rambling sentence

Comma splice

Subject verb agreement

Pronoun antecedent agreement: particularly using plural “their” to refer to a singular noun

Number consistency

Pronoun case errors

Modifier placement: dangling participle, dangling prep phrase, misplaced modifier

Split prepositional phrase: ending sentence with preposition

Word Choice: wrong word, wrong definition, wrong spelling of similar word (there, their, they’re)

Logic errors: making a statement that does not make sense, using coordinating conjunction to begin sentence (I know this is common practice. That doesn’t make it correct OR logical).

Shift to 2nd person

Punctuation errors: comma placement, incorrect use of colon and/or semi-colon, incorrect use of ellipses

Organizational errors: one sentence paragraphs, stream of consciousness writing, confused or tangential organization

Subject of Paper _____

Topic Limitation _____

Audience _____

Desired Effect on Audience _____

Thesis _____

1st Major Support

First Minor Support

Second Minor Support

Third Minor Support

Fourth Minor Support

2nd Major Support

First Minor Support

Second Minor Support

Third Minor Support

Fourth Minor Support

3rd Major Support

First Minor Support

Second Minor Support

Third Minor Support

Fourth Minor Support

Conclusion _____

Regis University School for Professional Studies Writing Evaluation Guidelines

The following guidelines will be used in evaluating papers in all SPS Undergraduate classes unless the syllabus for the course indicates otherwise. The evaluation may be expressed as a single grade incorporating the two areas of content/organization and grammar/punctuation/mechanics/spelling, or it may be expressed as a double grade with the facilitator determining the weight of each component.

Content /Organization

A The “A” paper is virtually free of errors in sentence structure, usage, and mechanics (including punctuation and spelling) and shows evidence of excellent control of language. The writer completes the task set by the assignment, and the paper is excellent in nearly all respects. It exhibits the following characteristics:

- is well argues;
- is well organized;
- provides a clearly stated or implied thesis
- contains well-developed content that is specific, accurate, interesting, and appropriate;
- demonstrates the writer’s ability to produce and synthesize complex ideas;
- contains logical connectors and transitions which contribute to a fluent style.
- Punctuation is used correctly and to enhance the ultimate message of the document

B The “B” paper shares most of the characteristics of the “A” paper. The paper displays few errors in sentence structure, usage, and mechanics; those few errors do not interfere with reader comprehension and are not distracting to the reader. The reasoning is logical, and the content is effectively organized into coherent units. Areas of weakness may be:

- less careful reasoning than found in the “A” paper;
- minor problems in paragraphing and or/organization
- minor grammatical/mechanical/punctuation errors

C The writer has come to terms with the basic task of the assignment, and the paper is generally competent. The paper may contain some awkward or ineffective sentences and may show some problems with mechanics and usage. These errors, however, are not serious or frequent enough to consistently distract the reader from the content or intended message, or to interfere significantly with reader comprehension. The organization sufficiently indicates that the reader can move with relative ease through the discourse. The paper, however, suffers from problems in some or all of the following areas:

- the thesis may be weak or difficult to locate
- development of minor points may be weak, but the writer provides evidence of the ability to support key ideas;
- connectors and transitions (e.g., however, therefore, although, furthermore, etc.) may be lacking or illogically presented
- a considerable number of grammatical, mechanical or punctuation errors is evident

D The shows difficulty managing the task of the assignment in one or more ways. The paper contains errors in grammar, sentence construction, mechanics, and/or usage which seriously interfere with reader comprehension and/or are distracting to the reader. For example:

- the thesis may be vague, too broad, or too obvious to be developed effectively;
- the thesis lacks adequate support or support lacks adequate detail;
- Paragraphing or essay organization is weak, but the reader is never completely lost in terms of following the train of thought;
- Significant grammatical, mechanical, or punctuation errors are present.

F The writer fails to come to terms with the assignment. The primary task is ignored, misconstrued, badly mis-handled, or redefined to accommodate what the writer wants to say or is able to say. The paper displays a number

of ungrammatical or poorly constructed sentences and serious, frequent error in mechanics and usage which impede reader understanding. This category may also be used for the paper that presents extremely poor grammatical, mechanical, or punctuation acuity, or the paper which is obviously “off topic,” regardless of the writing quality. In this case, the paper does not deal with the topic assigned and, therefore, does not fulfill the assignment. The difference between a “D” and an “F” paper lies primarily in the pervasiveness of errors.

Characteristics of Effective Writing

Main Idea

The paper is focused, meets the expectations set up by the writer, and makes these expectations clear to the reader. The paper shows a clear sense of purpose.

Organization

The paper is clearly developed; transitions are clear from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph. In other words, the writer has not simply made a series of unrelated or vaguely related statements. Rather, each sentence, each paragraph, and the entire paper carry the reader closer to an understanding or appreciation of the writer’s goal and message.

Support

The writer provides specific, concrete, detailed, and appropriate information from memory, observation, reading, interviewing, or other sources. The paper is well developed with examples, details, illustrations, anecdotes, analogies, or the like.

Style

Sentences are varied, and word choices are accurate. There is an absence of “clutter,” “padding” (excess words), and erudite phrasing or words inappropriate to the message being presented. Phrasing is direct and clear. Tone is handled consistently; sentence length and word choice are appropriate to the audience and purpose of the document.

Grammar/Punctuation/Mechanics/Spelling

Punctuation, grammar, syntax, spelling, and mechanical aspects are handled correctly. The writer has prepared the paper carefully with attention to appearance and other details. Opening, closing, and title are strong and contribute to the sense of purpose, focus, and unity of the document.

Academic Dishonesty/Plagiarism

Regis University is committed to intellectual integrity in its academic pursuits. The University's policy prohibits all forms of academic dishonesty. Academic dishonesty is normally defined by, though not necessarily limited to, the following categories:

- Cheating – defined as using inappropriate sources of information on a test or assignment.
- Plagiarism – defined as presenting one's own the words, ideas, or products of another person or source.

The academic dishonesty policy, as stated in the Regis University Bulletin, applies to all courses, regardless of learning format. The academic dishonesty policy also applies to any assignment or exam submitted by a student, whether in person or by electronic means.

Any time a student uses information from another source—a living person, printed materials or materials found on any electronic source, the student **MUST** completely and correctly cite the source, using APA (American Psychological Association) or other citation guide (MLA, AP, CMS, etc.). To fail to do so constitutes an infringement of Regis' intellectual integrity policy.

Resources

Handbooks

- Aaron, Jane E. *The Little Brown Compact Handbook*. New York: HarperCollins College Publishers. Latest edition
- Raimes, Ann. *Keys for Writers: A Brief Handbook*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. Latest Edition.
- Sabin, William A. *The Gregg Reference Manual*. New York: Macmillan /McGraw Hill. Latest edition.
- Truscott, Robert Blake. *The Essentials of University and College Writing*. Piscataway, NJ: Research and Education Association.
- Hult, Christine A., Huckin, Thomas N. *The New Century Handbook, Brief Edition (Latest Verison)* Longman

Style Guides

- American Psychological Association. *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association*. 4th Ed. Washington, D.C.: The American Psychological Association. 1994.
- Gibaldi, Joseph and Walter S. Achtert. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. Latest Edition. New York: The Modern Language Association.

Internet and Web Resources

Writing Centers (may include supportive handouts)

<http://departments.colgate.edu/diw/NWCAOWLS.htm>

<http://www.grammarnow.com> (interactive email for specific questions)

<http://www.cofc.edu/library/refcit.html>

Style Guides

MLA – http://www.mla.org/main_stl.html

http://www.mla.org/main_stl.html

<http://www.cas.usf.edu/library/electronics.html>

APA – <http://www.lib.csubak.edu/Dave/psyc/apaman.html>

<http://juno.concordia.ca/faqs/apanetscape.html>

<http://wisc.edu/writing/handbook/docapa.html>

Chicago Manual of Style – <http://.lib.uh.edu/rsa/chicago.html>

http://www.muhlberg.edu/library/ref/s_chicago.html

Handbooks

<http://www.truman.edu/academics/ss/faculty/davisv/write/manuals.html>

<http://www.inkspot.com/genres/biz.html>

Word Choice/Tone/Format

<http://www.lehigh.edu/~incbc/resources/writing/writing.html>
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/>
<http://www.rpi.edu/dept/llc/writecenter/web/text/revise.html>
<http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~bgac313/template.html>
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/writers/>
<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/files/112.html>
<http://www.eecom.com/eye/eyeindex.html>
<http://www.eecom.com/eye/qc-lead.html>

Grammar Reviews

http://www.wuacc.edu/services/zzcwwctr/persuasive_menu.html
<http://www.smartbiz.com/sbs/arts/dir5.htm>
http://www.austin.cc.tx.us/lrs/wr_bus.htm
<http://www.thebiz.co.uk/virtual-training-library/suwr.htm>
<http://www.schoolwork.org/english.html>
<http://vweb1.hiway.co.uk/ei/intro.html>
<http://www.english.upenn.edu/~jlynch/grammar.html>
<http://www.uottawa.ca/academic/arts/writcent/hypergrammar/>
<http://webserver.maclab.comp.uvic.ca/writersguide/welcome.html>

Dictionaries, Encyclopedias, etc.

<http://www.kisw.com/reference/dictionaries.html>

Libraries (some provide complete text of major works)

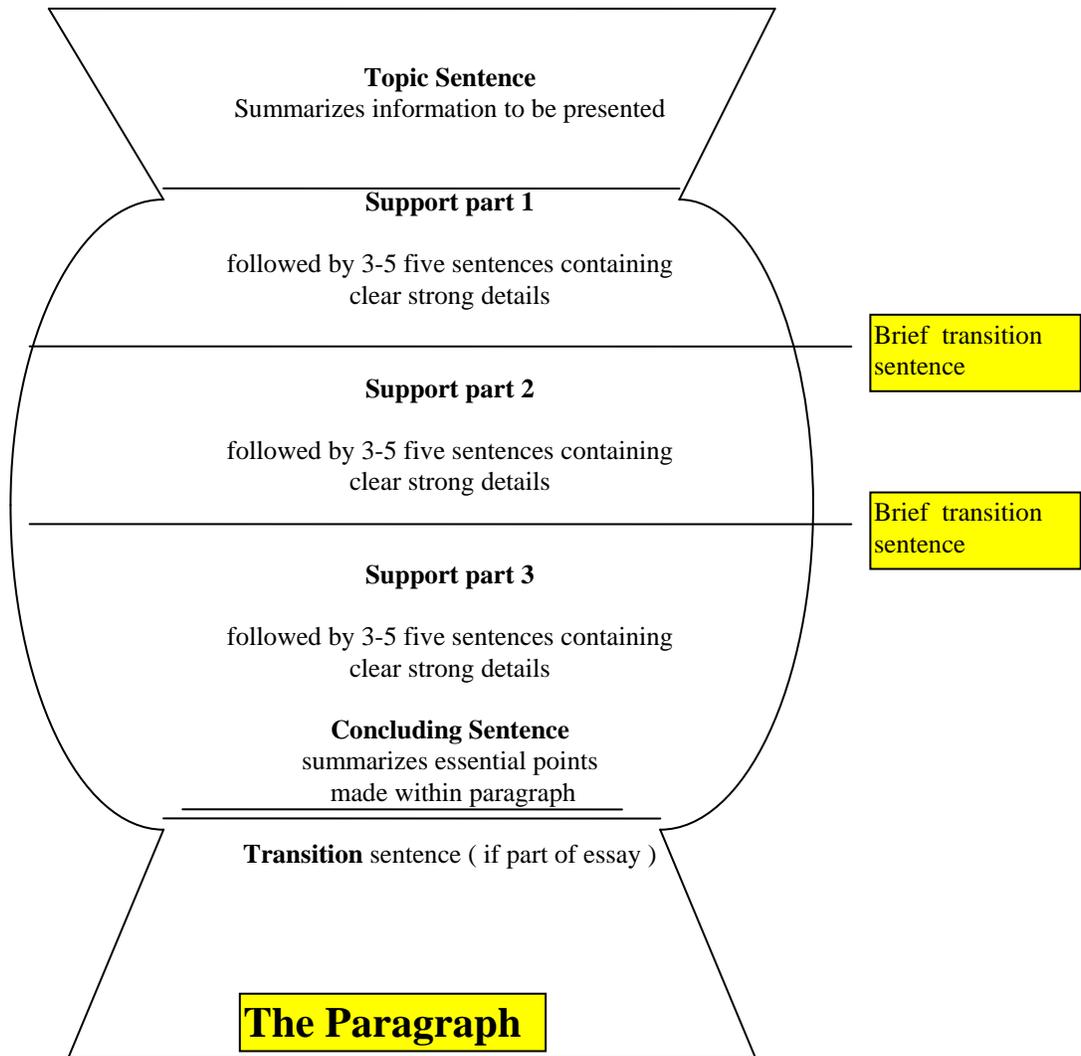
<http://www.ipl.org/>
<http://www.metronet.lib.mn.us/lc/lc1.html>
<http://departments.colgate.edu/diw/NWCA/Resources.html>
<http://vlib.org/Overview.html>

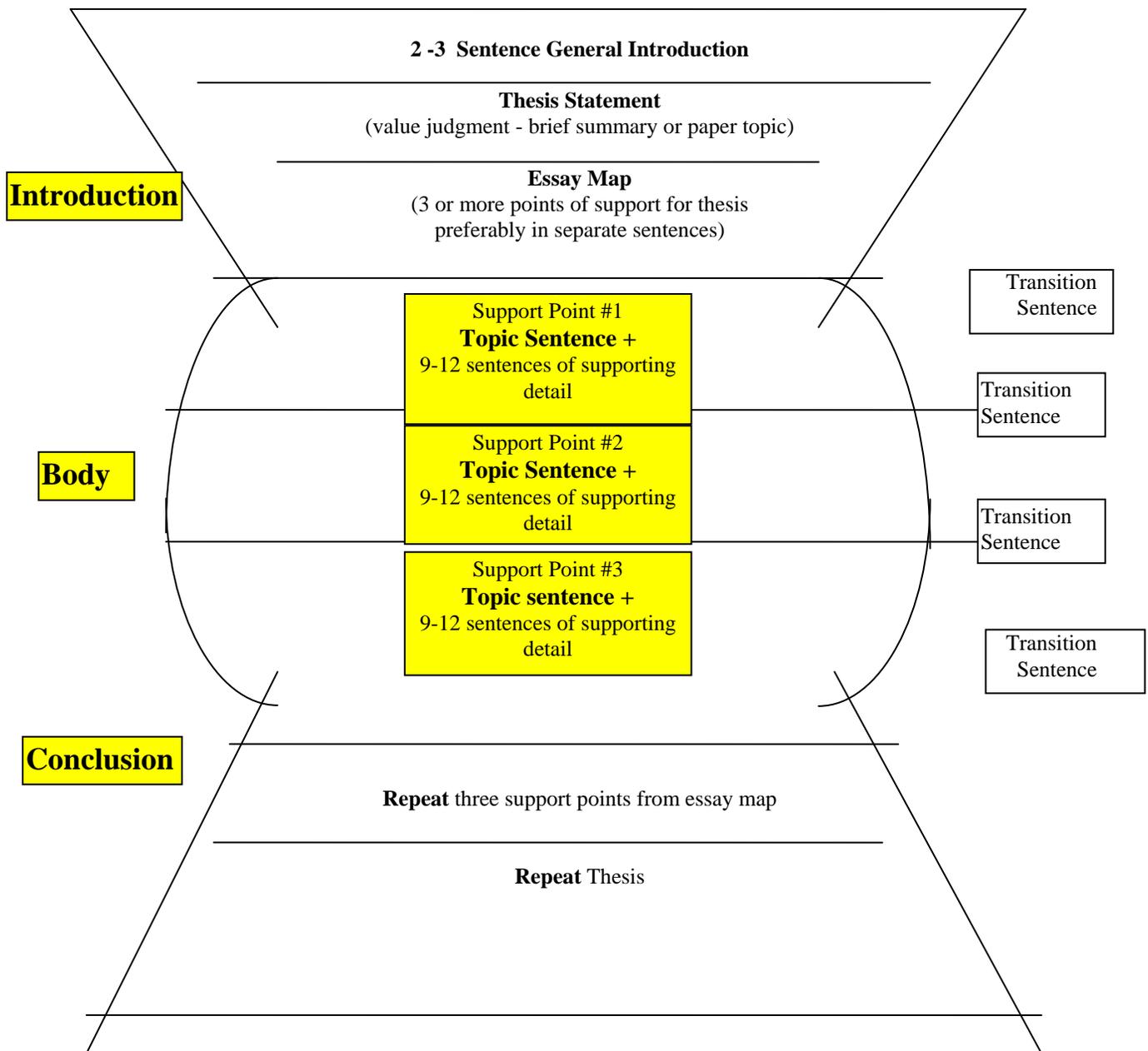
Research Paper Support

<http://ericir.syr.edu/>
<http://www.researchpaper.com/>
<http://webster.comnet.edu/mla.htm>
<http://www.tulsa.oklahoma.net/~jnichols/Writing.html>

Literary Criticism Resource

<http://www.ipl.org/ref/litcrit/>





Basic Five Paragraph Essay

Error Checklist

| Error | Week 1 | Week 2 | Week 3 | Week 4 | Week 5 | Week 6 | Week 7 |
|-------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Comma splice | | | | | | | |
| Run-on sentence | | | | | | | |
| Fragment | | | | | | | |
| Other comma problems | | | | | | | |
| Semi-colon | | | | | | | |
| Colon | | | | | | | |
| Conjunctions | | | | | | | |
| Tense errors | | | | | | | |
| Mood errors | | | | | | | |
| Passive Voice | | | | | | | |
| Parallel structure | | | | | | | |
| Mechanics, capitalization | | | | | | | |
| Spelling | | | | | | | |
| Pronoun usage (case or vague usage) | | | | | | | |
| Pronoun / antecedent Agreement | | | | | | | |
| Subject Verb Agreement | | | | | | | |
| Number Agreement | | | | | | | |
| Logic | | | | | | | |
| Other: | | | | | | | |

SAMPLE COVER SHEET AND GRADING CRITERIA

Grade Scale

Name _____ Date _____

91-100 = A
81-90 = B
71-80 = C
61-70 = D

GRADING CRITERIA

-
1. **Document viewed as a whole:**
The writing process, planning, drafting revising, and editing. Paper is limited with Thesis/Purpose Statement.

 2. **The Writing Goals:** Paper is written with stated audience and audience response in mind. Writing is clear and fluent.

 3. **Logic is sound and well-reasoned;**
rhetoric is helpful to the reader. Document fulfills all requirements; it is organized, unified, coherent, focused.

 4. **Sylistic elements:** Tone is consistent and appropriate. Writing is concise, precise, compact, succinct. Degree of formality is appropriate.

 5. **Effective paragraphs:** Topic sentences are clearly present. Support and development are convincing. Transitions help the reader. Introduction, body, and conclusion fulfill Their unique roles.

 6. **Effective sentences:** Verbs are consistent in tense and number. Parallel construction add emphasis and balance. Pronouns and antecedents agree in number; subjects and verbs agree in number.

 7. **There are NO sentence fragments,** comma splices, run-on sentences (fused sentences). Presence of **any** of these results in a “0” for this criteria.

 8. **Noun/pronoun case** is grammatically correct. Pronoun antecedents are easily identified. Placement of modifiers prevents misreading.

 9. **Effective Words:** Words are used correctly in context. Precise denotative and connotative meanings are observed.
Mechanical Precision: Spelling and capitalization are correct. Spelled-out and numeric numbers, italics, apostrophes, hyphens, etc. are used correctly.

 10. **Effective punctuation:** Interior punctuation Within the sentence as well as end punctuation are used correctly and enhance clarity.

Normally a maximum of ten points can be earned in each of the ten divisions above; however, occasionally, extra points will be awarded for superior work. Total Score _____