

LESSON

2



Writing Sentences

LESSON SUMMARY

In this lesson, you will look at the parts of a sentence, learn to spot complete and incomplete sentences, and revise sentence fragments and run-on sentences.

Successful writing means putting sentences together precisely. It can be compared to baking. If you don't follow the recipe or if you leave out a key ingredient, the cake will not turn out right. To ensure baking success, it is important to follow a recipe. To ensure writing success, it is important to know that sentences have recipes too. As you proofread, edit, and revise your work, remember that the basic recipe is very simple: Combine one subject with one predicate to yield one complete thought.

Examples

Bears stand in cold mountain streams.

Bears stand in cold mountain streams.
Subject *Predicate*

The girl ate macaroni and cheese.

The girl ate macaroni and cheese.
Subject *Predicate*

Sometimes the predicate appears first in the sentence.

Example

Lucky are the few who survived the Battle of the
 Bulge.

Predicate
Subject

► Simple Subjects and Simple Predicates

Subjects are nouns (a person, place, thing, or idea). The simple subject is the key word in the sentence. The subject of the sentence can appear almost anywhere in the sentence, so it can often be difficult to locate. One strategy for finding the subject is to find the verb (an action or linking word) or predicate first.

Example

The children carved the pumpkins.

Carved is the verb in this sentence. When you ask “Who or what did the carving?” the answer is *children*, so *children* is the subject.

Example

Down the street rolled the car.

The verb in the example sentence is *rolled*. Who or what rolled? The answer is *car*, so *car* is the subject.

The verb that you identify is the simple predicate—the main action of the subject. Just as the simple subject is the key noun in a sentence, the simple predicate is the key verb. The verb can be one word or a verb phrase such as *are jumping*, *will jump*, *has jumped*, *might have jumped*, etc. When the verb is a phrase, all parts of the verb phrase make up the simple predicate.

Example

Juan has ridden his bicycle to work.

In the example sentence, the simple predicate is *has ridden*.

► Compound Subjects and Compound Predicates

A sentence can have more than one subject that uses the same verb. When there are two subjects connected by *and*, *or*, or *nor*, they are called compound subjects.

Example

Manuel and Jonathan held the flag.

The compound subject in the example sentence is *Manuel and Jonathan*.

A sentence can have a compound predicate, also connected by *and*, *or*, or *nor*.

Example

Julian cannot speak or read French.

The compound predicate is *speak or read*.

Exercise 1

Underline the subject once and the predicate twice in the following sentences. Remember, it is often easier to find the predicate (verb, or action word) first and then the subject (the noun that is performing the action). Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

1. Larry ate the sushi.
2. Akiko changed the diaper.
3. In the haunted house went the children.

4. Bobby and Devone sat in their chairs.
5. Campbell fished and hunted in the Cascade Mountains.
6. They were running to catch the bus.
7. Mary and Al skipped the previews and watched only the feature presentation.
8. Adam and I made a soap box derby car.
9. The paper route was taking too long.
10. The building and the house caught on fire.

► Objects

The *direct object* of a sentence is the part of the predicate that is receiving the action of the verb or shows the result of the action. For example, if the subject of a sentence is *Mary*, and the verb is *throws*, you need an object—*what* Mary throws.

Example

Nina brought a present to the birthday party.

The subject of the sentence is *Nina*, the verb is *brought*, and the object is *present*.

Some sentences also contain an *indirect object*, which tells to whom or for whom the action of the verb is done and who is receiving the direct object. A sentence must have a direct object in order to have an indirect object. A common type of indirect object is an *object of a preposition*. Prepositions are words such as *to*, *with*, *of*, *by*, *from*, *between*, and *among*.

Example

Nina gave a present to Sarah.

This sentence has two objects—a direct object, *present*, and an indirect object, *Sarah*.

You will read more about objects in Lesson 10, which discusses pronoun agreement and the proper use of the objective case.

► Clauses

Together, the subject and predicate make up a clause. If the clause expresses a complete thought, it is an independent clause. Independent clauses can stand alone as complete sentences, as you can see in the following examples.

Examples

The team won the game.

Amy and Georgia live in New Mexico.

If the clause does not express a complete thought, it is not a complete sentence and is called a dependent or subordinate clause. Dependent or subordinate clauses are often incorrectly separated from the sentence where they belong. When this happens, a sentence fragment is created, as you can see in the following examples.

Example

though I was tired

Example

when he caught his breath

► Sentence Fragments

Sentence fragments do not make complete sentences all by themselves. Often they occur as a result of faulty punctuation. If you put a period in the wrong place, before a complete thought is expressed, you will create a fragment. If you omit

a subject or predicate, you will also create a sentence fragment.

Example

FRAGMENT: I thought I saw. The new teacher taking the bus.

To correct this example, simply change the punctuation.

COMPLETE THOUGHT: I thought I saw the new teacher taking the bus.

Example

FRAGMENT: “An American in Paris.” A great movie.

To correct this example, you must add a predicate or verb.

COMPLETE THOUGHT: “An American in Paris” is a great movie.

Exercise 2

Proofread and revise the following sentence fragments. Make them complete sentences by adding the missing subject or predicate. Write the revised sentences on the lines provided. *Note:* There may be many ways to revise the sentences depending on the words you choose to add. Some need both a subject and a predicate. Try to make them the best sentences you can, and don’t forget to add the appropriate end punctuation. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

11. Ran for student body president

12. Was wearing my shin guards

13. Luis to Puerto Rico rather frequently

14. Chose the new soccer team captains, Michael and Jose

15. Played the electric guitar in her new band

16. Sent me an e-mail with a virus

17. The cat while she ate

18. After the accident happened in front of the school

19. Put too much syrup on his pancakes

20. Rarely gets up before noon on Saturdays

Sentence fragments also occur when a subordinating conjunction—like *after, although, as, as much as, because, before, how, if, in order that, inasmuch as, provided, since, than, though, that, unless, until, when, where, while*—precedes an independent clause.

Example

FRAGMENT: Until the players began stretching.

This sentence fragment can be remedied by either eliminating the conjunction, or by adding a clause to the fragment to form a complete thought.

COMPLETE THOUGHT: The players began stretching.

COMPLETE THOUGHT: Until the players began stretching, they had many pulled muscles.

Coordinating conjunctions—like *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, and *for*—are often a quick fix for both sentence fragments and run-on sentences.

Example

FRAGMENT: The newspaper and a loaf of bread on your way home.

COMPLETE THOUGHT: Pick up the newspaper and a loaf of bread on your way home.

Exercise 3

Proofread and revise the following sentences and then add the proper punctuation. Write the revised sentences on the lines provided. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

21. After we saw the movie. We went to the café and discussed it.

22. Because the announcer spoke quickly. We didn't understand.

23. Our basketball team won the state title. Three years in a row.

24. Although Oregon is a beautiful state. It tends to rain a lot.

25. The two-point conversion. Made football games more exciting.

26. Sewing the Halloween costume. I stuck my finger with the needle.

27. Unless you know how to drive a manual transmission car. Buy an automatic.

28. Because dock workers had no contract. They discussed going on strike.

29. After the concert was over. I bought a T-shirt of the band.

30. Since we had eaten a big breakfast. We just snacked the rest of the day.

Exercise 4

Proofread and revise the following sentence fragments so that they form complete sentences. Write the revised sentences on the lines provided. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

31. While the taxi driver drove faster

32. My daughter. After she wrote a letter

33. Before we start the show

34. When Andrew gave his closing argument

35. Unless you would like Olga to buy them for you

36. Antonio is tired. Because he just moved again

37. Jose played soccer. Although he had never played before

38. Since Tom has a new class

39. The crowd cheered. When the union leader finished his speech

40. After our lunch of tuna fish sandwiches

► Run-On Sentences

Run-on sentences are like the person at the all-you-can-eat buffet who overfills a plate when he or she could have simply gone back for a second helping. Run-on sentences are two or more independent clauses written as though they were one sentence. The main cause of run-on sentences, like fragments, is faulty punctuation. End marks like periods, exclamation points, and question marks (Lesson 13) can make or break a sentence.

Example

This run-on sentence is missing punctuation:
 RUN-ON: Julie studies hard she is trying to win a fellowship next year.

CORRECT: Julie studies hard. She is trying to win a fellowship next year.

Semicolons (Lesson 15) can also be used to revise run-on sentences..

Example

RUN-ON: The soccer game ended at four, it was too late to go to the birthday party.

CORRECT: The soccer game ended at four; it was too late to go to the birthday party.

Commas, when used with a conjunction, can transform run-on sentences. Conjunctions come in three types: coordinating, correlative, and subordinating. Coordinating conjunctions (*and, but, or, nor, so, for, yet*) can be used to correct run-on sentences.

Example

RUN-ON: Gillian lived in Portland she lived in New York.

CORRECT: Gillian lived in Portland, and she lived in New York.

Correlative conjunctions (*both . . . and, neither . . . nor, not only . . . but also, whether . . . or, either . . . or*) join similar kinds of items and are always used in pairs.

Example

RUN-ON: They saw aquatic animals like moray eels and sharks they saw gorillas and chimpanzees.

CORRECT: They not only saw aquatic animals like moray eels and sharks, but they also saw gorillas and chimpanzees.

Subordinating conjunctions (*after, although, as far as, as if, as long as, as soon as, as though, because, before, if, in order that, provided that, since, so that, than, that, unless, until, when, whenever, where, wherever, whether, while*) join clauses with the rest of a sentence.

Example

RUN-ON: Isabel sang I played music.

CORRECT: When I played music, Isabel sang.

Exercise 5

Add end marks, commas, or semi-colons to fix the following sentences. Write the revised sentences on the lines provided. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

41. Will you come to the party we think you'll have fun.

42. We spent a year traveling in Asia, consequently, we speak some Chinese.

43. The Avinas live on Old Germantown Road, they've lived there for thirty years.

44. Powdered fruit drinks taste good, nevertheless, they are not as nutritious as juice.

45. Mrs. Michaels introduced me to the reading instructor. A neighbor of mine.

46. I sent her flowers. Hoping she would forgive me.

47. Neil locked the gate then we left the ranch.

48. I found it therefore I get to keep it.

49. The flag has thirteen stripes. As most U.S. citizens know.

50. The hockey team also travels to southern states. Such as Texas and Louisiana.

Sometimes, run-on sentences occur when writers use adverbs such as *then*, *however*, or *therefore* as if they were conjunctions. This type of error is easily fixed. By using correct punctuation—such as a semicolon—or by making two sentences out of one run-on, the writing takes the correct shape and form.

Example

RUN-ON: I bought a new motorcycle however my license had expired.

CORRECT: I bought a new motorcycle; however, my license had expired.

CORRECT: I bought a new motorcycle. However, my license had expired.

► **Types of Sentences**

A simple sentence contains only one independent clause and is typically short. If you write with only simple sentences, your writing will not have the variety and complexity of good writing. As you learn to vary your sentences by using compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences, you will find that you are able to express more complex relationships between ideas.

A compound sentence contains more than one independent clause and no subordinate clauses.

Example

The children couldn't finish the race,

Independent clause

but the adults could easily.

Independent clause

A complex sentence contains only one independent clause and at least one subordinate clause.

Example

As soon as we sat at the table,

Subordinate clause

the waiter brought menus.

Independent clause

A compound-complex sentence contains more than one independent clause and at least one subordinate clause.

Example

When Danny finally enrolled in college,

Subordinate clause

he studied very hard,

Independent clause

for he had missed the first two weeks of classes.

Independent clause

Remember, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences add depth to your writing, but they need to be punctuated correctly or they become run-on sentences. If you use only simple sentences, your writing sounds very choppy. Simple sentences are short. They say one thing. They don't give much detail. They don't flow. A good piece of writing uses both short and long sentences (see Lesson 4) for variety. When you write, alternating the length of sentences is a good idea, as long as the short sentences aren't fragments and the long sentences aren't run-ons.

Exercise 6

Fix the following sentence fragments and run-on sentences by adding a conjunction and any necessary punctuation. Write the revised sentence on the lines provided. Answers can be found at the end of the lesson.

51. I wanted to buy a bicycle. My paycheck wasn't enough.

52. I ate the ice cream my stomach hurt.

53. I wore my new shoes I got blisters.

54. You play the guitar. I practice my singing.

55. It rains. The field turns to mud.

56. I can't have dessert I eat my dinner.

57. I finish my homework I am going to watch T.V.

58. There's a need. We will be there to help out.

59. I made the bed my room passed inspection.

60. You can fix my broken alarm clock you can buy me a new one.

Summary

Knowing the parts of a sentence and the kinds of sentences that are a part of good writing will help you proofread, revise, and edit your work. As you examine your own writing, mark the places where faulty punctuation has created sentence fragments or run-on sentences. Revise them by using proper end marks, semicolons, or conjunctions.

► **Answers**

Exercise 1

1. subject = Larry; predicate = ate
2. subject = Akiko; predicate = changed
3. subject = children; predicate = went
4. subjects = Bobby, Devone; predicate = sat
5. subject = Campbell; predicate = fished, hunted
6. subject = They; predicate = were running
7. subjects = Mary, Al; predicate = skipped, watched
8. subjects = Adam, I; predicate = made
9. subject = route; predicate = was taking
10. subjects = building, house; predicate = caught

Exercise 2

11. Add a subject, i.e. Andy ran for student body president.
12. Add a subject, i.e. I was wearing my shin guards.
13. Add a predicate, i.e. Luis flew to Puerto Rico rather frequently.
14. Add a subject, i.e. The team chose the new soccer team captains, Michael and Jose.
15. Add a subject, i.e. Ellen played the electric guitar in her new band.
16. Add a subject, i.e. Pete sent me an e-mail with a virus.
17. Add a predicate, i.e. The cat twitched while she ate.
18. Add both a subject and a predicate, i.e. The police arrived after the accident happened in front of the school.
19. Add a subject, i.e. Brad put too much syrup on his pancakes.
20. Add a subject, i.e. Stacy rarely gets up before noon on Saturdays.

Exercise 3

21. After we saw the movie, we went to the café and discussed it.
22. Because the announcer spoke quickly, we didn't understand.
23. Our basketball team won the state title three years in a row.
24. Although Oregon is a beautiful state, it tends to rain a lot.
25. The two-point conversion made football games more exciting.
26. Sewing the Halloween costume, I stuck my finger with the needle.
27. Unless you know how to drive a manual transmission car, buy an automatic.
28. Because dock workers had no contract, they discussed going on strike.
29. After the concert was over, I bought a T-shirt of the band.
30. Since we had eaten a big breakfast, we just snacked the rest of the day.

Exercise 4

31. Needs an independent clause attached, i.e. While the taxi driver drove faster, we held on.
32. Needs a predicate, i.e. My daughter sighed after she wrote a letter.
33. Needs an independent clause attached, i.e. Before we start the show, we should warm up our voices.
34. Needs an independent clause attached, i.e. When Andrew gave his closing argument, the courtroom was silent.
35. Needs an independent clause attached, i.e. You should buy them unless you would like Olga to buy them for you.
36. Needs the punctuation fixed, i.e. Antonio is tired because he just moved again.
37. Needs the punctuation fixed, i.e. Jose played soccer although he had never played before.

- 38.** Needs an independent clause attached, i.e.
Since Tom has a new class, his schedule is full.
- 39.** Needs the punctuation fixed, i.e. The crowd
cheered when the union leader finished his
speech.
- 40.** Needs an independent clause attached, i.e.
After our lunch of tuna fish sandwiches, we
had coffee.

Exercise 5

- 41.** Will you come to the party? We think you'll
have fun.
- 42.** We spent a year traveling in Asia; conse-
quently, we speak some Chinese.
- 43.** The Avinas live on Old Germantown Road.
They've lived there for thirty years.
- 44.** Powdered fruit drinks taste good; neverthe-
less, they are not as nutritious as juice.
- 45.** Mrs. Michaels introduced me to the reading
instructor, a neighbor of mine.
- 46.** I sent her flowers hoping she would forgive
me.
- 47.** Neil locked the gate, then we left the ranch.
- 48.** I found it; therefore, I get to keep it.
- 49.** The flag has thirteen stripes, as most U.S. citi-
zens know.
- 50.** The hockey team also travels to southern
states, such as Texas and Louisiana.

Exercise 6

- 51.** I wanted to buy a bicycle but my paycheck
wasn't enough.
- 52.** I ate the ice cream and my stomach hurt.
- 53.** I wore my new shoes and I got blisters.
- 54.** You play the guitar while I practice my
singing.
- 55.** When it rains, the field turns to mud.
- 56.** I can't have dessert until I eat my dinner.
- 57.** After I finish my homework, I am going to
watch T.V.
- 58.** When there's a need, we will be there to help
out.
- 59.** I made the bed so my room passed inspection.
- 60.** You can fix my broken alarm clock or you can
buy me a new one.