

GENERAL EDUCATION:

Writing Complete, Grammatically Correct Sentences

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There are four main problems that prevent people from writing complete, grammatically correct sentences. These problems include: (a) the sentence fragment; (b) the run-on sentence; (c) lack of subject-verb and pronoun-reference agreement; and (d) lack of parallel structure.

Sentence Fragments

A fragment is a sentence which is not complete, and therefore not grammatically correct. Sentence fragments are problematic because they are disjointed and confusing to the reader. There are three main causes of fragments: (a) a missing subject; (b) a missing verb; (c) "danger" words which are not finished.

There are three ways to check for sentence completeness:

1. *Find the subject.* A subject is the noun or pronoun about which something is written. To find the subject of a sentence, identify who or what is doing the action. If there is no subject, the sentence is a fragment. Consider the two examples below.

"The student felt nervous before the speech."

"Thought about leaving the room."

The first sentence above is complete, because it contains both a subject and a verb. The subject of this sentence is the student. The sentence contains a subject which answers the question, "who or what felt nervous?" The second sentence is a fragment, because there is no identifiable subject. The sentence does not contain a subject which answers the question, "who or what thought about leaving?" To correct the second sentence, one could write: "He thought

about leaving the room." Alternatively, one could combine the two sentences to form one complete sentence: "The student felt nervous before the speech, and thought about leaving the room."

2. *Find the verb.* A verb is the action word in a sentence. Verbs express action, existence or occurrence. To find the verb in a sentence, identify what happened. If there is no identifiable action, the sentence is a fragment. Consider the two examples below.

"Many scientists, such as Einstein, think in strange ways."

"Many scientists think in strange ways. Einstein, for example."

This first example above has one complete sentence followed by a fragment. "Einstein, for example" is a fragment because there is no verb. "Einstein" serves as the subject (he is the one doing something), but the rest of the sentence does not express what action he is taking. The second example is a complete sentence. In this case, the sentence contains both a subject (scientists) and a verb (think). Alternatively, one could write the following: "Many scientists think in strange ways. Einstein, for example, could not tolerate more than one bar of soap in his home." In this case, there are two complete sentences. In the second sentence, the subject is Einstein and the verb is "could not tolerate."

3. *Check for "danger" words.* A danger word is one which introduces a thought that requires a follow-up phrase. Such words are sometimes called "cliff-hangers" because they begin a statement, but leave it "hanging" without a finish. Consider the phrases below.

"If you come home..."

"When the rain falls..."

"Because he is mean..."

The danger words in the sentences above are "if," "when" and "because." When these words are used at the beginning of a phrase, they require a follow-up phrase to conclude the thought.

Example: If you come home on time...*then what?*

Correct: If you come home on time, I will buy you a present.

Example: When it rains...*what happens?*

Correct: When it rains, the gutters become clogged.

Example: Because he is mean...*what is the result?*

Correct: Because he is mean, I will not take a class from him.

Danger words are helpful when writing sentences, but one must be sure to include a concluding phrase when these words are used.

Commonly used danger words include: after, unless, although, how, as if, when, because, where, before, while, if, until, once, so that, since, whether.

Run-on Sentences

A run-on sentence is one which actually contains two (or more) complete sentences without the proper punctuation to create separate sentences. There are two common forms of the run-on: (1) the "comma splice" in which a comma is inserted between two complete sentences where a period should actually be used; (2) a lack of punctuation where a semi-colon or period is needed.

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Incorrect Examples - The Comma Splice

John is a musician, he plays the guitar for a living.

The girl walked home, she decided not to ride the bus.

He could only guess at the number of guests who attended the party, the entire yard was filled with people.

In each of the examples above, the two sentences are incorrectly joined by a comma, thus "splicing" two complete sentences together into one run-on sentence. To correct these run-on's, the comma should be replaced by a period, thus creating two separate sentences, as shown below.

Correct Examples

John is a musician. He plays the guitar for a living.

The girl walked home. She decided not to ride the bus.

He could only guess at the number of guests who attended the party. The entire yard was filled with people.

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Incorrect Examples - Lack of Punctuation

There is a problem with the television however no one is available to fix it.
Nobody knows what really happened the policeman said there was a fight.
That is the problem when people have conflict they attack each other personally.

In each of the examples above, some type of punctuation is needed to separate the two parts of the sentence: either a semi-colon or a period.

Correct Examples

There is a problem with the television; however, no one is available to fix it.
There is a problem with the television. However, no one is available to fix it.

Nobody knows what really happened; the policeman said there was a fight.
Nobody knows what really happened. The policeman said there was a fight.

That is the problem when people have conflict; they attack each other personally.
That is the problem when people have conflict. They attack each other personally.

Subject-Verb Agreement

In order for a sentence to be grammatically correct, the subject and verb must both be singular or plural. In other words, the subject and verb must agree with one another in their tense. If the subject is in plural form, the verb should also be in plural form (and vice versa). To ensure subject-verb agreement, identify the main subject and verb in the sentence, then check to see if they are both plural or singular. Consider the examples below.

Incorrect examples - Subject-Verb Agreement

"The group of students are complaining about grades."

The main subject in this sentence is "group," which is singular. The main verb is "*are* complaining," which is plural.

"A recipe with more than six ingredients are too complicated."

The main subject in this sentence is "recipe," which is singular. The main verb is "are," which is plural.

"The facts in that complex case is questionable."

The main subject in this sentence is "facts," which is plural. The main verb, "is," is singular.

"The people is wearing formal attire."

The main subject in this sentence is "people," which is plural. The main verb is "is wearing," which is singular.

Correct examples

"The group of students is complaining about grades."

"A recipe with more than six ingredients is too complicated."

"The facts in that complex case are questionable."

"The people are wearing formal attire."

A variation of the subject-verb agreement is pronoun-reference agreement. In the case of pronoun-reference agreement, all of the pronouns should agree with one another in singular or plural tense. Consider the examples below.

Incorrect examples - Pronoun-Reference Agreement

"A manager should always be honest with their employees."

The subject in this sentence, "manager," is singular. The corresponding pronoun, "their," is plural.

"Organizations must be careful about discriminating against its employees."

The subject in this sentence is "organizations," which is plural. The corresponding pronoun, "its," is singular.

"If you really care about somebody, let them make their own choices."

In this sentence, the pronoun "somebody" is singular, but the corresponding pronouns, "them" and "their" are plural.

Correct examples

"A manager should always be honest with his (or her) employees."

"Organizations must be careful about discriminating against their employees."

"If you really care about somebody, let him (or her) make his (or her) own choices."

Parallel Structure

The parallel structure of a sentence refers to the extent to which different parts of the sentence match each other in form. When more than one phrase or description is used in a sentence, those phrases or descriptions should be consistent with one another in their form and wording. Parallel structure is important because it enhances the ease with which the reader can follow the writer's idea. Consider the following examples.

Incorrect examples - Parallel Structure

Example One: "He is strong and a tough competitor."

Notice that "strong" and "a tough competitor" are not the same form.

"Strong" and "competitive" are consistent in form.

Example Two: "The new coach is a smart strategist, an effective manager, and works hard."

Notice that "a smart strategist" and "an effective manager" are consistent with one another, but not consistent with "works hard."

Example Three: "In the last minute of the game, John intercepted the football, evaded the tacklers, and a touchdown was scored."

Notice that the first two phrases in this sentence are consistent with one another: "intercepted the football" and "evaded the tacklers." However, the final phrase, "and a touchdown was scored" is not consistent with the first two phrases. **Correct examples**

Example One: "He is strong and competitive."

Example Two: "The new coach is a smart strategist, an effective manager, and a hard worker."

Example Three: "In the last minute of the game, John intercepted the football, evaded the tacklers, and scored a touchdown."

The 20 Rules of Subject Verb Agreement in Standard English

1. **Subjects and verbs must agree in number.** This is the cornerstone rule that forms the background of the concept.

The *dog* **growls** when he is angry. The *dogs* **growl** when they are angry.

2. **Don't get confused by the words that come between the subject and verb; they do not affect agreement.**

The *dog*, who is chewing on my jeans, **is** usually very good.

3. **Prepositional phrases between the subject and verb usually do not affect agreement.**

The *colors* of the rainbow **are** beautiful.

4. **When sentences start with "there" or "here," the subject will always be placed after the verb, so care needs to be taken to identify it correctly.**

There **is** a problem with the balance sheet. Here **are** the papers you requested.

5. **Subjects don't always come before verbs in questions. Make sure you accurately identify the subject before deciding on the proper verb form to use.**

Does *Lefty* usually **eat** grass? Where **are** the *pieces* of this puzzle.

6. **If two subjects are joined by *and*, they typically require a plural verb form.**

The cow and the pig **are jumping** over the moon.

7. **The verb is singular if the two subjects separated by *and* refer to the same person or thing.**

Red beans and rice **is** my mom's favorite dish.

8. **If one of the words *each, every, or no* comes before the subject, the verb is singular.**

No *smoking or drinking* **is** allowed. Every *man and woman* **is** required to check in.

9. **If the subjects are both singular and are connected by the words *or, nor, neither/nor, either/or, and not only/but also* the verb is singular.**

Jessica or Christian **is** to blame for the accident.

10. The only time when the object of the preposition factors into the decision of plural or singular verb forms is when noun and pronoun subjects like some, half, none, more, all, etc. are followed by a prepositional phrase. In these sentences, the [object](#) of the preposition determines the form of the verb.

All of the *chicken* is gone. All of the *chickens* are gone.

11. The singular verb form is usually used for units of measurement.

Four *quarts of oil* **was** required to get the car running.

12. If the subjects are both plural and are connected by the words *or, nor, neither/nor, either/or, and not only/but also*, the verb is plural.

Dogs and cats **are** both available at the pound.

13. If one subject is singular and one plural and the words are connected by the words *or, nor, neither/nor, either/or, and not only/but also*, you use the verb form of the subject that is nearest the verb.

Either the *bears* or the *lion* **has** escaped from the zoo. Neither the *lion* nor the *bears* **have** escaped from the zoo.

14. Indefinite pronouns typically take singular verbs.

Everybody **wants** to be loved.

15. * Except for the [pronouns](#) (*few, many, several, both, all, some*) that always take the plural form.

Few **were** left alive after the flood.

16. If two infinitives are separated by *and* they take the plural form of the verb.

To walk and to chew gum **require** great skill.

17. When gerunds are used as the subject of a sentence they take the singular verb form of the verb, but when they are linked by *and* they take the plural form.

Standing in the water **was** a bad idea. *Swimming* in the ocean and *playing drums* **are** my hobbies.

18. Collective nouns like *herd, senate, class, crowd, etc.* usually take a singular verb form.

The *herd* is stampeding.

19. Titles of books, movies, novels, etc. are treated as singular and take a singular verb.

The Burbs **is** a movie starring Tom Hanks.

20. Final Rule – Remember, only the subject affects the verb!

FILIPINO

Pangungusap (Sentence)

I. Introduksyon:

Ang **Pangungusap** ay lipon ng mga salita na nagsaad ng buong diwa.

Bawat pangungusap ay may dalawang bahagi -- ang Simuno at Panaguri

1. Ang **Simuno** (subject) ay ang paksa o ang pinag-usapan sa pangungusap. May mga panandang si, sina kung tao ang simuno at ang o ang mga kung bagay, lunan o pangayayari.

2. Ang **Panaguri** (predicate) naman ang nagsasabi tungkol sa simuno.

Halimbawa:

a. Ang pinaghugasan ng pinggan ay ipinandidilig ko ng halaman.

Simuno: pinaghugasan ng pinggan

Panaguri: ay ipinandidilig ko ng halaman

b. Ginagamit ko ang basurahan nang maayos.

Simuno: ang basurahan

Panaguri: ginagamit nang maayos

II. Aayos ng Pangungusap

May dalawang kaayosang pangungusap. Ito ay ang Karaniwang Aayos at ang Di-karaniwang Aayos.

Ang **Karaniwang Aayos** ng pangungusap ay nauuna ang panaguri kaysa sa simuno/paksa.

Hal.

Nandito ako.

(panaguri) (simuno)

Ang **Di-karaniwang Aayos** ng pangungusap ay kung nauuna ang paksa at ginagamitan ng panandang "ay".

Hal.

Ako ay isang matalinong bata.

(simuno) (panaguri)

III. Mga Uri ng Pangungusap

May apat na uri ang pangungusap ayon sa gamit:

1. **Paturol o Pasalaysay** - ang pangungusap kung naglalahad ito ng isang katotohanang bagay. Nagtatapos ito sa tuldok (.).

Hal.

Nakalimutan mo ang iyong aklat sa bahay.

2. **Pautos** - ang pangungusap kung nag-uutos at nagtatapos din ito sa tuldok (.).

Hal.
Pakikuha po ng sapatos ko sa may mesa.

3. **Patanong** - ang pangungusap kung nagtatanong. Nagtatapos ito sa tandang pananong (?).

Hal.
Sino ako?

4. **Padamdang** - ang pangungusap kung nagsasaad ng matinding damdamin. Nagtatapos ito sa tandang padamdang (!).

Hal.
Aba, may sunog!

IV. Payak at Tambalang Pangungusap

1. **Payak na pangungusap** - kung ang isang ideya lamang ang ipinahahayag. May simuno at panaguri ito na maaring higit sa isa.

Hal.
Masarap at masustansya ang mga gulay.

2. **Tambalang pangungusap** - kung dalawang diwa o ideya ang ipinahahayag na maaring magkatulad, magkasalungat o pagpipilian. Dalawang payak na pangungusap ang pinagsama at pinag-uugnay ng at, o ngunit,

Hal.
Naglalaba si Juan habang nagluluto ang kanyang asawa.

V. Layon ng Pangungusap

Tatlo ang layon na maaring gamitin sa pangungusap.

1. Ang **tuwirang layon** ay tumatanggap ng kilos pandiwa at may panandang ng. Sumasagot ito sa tanong na ano.

Hal.
Sumayaw siya ng Tango.

2. Ang **di-tuwirang layon** ng pandiwa ay pinaglalaanan o pinagtutunguhan ng kilos. Sumasagot ito sa tanong ng kanino.

Hal.
Binigyan ko siya ng bulakla