

A punctuation and revision quick reference guide for all ages.

Writing Rules!

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*An E-School Study Unit by
Ann Graham*

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Introduction



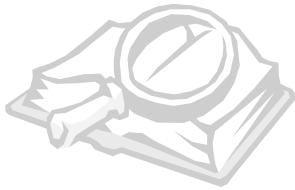
A word about words...

Words can take you places. You can learn things from them, and sometimes they can even be little vehicles that actually transport feelings from one person to another. Words are the highest form of communication there is. Communicating to each other with words is what separates humans from animals.

Much of what we learn comes through the experience of others that we discover for ourselves by reading books. To be able to express yourself by writing in such a way that others will understand you better, is a skill that will not only be helpful for you in school, but also for the rest of your life.

Writing Rules!

Writing well comes from learning basic rules and then practicing them. You can also learn what good writing is by simply reading a lot. But the best way to become a good writer is by doing both. If you are reading this, you are old enough to know that not all writing is interesting. In fact, a lot of things you have to read are pretty boring. Do you know why? Let's take a closer look and find out...



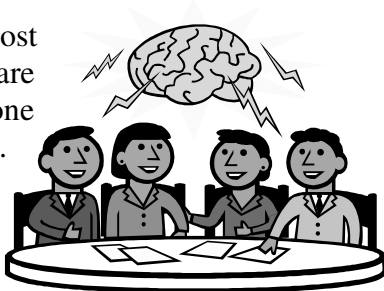
The Sentence



A sentence is a group of words that express a complete thought.

Sentences are the most common way ideas are communicated from one person's brain to another.

The best way to express the exact meaning of what you are thinking is by using a complete sentence. For instance you wouldn't just say, "Next to the bookcase," to someone, and have them understand exactly what you mean. On the other



hand, “The shoe you are missing is next to the bookcase,” gets the point across.

Of course, if you noticed your sister hobbling around on one shoe while she searched the living room, “Next to the bookcase,” might be enough said right then. People who know each other well – especially families – often talk to each other in pieces of sentences that are called **fragments**. In writing, this is not enough. You will see a sentence fragment once in a while, but only when it is surrounded by information that makes its meaning perfectly clear, and usually just for **emphasis**.

Computers do not understand this. Programs that check spelling and grammar will always point out a sentence fragment as something that should be changed. That’s because computers do not think; they simply gather and give out information. The truth is, there are certain times in writing when a fragment **IS** acceptable.



Kinds of Sentences...

All sentences begin with a capital letter and end with a **punctuation mark**. The most common kind

is one that simply makes a statement. This is called a **declarative sentence** (comes from the word *declare*, which means to state something).

Blue is a pretty color, is a declarative sentence. You might agree with it and you might not. It probably will not cause a surge of any feelings inside you. On the other hand, *After her twelfth birthday, Mystery Girl was in a good mood whenever she wore blue*, makes a person curious. Not just about who “Mystery Girl” might be, but why the color blue had such an effect on her. You might even wonder what happened on her twelfth birthday to make her feel this way. If there are more sentences following that promise to explain these things, a reader will want to read on.

Both of these sentences are correct sentences. Both of them are declarative. Only the second one brings certain thoughts to your mind and then propels you forward. It causes you to think or wonder about something. In other words, it makes a better connection with your brain. Sort of like someone throwing you a ball...



The Interrogative Sentence...

This kind of sentence asks a question, and always ends with a question mark. If you are wondering how you will ever remember a word as long as *interrogative*, just think of the word interrogate, which means to question someone. While it has a rather difficult name, it is one of the easiest kinds of sentences to recognize. “*Did you find what you were looking for?*” is an interrogative sentence. So is, “*What time is it?*” or “*Do you think she knew she was being followed?*”

Interrogative sentences make good links for paragraphs, because they naturally cause a reader to want to see the answer and read on.

Something you should know...

The most important goal in writing anything is to make sure your words are interesting enough to keep readers reading.

The Exclamatory Sentence...

This kind of sentence expresses strong feeling, or emotion, and always has an **exclamation point** at the end. In writing, the exclamation point also shows us when someone is yelling, such as the sentence, “*Turn the radio down!*”

Even though an exclamatory sentence is easy to identify, they can be a little tricky when you try to write one. That’s because not every place you *could* put an exclamation point *should* actually have one. Too many exclamations in your writing can actually make it less exciting if you “give the signal” for excitement and then don’t follow through with anything exciting.

For example, “*Mother invited the neighbor to dinner!*” would not seem very exciting to most people. In fact, they might even think it was a little silly or over-dramatic, and stop reading. On the other hand, if you were to write, “*Mother invited an alien to dinner!*”... that little change in the sentence would bring to mind all sorts of problems or possibilities that might occur. The reader would simply have to read on just to find out.

The Imperative Sentence...



This is a sentence that commands. A good way to think of an imperative sentence is to think of the word *imperial*. This makes us think of kings, who have the authority to command. You can also think of the word *important*: most commands that are given to us are important.

“*Follow the yellow brick road,*” is an imperative sentence. Without it, Dorothy could never have found her way to the Emerald City. “*Get out of the way!*” is also an imperative sentence, even though it has an exclamation point at the end. Why? Because while the exclamation point still expresses more excitement or intense feeling than an ordinary sentence, it is – more importantly – a command to do something.

There are other kinds of sentences, and there are many different books and web sites available where you can learn more about them if you are interested.

But the four different kinds we have looked at are the most common.

Understanding the difference between them can make anything you write easier for others to understand. If you never learn anything else about sentences, this information will get you by, whether you are working on a class assignment or simply a letter to a friend. Because now you know the basics.

Here is an example of the same sentence written in each of the four basic ways:

The boy got out of the burning building.

(declarative sentence)

Did the boy get out of the burning building?

(interrogatory sentence)

Thank heaven, that boy got out of the building!

(exclamatory sentence)

Boy, get out of the building!

(imperative sentence)



Writing Rules!

Here is a fun place to go if you would like to see how much you learned from this chapter:

Sentence Clubhouse



NOTE: *If you are reading this in booklet form, you can find the web address listed in the help section at the back, so that you can go there the next time you are working on your computer.*

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