Writing Skills
Administrative Professional Series
Level 2

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Participant Guide
Words

The basic building blocks of communication

Overview

Parts of Speech
Phrases vs. Clauses
Spelling
Verb Tenses
Misplaced Modifiers
Pronoun Case
Active vs. Passive
Confused Words
Parts of Speech

The 8 parts of speech
1. Nouns
2. Pronouns
3. Verbs
4. Adverbs
5. Adjectives
6. Articles
7. Prepositions
8. Conjunctions

Each part of speech explains not what the word is, but how the word is used. Some words can be a noun in one sentence and a verb or adjective in the next or even in the same sentence.

Can you give any examples of words that can be used like this?
Phrases vs. Clauses

**Phrases** are groups of words that do not have a subject and a verb. They lack one or the other.

- To the store
- Running down the road
- As big as an elephant

Phrases serve many roles in a sentence, such as these two common examples:

- subject or object—*To know him is to love him.*
- modifiers—*Digging for gold,* Harold found a quarter.

**Clauses** are a group of related words that do have both a subject and a verb.

He loves to swim. (independent)
Because he loves to swim (dependent)
Verb Tenses

Tense has to do with time or when the action occurs.

Six tenses: past perfect, past, present perfect, present, future perfect, future

Past, present, future:
I laughed, I laugh, I will laugh

Past perfect, present perfect, future perfect
I had laughed, I have laughed, I will have laughed
**Exercise**

1. Jim had broken the 5k record, and he ____ home to tell his wife.
   rushes /rushed

2. Jane has begun her new career as a lawyer, and she ____ eager to succeed.
   is /was

3. Because I will have no time to cook next week, yesterday I ____ a week’s worth of dinners.
   will cook /cooked

4. Many people visit the Caribbean islands each winter. Next year at this time, more ____
   will go /will have gone

5. Lucas makes the dean’s list each semester, although he ____ more courses last semester.
   takes /took
Misplaced Modifiers

A misplaced modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that is improperly separated from the word it modifies. Because of the separation, sentences with this error often sound awkward, ridiculous, or confusing. Furthermore, they can be downright illogical.

Check out these misplaced examples. Can you fix them?

1. The dog was chasing the boy with the spiked collar.
2. We saw several monkeys on vacation in Mexico.
3. I found a huge boulder taking a shortcut through the woods.
4. Sam found a letter in the mailbox that doesn’t belong to her.
5. The body was discovered by a hunter with a gunshot wound.
6. The burglar was about 30 years old, white, 5’ 10”, with wavy hair weighing about 150 pounds.
## Pronoun Case

Cases are the form pronouns take depending on how they are used in a sentence. There are three cases:
- **Nominative**— used when the pronoun is the subject
- **Objective**— used when the pronoun is the direct/indirect object or the object of the phrase object
- **Possessive**— used to show possession or attribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Pronouns</th>
<th>Subjective</th>
<th>Possessive</th>
<th>Objective</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Singular</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>my, mine</td>
<td>me</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>your, yours</td>
<td>you</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>he, she, it</td>
<td>his, her, hers, its</td>
<td>him, her, it</td>
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<td><strong>Plural</strong></td>
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<td>1st person</td>
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<td>our, ours</td>
<td>us</td>
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<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
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<td>your, yours</td>
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<tr>
<td>3rd person</td>
<td>they</td>
<td>their, theirs</td>
<td>them</td>
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<td><strong>Relative and interrogative pronouns</strong></td>
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<td>who</td>
<td>whose</td>
<td>whom</td>
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<td>whoever</td>
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<td>whomever</td>
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<td>which/that/what</td>
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<td><strong>Indefinite pronouns</strong></td>
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<td>everybody</td>
<td>everybody’s</td>
<td>everybody</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Exercise

1. Three of (we, us, ourselves) took a walk to the park.
2. Are you and (they, them, themselves) going to the movies?
3. No one is more excited about the game than (she, her, herself).
4. Janette and (I, me, myself) hope to work at the store someday.
5. The cowboy told Keith and (they, them, themselves) to head to the ranch.
6. We discovered that it was (they, them, themselves) who donated the money.
Who vs. Whom

1. ___ was Lue Gim Gong?

2. ___ did he impress with his skills as a grower of different varieties of fruit?

3. Lue was well known to other fruit growers ___ wished to learn his secrets.

4. ___ did Lue see when he visited his native China again? He saw his family.

5. His mother was the one ___ wanted him to marry, but he refused.

6. Lue was not the only Chinese immigrant ___ worked in agriculture in the United States.

7. For ___ did Lue develop the first hardy oranges that could be shipped around the world? He developed them for botanist Fanny Burlingame on her farm in Florida.

8. He was also the one ___ invented the Gim Gong grapefruit and the cherry currant.

9. To ___ did Lue give free samples of his fruit and plants? Some say he gave away too much for free.
Nonrestrictive vs. Restrictive

Nonrestrictive are not essential elements

Restrictive are essential to the meaning of the sentence.

In other words, if you take it out, the meaning is lost or is changed.

Which is correct?

Exercise

1. The professor cool and commanding strode into the room.
2. The books that are on that shelf are recent purchases.
3. The moon filled my window lighting my room with a soft glow.
4. The woman who just walked in the door is the artist.
5. I slept all night on the hard ground but not comfortably.
Active vs. Passive Voice

Which are active, and which are passive?

Can you flip the voice?

1. Harry ate six shrimp at dinner.
2. Beautiful giraffes roam the savannah.
3. The flat tire was changed by Sue.
4. We are going to watch a movie tonight.
5. The entire stretch of highway was paved by the crew.
Punctuation

The glue that holds it all together
Commas

Commas seem to cause many issues when it comes to writing. One reason might be because there are so many scenarios where commas are used.

In this section we will cover commas and some of the most common errors with them.
Introductory Elements

The introductory elements of a sentence can be items like:

- Introductory clause
  - If the restaurant is open
- Introductory phrase
  - To defeat their opponent
- Introductory word
  - However,

Exercise

Add commas where necessary.

1. Upon arriving at the dentist Paul checked in at the front desk.
2. Standing near the door I watched the cook prepare a large salad for the guests.
3. The home team won because the other team forfeited the game.
4. To get the full value of this vacation package people need to buy their tickets early.
5. Yes Daniel was willing to volunteer for the job.
6. Repairing the tanker will be difficult for the firemen to do.
Comma Splices and Run-on Sentences

Running two independent clauses together without a conjunction and a comma is trouble.

Check this out:

- My car needed a new tire, my mechanic did it for $50.

The easiest way to correct this is with a comma and a conjunction (AKA compound sentence).

- My car needed a new tire, and my mechanic did it for $50.

Run-ons are putting two independent clauses together without the appropriate punctuation.

- My dog is very loud when he barks and his favorite person to bark at is the mailman.

Fix it:

- My dog is very loud when he barks, and his favorite person to bark at is the mailman.

Exercise

Splice, run-on or correct?

1. The Nittany Lion is always happy, he never seems upset.

2. Birds fly into their nests for the night and they stay there until morning.

3. The traffic is too loud and Barbara can’t sleep.

4. Frank said his class is easy but he is failing because he falls asleep when the professor starts to talk.

5. I am busy today, I don’t have a minute to spare.

6. Whenever Debbie does not sleep enough, she gets very ill.
Commas in a Series

Lists of stuff or actions in sentences can be trouble. How would you let people know what a terrible instructor you had for this class? The instructor yelled screamed and belittled us as he threw paper pencils and erasers at our heads. The serial comma!

(PS- Penn State style dictates that we use the Oxford comma)

Exercise
Add serial commas

1. I love to read books magazines and journals.
2. My uncles Albert George and Frank all went to the ballgame yesterday.
3. The bowling alley employee said lanes six nine ten thirteen and twenty-two are closed.
4. My coach told us we needed to lift weights run laps and stretch before we could go home.
5. Yellow blue and red are the primary colors, and green orange and purple are the secondary colors.
Restrictive Elements

The dog at my house, which is a beagle, is my only pet.

vs.

The dog that I have at my house is a beagle.

I love watching television dramas that are about crime and justice.

vs.

Crime and justice dramas, which I watch on TV, are my favorites.

Exercise

Can you flip this sentence to make it have a restrictive clause?

1. Hiking the Mid-state Trail, which runs through Pennsylvania, is an amazing experience.
Coordinate Adjectives

Coordinate adjectives are adjectives that are equal and reversible.

How can you tell if they are equal and reversible?

First-________________________________________________

Second-_______________________________________________

Exercise

1. In the basement, we found old dirty rags next to the furnace.

2. The picture showed a red-haired green-eyed boy wearing a blue plaid knitted hat.

3. For breakfast we ate two gigantic chocolate waffles.

4. We bought six boxes of delicious homemade sweet sugary cookies.

5. The route we travelled was on a winding treacherous and narrow road.
Semicolons

1. My mother is a doctor she works at the hospital

2. Japanese is a difficult language to master however, if you plan to work in international politics, you may want to study the language.

3. The house need major repairs our neighbors contacted a contractor to give them a quote.


5. The police found new evidence the case is going to trial.
Apostrophes

When do we use apostrophes?

- possession with nouns
- contractions
- plurals of letters, but not numbers

Hint: never use an apostrophe to form the possessive of any pronoun except those ending in one or body:

- anyone’s house
- somebody’s coat
- their dog or the dog is theirs
- her coat or the coat is hers.

Exercise

1. The dog had its right foreleg caught between the couchs cushions.
2. Our neighbors son is a teenager, and hes just about to start high school.
3. She said that she was a child of the 1960s.
4. The suns rays beat down on the men as they made their way to the shores cool waters.
5. Its important to give the medicine time to do its works.
Hyphens and Dashes

Hyphens are used in words in order to make compound words.

Dashes:
- En dash—used with numbers and between dates
  - Similar to the word “to”
- Em dash—used as punctuation in a sentence similar to parentheses and commas

If hyphens are not used correctly, you get weird sentences. For example:

*The red colored car sped down the rain covered road on its way to the drive in theater.*

How do we handle words that end in –ly within compound modifiers?

*A quickly moving train made it to the poorly maintained building on the south side of town.*

An **en dash** is used between numbers or for periods of time when you might otherwise use to.

The Giants beat the Bears 21–7.
The years 2001–2003
The party is from 1–3 p.m.

The **em dash** can be used in place of a colon, commas, and parentheses.

I have two pets—a cat and a fish.
My two pets—a cat and a fish—are quite wonderful.
Exercise: All About You
Getting Started

A basic process to follow when writing anything:

1. Determine your purpose
2. Determine your reader's needs
3. Generate Ideas/Gather Info
4. Establish the Scope
5. Organize Your Ideas
Purpose

Doing this helps clarify much of what will/won't go into your writing. It will also help you to create a clear message.

Make a basic template for the purpose:
The purpose of this writing is ________ in order that my reader ________.

Example:

Fire alarm test tomorrow

The purpose of this writing is to inform readers of the fire alarm test in order that my readers stay safe and calm during the test because they believe it to be a real emergency.

What needs to be in the email?
Time/date of test?
Name of tech doing the test?
Areas affected?
Proper procedure for a real fire?
Location of first aid kits?
Safety record for the year?

Exercise

In groups, come up with two or three clear purpose statements for each of the following scenarios:

- Group 1- Poor lighting in the parking lot
- Group 2- Employee wellness program
- Group 3- New co-worker in a key position
- Group 4- A deliverable will not make the deadline

This is to be an email to someone in authority who can make things happen.

Fill in the blanks:

The purpose of this writing is ________ in order that my reader ________.

Exercise: Brainstorm

Let's brainstorm all of the things that we need to know to create a profile on Facebook.

List them below:
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Scope

Take the list from the last exercise, and let’s refine it to meet the need of someone who has never used a computer before.

What changes?

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Editing Exercise: Wordy Email

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**Exercise: 3-D Printing**

Subject: __________________________________________________________

Body: ____________________________________________________________

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Presentations

What stands out about this slide?

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Exercise: Editing

James Smith believes the use of the super creme is best and he proscribes it often. It's affect lasts longer and has deeper penetration to the skin. Patience who develop a skin rush are told to ask advise from their local Doctor. Neither James or Jame's colleges can be responsible for any condition developed if you chose to use this medecine. You are reminded to use too much than you need. Irregardless, Dr Smith says that "if you have problems, let Proffesor Black and I know". Although Dr Smith specializes in skin conditions from hid office downtown, he also utilises his skill overseas in voluntary circumstances. this is different to many of his pears who avoid doing something to help others. Dr Smith insists he is onto an important principal, that helping everyone is good for them. When asked who he should help Mr Smith says "any one in need'. He further say, 'if you are adverse to doing good things you will never achieve you full potential and will for ever remain stationery in you're life. The High Street is harder but more rewarding in the longer run.' He adds that he has born much in his own life and wants to contribute back to the society and while he does not want to infer that others are amoral, he does wander about there will to sacrifice. His unpaid work is complimentary to his full-time paid work. Even so he is carefull to keep the 2 areas of his actions discreet to avoid issues with the government. He also doesn’t flout his generosity publicly, its his practise to be humble. “I try to insure that I do not loose perspective and have an inflated opinion of what I do”. Dr Smith is obviously a philanderer whose greatly admired by all who know him. [Dr smith has authorised this statement.]
Exercise: Make a Bio Page

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Exercise: Social Media

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