Writing Clear Sentences: Part 2

Grammar Notes:
• For all grammar assignments, you must hand write (cursive or printing); never do grammar on the computer.
• Do not write the questions.
• Use blue or black ink only.
• Be sure to label your work as illustrated in the example below:

Smith, Bob
English 9H, III
September 12, 2013

Writing Clear Sentences: Part 2

Lesson 1: Identifying and Revising Sentence Fragments
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Lesson 2: Revising Run-on Sentences
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Read and study the explanatory notes. Then do the assignments.
Lesson 1: Identifying and Revising Sentence Fragments
Lesson 2: Revising Run-on Sentences
Lesson 3: Correcting Ambiguous References
Lesson 4: Correcting Indefinite Pronoun References
Lesson 5: Reducing Wordiness
Lesson 6: Revising Sentences to Improve Style

Due Dates:
Writing Clear Sentences Part 1, September 10th
Writing Clear Sentences Part 2, September 12th
Fragments

A sentence should express a complete thought. If you capitalize and punctuate a part of a sentence as if it were a complete sentence, you create a sentence fragment.

FRAGMENT Has large horns shaped like corkscrews.
   [The subject is missing. What has large horns shaped like corkscrews?]
SENTENCE A male kudu has large horns shaped like corkscrews.

FRAGMENT The kudu, a type of antelope, in Africa.
   [The verb is missing.]
SENTENCE The kudu, a type of antelope, lives in Africa.

FRAGMENT The kudu, a type of antelope, found in Africa.
   [The helping verb is missing.]
SENTENCE The kudu, a type of antelope, is found in Africa.

FRAGMENT While the kudu stands five feet high at the shoulder.
   [This has a subject and a verb, but it doesn’t express a complete thought.]
SENTENCE While the kudu stands five feet high at the shoulder, with its long horns its total height can reach past ten feet.

The meaning of a fragment you have written may seem clear to you because you know the information you have left out. Try looking at what you have written as though the information is all new to you. Ask what else a reader might need to know.

Lesson 1: Identifying and Revising Sentence Fragments
Decide which of these word groups are sentences and which are fragments. If an item contains only complete sentences, write C for correct. If it contains a fragment, revise the fragment.

1. Many great Americans had little or no formal education. Among these are political leaders, writers, artists, scientists, and business executives.
2. Eleanor Roosevelt had little formal education. Susan B. Anthony the equivalent of a high school education.
3. When Abraham Lincoln was a young man, he worked in a general store. And at the same time studied books on law.
4. Although Carl Sandburg left school when he was thirteen years old. He later went on to Lombard College after serving in the army during the Spanish-American War.
5. Andrew Carnegie, who gave away many millions to charity, started to work at the age of thirteen. He did not go to high school.
Run-on Sentences

When you are writing a draft, you may like to race full-speed ahead to get your thoughts down on paper. When you revise, however, it is important to know when to put on the brakes. Each complete thought should come to a full stop or be linked correctly to the next thought. If you run together two sentences as if they were a single thought, you create a run-on sentence.

There are two kinds of run-on sentences. A fused sentence has no punctuation at all between the two complete thoughts. A comma slice has just a comma between them.

FUSED
Lightening speeds to our eyes at 186,000 miles per second thunder creeps to our ears at 1,087 feet per second.

COMMA
We cannot hear and see the event at the same time, we sense it twice in different ways.

SPLICE

There are many different ways to correct a run-on sentence. Depending on the relationship you want to show between the two ideas, one method may be better than another.

1. You can make two sentences.
   Lightening speeds to our eyes at 186,000 miles per second. Thunder creeps to our ears at 1,087 feet per second.

2. You can use a comma and a coordinating conjunction.
   Lightening speeds to our eyes at 186,000 miles per second, but thunder creeps to our ears at 1,087 feet per second.

3. You can change one of the independent clauses to a subordinate clause.
   While lightening speeds to our eyes at 186,000 miles per second, thunder creeps to our ears at 1,087 feet per second.

4. You can use a semicolon.
   Lightening speeds to our eyes at 186,000 miles per second; thunder creeps to our ears at 1,087 feet per second.

5. You can use a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb.
   Lightening speeds to our eyes at 186,000 miles per second; however, thunder creeps to our ears at 1,087 feet per second.

Lesson 2: Revising Run-on Sentences
The following items are confusing because they are run-on sentences. Revise each run-on by using the method given in parenthesis. (The examples above and on page 432 will help you.) If you have to choose a connecting word or subordinate an idea, make sure your revised version shows the appropriate relationship between the ideas.

1. The Victorian era was a time of extreme delicacy and tact in language, direct references to the body were considered offensive in polite society. (two sentences)
2. The word *limb* had to be used instead of *leg* or *arm* even a reference to the “leg” of a chair was considered impolite. (semicolon)

3. In reference to poultry, the thigh was called the second joint the leg was called the first joint or the drumstick. (comma and coordinate conjunction)

4. Delicate language was carried to an even greater extreme by some people, they referred to a bull as a “gentleman cow.” (subordinate clause)

5. This kind of euphemistic language seems funny to us now even today we use indirect language to replace words and phrases that might be considered offensive. (semicolon, conjunctive adverb, and comma.)

**Comma Splice** (For your information only; there are no exercises to do.)

A comma splice is a run-on sentence in which sentences have been joined with only a comma between them.

**COMMA SPLICE**

I asked the librarian to suggest a contemporary novel about family values, she highly recommended *Mama Flora’s Family* by Alex Haley and David Stevens.

**REVISED**

I asked the librarian to suggest a contemporary novel about Family values, and she highly recommended *Mama Flora’s Family* by Alex Haley and David Stevens.

**REVISED**

I asked the librarian to suggest a contemporary novel abut family values; she highly recommended *Mama Flora’s Family* by Alex Haley and David Stevens.

**REVISED**

I asked the librarian to suggest a contemporary novel about family values. She highly recommended *Mama Flora’s Family* by Alex Haley and David Stevens.

**Ambiguous References**

**AMBIGUOUS**

Colleen called Alicia while she was doing her homework. [The antecedent of *she* and *her* is unclear. Who was doing her homework, Colleen Alicia?]

**CLEAR**

While Colleen was doing her homework, she called Alicia.

**CLEAR**

While Alicia was doing her homework, Colleen called her.

**AMBIGUOUS**

The ship’s officer explained to the passenger the meaning of the regulation he had just read. [The antecedent of *he* is unclear. Who had just read the regulation?]

**CLEAR**

After the ship’s officer read the regulation, he explained its meaning to the passenger.

**CLEAR**

After reading the regulation, the ship’s officer explained its meaning to the passenger.
After the passenger read the regulation, the ship’s officer explained its meaning to him.

Lesson 3: Correcting Ambiguous References
Revise each of the sentences to correct the ambiguous pronoun reference.

Example 1. When the ship struck the dock, it burst into flames.
   1. *When it struck the dock, the ship burst into flames.*
   or
   *The dock burst into flames when the ship struck it.*

1. The loyal forces fought the guerillas until they were almost entirely destroyed.
2. The police officer told the sergeant that a button was missing from her uniform.
3. The guide explained to the tourist the value of the stone that she had found.
4. Leon told Carlos that his report would be better if he added more details about Cesar Chavez.
5. When Anna brought Lena to the conference, we asked her for her press credentials.

Indefinite References
The pronouns commonly used in making indetermines references are *it, they,* and *you.* To correct indefinite reference, revise the sentence to eliminate the unnecessary pronoun.

INDEFINITE In the newspaper it reported that a volcano had erupted in the Indian Ocean. *[It is not necessary to the meaning of the sentence.]*
CLEAR The newspaper reported that a volcano had erupted in the Indian Ocean.

INDEFINITE At Yerkes Observatory in Wisconsin, they have the world’s largest refracting telescope. *[They does not refer to any specific persons.]*
CLEAR Yerkes Observatory in Wisconsin has the world’s largest refracting telescope.

INDEFINITE In Shakespeare’s time you could attend the performance of a play for a penny. *[You does not refer to the reader or to any other particular antecedent.]*
CLEAR In Shakespeare’s time a theatergoer could attend the performance of a play for a penny.

Lesson 4: Correcting Indefinite Pronoun References
Revise each of the following sentences, correcting the indefinite use of *it,* *they,* or *you.*

EXAMPLE 1. In Japan they have the world’s tallest roller coaster.
   1. *Japan has the world’s tallest roller coaster.*
1. In *The Diary of Anne Frank*, it shows a young Jewish girl’s courage during two years of hiding from the Nazis.

2. I asked my aunt Shirley, who works for one of the largest architectural design firms in the city, what you have to do to become a licensed architect.

3. In some parts of Africa, they mine diamonds and sell them to jewelers to be cut.

4. In the sports sections of daily newspapers, it usually tells all about the previous day’s events in sports.

5. When Grandpa was a child, you were supposed to be absolutely silent at the table.

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**Wordiness**

Read the following sentence. Could you remove a single word from it without changing its meaning or lessening its impact?

“At last I knelt on the island’s winter-killed grass, lost, dumbstruck, staring at the frog in the creek just four feet away.”  
*(Annie Dillard, Pilgrim at Tinker Creek)*

Skilled writers make every word count; they know that conciseness is essential for good style. You can make your own writing more concise by eliminating the clutter of extra words.

**To avoid wordiness in your writing, keep these three points in mind.**

- Use only as many words as you need to make your point.
- Choose simple, clear words and expressions over pretentious, complicated ones.
- Do not repeat words or ideas unless it is absolutely necessary.

**The following examples show some ways to revise wordy sentences.**

**1. Take out a whole group of unnecessary words.**

**WORDY** Every single individual in our class bought tickets to the concert.

**BETTER** Everyone in our class bought tickets to the concert.

**WORDY** At the edge of the river, we boarded a small boat that was floating there on the surface of the water.

**BETTER** At the edge of the river, we boarded a small boat.

**2. Replace pretentious words and expressions with straightforward ones.**

**WORDY** All attempts to mollify the male being in the early stage of life development and from an educational establishment were unsuccessful.

**BETTER** All attempts to soothe the young schoolboy failed.

**3. Reduce a clause to a phrase.**

**WORDY** Atul, who was the winner of the sportsmanship award, was asked to give a speech at the sports banquet.

**BETTER** Atul was the winner of the sportsmanship award and was asked to give a speech.
**Better**  
Winner of the *sportsmanship award*, Atul was asked to give a speech at the sports banquet.

**Wordy**  
Tori, who is a computer expert, produced a program that detects computer viruses.

**Better**  
Tori, a *computer expert*, produced a program that detects computer viruses.

4. **Reduce a phrase or a clause to one word.**

**Wordy**  
Lenny contacted a reporter from Albania.

**Better**  
The confirmed price will be honored by the dealer.

Here is a list of wordy phrases and their simpler replacements. Watch out for these wordy phrases in your writing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wordy</th>
<th>Simpler</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>at this point in time</td>
<td>now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at which time</td>
<td>when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by means of</td>
<td>by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>due to the fact that</td>
<td>because, since</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in spite of the fact that</td>
<td>although</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in the event that</td>
<td>if</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the fact is that</td>
<td>actually</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lesson 5: Reducing Wordiness**

Revise the sentences below as suggested in the parenthesis.

1. Have you ever read sentences that seem to ramble on and keep going forever?
2. Redundant sentences are boring and repetitive.
3. A sentence that has too many clauses that are subordinate becomes a mental maze for the unsuspecting reader.
4. Sentences stuffed with extra, unneeded words resemble Saint Bernards squeezed into Chihuahua-sized sweaters.
5. The fact is that carefully crafted sentences are like well-tailored suits.

**Lesson 6: Revising Sentences to Improve Style**

Revise the sentences below as suggested in the parentheses.

1. Mary Kingsley set sail for Africa in 1893. (phrase beginning)
2. Kingsley equipped the bush of Gabon and the Niger Delta. (compound sentence)
3. Kingsley was a fearless and intrepid woman was the first person to travel the route north from the Ogooue to the Rembwe River. (single word modifiers)
4. Kingsley bought back a variety of animal specimens. She donated them to the British Museum.
5. Upon her return, Kingsley penned a prodigious tome, the title of which was *Travels in West Africa*, with the aim and purpose of convincing inhabitants of England that the traditions
and customary ways of the peoples of the African continent were worthy of their respect and regard. (Reduce wordiness)

Deadwood

What we take out of our writing can be just as important as what we put in. So here we'll practice eliminating needless words—deadwood that bores, distracts, or confuses our readers. Your job is to trim the deadwood in these 10 sentences.

(Here’s a secret: the answers are provided for you. Your job is to study the corrections below. You need not do anything else.)

1. Emission allowances are issued every year on an annual basis.
2. Open wells in hard-rock formations are usually rectangular in shape.
3. A wide variety of inhaled corticosteroids are now currently available.
4. As a facilitator, you should be noticing what is going on and making sense of it. Then you can make a decision about what to do about it.
5. Beginning in the decade of the 1950s, NASA first initiated a program to develop and launch a series of passive satellites.
6. A good file format will include a mechanism to allow the addition of more data later in case the need becomes necessary.
7. The use of hormone-replacement therapy (HRT) has produced benefits for many women.
8. In 1972, President Nixon and his counterparts in Beijing took a number of important steps that would result in an improvement in relations between their respective countries.
9. In addition, the design team must also perform an analysis of the decisions that have to be made by crew members as the mission progresses.
10. It is possible to speculate that the reason the polymer melted was due to the fact that heat had been generated by way of internal friction within the bed.

Deadwood Revisions:

1. Emission allowances are issued every year on an annual basis.
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3. A wide variety of inhaled corticosteroids are now currently available.
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8. In 1972, President Nixon and his counterparts in Beijing took a number of important steps that would result in an improvement in relations between their respective countries.

9. In addition, the design team must also perform an analysis of the decisions that have to be made by crew members as the mission progresses.

10. It is possible to speculate that the reason the polymer melted was due to the fact that heat had been generated by internal friction within the bed. [Or, Heat generated by friction within the bed may have caused the polymer to melt.]