

Exercises

In your reading look for highly styled, deliberate fragments used for dramatic effect. Copy the fragment and add a brief comment about its function or purpose.

1. Example: _____

Comment: _____

2. Example: _____

Comment: _____

3. Example: _____

Comment: _____

4. Example: _____

Comment: _____

5. Example: _____

Comment: _____

CHAPTER 3**Sentences Grow****STYLE**

As we have shown, sentence variety can significantly enhance your writing. In this section we look at ways to combine the patterns for even greater effectiveness.

First, these few tips will make your writing more interesting and livelier.

1. Avoid the use of “to be” verbs (*am, are, is, was, were*). Although useful, they show no action and their overuse will make your writing boring.

WEAK: Kim Nelson is my English teacher. She is a very good teacher.

BETTER: Kim Nelson, my English teacher, makes our class special.

2. Many of these “to be” problems become worse when used in expletive sentences—sentences that begin with “There is,” “There are,” “It is,” and so on. Since the subject of the sentence is delayed, a reader may lose interest. These sentences also lead to wordiness.

WEAK: There is a man who lives next door to me who has a mean dog.

BETTER: My neighbor has a mean dog.

3. The strength of a sentence lies in the verbs. The more exact your verb choice, the more graphic and forceful your sentence will be.

WEAK: The teacher walked slowly into the room.

BETTER: The teacher ambled (or strolled) into the room.

These few tips, incorporated into the sentence patterns you have already learned, will allow your writing to better hold the reader’s interest.

NOTE: For more on style, see *On Writing Well* by William Zinsser. Harper, 2001.

Now you are ready to make sentences grow . . . and grow some more.

You are now familiar with some of the more complex patterns in CHAPTER 2, so let's combine two or more of them to create additional variety. Only a few examples of sentence combinations appear in this chapter, but you will discover many more possibilities as you experiment on your own. Remember these cautions, however: Always try to write a sentence that fits into the total context; never force a construction simply for the sake of variety.

Don't be afraid to be creative. Experiment not only with your own favorite patterns from CHAPTER 2 but also with others, with new ones you will discover in your reading or create in your own writing. When you learn to maneuver sentence patterns, when you feel at ease manipulating words, then you will be a master of sentence structure.

Now to discover what patterns combine well—

COMBINING THE PATTERNS—TEN WAYS

1. The compound sentence with a colon combines effectively with a series and the repetition of a key term (PATTERNS 3, 4, 9a).

To the Victorians much in life was sacred: Marriage was sacred, the family circle was sacred, society was sacred, the British Empire was sacred.

2. Repetition also combines well with a dependent clause as an interrupting modifier (PATTERNS 9, 11).

The experiences of the past—because they are experiences of the past—too seldom guide our actions today.

3. A dependent clause as complement combines well with an appositive at the end of a sentence after a colon and a series with balanced pairs (PATTERNS 17, 10, 5).

Ted became what he had long aspired to be: a master of magic and illusion, of hypnotism and sleight-of-hand tricks.

4. The series without a conjunction and the repetition of a key term combine well with the introductory appositive and an inversion of any kind (PATTERNS 4, 9, 9a, 15a).

The generation that was too young to remember a depression, too young to remember World War II, too young even to vote—from that generation came America's soldiers for Southeast Asia.

5. The compound sentence without a conjunction can combine with repetitions and series (PATTERNS 1, 4, 4a, 9).

Books of elegiac poetry had always stirred Jason; they made him think of music, music that sang of ancient glories, of brave men, of the things they loved and hated and died for.

6. Introductory appositives may be written as dependent clauses and the repetition of a key term may be followed by a question for dramatic effect (PATTERNS 6, 8, 9, 19a).

That there are too many people, that overcrowding causes social, economic, and political problems, that human fellowship and compassion wear thin in such an environment—these are problems facing the inner city today, problems that eventually young people must solve. But how will they?

7. An inversion of the sentence pattern may also include a prepositional phrase before the subject-verb combination within a compound sentence (PATTERNS 1, 14, 15a).

Around Jay were men of various nationalities; to none of them could he ever really relate.

8. A pair of dependent clauses as direct objects will work well with paired words, a series without a conjunction, an interrupting modifier with dashes, and a repetition of the same word in a parallel construction (PATTERNS 4, 11, 9a, 16, 17).

The ambassador found that not only was America experiencing painful expansion and costly social upheavals—over foreign policy, racial disorder, economic priorities—but also that the nation was facing the threat of a national paralysis of will, a paralysis of faith.

9. An interrupting modifier that is itself a sentence may go well with another type of modifier (PATTERNS 11, 11a).

His family, a respected conservative family ruled mainly by several maiden aunts—his father had died when he was a child—had been scandalized at the thought that their young heir wanted to devote his entire life to hot-rod racing and roller-derby competition.

10. After a long, involved compound sentence without a conjunction, a fragment with a repeated key word and then a fragmentary question may be very effective (PATTERNS 1, 4a, 9a, 20).

The ecology-awareness movement aims at balance and wholeness and health in our environment; it wants to assure a proper place in the scheme of things for people, for plants,

and for animals. Not an exclusive place for either one, just a proper place for each. But how?

Sentences for analysis

The following sentences from professional writers combine several patterns you learned in CHAPTER 2. Identify them, looking for their special characteristics. Pay particular attention to series structures, length, balance, the amount and appropriateness of detail, effective punctuation, and the appearance of sentences within other sentences. More important, look for patterns that you can adapt to your own style.

1. The 190E Mercedes Benz is a car to respect, to value, to appreciate; the 500SL is a car to adore.
-

2. See how the writer has used an out-of-breath repetition at the end of this sentence. Notice that it contains an allusion to Bugsy Siegel, one of the early developers of Las Vegas.

“The lights rippled, rolled, darted, sequenced their way through fantastical patterns against the black, empty screen of beyond, millions and millions of lights, more than crazy Bugsy could have imagined, far more than someone who’s never spent a night in Las Vegas could ever, ever, ever—even in the wildest reaches of dreams—hope to comprehend.”—Kathryn Marshall, *American Way*, September 1991

3. “Everything for which Japan is known exists in Kyoto: The modern rush and bother and sex and sleaze and chrome and high-technology excitement are all there; but alongside the finest and most exquisite food, the most classical and revered exponents and teachers of various schools of tea ceremony, of flower arranging, of kabuke and noh, the most renowned teachings of the art of the geisha, the best in damascene, lacquer, in handmade paper, in dolls, the art of sand raking, of potting, of making brocades, of arranging the Kimono, of fashioning tiny gardens with moss, of diverting small streams—in short, everything, for those of an alliterative bent, from Zen to

Zaitech.”—Simon Winchester, “Kyoto,” *Condé Nast Traveler*, February 1992

4. “Imagine a macadam track from San Francisco to Wichita, barely two lanes wide with no markings on most stretches, serving the following traffic: ten-ton trucks constantly jockeying to pass one another, buses with riders hanging on for their lives, big cars called Ambassadors that lumber along like tanks, camel trains, oxcarts, cycle rickshaws, wandering cows, motor scooters, bicycles and pedestrians, including the occasional itinerant with a dancing bear on a leash.”—Constance Bond, *Smithsonian*, May 1992
-

5. “Here is an 1872 brochure for weather vanes: horses, roosters, cows, eagles, plows, fish, hogs, swans, cannon, shovels, flags, peacocks, stars.”—*Smithsonian*, April 1991
-

6. “After the Lincoln County War [New Mexico in 1878], Billy [the Kid] failed to live up to his potential—not as a respectable, law-abiding citizen, not as a Robin Hood battling against injustice, not as a cold-blooded killer, not even as the premier outlaw of all time.”—Robert Utley, “Billy the Kid Country,” *American Heritage*, April 1991
-

7. Writing in the *Washington Post*, Henry Allen raised press bashing to a level rarely heard since [Gen. William T.] Sherman: “The Persian Gulf press briefings are making reporters look like fools, nitpickers and egomaniacs; like dilettantes who have spent exactly none of their lives on the end of a gun or even a shovel; dinner party commandos, slouching inquisitors, collegiate spitball artists; people who have never been in a fistfight much less combat; a whining, self-righteous,

upper-middle-class mob jostling for whatever tiny flakes of fame may settle on their shoulders like some sort of Pulitzer Prize dandruff.”
—Peter Andrews, “The Media and the Military,” *American Heritage*, July–August 1991

8. “American families in shorts, bickering and road-weary, climb and descend the macadam path to Last Stand Hill, the women stumping along with their aim-and-shoots, the children fidgeting with their Nintendo Gameboys, the men in caps explaining with the instant authority of sports fans—‘Now listen to me, kids’—that the marble stones that punctuate the battlefield mark where the troopers are buried (they don’t exactly), that the fighting was hand to hand (it wasn’t), that the Sioux tricked Custer (they didn’t), that he is buried beneath the monument on Custer Hill (if he is, it’s inadvertent; he’s supposed to be buried at West Point, but some believe that in 1877 a burial detail may have shipped the wrong set of disinterred remains, in which case an enlisted man has been impersonating an officer for more than a century).”—Andrew Ward, “The Little Bighorn,” *American Heritage*, April 1992
-

9. “It [the maze] has been used for courting (a favorite place for Tudor trysts); for religious processions (the line of worshippers never once crossing); as a form of contemplation and penance (monks supposedly shuffling along the stony paths on their knees); and, even now, for fertility rites—a gameskeeper in Hampshire is always having to move couples on from one particular maze site.”—Martin O’Brien, “Garden-Variety Puzzles,” *Travel and Life*
-

10. “Whether the Southwest will develop a distinct culture I do not know. I only know that if a distinctly Southwestern culture is developed, it will employ cattle brands and no signs of the zodiac to ornament the facades of its buildings; that its gardens will be made

beautiful by native mountain laurel as well as by English boxwood; that it will paint with the colors of the Painted Desert as well as with the colors of the Aegean; that is, biographers will have to understand Sam Houston better than they understand John Quincy Adams; that is, actors on the stage will cultivate the drawl of the old-time Texans rather than the broad *a*’s of Boston; and that the aroma of jasmine and bluebonnets, the golden fragility of the *retama*, the sting of a dry norther, the lonely howl of the coyote, and the pulsing silence of places where machines do not murder quietude—such things will appeal to the senses through the rhythms [*sic*] of its poets.”
—J. Frank Dobie, quoted in Clark Kimball, *The Southwest Printer*, Texas Western Press, 1990

EXPANDING SENTENCES

Often writers need more than a simple sentence with only a noun and a verb. Modifiers help illustrate the generalization of the main sentence. To make their meaning clearer, writers add one or more modifiers to help explain, describe, or amplify so the sentence will be more meaningful to the reader. Modifiers can be placed anywhere in the sentence. Francis Christensen, *Notes Toward a New Rhetoric* (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), named this type of expanded sentence the “cumulative sentence.” In it the base sentence of main subject and main verb with their “bound modifiers” (those that cannot move about) *accumulates* additions. To the base one adds “free modifiers” (those that can move about) that enrich the sentence and create a feeling of motion. A later description of the Christensen method appears in *A New Rhetoric* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976).

The primary sentence is the first level and the modifiers are the second, third, or even fourth level. Each level needs to be connected to the one immediately above it and is related to the basic sentence.

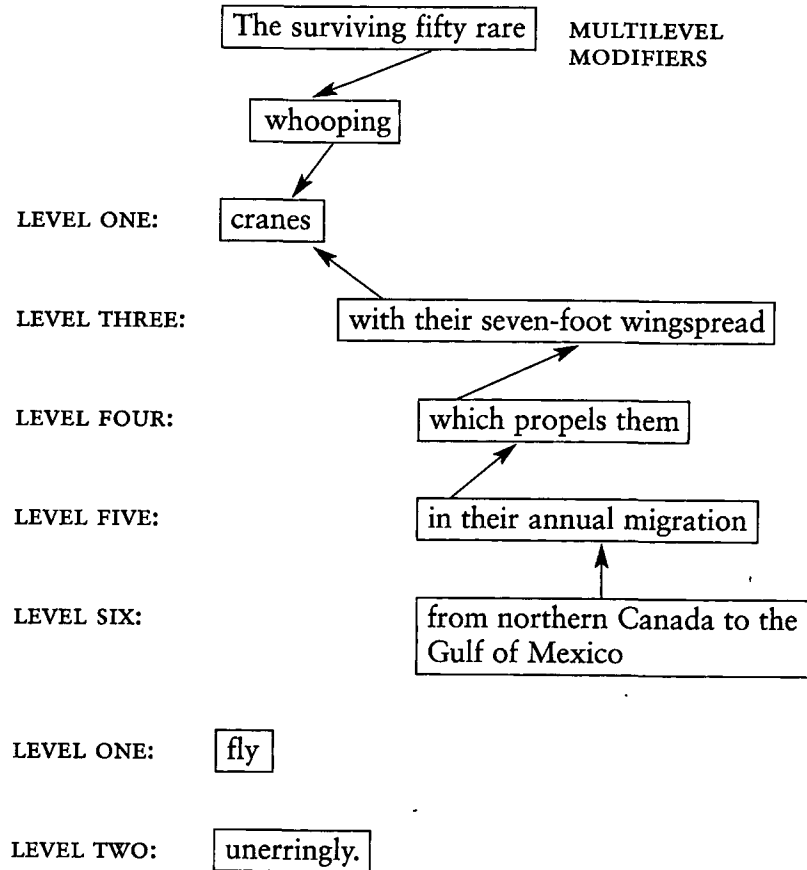
Study the examples that follow and notice how modifiers on different levels in the subject slot help expand the sentence and clarify its meaning.

LEVEL ONE: the basic slots for any sentence (S—V)

Whooping cranes fly. (the “kernel sentence,” according to Francis Christensen)

Now, on different levels add modifiers to the subject.

LEVEL TWO: (the first modifiers): may come before or after subject or verb:



Now add more modifiers on different levels in the verb slot:

LEVEL ONE (the basic S—V): Whooping cranes fly.

LEVEL TWO: modifiers for the verb:

unerringly and swiftly overhead

LEVEL TWO EXPANDED (more modifiers for the verb):

as they migrate southward

LEVEL THREE: modifier for some part of *that* modifier

using a kind of built-in radar

LEVEL FOUR: more modifiers with more modifiers

in their search

for winter quarters

near Aransas Pass.

Now see what modifiers can do to a basic sentence:

The surviving fifty rare whooping cranes, with their seven-foot wingspread, which propels them in their annual migration from northern Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, fly unerringly and swiftly overhead as they migrate southward using a kind of built-in radar in their search for winter quarters near Aransas Pass.

MYTHS ABOUT COORDINATORS

Some writers believe you should not begin a sentence with one of the FANBOYS—the seven coordinators: *for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so*. Nevertheless, many experienced writers *do* use coordinators now and then to begin sentences and to link ideas. Review the coordinators and their meanings; then observe how professional writers use them effectively to begin sentences.

for Gives a reason why something did or did not occur. There is a causal connection between two thoughts.

- and** Adds to the information previously given, implying continuation of a thought.
- nor** Continues a previous negative thought.
- but** Signals an exception, or something contrary to the first thought. *But* implies opposition or contrast in a causal way.
- or** Gives an alternative, another opinion. *Or* suggests only one alternative at a time.
- yet** Implies a conditional situation; something true despite apparent obstacles.
- so** Shows a consequence, a result, or a reason for something to occur.

Examples

For we had to leave early.
 For it was magical.
 For the champion was unbeatable.
 And now you can finish the assignment.
 And in the middle of that Stones tune, too.
 Nor did she give a reason.
 Nor can I explain.
 But peace of mind remains as elusive as ever.
 But he, too, helped with the rescue.
 Or you could take an earlier flight and arrive in Honolulu about
 4:15 P.M.
 Or you can take an alternative route and avoid the traffic.
 Yet few remember him.
 Yet we find exceptions to this pattern.
 So we finally got to go.
 So that's it.
 So we'll start here.

Professional examples

"And that's the way it is."—Walter Cronkite, CBS Evening News sign-off line

NOTE: The quote above is the final line of a long article.

"But now I'm a big boy too and I can do anything and anything and anything."—Ernest Hemingway, *The Garden of Eden*

Exercises

As you read, observe how professional writers often use the short, simple sentence for dramatic effect. Copy the sentence here and add a comment about its function in the overall context—to provide transition, to give variety, to shock the reader, and so on.

1. Example: _____

Comment: _____

2. Example: _____

Comment: _____

3. Example: _____

Comment: _____

4. Example: _____

Comment: _____

5. Example: _____

Comment: _____

A SENTENCE WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS: THE PERIODIC SENTENCE

A special pattern that helps create suspense is the *periodic sentence*. Unlike the *loose* or *cumulative sentence*, which begins with the main clause and continues with supporting details, the periodic sentence delays statements of the central idea until the period at the end. The important thought is deliberately withheld from the reader to create a special climax.

Every sentence has points where you place known and unknown information. In other words, your reader will be looking in particular places for something new. Sometimes you may delay giving this unknown information until the end of the sentence, the primary point of emphasis. A periodic sentence enables you to place the unknown at a strategically powerful point.

A second point of emphasis is near the beginning, in the subject slot. Here, you place known information, because it is not so crucial as what is new. If you bury new information in the middle, it will be forgotten.

You won't use many periodic sentences. In fact, the majority will be loosely structured. Sometimes, though, you will want to withhold unfamiliar information to create suspense. Place the less important items first, then gradually move toward the more important, with the most vital bit saved for a climactic ending. This humorous sentence illustrates the periodic structure: "I attribute such success as I have had to the use of the periodic sentence."

Now analyze this example:

"While caravan after caravan winds its weary way across the desert sands, bringing precious cargo from far inland marts to the bazaars that are the meeting-places of the East and West, most of the camels in these trains announce their coming through the melodious tinkling of brass bells."—Brochure on camel bells of Sarna

How did the writer create suspense? What crucial bit of information was withheld until the very end? What is the purpose of the details in the long clause that begins the sentence?

Now contrast the loose structure of the first sentence below with the periodic structure of the second:

If the voters pass the measure, the new park will be built downtown.

The new park will be built downtown, if the voters pass the measure.

Sentences for analysis

Analyze these periodic sentences. Remember the characteristics of the pattern.

1. "From the deserts of Arizona to the Baltic coastline of Sweden; from Italy to India; from Chile to Celtic Britain; from wavering Bronze Age rock carvings and medieval stone-and-turf designs to the more recent and the more formal garden variety built of evergreens such as yew and holly, the pattern of the maze has appeared throughout history with mystifying regularity in a score of unrelated cultures."—Martin O'Brien, "Garden-Variety Puzzles," *Travel and Life*

2. "Sketch a simple picture of azure waters, gentle breezes, and a protected anchorage; add a wash of tropical sunset colors—and you have a portrait of Cruz Bay."—Kenneth Brower, *National Geographic Traveler*, September/October 1992

3. "She never gives up. Her blue hair waved, circles of rouge on her wrinkled cheeks, lipstick etching the lines around her mouth, still moisturizing her skin nightly, still corseted, she dies."—Una Stannard, "The Mask of Beauty," *A Woman's Place*

4. "From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent."—Winston Churchill, Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri, March 1946

**PATTERN 14: PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE
BEFORE S AND V**

Prepositional phrase S V (or V S) .

Explanation

Before beginning this pattern, let's review what a preposition is. The name actually indicates its function: it has a "pre-position." The *pre* means that it comes before an object, which is necessary to make a prepositional phrase. For example, consider a box and a pencil. Where can you put the pencil in relation to the box? It might be "on the box" or "under the box," "beyond the box" or "near the box," "inside the box" or "beside the box."

In this pattern, you put one or more prepositional phrases at the beginning of the sentence. Make sure the modifying phrase does not sound awkward. Only your ear will tell you whether to put a comma after it; will the reader need the punctuation for each reading? If so, provide it.

For example, these sentences *must* have commas:

After that, time had no meaning for him.
Beyond this, Rex can probably never go.
(Not "after that time" or "beyond this Rex.")

These sentences do well without a comma:

Until next semester I have no more papers due.
During the winter months Tom snowboards every day.

Examples

After a long pause, the teacher continued.
Despite his master's degree in world trade and economics, the only job David could get was making change in an Atlantic City casino.
With horrified attention, we watched the planes crash into the World Trade Center.
Under the table, Jenny played with her dolls.
In the park the ducks waddled toward the pond.

Under the care of Bishop Jean Baptist Lamy, Sante Fe, New Mexico, became an important, thriving village.
On top of the desk, she put his CD player and his backpack.

Professional examples

- "If you chart genealogy in a horizontal manner, you discover such curiosities as the fact that Jimmy Carter and Richard Nixon are sixth cousins."—*Everything Is Somewhere*
"When I left the dining room that evening and started down the dark basement stairs, I had a life."—Annie Dillard, "Hitting Pay Dirt"
"From the mist emerged a figure playing a flute."—*National Geographic*, August 1988

Checkpoint

- ✓ Sometimes a comma is necessary after the prepositional phrase, sometimes not. The sound and meaning of your sentence will guide you.
- ✓ A prepositional phrase can never stand alone. With no completion, it becomes a sentence fragment.

Exercises

In the following sentences, fill in the blanks. Some need prepositional phrases. In others, you need more words than a prepositional phrase to complete the sentence. Try to use *more* than one or two words in each blank.

1. To the athletes _____, the new NCAA regulations represented _____.
2. _____ stood the farmer holding a loaded shotgun.
3. After _____ yet before _____, the veterans soon realized that _____.

PATTERN 13: A SINGLE MODIFIER OUT
OF PLACE FOR EMPHASIS

Modifier _____, S V .
(modifier may be in other positions)

Explanation

To place additional emphasis on any modifier, put it somewhere other than its normal place in the sentence. Sometimes, in this new position, the modifier seems so normal that it sounds clear without a comma; at other times, you *must* have a comma to keep the reader from misinterpreting your sentence. For example:

As a whole, people tend to be happy.

(Otherwise, "As a whole people . . .")

To begin with, some ideas are difficult.

(Otherwise, "To begin with some ideas . . .")

Sometimes a single word such as *before*, *inside*, or *below* may look like a preposition instead of an adverb if you forget the comma in a sentence like this one:

Inside, the child was noisy.

Now look what internal rumblings you create when you have no comma:

Inside the child was noisy.

If a modifier is clearly an adverb, however, you may not need the comma:

Later the child was quiet.

One pitfall in writing sentences has always been the split infinitive—inserting a modifier between the "to" and the "verb" (such as "to boldly leap"), and this pattern can help you avoid this faulty construction. In recent years, however, the split infinitive is considered acceptable in casual writing but is still frowned upon in formal writing. In the following sentence *occasionally* would be better at the beginning than where it is, separating the two parts of the infinitive and *further* should follow *illustrate*.

Francesca liked to *occasionally wade* in the neighbor's pool.
The professor tried to *further illustrate* the point of the essay.

Examples

Below, the traffic looked like a necklace of ants.

Desperate, the young mother called for help.

Frantic, the young hiker rushed over with the rescue rope.

The general demanded absolute obedience, instant and unquestioning.

All day the walkers sweated in the sun, pleased that they were walking for a good cause—preventing breast cancer.

Professional examples

"Extradited, he got similar adulation, as he passed through Concord, New Hampshire."—*Smithsonian*, February 1999

"Delirious, she cried out for her children and apologized for an accident she neither caused nor could have avoided."—Ruth Russell, "The Wounds That Can't Be Stitched Up"

"Unhappy the land that is in need of heroes."—Bertolt Brecht, "The Life of Galileo"

"Now French Protestants—heretics—squatted in Philip's Florida."—Richard and Joyce Welkomir, *Smithsonian*, October 2001

Sentences for analysis

1. Occasionally authors can show an emotional reaction to their material. In the following sentence look for ways that David Segal conveys his emotional stance (*tone*). In describing the manner of Lynne Cheney, Segal interrupts the second clause with the modifier *well*. How does this carefully placed *well* suggest Segal's attitude toward Cheney's policies?

"Cheney denies that she meddles; in my interview with her, she describes herself as, well, helpful."—David Segal, *Lingua Franca*

or other punctuation, you tell your reader this material is not really needed to communicate the main message.

Guarding us with their powerful guns, the heavily armed soldiers at the Rio conference looked ominous.

The heavily armed soldiers guarding us with their powerful guns at the Rio conference looked ominous.

NOTE: Here the phrase is *restrictive* or *essential*, suggesting that specific soldiers were guarding us. See in the following example how the phrase is commentary and thus *nonrestrictive*.

The heavily armed soldiers at the Rio conference, guarding us with their powerful guns, looked ominous.

Once you are familiar with what a participle is, PATTERN 12 will be simple. Although participial modifiers may come at the beginning and at the end of the sentence, they may also come as interrupters at any point.

CAUTION: Do not dangle participles! Be sure to place them next to the word they modify. You will have no trouble with them if you remember not to “shift subjects” at the comma: The subject of your sentence must be the idea or person you describe in the modifying phrase, not some other person or word. Inadvertent danglers usually result in unintentional humor or illogical statements, like the following:

Walking onto the stage, the spotlight followed the singer.

Overgrown with moss, the gardener cleaned his seed flats for spring planting. (Overgrown with moss is the participial phrase here.)

The three boys tried to steal my bike while going on an errand.

The man in the advertisement is shown standing in the middle of a stream holding an ax surrounded by trees.

See examples below for modifiers that don't dangle.

Examples

The man failed the driver's test given that he did not study at all.

NOTE: *Given* is the participle here.

Expecting a spectacular display, the crowd eagerly awaited the fireworks.

Inspired by the reach of the woods and the magnificent view, he was able to finish his novel.

Printed in Old English and bound in real leather, the new edition of *Beowulf* was too expensive for the family to buy.

NOTE: *Printed* and *bound* are the participles here.

Professional examples

“Standing at the very center of those paradoxes, the old Taoists shrugged and let out a sigh of relief, accepting that they could not resolve them.”—Wes “Scoop” Risker, *Crazy Wisdom*

“Running in and out of the sun, you met what seemed total obscurity inside.”—Eudora Welty, “The Corner Stone”

“Faced with such obstacles, readers are at first tenacious.”—William Zinsser, “Simplicity”

“Sprawled on the sofa, I finally faced up to the grim task, took the list out of my notebook, and scanned it.”—Russell Baker, “Becoming a Writer”

Sentence for analysis

In the following sentences, locate the participial modifiers. Do they work well?

Appearing on television talk shows, crisscrossing the country on the campus lecture circuit, invited to be on important programs, fad theorists and former criminals become the darlings of our society before we forget and discard them for others.

Exercises

Try these exercises:

1. (Rewrite the following sentence, beginning it with an *-ed* word.) If you water your African violets carefully, they will burst into bloom.

MODIFIERS

To clarify a sentence that is too brief or general, you can add modifiers. A key word may need more explanation—one or more modifiers—to make its meaning clear:

The lovely model—tall, blonde, graceful—captured the audience.

Modifiers can be single words, phrases, even clauses, and may be anywhere in the sentence. A good way to use them is to take two short sentences and make one of them a dependent clause modifier:

CHANGE: My coach is always fair. He gives us all a chance to play.

TO: My coach, always fair, gives us all a chance to play.

Modifiers work well when you want to appeal to a reader's senses or use some figurative language. Be careful. Remember that the modifier clings to the nearest target. If your modifier clings to the wrong target, you wind up with a silly sentence. For example:

Carrying a heavy pile of books, his foot caught on the steps.

(It sounds as if his foot was carrying a heavy pile of books.)

Appositives, which rename the subject, are another form of modifier:

My sister, an English professor, teaches at Stanford.

A special use for the appositive is as a modifier for a whole sentence where it renames an idea in the sentence:

To speak freely, to bear arms, to vote—these are freedoms we often take for granted.

PATTERN

Explanation

When a modifier is placed in the wrong position, it can be confusing. For example, in the sentence "Carrying a heavy pile of books, his foot caught on the steps," the modifier "Carrying a heavy pile of books" is placed next to "his foot," which is not the intended target. The intended target is the person whose foot caught on the steps. This is a case of a modifier clinging to the wrong target, resulting in a silly sentence.

In this pattern, the modifier is placed at the beginning of the sentence, which is the correct position for a modifier. The modifier "To speak freely, to bear arms, to vote" is placed at the beginning of the sentence, which is the correct position for a modifier. The modifier "To speak freely, to bear arms, to vote" is placed at the beginning of the sentence, which is the correct position for a modifier.

Example

A s
tho
Do
nut
Ty
use
Wc
en
Re
ab
ha
ve

Make up an original sentence using each of the following words as an interrupting appositive:

1. John F. Kennedy _____

2. white wine _____

3. personality _____

As you read, watch for sentences that follow this pattern and add them below.

PATTERN 8: DEPENDENT CLAUSES IN A PAIR
OR IN A SERIES
(at beginning or end of sentence)

If . . . , if . . . , if . . . , then S V .

When . . . , when . . . , when . . . , S V .

S V that . . . , that . . . , that

(omit the third clause and have just two, if you wish)

Explanation

The preceding patterns showed series with single words or phrases. PATTERN 8 shows a different series with dependent clauses. All the clauses in this series must be dependent. They must also be parallel in structure and they must express conditions or situations or provisions dependent upon the idea expressed in the main clause. The series may come at the beginning or at the end of the sentence. You will normally have two or three clauses here; rarely will four or five sound graceful and smooth. Try not to struggle for style; be natural, relaxed, never forced.

This pattern is unique. Save it for special places, special functions. It is particularly helpful

- a. at the end of a single paragraph to summarize the major points;
- b. in structuring a thesis statement having three or more parts (or points);
- c. in the introductory or concluding paragraph to bring together the main points of a composition in a single sentence.

Examples

Because it may seem difficult at first, because it may sound awkward or forced, because it often creates lengthy sentences where the thought "gets lost," this pattern seems forbidding to some writers, but it isn't all that hard; try it.

If he had the money, if he had the time, if he had a companion, he would take that trip around the world.

With no money and with no time, she had to refuse the vacation package.

Whether you use a Mac or whether you use a PC, you can play great games on a computer.

I know that she was right, that her reasons were convincing and that I'd be better off if I did it, but I still didn't want to move to Canada.

Professional examples

"Though it was attached to a lead held by a man, and despite the fact that I had read in my book, *How and Why Wonder Book on Wild Animals*, that pumas do not usually harm people, I ran away as fast as I could."—*National Geographic*, June 1997

"If you attempt to save a chart before ever saving the supporting worksheet, Excel displays an alert box on the screen, asking you, in effect, if you are sure you want to proceed."—Douglas Hergert, *The ABC's of Excel on the Macintosh*

"Now, when I had mastered the language of this water, and had come to know every trifling feature that bordered the great river as familiarly as I knew the letters of the alphabet, I had made a valuable acquisition."—Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*

"When you can measure what you are speaking about, and express it in numbers, you know something about it; but when you cannot measure it, when you cannot express it in numbers, your knowledge is of a meager and unsatisfactory kind."—William Thomson, Lord Kelvin

"I think of a city without cars, where dogs can dawdle, snuffing the wind; where everyone knows everyone else; where lions have wings; where cats and pigeons ignore one another; where people grow accustomed to living in a kind of sphere of absolute beauty, as if all of this were natural, whereas there is nothing at all natural about Venice."—Frederic Vitoux, "Life in Venice," *Travel and Life*

NOTE: The sentence above combines PATTERNS 8 and 9a.

Sentence for analysis

Do you think this sentence is effective stylistically? Does the tone complement the content?

"I wish I could say that I discovered Arden in some appropriately romantic fashion—that my Land Rover was stopped by hooded archers in a bosky byway; that I was kidnapped by free-love

agitators on a dark and stormy night; or that I tracked a fugitive Soviet coup meister to a secret Stalinist camp in the Delaware woods."—Henry Wiencek, *Smithsonian*, May 1992

Checkpoints

- ✓ You don't always need three dependent clauses here. Two will also work in this pattern.
- ✓ Whether you have only two or a full series of three or more, whether you have the clauses at the beginning or the end of the sentence, arrange them in some order of increasing impact.

Exercises

Fill in the blanks to construct logical dependent or independent clauses:

1. If your teacher says to read it twice, if _____, or if _____, you'd better follow your teacher's wishes rather than your friend's.
2. When _____, when the astronaut heard the explosion, when the air controller _____, then the flight crew _____.
3. The new puppy _____ because _____ and because _____.
4. Whether you think _____ or whether you think _____, you _____.

4. Some Hollywood couples like _____
and _____ or _____
and _____ manage to have good marriages.

Using the words listed below, compose three sentences, each with a balanced series pattern:

1. oatmeal Cheerios coffee tea biscuits honey
- _____
- _____

2. elephants hippos gorillas monkeys
- _____
- _____

3. Veteran's Day Labor Day Mother's Day Father's Day
- _____
- _____

As you read, watch for sentences that follow this pattern and add them below.

PATTERN 6: AN INTRODUCTORY SERIES
 OF APPOSITIVES
 (with a dash and a summarizing subject)

Appositive, appositive, appositive— summary word S V.

(The key summarizing word before the subject may be one of these: *such, all, those, this, many, each, which, what, these, something, someone*. Sometimes this summary word will be the subject, but other times it will merely modify the subject.)

Explanation

This pattern begins with a "cluster" of appositives. An appositive is simply another word for something named elsewhere in the sentence—that is, it is another name for some noun. After the appositives, in sequence, you need a dash, a word that summarizes the appositives, and the subject-verb combination for the main clause. You may arrange the appositives in any of the patterns for series (see PATTERNS 4, 4a, and 5).

PATTERN 6 produces a highly stylized sentence, extremely effective for special places in your writing, places where you want to squeeze a lot of information into the same slot.

Examples

The depressed, the stressed, the lonely, the fearful—all have trouble coping with problems.

Gluttony, lust, envy—which is the worst sin?

Mickey Mouse, Magic Mountain, the Light Parade—these mean Disneyland to children.

Hawaiians, Filipinos, Japanese, Chinese—these ethnic groups make up much of Hawaii's diverse population.

Disko kloobs, verd processer, ti-shirti, konsulting, gala-konsert—these are some of the *Amerikanizatsia* of current Russian.

Bull riding, camel racing, bronc riding, and roping—these events mean "rodeo" to many people; they mean money to the cowboys.

(This example combines PATTERNS 1 and 6.)

The *Mona Lisa*, *Venus de Milo*, Egyptian mummies—what treasures the Louvre contains!

OR: —which of these is the best proof of the Italian imagination?

OR: —many are the wonders of the Renaissance in Italy.

An old photograph, a haunting fragrance, a sudden view of a half-forgotten scene—something unexpectedly triggers our nostalgia for the past.

NOTE: You can also put appositives at the end. Try reversing any of the sentences above, following the example below:

The tea tax, the lack of representation, the distance from the mother country, the growing sense of being a new and independent nation—what do you think caused the American Revolution?

What do you think caused the American Revolution—the tea tax, the lack of representation, the distance from the mother country, or the growing sense of being a new and independent nation?

Professional examples

“What it comes down to is this: the grocer, the butcher, the baker, the merchant, the landlord, the druggist, the liquor dealer, the policeman, the doctor, the city father and the politician—these are the people who make money out of prostitution, these are the real reapers of the wages of sin.”—Polly Adler, *A House Is Not a Home*

“A car crash harnesses elements of eroticism, aggression, desire, speed, drama, kinaesthetic factors, the stylizing of motion, consumer goods, status—all these in one event.”—J. G. Ballard, Interviews in *Penthouse*

Checkpoints

- ✓ Check the punctuation of this pattern:
 1. you need commas between the appositives in the series;
 2. you need a dash after the series.
- ✓ Check that you have a summary word at the beginning of the main clause.
- ✓ Check that, as in any series, all the appositives are parallel in structure and related in meaning.

Exercises

For each sentence supply introductory appositives that logically attach to the independent clause.

1. _____, _____,
_____ —each of these people served their
country well.
2. To _____, to _____,
to _____ —such are the goals of the average
American college graduate.
3. _____ or _____,
_____ or _____,
_____ or _____ —

what are your preferences for spring break?

Complete each sentence by writing an appropriate summarizing word and independent clause.

1. Hardware, software, a modem—_____

_____.
2. Poetry and music, painting and sculpture, drama and dance —_____

_____.

1. The fabulous paintings in the Prado thrilled me, all of them _____
_____.
2. The lion tamer entered the cage, his demeanor _____
_____.
3. Their faces _____, the ice
skaters _____.
4. The sounds of the airport—jets _____
_____, people _____, the
public address system _____—suggest
the excitement, frustration, and chaos of the place.
5. The guitarist's hands moved over the strings, his right hand _____
_____, his left hand _____
_____.

As you read, watch for sentences that follow this pattern and add them below.

PATTERN 19: THE SHORT, SIMPLE SENTENCE FOR RELIEF OR DRAMATIC EFFECT

S V .

Explanation

This pattern can provide intense clarity, but being brief alone will not make it dramatic. Actually, this pattern will be effective only when you use it after several long sentences, or when you let it more or less summarize what you have just said, or when you let it provide transition between two or more ideas.

Although "All was lost." or "Thus it ended." may not look very startling here, in the appropriate context such a sentence may be quite dramatic. After a series of long, involved sentences, a short statement will grab the readers' attention, make them pause, shock them into considering the ideas in the longer sentences that precede it.

' As you develop your style, your ear will hear "a good turn of phrase" and you will be able to use this pattern effectively.

Polonius knew this.

Examples

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Well, I wonder. | But then it happened. |
| Days passed. | Just consider this. |
| It was magical. | Don't laugh. |
| That is not my style. | That is okay. |
| Perseverance pays. | I think not. |
| It is time to move on. | And this is true. |
| All efforts failed. | He was unbeatable. |
| Everything changed. | Let's talk. |

Professional examples

- "Jesus wept."—The Bible
 "The buck stops here."—sign on Harry Truman's desk
 "Know thyself."—Plutarch, *Lives*
 "Make my day."—Clint Eastwood in *Dirty Harry*
 "I came, I saw, I conquered."—Julius Caesar
 "Call me Ishmael." (the dramatic first sentence in *Moby Dick*)

NOTE: Try to imagine the context that would make these sentences dramatic and effective. Some experienced writers, such as Charles Dickens, join a number of short, balanced thoughts into one long sentence that could have been broken down into a series of short sentences, brief and dramatic. But imagine how choppy the opening of *A Tale of Two Cities* would have sounded if Dickens had used short sentences rather than one long sentence, with a series of parallel and balanced parts:

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way—in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only."—Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities*

Checkpoints

- ✓ Sentences such as "I like petunias." or "Children laugh." don't fit this pattern just because they are short. They might, of course, but only in the proper context.
- ✓ Notice how professional writers employ this technique of short sentences for special effects.
- ✓ This pattern works best when it is emphatic, points up a contrast, or summarizes dramatically.

PATTERN 19a: A SHORT QUESTION FOR DRAMATIC EFFECT

(Interrogative word) auxiliary verb	S	V	?
(Interrogative word standing alone)			?
(Question based solely on intonation)			?
Auxiliary verb	S	V	?

Explanation

This pattern involves either of two basic constructions: a question that begins with an interrogative word, or a statement that becomes a question through intonation (pitch or tone) of voice.

It is effective in several places:

- in the introduction to arouse the reader's interest;
- as a topic sentence to introduce a paragraph;
- within the paragraph to provide variety;
- between paragraphs to provide transition;
- at the end to provide a thought-provoking conclusion.

When you write, look in these five places to discover where a question could serve some desired effect. You can provoke your readers with staccato-like questions, wake them up, make them pause and think, or make them ask *why* about your subject.

Examples

Can we change?	How did she cope?
Why do it?	What is next?
Where to now?	What if E.T. calls?
Was it easy?	When will it end?

The following examples suggested by intonation are more common in conversation than in formal prose. Imagine how the voice rises at the end of each question.