

Grammar Basics

This handout contains basic grammar explanations and links where students can get further help and practice quizzes.

The Following websites have helpful grammar tutorials and exercises:

The Purdue Online Writing Lab (OWL) <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/>

Grammar Bytes: <http://www.chompchomp.com/>

The Writing Center at UNC: <https://writingcenter.unc.edu/>

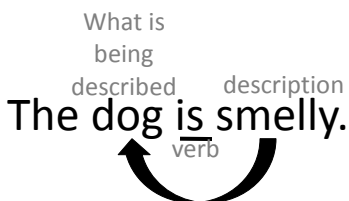
Grammar Girl: <http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/grammar-girl>

VERBS

Action verbs: verbs that show either physical or mental action. They are words like think, wonder, jump, run, etc.

Linking verbs: verbs that link a description to the subject/noun being described. “To be” verbs (is, was, were, has been, are, am) are usually linking verbs

Linking verbs have to follow the pattern below. If the arrow points a different direction, the verb is not a linking verb.



A verb can be either action or linking depending on whether or not it follows the linking verb pattern.

SUBJECTS

Grammar Girl Tip: <http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/education/grammar/subject-and-object>

If you can find the verb, you can find the subject. Remember, the subject is always a noun (a person, place, or thing) or a pronoun, which is a word that stands in for a noun (he, she, they).

Subjects with Action Verbs—The subject is the who or what doing the action of the verb. Find the action verb and ask yourself who or what is doing the action

Example:

Mario ran to the store.
action verb

↑
This is who did the action of running, so he is the SUBJECT

The dog ate a treat.
action verb

↑
This is what did the action of eating, so it is the SUBJECT

Subjects with Linking Verbs—The subject is the who or what is being described. Find the linking verb and ask yourself who or what is being described.

Example:

This is what is being described, so it is the SUBJECT

↓

The dog is smelly.
description
Linking verb

This is what is being described, so it is the SUBJECT

↓

The cookie tasted great.
description
Linking verb

FULL SENTENCES

Tips for building complete sentences and avoiding Run-on and Fragment construction:

<https://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/fragments-and-run-ons/>

Exercises to practice constructing complete sentences:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/engagement/2/1/33/>

Full sentences need to have a subject, a verb, and make sense on their own. To see if you have a full sentence, run the following test:

1. Does it have a verb?
2. Does it have a subject?
3. Does it make sense on its own?

*If it fails any part of the test, then it is not a full sentence.

FRAGMENTS

Grammar Girl Tip: <http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/education/grammar/sentence-fragments>

Exercises to practice fixing fragments:

<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/exercises/5/18>

<http://www.chompchomp.com/frag06/frag06.htm>

http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/cgi-shl/quiz.pl/fragments_add1.htm

According to the OWL at Purdue, “Fragments are incomplete sentences. Usually, fragments are pieces of sentences that have become disconnected from the main clause. One of the easiest ways to correct them is to remove the period between the fragment and the main clause. “ Fragments are often finishing or starting an idea found in a nearby sentence, so a fragment can often be fixed by gluing it to a complete sentence with a comma.

RUN-ON SENTENCES

Grammar Girl tip: <http://www.quickanddirtytips.com/education/grammar/what-are-run-on-sentences>

Exercises to practice fixing run on sentences:

http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/quizzes/runons_quiz.htm

<http://www.chompchomp.com/csfs01/csfs01.htm>

Here are four ways to connect or break up two full sentences to avoid a run-on sentence.

Independent Clause—Full sentence that passes the full sentence test. It’s like an independent person. It can stand alone because it is strong enough by itself. An independent clause has all the elements needed to be a complete sentence by itself.

Dependent Clause—A grouping of words that is not a full sentence. It does not pass the full sentence test, often because it doesn’t make sense on its own. A dependent clause has to depend on an independent clause, a full sentence. It isn’t strong enough to be by itself. A dependent clause is missing a required element.

Step 1 Confirm you have two full sentences

Step 2 Choose an appropriate method to deal with the two full sentences

Fixing Run-on sentences--Method 1—Period and capital letter

Pattern: Full sentence. Full sentence.

Example: Mary went to the store. She bought milk.

Method 2—Comma and FANBOYS

Think of a comma and FANBOYS as glue that holds two sentences together. The glue is only strong enough when you have both a comma and FANBOYS. If you are missing one, the relationship between the sentences won't make sense.

F—For A—And N—Nor B—But O—Or Y—Yet S—So

Pattern: Full sentence, **FANBOYS** full sentence.

Example: Mary went to the store, **and** she bought milk.

Method 3—Semicolon (;)

Think of a semicolon as superglue. It is strong enough on its own to hold two sentences together. A semicolon indicates that there is a relationship between the ideas in the two sentences.

Pattern: Full sentence; full sentence.

Example: Mary went to the store; her kids would not eat breakfast if there was no milk.

Method 4—Subordinator

Sometimes you can add a dependent word (subordinator) onto the front of an independent clause (full sentence) to make it a dependent clause (fragment). You can then join the dependent clause to the independent clause in two ways.

Common Dependent words: when, if, as, because

Step 1: Use a dependent word to turn an independent clause into a dependent clause.

Step 2: Combine the dependent clause and the independent clause using one of the two patterns.

Pattern 1—**Dependent word starting dependent clause**, independent clause.

Example—**When she ran out of milk**, Mary went to the store.

Pattern 2—Independent clause **dependent word starting dependent clause**.

Example—Mary went to the store **when she ran out of milk**.

COMMA RULES

Rule 1: Commas after a introduction

Pattern: Intro fragment , full sentence.

Example: When I was young, I was a brat.

Rule 2: Commas to join items in a series (list) of three or more

Pattern: Full sentence with list at beginning or end.

Example:

1. I bought milk, bread, and eggs.
2. Pizza, tacos, and cake are my favorite food.

Rule 3: Comma and FANBOYS to connect 2 full sentences

Pattern: Full sentence , FANBOYS full sentence.

Example: I wanted to see the Pacific Ocean, so I went to Seattle.

Rule 4: Commas around an interrupter

An interrupter is a word or phrase that interrupts a full sentence. The interrupter almost always goes between the subject and the verb in a full sentence. The interrupter usually adds information about the subject.

Pattern: Subject , interrupter , verb and rest of sentence.

Example: Jake, who is my brother, found a lost dog.

Rule 5: Commas in direct quotations

Patterns:

1. "Quotation," tag.
2. Tag, "Quotation."
3. "Quotation," tag, "quotation."

Example:

1. "Go west," said the mailman when I asked for directions.
2. My mother said, "Make sure you don't forget to turn off the lights."
3. "Love is all fun and games," said James Cole, "until someone loses an eye or gets pregnant."

SEMICOLON RULES

Rule 1: Use a semicolon to connect two full sentences.

Pattern: Full sentence; full sentence.

Joe was out of milk; he drank it all this morning.

Rule 2: Use a semicolon with a transition word and comma to connect two full sentences.

Pattern: Full sentence; transition word, full sentence.

Peggy likes raspberries; however, she is allergic to them.

Rule 3: Use a semicolon to separate parts of a list that already have commas.

Joe went to Phoenix, Arizona; Lima, Peru; and London, England.

Joe went to the store to buy eggs, milk, and bread; to the movies; and to the circus.

COLON RULES

Colons are used to signal that additional information is coming. The thing to remember is that you must have a full sentence preceding the colon.

Rule 1: Using a colon with a list.

Pattern: Full sentence: list.

The office needs to purchase the following items: staples, pens, and paper.

Rule 2: Using a colon with an elaboration

Pattern: Full sentence: elaboration.

There is only one way my toddler knows how to communicate: by screaming.

Rule 3: Using a colon after a signal phrase that is a complete sentence

Pattern: Full sentence signal phrase: quote

Socrates is often attributed with creating the ideals of western philosophy: “an unexamined life is not worth living.”