

Part IV: Writing Effective Sentences

The “Online Exercise” icons in Part IV of the handbook refer to the following exercises.

Note: There is also a set of review exercises on “Sentence Errors and Weaknesses” (covered in Parts II-IV) at the end of this document.

Exercise 40: Modifiers (see section #26)

Choose five of these bare-bones sentences and flesh them out with various kinds of modifiers. Compose several expanded sentences for each. Use some single-word modifiers, but try to work mainly with phrases and clauses, including some noun clauses. Identify each modifier. Keep the sentences simple or complex, not compound or compound-complex (see 12z). (If you don’t like these core sentences, make up some of your own.)

Air travel can be an ordeal.

Recycling requires planning.

Think globally.

Hollywood movies follow trends.

The restaurant was reviewed.

Stop.

We are investigating.

Time is passing.

Canadians puzzle Americans.

Punctuation matters.

Exercise 41: Sentence Length, Variety, and Emphasis (see sections #27, #28, #29)

Below are five paragraphs from draft versions of student essays. For practise, revise each one to improve the effectiveness of sentence length, variety, and emphasis. Try not to change the basic sense in any important way, but make whatever changes will make the paragraphs effective.

1. My father drove up to the campsite and chose an empty spot close to the lake, up against the thickly covered mountainside. We had just unpacked our equipment and set up our tent when an elderly man walked up our path. He introduced himself and told us that he was camped farther up the mountain, about a hundred yards away. He told us that only an hour before, as he walked toward his campsite, he saw a huge black bear running away from it. He said he then drew closer and saw that his tent was knocked down and his food scattered all over the ground. He suggested that we might want to move our camp to a safer place, not so close to this bear’s haunts.
2. The sky promised hot and sunny weather as we quickly finished closing side-pockets and adjusting straps on our packs in preparation for our hike up Black Tusk, which is in Garibaldi Park, a hike which was to be on a trail I had never seen before and which I therefore had been looking forward to with great enthusiasm. And that’s what I felt as we set off in the early morning light on the first leg of the journey which would take us to the top in a few hours.

3. The way time passes can be odd. The mind's sense of time can be changed. I remember an experience which will illustrate this. It happened when I was nine. I rode my bike in front of a car and got hit. I don't remember much about this experience. However, a few details do come to mind. These include the way the car's brakes sounded suddenly from my right. I never even saw the car that hit me. And I remember flying through the air. It was a peculiar feeling. The ground seemed to come up slowly as I floated along. Time seemed almost to have stopped. But then I hit the ground. And then time speeded up. A neighbour ran up and asked if I was all right. My parents pulled our car up. They carefully put me in it. And all of a sudden I was at the hospital, it seemed. It all must have taken twenty or thirty minutes. To me it seemed that only a minute or two had passed since I had hit the ground.
4. It's not so difficult to repot a houseplant, although many plant owners procrastinate about doing this because they think it's too messy and time-consuming, when actually repotting takes very little time and effort if you follow a simple set of instructions such as I'm about to give you. And you'll find that when you've done the repotting both you and your plant will benefit from the process because the plant will then be able to receive fresh minerals and oxygen from the new soil which will make it grow into a healthier plant that will give you increased pleasure and enjoyment.
5. The popularity of the fictional character of Sherlock Holmes began when Arthur Conan Doyle introduced him to readers in his book, *A Study in Scarlet*. Doyle wrote sixty Holmes' stories between 1887 and 1927 altogether, and at one point, in 1893, Doyle got tired of writing about Holmes. Doyle wrote a story, "The Final Problem," that depicted Holmes falling off a cliff into a dangerous waterfall and declared Holmes dead. Doyle thought that was the end of Holmes and that he could now concentrate on writing what he thought was more important fiction. He wasn't counting on the reaction of his fans. Around the world people mourned the passing of Holmes and wrote to Doyle begging him to find a way to write more stories, and finally, in 1903, Doyle brought Holmes back to life again in the story, "The Empty House" and he wrote more stories until 1927.

Exercise 42: Analyzing Sentences (see section #30)

- A. Try analyzing the following sentences by each of the three suggested methods. Doing so should give you a sense of the advantages and disadvantages of each; you can then use or adapt the one you prefer, or use different methods for different kinds of sentences. You may even want to invent your own method.
1. Children danced to the music of the piper.
 2. A chinook is a warm wind blowing eastward off the Rocky Mountains.
 3. Many potentially good films are spoiled by sensationalism.
 4. Both the beaver and the maple leaf are Canadian emblems.
 5. Although she was discouraged, Suki persevered, and after a few more tries she succeeded in clearing the two-metre bar.

- B. Here is a longer, more complicated sentence. For such sentences, the “vertical” method is probably the most convenient. Try it. (You may want to challenge a classmate: see which of you can write down the greatest number of grammatical facts about the sentence.)

Constructed of stone and cedar, the large house that the Smiths built on the brow of Murphy’s Bluff—an exposed promontory—was so sturdy that even the icy blasts of the continual north wind in December and January made no impression on it.

Exercise 43: Correcting Misplaced Modifiers (see section #35)

Revise the following sentences to eliminate awkwardness resulting from misplaced modifiers.

1. Our submissions were accepted if they were postmarked only by midnight.
2. I pledged to always listen to my children when I became a parent.
3. She decided that on this day she would skip dinner entirely in the morning.
4. I could see my grandmother coming through the window.
5. They discussed booking a trip around the world for two days but decided against it.
6. A piano stood in the centre of the stage with its outline only visible to the audience in the darkness.
7. The newspaper only published three letters to the editor yesterday.
8. It merely seemed a few days before he returned from his journey to Nepal.
9. The students decided to work on their project and then hand it in for four days.
10. Only the discounts were available to those who had completed their applications before the deadline.

Exercise 44: Dangling Modifiers (see section #36)

Revise the following to eliminate dangling modifiers.

1. Sitting quiet and fascinated, the busy hummingbird was gazed at by the baby in her playpen.
2. By using first-person narration, readers are led by the author to wonder about the reliability of the story.
3. In order to cook, one must be creative, thereby being adept at substituting one ingredient for another.
4. Looked at in this light, one has to find Hamlet very much like other people.

5. Reamur introduced the idea of testing small sample rods and then studying their structure when fractured.
6. Being the youngest member of the community, it is harder for me to convince the leaders of my experience.
7. When not going to school or working, my activities range from playing tennis to surfing the Internet.
8. By using this style it added more tension to the dialogue.
9. The colonel began to send groups of reinforcements to the weakened position only to be ambushed in the mountain passes.
10. Whispering in the darkened theatre, our popcorn spilled onto the floor.
11. Entering the room, the desk was full of open textbooks, paper, and used coffee cups.
12. When completely cooled, it is time to eat the brownies.
13. After being taught the correct way to clean our hiking boots, our instructors showed us the route for next day's hike.

Exercise 45: Mixed Constructions (see section #37)

Revise the following to eliminate mixed constructions.

1. The reason for the decrease in tourism was due to the fear of terrorism.
2. Soccer happens to be a sport that is very popular in Brazil.
3. I found that the children's literature website to be very useful.
4. The new styles were popular with both men or women alike.
5. Since, for most of us, our earliest recollections are mere fragments of things that made up our childhoods, we therefore must rely on the objects or ideas around us to trigger the past.
6. Just because people like to watch reality television programs is not a sign of a decadent society.
7. The lessons to be learned from the game was because of focus and teamwork.
8. When I was looking for my dropped car keys in the grass beside the driveway; however, I found a lucky, four-leaf clover.

Exercise 46: Faulty Alignment (see section #38)

Revise the following sentences to remove illogical or incongruous alignment.

1. I decided not to buy it, for the price was too expensive.
2. Even religious principles were being enlightened during this period.
3. It is clear that this general conception of his ability is greatly underestimated.
4. The only source of light in the house came through the windows.
5. Its shape is a rectangle about three times as long as it is wide.
6. The poem expresses the meaningless and useless achievements of war.
7. The character of the speaker in the poem seems euphoric and energetic.
8. The need for such great effort on the part of the reader represents serious weakness in the writing.
9. Life and death was a constant idea in the back of the pioneers' minds.
10. She started university at a very young age.
11. The amount of food that could be brought to the picnic was important because it had to fit in two small baskets.

Exercise 47: Faulty Parallelism (see section #40)

Revise the following in order to repair faulty parallelism.

1. Disagreements over the war were not only apparent between elected officials and voters, but between various elements of the armed forces as well.
2. People adopt roles in life that they are most comfortable with, or will benefit them the most.
3. Not only was our trip like an adventure, but also very much like a marathon.
4. It is significant that the prosecutor ignored the jury and to try to address his comments to the judge.
5. Part of the report is not only concerned with the present situation but also prepares the way for the important reforms that are ahead.
6. We are told that we should eat more fibre, less fat, and exercise regularly.

7. The homeless are a neglected group in our society, and our own lives.
8. He says that when he graduates he wants to be a teacher, a home owner, and travel.
9. A pet not only gives an older person something to care for, but also a sense of companionship.
10. The mountaineers had to cope with obsolete or too few pieces of new equipment.
11. The speaker narrates the poem as if he has walked along the streets at night more than once before and that he is acquainted with what goes on around him during his walks.
12. There are many kinds of smiles. For example, there are smiles of pleasure, compassion, humour, contempt, winning, competitive, shared secrets, idiotic grins, leers, gloating, sneers, recognition, friendliness, greeting, social, professional, gratification, spontaneous, contagious, deliberate, suppressed, courtesy, anger, humility, rebellion, embarrassment, and surprise.
13. Everything the fortuneteller told me was happy and exciting: I would marry an intelligent man, have two children, one who will become a famous author, and the other will be a doctor, travel all over the world, and live until I'm ninety-five, healthy as a young woman.
14. The music at the concert captured the child's imagination. While he listened to the music he imagined a sea fight against pirates, that he could fly like an eagle, riding on a carousel, and watched giants who were dancing.

Exercise 48 (1): Faulty Coordination: Logic, Emphasis, and Unity (see section #41)

Convert each of the following pairs of sentences into a complex sentence by subordinating one or the other.

1. The book was well written. I did not find it rewarding.
2. The wind was very cold. She wore a heavy sweater.
3. It stopped snowing. We shovelled the driveway.
4. She read a good book. He played solitaire.
5. The meeting was contentious. A consensus was reached.
6. The opposing team played very well. Our team won a close victory.
7. It started to rain. We moved the party indoors.

Exercise 48 (2): Faulty Coordination: Logic, Emphasis, and Unity (see section #41)

Revise the following sentences to eliminate faulty or loose coordination; aim for good subordination, unity, emphasis, and logic. You may also find that you can reduce wordiness.

1. There are no windows in the room, and all lighting is from fluorescent fixtures.
2. At this point Ophelia becomes confused, and this becomes evident when she speaks her next line.
3. Patrick Lewis is a compelling character, and *In the Skin of a Lion* is a great novel about early twentieth-century Toronto.
4. The last appearance of the ghost is in the “closet” scene and the purpose of its appearance is to prevent Hamlet from diverging from his “blunted purpose.”
5. Her experiments with chimpanzees were unusual but they were interesting.
6. Older people have already been through what others are experiencing, and this enables them to help.
7. Experts are not always right, and they are seldom wrong.
8. The city’s streets are well paved and some of them badly need repair.
9. He is a genius; some people claim that he is an imposter.
10. The stores are usually the first to remind us that Christmas is coming and set the mood with decorations, music, and advertising.
11. The audience learns a lot about Macbeth before his character appears on stage in the play. He is a brave soldier and the audience learns that the witches are going to meet him.

Exercise 49: Faulty Logic (see section #42)

Revise the following sentences to eliminate errors in logic.

1. As he approached the shore, he felt a challenge between himself and the sea.
2. Milton’s influence on other subsequent poets was very great.
3. Some auto accidents are unavoidable, but can be prevented by proper maintenance.
4. Shakespeare fashioned *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* around the theme of love and created the characters and situations to illustrate it in the best possible way. Thus he freely used a variety of comic devices in developing the theme.

5. By the use of imagery, diction, symbolism, and sound, we may also see the structure of the plot.
6. It employed the technique of using projected images on a screen and a corresponding taped conversation which visually enforced the lesson.
7. Throughout history philosophers have been discussing and proposing theories about our purpose on earth, and thus far they can be divided into three general camps.
8. Through the use of too much abstract language, jargon, and clichés, the clarity and effectiveness of this article have been destroyed.
9. As I think back to the days when we were in our early teens, we had a lot of fun together.
10. After his wife died, his paintings of excited forms changed to quiet ones.
11. Having exercise as a part of your daily routine means it will relieve stress and increase stamina.
12. Linda reviewed her study notes for the third time; therefore, she was well prepared.

Review Exercise Parts II–IV: Sentence Errors and Weaknesses

The following sentences contain various kinds of errors and weaknesses discussed in the preceding chapters. Decide what is wrong with each sentence, label it with the appropriate correction symbol, and then revise the sentence to eliminate the problem. Some of the sentences have more than one thing wrong with them.

1. Our coach is overbearing, tall, overpaid, and over forty.
2. One receives this impression when the colour of the picture is considered.
3. Many organic diseases present symptoms that are very similar to autism.
4. Great distances now separate he and his father.
5. The writer's skill was very good.
6. It's true that love and romance come when you least expect it.
7. No player in our school has ever scored as highly as Schmidt did this year.
8. The poem is separated into two parts. The first being his memories and an account of how he reacted to his father's death.
9. Its shape is rounded somewhat resembling a keyhole.

10. I pulled over to the side of the road in a green truck I had borrowed from my roommate, and because the weather was warm I was dressed only in a bathing suit and a bandana, which I had tied around my head.
11. Borelli supposed that there was a tendency for celestial bodies to attract each other but a fluid pressure prevented this.
12. Shakespeare's *Othello* is a brilliant but tragic story of the betrayal of the Moor of Venice by his most trusted lieutenant, Iago.
13. The whole meaning of Housman's poem is that it is better to die young with honour and glory intact than to have someone take it away from you.
14. The forefinger along with the other digits of the hand have enabled us to evolve to the position of being a creative and destructive species.
15. He says he would like to have another chance at being premier; but if he couldn't run the government right the first time, how can anyone think he's about to do it right again?
16. Smitty is so eager about Michael's friendship, and this is easy to understand even the first time one reads the story.
17. Those who are actually involved in this holiday frenzy may find themselves feeling like getting in touch with old friends, making peace with people they haven't been getting along with, giving to their loved ones and even to strangers, decorating, and enjoying each other's company.
18. They preferred to go out with friends to movies and parties than to stay home and watch TV with their families.
19. By creating an atmosphere of concern for the main character we are more open to the message of the story.
20. What a university stands for more than anything else is an institution where one furthers his education.
21. He has an old worn coat which is far too big for him, but alterations are something he has neither money for nor feels the need to get done.
22. I feel faint; the reason is because I am hungry.
23. Her success is credited to her slyness and wit which always prevails over her daughter's weakness.
24. Physical activity of any kind is always beneficial for the individual.
25. At present the fees are already very expensive.