



# WRITING BETTER SENTENCES

## 1.1 BUILDING BLOCKS: WORDS

Before you can start to analyse and write sentences, it's important to consolidate your understanding of the parts of speech.

### YOUR TURN

1.1 Add at least three other examples of each part of speech (except 'article') to the table.

PART OF SPEECH	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES
Noun	A naming word that identifies things, people, places, thinking, ideas or qualities	girl, Melbourne, hope
Pronoun	A word that replaces a noun	it, this, them
Verb	A word used to describe an action, state or occurrence	chew, is, happen
Adverb	A word that gives extra information about a verb or adjective to indicate such things as when, where, how or in what circumstances	slowly, now, proudly
Adjective	A word that gives extra information about a noun by telling more about the qualities or kind of person, thing, place or idea	defiant, quiet, stoic
Article	A word placed before a noun to indicate which person or thing is meant	There are only three articles: a, an, the
Preposition	A word placed at the beginning of phrases indicating time, place and manner	on, in, through
Conjunction	A word that links two clauses, groups or words	but, and, also

## 1.2 BUILDING BLOCKS: SENTENCES

If you understand how sentences work, you will be more confident in experimenting with the different sentence types and as a result your writing will become more fluent and interesting.

A sentence is a group of words that can stand alone to:

- make a statement
- ask a question.

A sentence has:

- a capital letter for the first word
- a full stop, question mark or exclamation mark at the end

- a subject (this is a word or group of words that performs the action of the verb)
- a verb (this has a subject, changes according to the person and number of that subject, expresses a tense and has a voice).

The boy (subject) ran (verb).      The boys (subject) were running (verb).

## SENTENCE TYPES

Good writing will contain a variety of sentence types. The main types are simple, compound and complex sentences. It is also useful for you to know about loose, periodic and run-on sentences.

### Simple sentence

A simple sentence consists of one main clause that expresses one complete thought.

Voula (subject) took (verb) a photograph of the group.

A simple sentence can consist of just one word.

Stop! (verb taking the imperative (ordering) mood)

A simple sentence after some longer sentences can create a dramatic and forceful effect, but overusing simple sentences can make your writing seem jerky and disjointed.

### Compound sentence

A compound sentence is made up of two or more simple sentences of equal importance joined by a conjunction or separated by a semicolon.

Suzy left for school. She came back. (two simple sentences)

Suzy left for school, but she came back. (compound sentence)

### Complex sentence

A complex sentence consists of one or more main clauses and one or more subordinate clauses.

When it began to rain (subordinate clause), we rushed for cover (main clause) and we stayed fairly dry (main clause).

### Loose sentence

A loose sentence has the main clause coming first, followed by its subordinate clause(s). The sentence could end at one or more places before the full stop.

The coach might move this young player to a different position (could end here) because he is extremely versatile (could end here), which is obviously a great advantage.

### Periodic sentence

A periodic sentence is the opposite of a loose sentence. In a periodic sentence, the subordinate clause(s) come first and the main clause is at the end. The meaning is not completed until the end of the sentence.

Since he is extremely tired (subordinate clause), he will not play football tonight (main clause).

### Run-on sentence

A run-on sentence is one that tries to include too many ideas. Such sentences become awkward and difficult to read, and they often need to be broken into two or three separate sentences.

Our next job is to renovate the bathroom, this will be expensive and we're broke at the moment but maybe we'll win TattsLotto – what do you think?

This could be written as:

Our next job is to renovate the bathroom. This will be expensive, and we're broke at the moment. Maybe we'll win TattsLotto. What do you think?

## COMMON SENTENCE FAULTS

Some common sentence faults include:

- using a verb and a subject that do not agree

Example of error: Tim and Jack was boogie boarding.

Rule: **Tim and Jack** are a plural subject, so we need to use a plural verb.

Correct sentence: Tim and Jack **were** boogie boarding.

- using inconsistent tenses

Example of error: Tim and Jack were boogie boarding when they are seeing a shark.

Rule: **Were** indicates an activity in the past, whereas **are** indicates an activity in the present. We need to use consistent tenses to avoid confusion for the reader.

Correct sentence: Tim and Jack were boogie boarding when they **saw** a shark.

- moving from the active to the passive voice or vice versa: a verb is active when its subject performs the action; a verb is passive if its subject does not perform the action (see Unit 6)

Example of error: I bought a dress for the formal (active) and some shoes were bought (passive).

- writing run-on sentences, where one clause is run into another and simply separated with a comma. Instead, use a conjunction or a semicolon to join the clauses, or break them into separate sentences.



Tim and Jack were boogie boarding.

### YOUR TURN

- 1.2 Write a sentence that changes from the active voice to the passive. Then state the correct rule. Finally, rewrite the first sentence so that it is correct.

Example of error: \_\_\_\_\_

Rule: \_\_\_\_\_

Correct sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1.3 Write a run-on sentence. Then state the correct rule. Finally, rewrite the run-on sentence so that it is correct.

Example of error: \_\_\_\_\_

Rule: \_\_\_\_\_

Correct sentence: \_\_\_\_\_

- 1.4 Highlight the subject in the following sentences.
- a I have lost my mobile.
  - b Our dog hates cats.
  - c Chloe loves to play basketball.
  - d Walking is good for you.
- 1.5 Highlight the verb in the following sentences.
- a Can you please send me the information?
  - b Maddie plays the piano.
  - c The cat killed a parrot.
  - d Jacques was losing the match.
- 1.6 Indicate whether each of the following is a sentence (S) or a sentence fragment (SF).
- a I played tennis on Saturday. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b What a pity! \_\_\_\_\_
  - c Stop that! \_\_\_\_\_
  - d Crawling along the freeway, running late. \_\_\_\_\_
  - e Are you angry? \_\_\_\_\_
  - f Don't go near the edge. \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.7 Identify whether each of the following is a simple (S), compound (C) or complex sentence (CS).
- a I would like to go to the beach but I have to study for an exam. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b Tien comes from Vietnam. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c The crowd burst into applause when Warne left the ground because he had played so well. \_\_\_\_\_
  - d Mr Carroll wants to see you immediately. \_\_\_\_\_
  - e We sold our old house and moved to a city apartment. \_\_\_\_\_
  - f When we went to Sydney, I visited him and we climbed the Harbour Bridge. \_\_\_\_\_
- 1.8 Identify whether each of the following is a loose (L), periodic (P) or run-on sentence (RO).
- a Since I have another engagement, which prevents me from attending the concert, you can have my ticket. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b Jess, Kate and Li are going to Lorne, they go there every year with their family and a big group of friends, they always have a great time, I hope I can go with them this summer. \_\_\_\_\_
  - c The girls were late to class because they were not aware of the room change that had been announced that morning. \_\_\_\_\_

**1.9** Identify the fault (verb–subject agreement, run-on sentence or comma fault, inconsistent verb tense or a change from active to passive voice) in each of the following sentences and then rewrite them correctly. Some will have more than one correct answer.

- a** The party was excellent everyone came, it started pouring with rain at about eleven o'clock no one cared, it was great.

Fault \_\_\_\_\_

Rewrite \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- b** Neither of my brothers are blond like me.

Fault \_\_\_\_\_

Rewrite \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- c** Elena spent the day studying but nothing much was achieved.

Fault \_\_\_\_\_

Rewrite \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- d** We tried to help him, but he tells us he doesn't want to see us again.

Fault \_\_\_\_\_

Rewrite \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- e** I think what he did is wrong, you should tell someone.

Fault \_\_\_\_\_

Rewrite \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**1.10** Rewrite the following passages to eliminate any errors in sentence construction.

- a** The icy wind searches every space for more heat and warmth it's so cold I can't believe I'll ever feel warm again, it feels as if it might snow soon, the wind whistles and blows through the cracks in the walls Since there are sticks and paper which previous walkers have left behind, we will try to light a fire. As we have very few matches which is a problem, we may not be successful. The tin roof creaks, the iron latch rattles, the hut still stays in one piece.

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

- b We ate breakfast. We finished preparing for our trip. We were going to an indoor go-carting complex. I was really looking forward to the day having never been there before. We decided to form into teams. It will be more fun. I have got a feeling our team are going to win. We are pretty good competitors.

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## 1.3 BUILDING BLOCKS: TYPES OF NOUNS AND NOMINALISATION

### TYPES OF NOUNS

There are many types of nouns in the English language. The following table explains some of these.

#### YOUR TURN

- 1.11 Add at least three other examples of each type of noun to the table.

TYPE OF NOUN	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES
Common noun	The name of anything that you can see and touch	dog, table
Proper noun	The name of a person, place or thing; a proper noun starts with a capital letter	Melbourne, Sarah
Collective noun	The name given to a group of persons or things	team, herd, flock
Abstract noun	The name of something you feel, or something that could exist in your mind; you cannot see or touch an abstract noun	joy, sadness, humiliation
Technical noun	A noun that is used in a specific area of study	centimetre, mammal

- 1.12 Read the extract and place the nouns in the table, according to their types.

Brown's control of the football is unparalleled. His ability to crash through packs of players while holding onto the Sherrin at half-forward inspires wonder among the flocks of supporters.

TYPE OF NOUN	EXAMPLES	TYPE OF NOUN	EXAMPLES
Common		Collective	
		Abstract	
Proper		Technical	

# NOMINALISATION

Another important writing technique is **nominalisation**. This refers to using verbs as nouns. We do this to change the tone of our writing.

Take this example:

The heat was **increasing** rapidly and the children **were becoming concerned**.

Compare it to this:

The rapid **increase** in heat was causing **concern** among the children.

Here, three important things happen:

- 1 We shift from an action to a concept, person or thing.
- 2 The text becomes compressed and concise.
- 3 The tone of the text moves from 'everyday writing' to being more abstract.

Nominalisation is a useful strategy for positioning audiences to agree with the writer's or speaker's opinion because it presents an act or statement as already agreed upon. Consider this example:

Violence in the neighbourhood **was rising dramatically** and the locals **were beginning to worry** (not nominalised).

The **dramatic rise** in neighbourhood violence was causing **worry** amongst the locals (nominalised).

The nominalisation is effective because the 'dramatic rise' has already happened. It cannot be debated. In this way, the reader is positioned to believe that the violence is entrenched rather than fleeting. The serious nature of the issue is firmly established and thus cannot be ignored.

## YOUR TURN

1.13 In this example, the nominalisations are highlighted. Rewrite the text without the nominalisations. This will require you to write more and longer sentences, which will include more verbs and fewer abstract and technical nouns.

The government's dredging program has resulted in the terrible loss of marine life. Its desire to please 'big business' at the expense of biodiversity has wreaked havoc on nature and has far-reaching implications for long-term sustainability.

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1.14 Complete this activity off the page. Write a paragraph. Highlight the nominalisations and explain how nominalisation makes the writing more effective.

