

**Session Objectives:**

- Sentence Structure
- Punctuation
- Paragraphs
- Compositions
- Steps in essay writing

**Sentence Structure**

Sentences are divided into 2 parts, namely, the subject and the predicate. The subject describes things, while the predicate describes the action.

**Example:** A diamond ring glitters.

A diamond ring – Subject

glitters – Predicate

The following rules should be observed in order to avoid common errors in written language:

- State the subject of each sentence.

**Example: The sentence:** "Will not attend the meeting" conveys the apparent meaning that you will not attend the meeting. However, to avoid being misinterpreted, it is preferable to write the sentence as: " I will not attend the meeting".

- Follow the Subject-Verb-Complement sequence. There are three drawbacks of not abiding by this rule. It increases reading time, presents a less vivid picture and necessitates more words than would be required in the normal sequence.

**Example:** The police (Subject) suspected (Verb) the servant due to various reasons (Compliment).

If the subject-verb-compliment order is not followed and the sentence is written as:

There were various reasons for the police to suspect the servant.

- Do not include unrelated ideas in the same sentence. Since such ideas do not have anything in common, putting them in the same sentence will confuse the reader.

**Example:** These street dogs are ferocious, and the doctor next door, works at the Apollo hospital.

- Avoid misplaced modifiers. Modifiers should be placed near the words they modify. Changing the position of the modifiers will convey a wrong meaning.

Squinting modifiers are those which seem to modify more than one word. Therefore, it must be ensured that the modifiers modify only one element in the sentence.

One more common error while using modifiers is that the modifier does not seem to modify anything in the sentence. These are known as dangling modifiers.

**Example:**

**Incorrect statement:** She served hamburgers to the men on paper plates.

**Correct statement:** She served hamburgers on paper plates to the men.

- Use parallel structure to express similar ideas. When two or more sentences convey similar ideas, the construction of these sentences should be similar.

**Example:** She is young, intelligent, and she is ambitious by nature.

Using parallel structure, the sentence can be written as:

She is young, intelligent and ambitious by nature.

- Avoid platitudes or sentences which convey ideas that need not be explicitly stated.

**Example** – You should not go out during office hours.

- Always use active voice unless it is more appropriate to use passive voice. Passive voice should be used to emphasize the action more than the doer, to avoid an accusing tone, and to avoid revealing names.

**Example:** – Active voice: Ritu Beri has designed a beautiful evening gown for Priyanka Chopra. Here the emphasis is on Ritu Beri (the doer).

Passive voice – A beautiful dress has been designed by Ritu Beri for Priyanka Chopra. Here the emphasis is on the action.

## Punctuation

The use of punctuation helps the reader understand the true meaning of a sentence. Punctuation may be used for the purpose of clarity or only for the sake of following convention.

### Apostrophe:

Use an apostrophe

- a)** To form the possessive singular

**Example:** Henry Smith's novels reward the patient reader.

- b)** To form the possessive plural

**Example:** Workers' incomes have risen over the years, but not fast enough.

- c)** To form the possessive of a proper noun in which the last letter is not an s

**Example:**

**Incorrect:** The credit is her's not their's.

**Correct :** The credit is hers not theirs.

- d)** To form the possessive singular when the last letter in a proper noun is an s. When the singular form of a proper noun has more than one syllable and ends in an s or an s sound, then the possessive is formed by adding only an apostrophe.

**Example:**

**Incorrect:** The Joneses and Besses were feuding.

**Correct:** The Jones' and Bass' were feuding.

- e) In expressions that indicate ownership. The apostrophe indicates that a preposition has been left out.
- f) When the noun presents time or distance in a possessive manner.
- g) When a noun precedes a gerund.
- h) To indicate joint or separate ownership.

To show joint ownership, add an apostrophe to the last name only.

Do not use the apostrophe to form the possessive of a pronoun.

**Comma** Use a comma,

- a) Between coordinate clauses joined by *and*, *but*, *for*, and other coordinate conjunctions
- b) After participial phrases or dependent clauses

Sentences that begin with prepositions or such words as: *if*, *as* and *when*, almost always, all these need a comma

- c) To separate words in a series
  - d) Between two separate adjectives that modify the same noun
- Do not use a comma when the second adjective may be considered a part of the noun that follows
- e) To separate a clause that is not essential to the basic meaning of the sentence, from the rest of the sentence
  - f) To separate parenthetical expressions from the rest of the sentence
  - g) Before and after the year in the month-day-year format
  - h) After a direct address
  - i) After the words No and Yes when they introduce a statement
  - j) Before a question that seeks a confirmatory answer
  - k) After an adverbial conjunction

**Colon** Use a colon,

- a) To suggest that a list will follow a statement that appears in complete-sentence form
- b) When the verb that completes the sentence is sufficiently understood and therefore omitted
- c) To stress a noun that renames the preceding noun at the end of a sentence
- d) Between hours and minutes to express time in figures

**Example:** Meat has one disadvantage: fat.

**Semicolon** Use a semicolon,

- a) When a conjunction is omitted
- b) In a compound-complex sentence
- c) Before an adverbial conjunction
- d) In a series that contains commas

e) Before illustrative words, as in the following sentence

**Example:** One man at the auction bid prudently; another did not.

**Period** Use a period,

a) After imperative and declarative sentences

b) After a courteous request

c) After an abbreviation

**Quotation marks** Use quotation marks,

a) To enclose quoted material

b) To define terms

c) To enclose slang expressions

**Dash** Use a dash,

a) To set off parenthetical elements that represent a break in the flow of thought

b) To set off parenthetical elements that require internal commas

c) Before a summarizing appositive

## Paragraphs

A paragraph is a collection of sentences all of which convey one central idea and which are related to each other in a coherent manner. For a paragraph to be well structured, the sentences should all reflect one central idea and they should be related to each other.

Paragraph thus consist of a topic sentence that conveys the main idea expressed in the paragraph. The topic sentence may appear at the beginning, middle, or toward the end of the paragraph. All other sentences in the paragraph support, illustrate or lead to the topic sentence.

**Logical Order:** It is imperative that paragraphs follow a logical flow. Writers make use of logical connectors or transition words to ensure flow and coherence in the paragraphs. Words such as *then, next, finally* etc. are examples of logical connectors.

**Concluding sentence:** The concluding sentence restates the main idea expressed in the paragraph but in a different way. All the other sentences in the paragraph substantiate or support the main idea whereas the concluding sentence sums up the paragraph.

## Compositions

A composition or an essay is made up of several paragraphs. It consists of three parts – the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. The introduction and the conclusion usually consist of one paragraph each while the body consists of several paragraphs.

Each paragraph in the essay conveys one topic idea which substantiate or support the main idea conveyed by the essay as a whole.

## Steps in Essay Writing

An essay must follow an organizational plan. This helps the reader understand what the writer wants to convey.

**Limiting a Topic:** It becomes difficult to write a good essay if too many ideas are to be expressed. It is always advisable to limit the composition to a particular idea or topic and present the same with adequate examples. Generally, one should start from a general and narrow down to a specific topic.

**Clarify your purpose:** After having decided on the topic, the writer needs to decide how he plans to present the topic for the readers. In order to do so, the writer should first answer the following questions:

- Why is he writing the essay?
- For whom is the essay being written?
- What is the writer trying to convey to his readers?

Answering these questions will allow the writer to develop clarity of thought.

**Write the thesis statement:** The thesis statement expresses the main idea of the essay. The writer should be clear about the thesis statement before he/she begins to write the essay. The thesis statement need not necessarily be a single sentence. It may be comprise of 2 or more sentences. Also, the thesis statement need not necessarily be explicitly stated. At times, the thesis statement may be implied in nature.

**Write the introduction:** The introduction to an essay depends on the audience for which the essay is intended and on the type of essay. The manner in which the introduction is written decides whether the reader will continue to read the essay or will put it aside. The introduction should capture the attention of the reader and make him to read further, convey the main idea of the essay, give the readers an idea as to what material will follow subsequently in the essay, and hint at how the essay is organized.

**Plan and write the body:** Before beginning to write the essay, the writer should first organize his ideas. This can be done by listing down all the ideas that he can think of regarding the topic. It is not necessary that all the ideas that come to his mind be relevant. The writer should continue listing down the ideas, relevant or otherwise, until he has exhausted all the possible ideas. This should then be followed by a grouping of related ideas to develop into the paragraphs of the essay. The idea conveyed in the paragraphs should support the thesis statement or the main idea of the essay. While developing the paragraphs of the essay, the writer should take care that there is a logical flow between one paragraph and the other and there is no abrupt jump from one idea to the other.

### Write the Conclusion

The conclusion summarizes the essay and emphasizes or restates the main idea. The conclusion should depend upon the type of essay that has been written.

Some commonly used conclusions are:

**Result:** The conclusion states the result of a process or activity that has been described.

**Restatement:** The main idea is stated in a different way.

**Prediction:** This type of conclusion is appropriate for an essay that expresses an opinion or a point of view. In such essays, the writer usually concludes by stating the future possibilities that are likely.

**Recommendation:** If the essay discusses a problem, the conclusion should be in the form of a recommendation or a solution to the problem.

**Quotation:** A catchy quotation will always capture the readers' attention but overuse of quotations is not advisable. The use of a quote from a recognized authority can add credibility to what the writer has expressed in his essay.

### Summary

Sentences should be grammatically correct and should convey the meaning clearly.

An essay must have an introduction, body and a conclusion. Every essay must have a thesis statement