



PART

2

# Effective Sentences

## Chapter 6

### Combining Word Groups

6a Coordination

6b Subordination

6c Parallelism

## Chapter 7

### Agreement

7a Subject-Verb Agreement

7b Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

## Chapter 8

### Modifiers

8a Using Modifiers

8b Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

## Chapter 9

### Word Choice

9a Clarity and Conciseness

9b Vague vs. Vivid Words

9c Choosing Correct Words

9d Inclusive Language

9e Commonly Misused Words

## Chapter 10

### Shifts in Tense and Person

10a Consistency in Tense

10b Consistency in Person

80

80

81

83

85

85

89

92

92

93

97

97

101

102

105

110

113

113

116

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## Chapter 6

# Combining Word Groups

When you write, one of your main goals should be to show connections between ideas. Some ideas are equally important to your meaning, while others are less important. The way that you structure a sentence can help establish those relationships and give your writing a smoother flow.

## 6a Coordination

When two word groups discuss ideas that are closely related, they can be combined using coordination. There are two ways to join word groups with coordination:

- Use a comma + coordinating conjunction
- Use a semicolon

### Use a Comma + Coordinating Conjunction

Use a comma and a coordinating conjunction to join two independent clauses. Use the acronym FANBOYS to remember the seven coordinating conjunctions:

<b>F</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>Y</b>	<b>S</b>
For	And	Nor	But	Or	Yet	So

Take a look at these examples that use a comma with a coordinating conjunction:

Marco is a football fanatic, **but** he likes baseball even better.

It has finally stopped raining, **and** the sun is shining again.

My boyfriend is allergic to peanuts, **so** I don't eat them either.



## Use a Semicolon

Using a semicolon is another way to combine two independent clauses.

Marco is a football fanatic; he likes baseball even better.

It has finally stopped raining; the sun is shining again.

My boyfriend is allergic to peanuts; I don't eat them either.

### Exercise

**Practice combining the independent clauses below either with a comma and coordinating conjunction or with a semicolon.**

My friend is majoring in nursing. She is constantly studying.

Last night, the temperature dropped. My car's windshield was covered with ice.

Nate wants to see a movie tonight. I want to go to a party.

## 6b Subordination

Another word for “subordinate” is “dependent.” Like coordination, subordination combines word groups that discuss related ideas. However, subordination makes one word group dependent on another word group.

Here's a list of common subordinating conjunctions:

after	despite	since
although	even though	until
as	if	when
because	once	while

### At the Beginning of a Sentence

Use a subordinating conjunction to make one sentence dependent on a second sentence.



The power went out.

We used candles for light.

**Because** the power went out, we used candles for light.

When the dependent word group is at the front of the sentence, it is separated from the other word group by a comma.

Here are a few more examples:

**Since it's Friday**, everyone in the office is dressed casually.

**Even though the event was cancelled**, people still showed up.

### At the End of a Sentence

When a dependent word group is at the end of a sentence, no comma is needed.

Everyone in the office is dressed casually **since it's Friday**.

People still showed up **even though the event was cancelled**.

### Exercise

**Practice combining two independent clauses below with a subordinating conjunction. When you're finished, each sentence should contain one dependent clause and one independent clause.**

The job market is very competitive. I want to apply to a number of positions in my area.

I dislike costume parties. I have to dress up so I can go out to my friend's Halloween party.

Math is my favorite subject in school. I am taking two English courses this semester.



## 6c Parallelism

In writing, parallelism is used to create balance between two or more related ideas by using similarly-structured words, phrases, or clauses. Parallelism can be used for the following types of sentences:

- Combined word groups
- Lists

### Combined Word Groups

You can use coordination or subordination to combine two word groups. However, if the word groups are structured in two different ways, it will be difficult to see the connection between the two pieces of information.

My sister has a bulldog; a golden retriever is what my brother has.

To make this sentence parallel, one of the independent clauses needs to be changed so that both clauses follow the same basic pattern:

<b>Person</b>	My sister
<b>Action</b>	has
<b>Dog</b>	a bulldog

If the second independent clause is changed to follow this pattern, the sentence will be parallel and the two ideas will be more clearly connected.

My sister has a bulldog; my brother has a golden retriever.

Here are a few more examples of independent clauses connected with parallelism.

Take out the trash on Monday; sweep the floors on Tuesday.

My mom likes to stay up late on her birthday; my dad likes to sleep late on his birthday.



My roommate is majoring in chemistry; my best friend is majoring in journalism.

## Lists

Lists are easy to read when each item follows the same parallel structure.

**Not Parallel** This afternoon, I want to finish my essay, my car needs to be cleaned out, and buying milk is necessary.

**Parallel** This afternoon, I want to finish my essay, clean out my car, and buy milk.

**Not Parallel** Sherman Alexie is a talented novelist, he is also a screenwriter, and he has written poetry.

**Parallel** Sherman Alexie is a talented novelist, screenwriter, and poet.

In the parallel lists, each item follows the same basic structure, making it much easier to read than the lists that aren't parallel.

### Exercise

**Re-write the sentence below so that the list items use a parallel structure.**

My neighbor's parakeet, the cat that belongs to my grandmother, and my best friend's hamster came to my dog's birthday party.



## Chapter 7

# Agreement

When two people agree on something, like “mint chocolate chip is the best ice cream flavor,” it means that even though they are two different individuals, they are the same when it comes to at least one issue (in this case, ice cream flavors). In effective sentences, your words are different from each other, but they need to agree with each other, or be the same, in certain ways. Agreement needs to happen between two types of words:

- Subjects and verbs
- Pronouns and antecedents

## 7a Subject-Verb Agreement

The way that subjects and verbs need to agree is in “number.” All subjects and verbs are either singular or plural in number. “Singular” means *one*, and “plural” means *many*. Singular subjects are always paired with singular verbs. Take a look at these examples:

My friend **writes** posts for her blog every week.

The **sparrow looks** for crumbs on the busy sidewalk.

The **update is** available to download for free.

Similarly, plural subjects are always paired with plural verbs. Take a look at these examples:

**Cars need** regular maintenance checks.

**Raindrops slide** down the car window.

The **puppies are** three weeks old today.

Notice that the spelling of singular and plural verbs is unexpected. Singular verbs often end in the letter *s*, while plural verbs usually don’t. In contrast, singular nouns often don’t end in the letter *s*, while plural verbs often do.



## Compound Subjects

A compound subject is a subject made up of two nouns or pronouns that are usually joined by a conjunction, like “Bonnie and Clyde.” When a sentence contains a compound subject, you must use special guidelines to decide if the subject is singular or plural.

If a compound subject uses the following conjunctions, it’s plural and needs a plural verb.

and

both, and

Marta **and** John **answer** questions at the end of each training session.

**Both** Sokwe the chimpanzee **and** Fisi the hyena **were born** in captivity.

If a compound subject uses any of the following conjunctions, use the part of the compound subject that is closest to the verb to decide whether the verb needs to be singular or plural.

nor

neither, nor

or

either, or

**Either** the closets **or** the bathroom **needs** to be cleaned today.

*Closets* is plural, but because the other part of the subject, *bathroom*, is singular and closest to the verb, the verb is singular too. Here are a few more examples:

**Neither** blueberries **nor** blackberries **are** in season right now.





This bus **or** the next **one** is always on time.

## Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns refer to non-specific people or objects. Some indefinite pronouns are always singular or always plural. Others can be singular or plural depending on how they are used in a sentence.

Singular		Plural	Both
anybody	everything	both	all
anyone	nobody	few	any
anything	no one	many	most
each	nothing	several	none
everybody	somebody		some
everyone	someone		
	something		

To decide if the words *all*, *any*, *most*, *none*, or *some* are plural, look at what the indefinite pronoun is referring to.

**Singular:** All of the cake has already been eaten.

**Plural:** All of the orders have been filled on time.

**Singular:** Most of the building has been remodeled.

**Plural:** Most of the cars are parked.

## Distracting Words and Phrases

When words and phrases come between a subject and its verb, it can be difficult to use subject-verb agreement. However, the subject of a sentence will never appear inside a prepositional phrase. A prepositional phrase starts with a preposition and ends with a noun or pronoun.



## Subject-Verb Checklist

Use the following steps to find the subject and verb in a complicated sentence.

- ✓ Put parentheses around any prepositional phrases
- ✓ Identify the verb
- ✓ Identify the subject
- ✓ Determine if the subject and verb agree in number

The people in the elevator is stuck between the third and fourth floors.

The people (in the elevator) is stuck (between the third and fourth floors).

The people (in the elevator) is stuck (between the third and fourth floors).

The people (in the elevator) is stuck (between the third and fourth floors).

In this example, the subject and verb do not agree because *people* is plural and *is* is singular. Here is the correct version:

The people in the elevator are stuck between the third and fourth floors.

## Inverted Word Order

When a sentence has regular word order, the subject comes before the verb.

The squirrel dashes across the street.

“Inverted” means switched, so sentences with inverted order put the verb before the subject.

Across the street dashes the squirrel.



To find out if a sentence with inverted word order uses subject-verb agreement, use the same steps as you would for a sentence with distracting words or phrases.

Take a look at this example:

Into the store walk three mysterious men.

(Into the store) walk three mysterious men.

(Into the store) walk three mysterious men.

(Into the store) walk three mysterious men.

### Exercise

Circle the sentences below that use subject-verb agreement.

The basketball player dribbled the ball easily.

The actors or the producer are attending the event.

Somebody is giving a presentation in class tomorrow.

The cookies on the blue plate in the kitchen is for my niece's birthday.

Around the block moved the large parade.

## 7b Pronoun-Antecedent Agreement

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun in a sentence. Pronouns are often paired with an antecedent, which is the word that the pronoun renames.

The firefighter put on her helmet.

In this sentence, *her* is a pronoun and *firefighter* is the antecedent. Pronouns and their antecedents must agree, or be the same, in two ways: gender and number. These two categories work together; for example, a pronoun could be “singular, male” or “plural, neutral.”



## Number

Pronoun number has two categories: singular and plural

Singular	Plural
I, me, my, mine	we, us, our, ours
you, your, yours	you, your, yours
he, him, his	they, them, their, theirs
she, her, hers	
it, its	

The number of a pronoun must agree with the number of its antecedent. Take a look at these examples:

**Singular:** My **tablet** needs **its** screen repaired.

**Singular:** The **candidate** shared **her** opinions during the debate last night.

**Plural:** My twin **cousins** celebrate **their** birthday together.

**Plural:** Since this **family** is small, **we** don't need two cars.

## Gender

Pronoun gender has three categories: male, female, and neutral.

Male	Female	Neutral
he, him, his	she, her, hers	I, me, my, mine
		we, us, our, ours
		you, your, yours
		it, its
		they, them, their, theirs



The gender of a pronoun must agree with the gender of its antecedent. Take a look at these examples:

**Male:** Uncle Ken left his glasses in the car.

**Female:** The little girl was sitting on her father's shoulders.

**Neutral:** That tree is losing its leaves already.

If the gender of the antecedent is unknown, there are two options.

Use the term *he or she* or *his or her*.

An employee should eat his or her lunch in the break room.

Make the antecedent plural in number and use a pronoun that is neutral in gender

Employees should eat their lunches in the break room.

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## Chapter 8

# Modifiers

## 8a Using Modifiers

Modifiers are words or word groups that add extra information to a sentence. Another word for modifier is *describer* because modifiers describe other words or word groups. Without modifiers, sentences would be less meaningful and clear. Take a look at this example:

**With Modifiers:** The red-faced man frantically sprinted down the street.

**Without Modifiers:** The man sprinted down the street.

**With Modifiers:** The woman leaning nonchalantly against the doorframe observed the crowd.

**Without Modifiers:** The woman observed the crowd.

## Common Types of Modifiers

The most common types of modifiers are adjectives and adverbs.

Seasoned Minnesotans rarely dream of living in a warmer climate.

The dusty shelf hung diagonally above an ancient stove.

However, sometimes phrases and even clauses are also considered modifiers.

As she backed out of the driveway, Bridget realized she'd left her glasses inside.

All of the students on the volleyball team are experienced athletes.



## Absolute Modifiers

One more type of modifier is the “absolute” modifier. Absolute modifiers are complete by themselves and don’t need words like *very* or *extremely* in front of them.

The tree in the front yard is ~~completely~~ dead.

Either the tree is dead or it is alive; using the word *completely* incorrectly implies that there are varying degrees of death.

Absolute modifiers also do not make sense in comparisons.

In Greek mythology, gods like Zeus and Hera are ~~more~~  
immortal *while humans are not.*  
~~than the humans~~

Here are a few more examples of absolute modifiers.

entirely	identical	perfect
eternal	infinite	right
fatal	irrevocable	straight
final	mortal	
finite	opposite	

## 8b Misplaced and Dangling Modifiers

While modifiers are meant to add meaning and clarity to a sentence, they can end up creating confusion if they’re used incorrectly. There are two common modifier errors:

- Misplaced modifiers
- Dangling modifiers

### Misplaced Modifiers

A misplaced modifier is too far away from the word it modifies.

A spring was sticking out of the faded sofa cushion, **coiled.**



*Coiled* is too far away from the word it's modifying, *spring*. To make this sentence easier to understand, the misplaced modifier should be moved closer to the word it's describing.

*coiled*

A <sup>^</sup>spring was sticking out of the faded sofa cushion, ~~coiled~~.

Modifying phrases or clauses can also be misplaced.

Daniel saw a strange-looking bird **using his new binoculars**.

The modifying phrase “using his new binoculars” is supposed to be describing Daniel, but it is misplaced in the sentence. As a result, the meaning of the sentence completely changes to suggest that a bird was using Daniel's new binoculars.

To fix the misplaced modifier, move it as close as possible to *Daniel* so that the sentence makes sense.

*Using his new binoculars,*

<sup>^</sup>Daniel saw a strange-looking bird ~~using his new binoculars~~.

Sometimes, a misplaced modifier is hard to spot because the meaning of the sentence could still be logical.

The books in the library cannot be purchased.

The books cannot be purchased in the library.

Both of these sentences make sense. The first sentence implies that none of the books in the library can be bought. The second sentence implies that books can be purchased, just not in the library. You should carefully read your sentences and look for misplaced modifiers to make sure you're expressing your thoughts clearly.





## Exercise

**Practice revising the sentences below so that the modifier is not misplaced. Underline the modifier and draw an arrow to the correct placement in the sentence.**

There are hundreds of signatures from local business owners on the county website's petition.

The gray tabby cat stared at me as I got in my car, sitting in the window.

He tried to delete the awkward voicemail he had just left, desperately.

## Dangling Modifiers

A dangling modifier happens when the word being modified is missing from the sentence.

After reading through the budget, the miscalculation was discovered.

The modifier in this sentence is “After reading through the budget,” but it’s dangling because it has nothing to modify. *Who* is reading through the budget?

To correct a dangling modifier, add the missing information as close to the modifier as possible.

*the accountant discovered the miscalculation*  
After reading through the budget, ~~the miscalculation~~  
~~was discovered.~~

Sometimes, the best way to fix a dangling modifier is to add the missing information to the modifier itself.

Since opening the new restaurant, the menu has changed every year.

**The menu didn't open the restaurant, so who did?**

*the Myers opened*

Since ~~opening~~ the new restaurant, the menu has changed every year.

**Here are a few more examples:**

**Dangling Modifier:** Looking at her watch constantly, the minute hand seemed to be frozen.

**Revised:** Looking at her watch constantly, Jan thought the minute hand seemed to be frozen.

**Dangling Modifier:** By training diligently, chances of reaching the championship have increased.

**Revised:** By training diligently, the team's chances of reaching the championship have increased.

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## Chapter 9

# Word Choice

## 9a Clarity and Conciseness

While academic and professional documents may be formal, they should not be confusing. You don't need to use complicated language to sound "smarter." Carefully choosing your words to create clear and concise sentences will improve your writing more effectively than using flowery or over-complicated language.

### Clear Words

When writing is "clear," it's easy to understand because the meaning is obvious. Take a look at these sentences:

This stratagem will advocate tandem techniques to diminish building perpetuation expenditures.

This proposal will suggest two ways to reduce building maintenance cost.

The second sentence is clear, or easy to understand. In contrast, the first sentence is confusing; the meaning is not obvious. This is because it uses words like *tandem* and *expenditures* when simpler words like *two* and *costs* would work just as well.

### Exercise

Read the following pairs of sentences and circle the one that uses clear words.

Remember to return the lab equipment to the cabinet at the end of class.

Remember to reinstate the laboratory accouterments in the repository at the termination of class.

My cellular device commenced pealing in the midsection of the allocution.

My phone started ringing in the middle of the lecture.



## Jargon

“Jargon” is overly technical language, and using it can make writing unclear. Here’s an example:

The nomenclature of the *Acer rubrum* is derived from the visual perceptual property of the principal lateral appendages of its stems during the temperate season of autumn.

Can you tell what this sentence says? It’s explaining that red maples get their name from their leaves, which turn red in the fall. However, figuring this out is difficult because of scientific jargon like “*Acer rubrum*” and “principal lateral appendages.” Unless the author is writing to an audience of other scientists, this language is unnecessary.

## Conciseness

To be “concise” means to communicate as much information as possible with the least amount of words. The opposite of concise is wordy. Wordy writing uses more words and phrases than necessary. Take a look at this paragraph:

I wanted to see if you would be willing to meet with me for just a couple minutes tomorrow in the afternoon at 2:15 or sometime around then. I would really appreciate being able to hear what you think about the progress I’ve made with the first draft of the paper that I’ve been writing. Due to the fact that I am having some trouble with organizing my paragraphs, I am hoping that you can help me. It would be great if I could come to your office after class tomorrow afternoon, but I can also meet at another time if it would work better for you.

The author circles around the meaning of each sentence, using four or five words when just one is required. Here are some examples of especially wordy phrases:

just a couple minutes tomorrow in the afternoon at 2:15 or sometime around then

the first draft of the paper that I’ve been writing



Due to the fact that I am having some trouble with organizing my paragraphs

**Here is a more concise version of the same paragraph:**

Are you available for a brief meeting around 2:15 tomorrow afternoon? I would like to hear your feedback on my first draft of Essay #3. I am having trouble organizing my paragraphs and would appreciate your help. If another time would be better, please let me know.

**A concise sentence is not always short; you don't want to leave out important information. Instead, focus on using words that state exactly what you want to say.**

**Here's another example of a paragraph that has been changed from wordy to concise:**

Last July, ~~in the summer,~~ I visited my friend, ~~whose first name is~~ Ben. At the time, he was living in New York and interning as a writer at *The Powder Magazine*, ~~which is a magazine.~~ We did typical tourist activities ~~such as going to see~~ the Statue of Liberty and Times Square. The whole time, I felt like I was on ~~the set of a movie.~~ *like visiting a movie set*

**Take a look at this table of common wordy phrases and the concise version**

<b>Wordy</b>	<b>Concise</b>
the professors who teach at Harvard Law School	professors at Harvard Law School
owing to the fact that	because
the type of information used for test purposes	used for tests
Elizabeth Cady Stanton was a woman who wrote	Elizabeth Cady Stanton wrote
a movie that is exciting	an exciting movie



Wordy	Concise
situations that could be considered exceptions	exceptions
worked as a manager	managed

## Unnecessary Repetition

The common term for unnecessary repetition is “redundancy.” This concept often overlaps with conciseness and wordiness. Take a look at this example:

It’s a true fact that narwhals only have two teeth.

*True* and *fact* mean essentially the same thing, so the phrase “true fact” is redundant. To correct this, remove either word.

It’s a fact that narwhals only have two teeth.

It’s true that narwhals only have two teeth.

Redundancy can happen within a few words, like using *true* and *fact* together. It can also happen within a phrase or an entire paragraph if an idea or explanation is written more than once. Identifying and removing redundancy will make your writing clear and concise.

Here are some common redundant phrases:

Redundant	Revised
12 o’clock midnight/noon	midnight/noon
advance warning	warning
complete opposite	opposite
past history	history
unexpected surprise	surprise
same exact	exact
free gift	gift
ask a question	ask
consensus of opinion	consensus
end result	result
plan ahead	plan



<b>Redundant</b>	<b>Revised</b>
revert back	revert
HIV virus	HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus)
PIN number	PIN (Personal Identification Number)

## 9b Vague vs. Vivid Words

When something is “vague,” it is unconfirmed or unclear. In writing, vague words are unclear because they are too general. In contrast, vivid words are specific and interesting. “Vivid” means colorful or bright.

In writing, it’s important to use language that is both interesting and accurate. Choosing words that are vivid, not vague, will improve your sentences in two ways. First, it will capture the attention of your audience. Second, it will help you effectively communicate your ideas.

### Vague vs. Vivid Nouns

Choosing specific nouns will make your writing more vivid. Take a look at these examples:

<b>Vague Nouns</b>	<b>Vivid Nouns</b>
guy	best friend
organization	European Union
stuff	clutter
pet	iguana
show	<i>Pushing Daisies</i>
people	mechanics

### Vague vs. Vivid Verbs

Using specific action verbs will also make your writing more vivid. Take a look at these example



### Vague Verbs

was walking  
sat  
say  
found  
am going  
went

### Vivid Verbs

was striding  
slumped  
argue  
discovered  
am traveling  
sprinted

## Vague vs. Vivid Adjectives and Adverbs

Another way to write vividly is to use unique adjectives and adverbs. Words like *nice* and *good* are often overused.

### Vague

nice  
very  
dark  
cold  
really  
some

### Vivid

thoughtful  
extremely  
pitch black  
frigid  
undoubtedly  
twenty-five

### Exercise

Try using vivid nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs to re-write the following sentences:

The bear got the fish in the water.

A girl talked quickly about her fun weekend.

My roommate said he is sad because our team lost the game.

## 9c Choosing Correct Words

To make sure you effectively communicate your ideas, it's important to use the most appropriate words. Try downloading a trustworthy dictionary app on your phone, bookmarking a reference website on your browser, or carrying a pocket-sized





reference with you. This will help you choose the best word while you're writing.

## Tone

**Tone** is a positive, negative, or neutral attitude. Just like you use your voice to communicate a certain tone when speaking, you can use words to do the same thing when writing.

The new skyscraper was **impressive**.

The new skyscraper was **overwhelming**.

In these sentences, one word changes the tone of the whole sentence. *Impressive* has a positive tone, but *overwhelming* has a negative tone.

It's a common mistake to use a word that has the wrong tone, but this can confuse your reader and even yourself.

Jeremy **leered** out the window to see if the mail truck had come.

The word *leered* almost always has a negative tone, which means it doesn't fit with a neutral activity like looking for the mail truck. There's another word with a more appropriate tone.

Jeremy <sup>glanced</sup> ~~leered~~ out the window to see if the mail truck had come.

Sometimes, a word doesn't have a *wrong* tone; there's just another word that would fit even better.

My two-year-old son is always running around, but today he was ready for his afternoon **respite**.

My two-year-old son is always running around, but today he was ready for his afternoon **nap**.

These sentences use *respite* and *nap*, which both have a neutral or even positive tone. However, *respite* is too formal in this context. *Nap* is a better word because it fits the context and the casual tone of the rest of the sentence.



## Exercise

Label the following words as *positive*, *negative*, or *neutral*. Use a dictionary and/or thesaurus for some extra guidance.

enthusiastic

gloomy

walk

mimic

sneer

## Clichés

A cliché is something that has been used so much that it is no longer original or interesting. Think of a song you used to like but are tired of now. You probably don't like the song anymore because you heard it over and over. A cliché works the same way.

A cliché can be an event or even an idea, like the cliché of two people disliking each other and then eventually falling in love; this is common in movies, TV shows, and books. However, many clichés are phrases.

The car raced around the track at the speed of light.

There may be times when using a cliché is appropriate. For example, an author might intentionally use clichés to make a point. Reinventing a cliché can also be an effective writing strategy.

My sister was frightened to death by the haunted house, but I was frightened to life; I sprinted through the dark hallways and out the door.

In this sentence, the writer reinvents the cliché “frightened to death” by changing it to “frightened to life,” which adds more interest to the sentence.



Most of the time, though, writing that uses clichés comes across as predictable or boring.

Because they're so prevalent, most clichés are easy to spot. If you catch yourself using a cliché, delete it completely or replace it with a more original phrase. Here are a few more examples of clichés:

Throughout history

In the nick of time

The time of my life

Opposites attract

Raining cats and dogs

Cool as a cucumber

Light as a feather

Actions speak louder  
than words

Love is blind

Think outside the box

The early bird catches  
the worm

Old habits die hard

A picture is worth a  
thousand words

Beauty is in the eye of  
the beholder

## 9d Inclusive Language

Inclusive language is respectful of people's differences. The opposite of **inclusive** language is **exclusive** language. Exclusive language disrespectfully refers to a person's gender, ethnicity or culture, physical or mental ability, or sexual orientation.

If a text uses exclusive language, it might be a sign of bias. However, writing that uses inclusive language will come across as more trustworthy and balanced.

### Gender

#### Terms

A gender-specific word like *mankind* is a type of exclusive language because it refers specifically to men and excludes women.

Additionally, exclusive language uses separate terms to describe men and women, even though the words have the same meaning. For example, *shepherd* refers to a male



shepherd, and *shepherdess* refers to a female shepherd, even though the job is the same.

Inclusive language uses gender-neutral terms to describe men and women, such as *humankind*. “Gender-neutral” means that it does not refer specifically to men or to women.

Gender-Specific	Gender-Neutral
actor, actress	actor
doctor, lady doctor	doctor
male nurse, nurse	nurse
policeman, policewoman	police officer
waiter, waitress	waiter

### Pronouns

If a text is clearly referring to men or women, use the appropriate pronoun. However, exclusive language uses a male personal pronoun as the default if someone’s gender is unknown.

**Exclusive:** If a person needs to make a phone call, **he** can step outside.

Inclusive language uses a gender-neutral pronoun when a person’s gender is unknown. There are two options for using inclusive pronouns.

Use the term *he or she*.

When a person needs to make a phone call, **he or she** can step outside.

Make the subject plural and use a gender-neutral pronoun.

When **people** need to make a phone call, **they** can step outside.

Some people do not self-identify as male or female. In that case, you should find out which pronoun they prefer.



## Stereotypes

Inclusive language does not use stereotypes based on gender. A stereotype is an over-simplified idea about a group of people. Because each person is a unique individual, general statements about a group of people are often inaccurate and disrespectful.

**Exclusive:** The high number of accidents involving female drivers this year gives credibility to the saying that women can't drive.

**Exclusive:** Brian is a real man; he loves hunting, fishing, and camping.

These sentence clearly use stereotypes about both men and women. The first sentence uses a stereotype about all women being bad drivers. The second sentence uses a stereotype about all men enjoying certain activities.

## Unrelated Information

Writing that refers to a person's gender, when this information is unnecessary, is using exclusive language.

**Exclusive:** The accident was caused when the driver, a woman, veered into the other lane.

This sentence refers to the driver's gender, even though this information is unnecessary for the meaning of the sentence.

Inclusive language only mentions someone's gender when it is essential to the meaning of the text.

## Ethnicity or Culture

### Terms

One way to use exclusive language about ethnicity or culture is using outdated, inaccurate, or insulting terms. For example, during the First and Second World Wars, it became popular among many Americans to call Germans *Krauts*, a derogatory label derived from *sauerkraut*. Here is a more modern example:



**Exclusive:** *Atanarjuat* is a widely-acclaimed film based on an ~~Eskimo~~ <sup>Inuit</sup> legend passed down from generation to generation.

*Eskimo* is an outdated term that incorrectly groups together several distinct indigenous people groups. *Inuit* is a more accurate term.

Inclusive language uses the correct term to refer to someone's ethnicity. If you are unsure which term to use, look up the information from a reputable source. Usually, people of that ethnicity or culture can tell you which term they prefer.

### Stereotypes

Exclusive language makes assumptions about people based on their ethnicity or culture. For example, using a stereotype about a person with a certain ethnic background is inappropriate.

**Exclusive:** Ryan is Asian, so he's probably going to get an A on the math exam.

Whether a stereotype seems negative or positive, it's disrespectful to make assumptions about someone based on his or her ethnicity.

### Unrelated Information

Exclusive language about ethnicity or culture can be subtle. For example, referring to someone's ethnicity in an unrelated comment is an example of exclusive language.

**Exclusive:** Yesterday, police arrested Greg Lopez, a Colombian man who lives in Lebanon, PA, on armed robbery charges.

In this sentence, the suspect's ethnicity has nothing to do with his crime.



Inclusive language refers to someone's ethnicity or culture only when it is essential to the meaning of the text.

**Inclusive:** Chef Candice Aquino says that her cooking is inspired by her heritage because both of her parents were born in the Philippines.

## Physical or Mental Ability

Exclusive language equates people with their physical or mental ability.

**Exclusive:** Percy Jackson is a dyslexic.

This statement disrespectfully refers to Percy's physical or mental ability by equating him with his condition: "a dyslexic."

Inclusive language puts the person first instead of defining them by their disability. Information about someone's physical or mental ability should only be included when it's relevant to the purpose of the sentence.

Using medical terms inaccurately is also an example of exclusive language.

**Exclusive:** She still isn't satisfied with the layout; she's so OCD.

**Exclusive:** The traffic light was clearly red; is he blind?

Unless the people in these sentences have been officially diagnosed, this is exclusive language. Even if these people do have a medical condition, mentioning it in a disrespectful or insulting way would still be a type of exclusive language.

One way to use inclusive language is to use a term like "accessible parking spots" instead of "disabled parking spots." This emphasizes the accessibility of the parking spot, not the limitations of the person.



## Sexual Orientation

Inclusive language does not mention someone's sexual orientation when this information is irrelevant.

**Exclusive:** My cousin, who's gay, is graduating this spring.

**Inclusive:** My cousin is graduating this spring.

This sentence uses exclusive language because the sexual orientation of the cousin is completely unnecessary to the meaning of the sentence.

Inclusive language also uses respectful terms.

Exclusive	Inclusive
gay couple	couple
his husband/her wife	spouse, partner

If you need to discuss sexual orientation, use a resource like the GLAAD organization to research inclusive terms.

## 9e Commonly Misused Words

These words are commonly misused because their meanings are closely related.

### Between and Among

*Between* is a preposition that shows a relationship between two people or things.

Markham requested that all communication **between** the defendants should be approved by him first.

The hammock was tied **between** two large trees.

*Among* is a preposition that shows relationships between more than two people or things.

I divided the Halloween candy equally **among** my three children.

Competition was fierce **among** the runners.





## Borrow and Lend

*Borrow* is a verb that means “to take temporarily.”

After **borrowing** millions of dollars from the European Union, Greek banks began to fail.

My little brother always wants to **borrow** my stuff.

*Lend* is a verb that means “to give temporarily.”

Could you **lend** me your truck when I move?

The bank agreed to **lend** her money to open a restaurant.

## Come and Go

*Come* is a noun that indicates movement toward the speaker.

Are you planning to **come** to my house after work?

The wary zebra watched the lioness **come** closer to the herd.

*Go* is a verb that indicates movement away from the speaker.

Don't **go** while it's still snowing outside.

Cary couldn't wait to **go** to Disney World.

## Fewer and Less

*Fewer* compares items that can be counted.

There are three **fewer** volunteers than last time.

There are **fewer** pandas in the wild than there were twenty years ago.

*Less* compares items that cannot be counted.

This year, people have been donating **less** than usual.

There is **less** crime in the city since the new mayor was elected.



## Lie and Lay

*Lie* is a noun that means “to recline.”

The nurse asked the patient to **lie** still during the MRI.

After the large meal, we decided to **lie** down for a nap.

*Lay* is a noun that means “to set down.”

You can **lay** your coats on the bed.

**Lay** the cement on the south side of the building.

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## Chapter 10

# Shifts in Tense and Person

## 10a Consistency in Tense

### Verb Tense

Verb tenses indicate when an action took place: past, present, or future. Another way to think of tense is as an indication of *time*.

Past	Present	Future
hated	hate	will hate
ran	run	will run
took	take	will take

Here's how verb tenses look in a sentence:

<b>Past</b>	Salman <b>called</b> the office.
<b>Present</b>	Salman <b>calls</b> the office.
<b>Future</b>	Salman <b>will call</b> the office.

### Purposes of Tense

Tense	Type of Writing
Present	Narrative or story Literary analysis or discussion
Past	Event report Reflection on past experience
Future	Plans Instructions



## Present

Present tense is often used in narratives or stories because it makes readers feel as if the events are taking place right before their eyes. Think of present tense in writing as the equivalent of a live video feed.

Kit **approaches** the closed door. He **looks** with wide eyes at the paint peeling off the frame and the long scratches gouged in the boards beneath his feet. Tentatively, he **lifts** his hand and **takes** a deep breath. His fist **hovers** uncertainly in the air. Suddenly, he **raps** his knuckles loudly on the warped wood. His heart **races** as he **hears** heavy footsteps on the other side of the door.

The present tense is also used for analyzing literature. The events of the book, and any author analysis, should be discussed using the present tense.

F. Scott Fitzgerald's exploration of the American Dream is evident when Jay Gatsby **speaks** about Daisy Buchanan. Gatsby's idealized version of Daisy **is** the motivation for—and the fulfillment of—all of his ambitions.

## Past

The past tense is used to report an event or reflect on a past experience.

Since 73% of registered voters **participated** in last night's election, voter turnout **was** at an all-time high.

My father always **told** the story about the time he **camped** in the Blue Ridge Mountains with his brothers and **saw** a bear.

Many works of fiction are also written in the past tense.

## Future

Future tense is used to describe anything that has not yet happened, like plans or instructions.

During our next meeting, we **will discuss** decorating ideas for the upcoming show.



Part A **will connect** to Part B to form the base of the bookshelf.

## Exercise

**Rewrite the sentences below so that they all use the *past* tense.**

My new puppy will chew on the chair legs.

He drops his phone on the pavement two days after buying it.

The Ferris wheel spins slowly in the humid summer night.

## Inconsistent Tense

Switching tenses in the middle of a thought is awkward.

I felt my heart racing as Devonte approached my desk on the first day of the semester. My best friend snickered because she knew how much I liked him. **Suddenly, he grabs the seat to my right and sits down.**

**In this paragraph, the action is happening in the past, but the last sentence uses the present tense. This interrupts the flow of the writing.**

Switching tenses can also happen within a sentence.

### Inconsistent Tense

As I **walk** down the hall to refill my water bottle, I **tripped** and **fell** in front of the open door of a classroom.

**Consistent Tense**

As I **walked** down the hall to refill my water bottle, I **tripped** and **fell** in front of the open door of a classroom.

**Consistent Tense**

As I **walk** down the hall to refill my water bottle, I **trip** and **fall** in front of the open door of a classroom.

In order to communicate your main idea effectively, make sure you use consistent tense.

**Appropriate Tense Shifts**

Sometimes, shifting tenses within a sentence or paragraph is necessary.

To describe events that happened at two different points in time, it's appropriate to use different verb tense.

We **took** inventory of the women's department last week, and we **are working** through the men's department now.

To show that a current or future action is the result of a past action, shifting tenses is also appropriate.

Josh **left** the towels out in the rain last night, so Karen **is drying** them at the laundromat now.

I just **realized** that the cupcakes **taste** strange because they **are missing** some ingredients. Next time, I **will pay** closer attention to the recipe.

**10b Consistency in Person****Personal Pronouns**

Personal pronouns can be first-person, second-person, or third-person. Another way to think of person is as *perspective*. A text can be written from *my* perspective (first-person), *your* perspective (second-person), or *their* perspective (third-person).



<b>Number</b>	<b>First Person</b>	<b>Second Person</b>	<b>Third Person</b>
Singular	I, me, my, mine	you, your, yours	he, him, his
Plural	we, us, our, ours	you, your, yours	she, her, hers it, its they, them, their, theirs

All nouns are considered third-person.

Here's what personal pronouns look like in a sentence:

**First person**

We had a waffle bar at our wedding reception.

**Second person**

You had a waffle bar at your wedding reception.

**Third person**

They had a waffle bar at their wedding reception.

## Purposes of Person

Different perspectives are appropriate for different types of writing. In general, certain types of writing are commonly written in a particular person:

**Perspective**

**Writing Type**

First-person

Informal writing

Personal reflection

Second-person

Instructions

Advice

Third-person

Formal academic writing

Business writing



## Inconsistent Person

If the perspective of a text shifts frequently, it can be hard to follow.

After the graduates received their degrees, 80% of us moved to new cities.

I will never forget my first trip to Disney World. I was so excited to try out all of the rides. You could get a pass for access to different rides in multiple parks.

In the first example, *graduates* is third-person because all nouns are third-person, and *their* is a third-person pronoun. However, *us* is a first-person pronoun. **Antecedents** are the words that pronouns replace; since *graduates* is the antecedent, the personal pronouns in this sentence that are replacing *graduate* need to be consistently third-person.

In the second example, the last sentence switches from using first-person pronouns *I* and *my* to second-person pronoun *you*.

After the graduates received their degrees, 80% of <sup>them</sup> ~~us~~ moved to new cities.

I will never forget my first trip to Disney World. I was so excited to try out all of the rides. <sup>I</sup> ~~You~~ could get a pass for access to different rides in multiple parks.





## Exercise

**Rewrite the sentences below so that they all use *plural, first-person pronouns*.**

She always walks to the store because her house is only two blocks away.

They are opening a restaurant in their neighborhood.

Tell me how much the tickets cost so I can write it down.

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