his online textbook in basic writing offers students three approaches to becoming more confident writers. **Part One** examines how sentences work, giving students a structural understanding of the language they use every day. **Part Two** focuses on errors that commonly appear in written English. **Part Three** suggests techniques and topics for developing ideas in writing. Students may move back and forth among parts, using the resources collected in **Part Four** as support.

Before beginning their serious study of *Sentence Sense*, students are advised to read the special instructions for navigating the online text and for taking the various kinds of applications:

- **Navigation Instructions**
- **Using Applications**

Sentence Sense Online is designed to take advantage of the interactivity possible on the Internet. There are over 200 computer-graded or self-grading exercises to encourage students to apply ideas, test their mastery, and have fun with language along the way.

Students are also referred to documents outside this text for further reading and exploration of issues that come up in the process of writing.

The accompanying **Study Guide** advises teachers about ways of using Sentence Sense in courses, and it provides students with a printable manual for easy reference both at and away from the computer.
An Overview of the Whole Sentence: Chapter Preview

An overview is the view you get when you stand back to look at a whole thing rather than at its separate parts. It’s a passenger’s view from an airplane—a view that makes it hard to recognize particular buildings but shows patterns in the roads among the neighborhoods.

This chapter offers an overview of the English sentence. Because you speak English, you already understand many things about the way English sentences work. Here you’ll see the four parts of the sentence working together, and you’ll have an opportunity to use each part and come to your own conclusions. In Chapters 2 through 7, you’ll be given definitions and explanations of the four sentence parts; the details will become clear when you focus on each sentence part in those chapters. In this overview, though, just watch the patterns that the parts make as they fit together into whole sentences.

An Overview of the Whole Sentence: Writing

On scrap paper, jot down ideas about how it feels to write. Here are some questions that may start you thinking:

- How tightly are you holding your pen or pencil?
- How do your shoulders feel?
- What do you think about when you face the blank page?
- How is writing different from talking?

You may answer some of these questions, or simply write down any thoughts that come into your head when you consider how the act of writing affects you. Turn those jottings into four or five sentences, and then rewrite them. For your rewritten paragraph, use pen and paper, a word processor, or a class bulletin board, depending on your class's arrangements.

Overview: Growing Sentences

Sentences grow.

These sentences grow.

Sentences on this page grow.

Starting from seeds, sentences grow.

Sentences that sprout modifiers grow.
Sentences grow easily. Sentences grow before your eyes. Sentences grow to develop sturdy shapes. Sentences grow until they seem to gather a momentum of their own. Sentences grow branches. Sentences grow new branches. Sentences grow branches of words. Sentences grow branches unfolding fresh ideas. Sentences grow branches that may blossom with unexpected possibilities.

Starting from seeds, these sentences that sprout modifiers grow easily before your eyes until they seem to gather a momentum of their own. To develop sturdy shapes, sentences grow new branches of words, unfolding fresh ideas that may blossom with unexpected possibilities.

In the sentences below, look at the words in this color. What do all these words have in common? Now look at the words in this color. What do these words have in common with each other?

- Sentences grow.
- Love deceives.
- Someone is painting.
- Kenisha must have forgotten.
- Were they hiding?

The seed of a sentence is made of a subject and a verb. Chapter 2 focuses on verbs and Chapter 3 focuses on subjects.

In the sentences below, look at the underlined words. What do these words have in common?

- Sentences grow branches.
- Love deceives people.
- Someone is painting graffiti.
- Kenisha must have forgotten Donnell.
- Were they doing anything?
Sometimes a third part may join the subject/verb seed to complete the sentence’s idea. The underlined words above are completers. **Chapter 4** examines what completers do.

In the sentences below, notice how the subjects, verbs, or completers grow in meaning when descriptive words or groups of words are added.

- *These sentences grow* branches.
- *Love sometimes deceives* people.
- *Someone is painting fresh* graffiti.
- *Kenisha must have forgotten* Donnell [*since the summer*].
- *Were they hiding anything* [*of value*]?

These new words, in *italics* (or *italics within brackets* when a phrase is involved), are modifiers. Some modifiers are single words, but others are groups of words. **Chapter 4** shows how modifiers work. But before you get there, experiment with the four sentence parts for a few minutes here. The following application will help you to see what you already know about subjects, verbs, completers, and modifiers.

### 1.3 Overview: Return to Your Writing

Return to the paragraph that you wrote at the beginning of this chapter. Read it aloud. Pick one sentence and identify its subject and verb, and see if the sentence contains a completer or modifier. The next five chapters in *Sentence Sense* will offer you chances to look more closely at words and groups of words performing these four sentence functions, each one contributing to the growth of a whole sentence.
Chapter 2

Verbs

Inside this Chapter

Begin here to navigate through each section.

1. Your Writing: Recounting a Recent Incident or Story
2. Doing and Being Verbs
3. Single-Word Verbs and Verb Strings
4. Split Verbs
5. Time (Tense)
6. A Verb’s Four Forms
7. Irregular Verbs
8. Non-Verb Forms
9. Combining Sentences by Compounding Verbs
10. Review & Practice
11. Fun With Grammar: Pattern Puzzle
12. Return to Your Writing

Verbs: Your Writing: Recounting a Recent Incident or Story

Think about a TV show you saw, a story you read, or an incident at school in the past week. Remember what happened, who did what, and why. Try to recall what was interesting or funny or exciting. On scrap paper, jot notes and freewrite about what happened in the show, story, or incident. (Click here for an introduction to freewriting.)

1. Arrange your ideas into a short paragraph describing the events as they happened in the past. For example, your paragraph might start like this:

   In history class yesterday, I got mad. The videotape we were watching irritated me because the narrator kept trying to force his opinion down our throats . . .

2. Now change the time of your paragraph. Tell the story as if it were happening right now. Cross out the words which place the events in the past, and replace them with words which place the events in the present. The example sentences above would look like this:

   In history class yesterday today, I got ’m getting mad . The videotape we were are watching irritated irritates me because the narrator kept keep trying to force his opinion down our throats . . .
Many of the words that you cross out and change will be verbs.

If your teacher or study group would like you to develop this exercise into a longer narrative paragraph, please revise it double-spaced on a fresh piece of paper, a word processor, or a class bulletin board.

### Verbs: Doing and Being Verbs

A verb usually begins the section of a sentence which tells what someone or something is doing or being.

**Doing verbs:**

Finally Sir Edmund Hilary **arrived** at the peak of Mt. Everest.

Clouds **were rolling** far below.

He **breathed** carefully through his mask.

His oxygen supply **was running** low.

**Being verbs:**

Hilary **had become** the first foreign conqueror of the mountain.

This **was** a great moment for international exploration.

However, for Tenzing Norkay, the Sherpa guide, it **was** simply another trip up the ancient and holy slopes.

The words in *bold purple* are the verbs of the sentences above.

**Tip for finding verbs:** Look at the first few words in the doing or being part of the sentence.

### Verbs: Single Word Verbs And Verb Strings

A verb may be just one word:

The moon's cycle, not the sun's, **governs** the tides. Therefore, low tide **comes** at a later time each day.

**Often, however, a verb is a string of words made of a main verb with one or more auxiliaries in front of it.**

The tide **was changing** at 10:30 yesterday morning. It **should be turning** today at about 11:10 A.M. We probably **could have waited** until noon for our fishing trip.

The **main verb** identifies the event which the sentence is reporting. The **auxiliaries** tell more about the time or conditions of the event, and they always come before the main verb. The **verb string** is the combination of auxiliaries and main verb acting together to play the role of verb in a sentence. In the following exercises, the verbs will be analyzed and marked like this:

- single-word verb = SV
- main verb = MV
- auxiliary = X

**Verbs in the simple present or simple past tense consist of just one word.**
Verbs that emphasize the continuation of an event include some form of *to be* as an auxiliary (am, is, are, was, were, being).

I **am singing** beautifully in the shower now, but I **was** hoarse before.

Verbs that emphasize the completion of an event include some form of *to have* as an auxiliary (have, has, had).

Chris **has sung** that song once too often. I **had warned** him about it several times before the argument.

Verbs that express a future event include the auxiliary *will* or *shall*.

He **will be singing** a different tune soon; you **will see**.

Verbs may include several other auxiliaries to express shadings of time or condition. These additional auxiliaries are: *do, does, did, can, could, should, would, may, might, must*.
### Application 3

The following words may be used as auxiliaries within verb strings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of to do</th>
<th>Forms of to have</th>
<th>Forms of to be</th>
<th>Modals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(used with base form of the next verb in the string)</td>
<td>(used with past participle form of the next verb in the string)</td>
<td>(used with present or past participle of the next verb in the string)</td>
<td>(used with base form of the next verb in the string)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do, does, did</td>
<td>have, has, had</td>
<td>am, is, are, was, were</td>
<td>can, will, shall, could, would, should</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>be, being, been</td>
<td>may, might, must</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note** the words in the shaded area of the chart may sometimes act as single-word verbs:

I *am* your brother. You *have* the same kind of eyes as I *do*.

The rest of the auxiliaries in the chart work only in verb strings:

Everyone *will be* happy. They *must have been expecting* something.

Learn the auxiliaries in the chart. They will help you to find verb strings.

### TIP FOR ESL STUDENTS:

Click on the ESL icon at left to visit "Functions of Auxiliary Verbs" for help in choosing which auxiliary to use in different situations. Practice these forms with a teacher or tutor.

### Application 4

Many auxiliaries can shrink into shorter forms called contractions.

I’m *looking* forward to this evening with Arny’s boss. After supper we’ll *watch* the game unless she’d *prefer* to play cards.

*Here are some common contractions.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Auxiliary</th>
<th>Short form</th>
<th>Example of Contraction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>am</td>
<td>'m</td>
<td>I am = I'm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are</td>
<td>'re</td>
<td>you are = you're</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is or has</td>
<td>'s</td>
<td>Emma is = Emma's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have</td>
<td>'ve</td>
<td>they have = they've</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>had or would</td>
<td>'d</td>
<td>we would = we'd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>will or shall</td>
<td>'ll</td>
<td>he will = he'll</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1. that the apostrophe (') replaces missing letters, and 2. that there are no contractions for was and were.

At this time, you might want to review the chart on modal auxiliaries in Part Four.

### Verbs: Split Verbs

Questions and negative statements split verbs into two parts.

In a question, the subject splits the verb apart.

- Some of the union members are voting for the strike.
- Are some of the union members voting for the strike?

In a negative statement, the word not splits the verb.

- Some of the union members are not voting for the strike.
- Sometimes the word not contracts and attaches itself to the first part of the split verb:
- Some of the union members aren't voting for the strike.

Tip for finding verbs: Look for auxiliaries. If you find one, look for a main verb accompanying it. Remember that auxiliaries are sometimes squeezed into contractions.

### Application 6

When you turned the sentences of Application 6 into questions or negative statements, you split the verbs between the first auxiliary and the rest of the verb string. But what happens when the verb is a single word? You have to change a single-word verb to a verb string before you can split it. For this purpose, add the auxiliary do, does, or did. Then split the string to make the question or negative statement:

- Those people train tigers. -- Those people do train tigers.
- Sandra trains tigers. -- Sandra does train tigers.

Tip for finding verbs: Turn each sentence into a negative statement. The word not will come before the main verb and after any auxiliaries. (When a form of the verb to be stands alone as a single-word verb, it...
is an exception; it will come right before the word not.)

**Application 7**
The verb to be often behaves differently from other verbs. When a form of to be stands alone as a single word verb, it doesn't need to split to form a question or a negative statement. It simply moves to the beginning for a question, or adds not for a negative statement:
Dinosaurs were warm-blooded. Were dinosaurs warm-blooded?
Their bones are like birds' bones. Their bones are not like birds' bones.

**2.5 Verbs: Time (Tense)**
A verb gives clues about the time of an event.
When Ricardo was making flan, he used a couple of the eggs that we had brought from the farm. There is only one left, and we have finished all the other food in the house, so we will have a very small supper.
The verbs in the sentences above can be spread out on a time line like this:

![Time Line Diagram]

**Application 9**
A verb usually changes to show time differences.
Channice is working on the same paper she worked on last week. She works on it a little bit every day.

**2.6 Verbs: A Verb's Four Forms**
Verbs show up in four forms: base, simple past, present participle, and past participle.
Study this chart and complete the last four rows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of verb</th>
<th>Base form</th>
<th>Past form</th>
<th>Present participle</th>
<th>Past participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to watch</td>
<td>I can watch. I watch.</td>
<td>I watched.</td>
<td>I am watching.</td>
<td>I have watched.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to wait</td>
<td>I can wait. I wait.</td>
<td>I waited.</td>
<td>I am waiting.</td>
<td>I have waited.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Study the chart again. Which forms can stand alone as single-word verbs? Which ones act as main verbs in verb strings? Draw your own conclusions before going on to the explanations of each form below.

### The base form comes directly from the name of the verb.

- **to watch** -- watch
- **to wait** -- wait

The base form can combine in a string with any of these auxiliaries:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Auxiliaries</th>
<th>Examples of Verbs Strings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>can, will, shall</td>
<td>can watch, will watch, shall watch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>could, would, should</td>
<td>could wait, would wait, should wait</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>may, might, must</td>
<td>may try, might try, must try</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>do, does, did</td>
<td>do laugh, does laugh, did laugh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fireworks **will scare** Saeed, so probably we **should go** home.

He **may object**, but after all, he **does need** some sleep.

#### Application 12

**Used without any auxiliary, the base form expresses present or recurring time. This way of expressing time is called the simple present tense.**

Under warm air, water **evaporates** faster than under cold air.
The minerals in the water **remain** behind, so south sea waters **contain** a higher concentration of salt than northern seas **do**.
Notice that in some cases, the base form adds an -s. **Chapter 11** explains how this -s ending works.

#### Application 13
The simple past form is usually the base form + -ed:

watch -- watched  wait -- waited

It works without any auxiliary, expressing past time. This way of expressing time is called the simple past tense.

The spider webs collected dew and sparkled when the wind moved them. The light grew on them slowly, and no animal disturbed them.

Notice that one simple past verb above (grew) does not end in -ed. We'll examine the exceptions to the -ed ending rule when we study irregular verbs later in this chapter. Chapter 10 also explains more about how the -ed ending works.

Application 14

The present participle is always the base form + -ing.

watch -- watching  wait -- waiting

It combines with a form of the auxiliary to be (am, are, is, was, were, being, been, be) in a verb string that expresses a continuing action.

Two storm systems are converging on the island. This morning schoolteachers were bringing blankets to the shelter. The trucks will be arriving soon for emergency assignments.

Application 15

The past participle usually looks the same as the simple past form.

I watched. I have watched.

I waited. I have waited.

It can combine with a form of the auxiliary to have (have, has, had) to express a completed action.

Marty has cooked me dinner twice since Saturday. When he had finished last night's clean-up, he joked that by the time my leg has healed, he will have weaned me from junk food entirely.

Application 16

A past participle can also combine with a form of to be to express the passive voice, a sentence structure in which the subject isn't performing the action of the sentence.

The tree was damaged by the wind.

Our house was not harmed, though.

The subjects above are are tree and house, and neither the tree nor the house is doing anything. Both are simply sitting there passively, having something done to them. Notice how a past participle and a form of the auxiliary to be (am, are, is, was, were, being, been, be) combine to form a verb string in each sentence below.

The umpire's call was drowned out by the clamor of the fans.

The camera crew is amazed by the enthusiasm.

This play will be remembered for years.

Application 17

Sometimes a sentence with two verbs may use two different tenses, but only if the two verbs clearly reflect different times for the events they report on.
• You know what you did wrong now, but you missed your chance.

Chapter 15 will offer more work on consistency of tenses.

Sentences that express conditions and results also show a contrast in verb tenses.

• If it had rained we wouldn't have had a fire drill.

TIP FOR ESL STUDENTS:
Click on the ESL icon at left to visit "Conditional Sentences" for help with the way English combines tenses to express conditions and results. Practice these forms with a teacher or tutor.

If you would like more work on conditional sentences, click on "Check this out!"

2.7 Verbs: Irregular Verbs
Many English verbs are irregular: their simple past and past participle forms are unpredictable. The verbs you've been working with in Applications 12 through 17 have been regular verbs which move through their four forms in a regular way, adding either -ed or -ing to the base. But irregular verbs break that pattern. Although their present participles always end in the usual -ing, you can't count on the -ed endings for the simple past and past participle forms.

The verb to be is the most irregular of all. You are patient with me when I am in trouble. Many times I have been glad that you were nearby. This verb, whether it acts as an auxiliary, a main verb, or a single-word verb, appears in more forms than any other verb. Here are examples of its eight forms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Base</th>
<th>Simple present</th>
<th>Simple past</th>
<th>Present participle</th>
<th>Past participle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can be</td>
<td>I am You are She is</td>
<td>I was We were</td>
<td>I am being</td>
<td>I have been</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most verbs appear in their base form for the simple present tense, but the verb to be doesn't. Instead it uses three different simple present forms. Further, the simple past tense of this verb has two forms. Chapter 12 will explain how to decide which form to use in each of these tenses. The following application will help you see what you already know about choosing the forms of the verb to be.

Application 18
The other irregular verbs have only four forms. No other verb is as irregular as to be, but some may be unfamiliar to you. There are two versions of our list of common irregular verbs:

- a framed "rolodex"
- a printable page

Whichever you use, be sure to return to this page (using your browser's "back" or "return" button) to take applications 19 and 20, listed below.
### 2.8 Verbs: Non-Verb Forms

#### Participles

A participle must be in a verb string in order to behave as a verb. Without an auxiliary, a participle plays a non-verb role in its sentence.

Arriving home late, Priscilla rushed into the kitchen. She was thinking about the burnt potatoes.

Remember that participles are parts of verb strings. They need auxiliaries to do a verb's work. If a participle has no auxiliary in front of it, look elsewhere for the sentence's verb.

#### Infinitives

When the word to stands in front of the base form of a verb, it creates an infinitive. An infinitive plays a non-verb role in its sentence.

To know him is to love him.
I want to bring him with me at Christmas.

The infinitive serves as the name of a verb. It can play several roles in a sentence. However, if a base form has the word to in front of it, look elsewhere for the sentence's verb.

**Tip for distinguishing non-verb forms from verb forms:** A verb form ending in -ing can act as part of a verb only if it is in a verb string (preceded by an auxiliary). A base form with to in front never plays the role of verb.

Chapter 5 explains the behavior of these non-verb forms in more detail.

### 2.9 Verbs: Combining Sentences With Compound Verbs

A subject may take more than one verb.
I sat right down and cut my toenails.

Compounding is the process of joining similar parts. Joining two separate verbs to go with one subject results in a compound verb. The words that can join verbs are: and, but, yet, or, nor. These words are conjunctions.

Population growth will slow down and may stabilize by the year 2110.

Sometimes the conjunctions work in partnership with other words, such as:

either . . . or
neither . . . nor
both . . and
not only . . . but also
One study not only predicts a steady 10.5 billion total population for several decades, but also describes a new distribution of people throughout the world.

When more than two verbs are compounded, the conjunction may appear between only the last two, while the others are separated by commas.

In contrast to families in the Third World, families in the industrialized nations bear fewer children, move more frequently, and feel less bound to their home communities.

2.10 Verbs: Review & Practice

Instructions

This Review and Practice exercise is an opportunity for you to test your understanding of what you have studied in Chapter 2: Verbs. Complete the work below and then submit the exercise using the appropriate button at the end of the application. You will soon receive a response from the computer which will score your answers.

After each review statement below, there are five practice sentences. In the space provided write the verb(s) of the sentence; if there is more than one verb in the sentence, separate them with a comma.

A verb usually starts the section of a sentence that tells what someone or something is doing or being.

Computers have changed students' lives.

Typewriters are becoming obsolete.

Even small colleges are buying simple word-processors.

In laboratories, students can share the expensive equipment.

Revisions and corrections are almost fun on a computer.

Some verbs are single words, but many are verb strings. A verb string is made of a main verb with one or more auxiliaries in front.

Jeff will be climbing the glacier tomorrow.

He has loved adventures since he was a kid.

He was preparing his equipment when we saw him last night.

He will be leaving for the base when the sun rises.

His Aunt Sally would have been amazed at his determination.

Some auxiliaries can shrink into contractions. Show the apostrophe in your answer, too.

Recently we've learned a lot about the origin of the solar system.
There's a physicist in this school who's working on that issue.
She'd been interested primarily in black holes until last year.
She's offering some lectures about the edge of the universe.
She claims we'll be making a new breakthrough in physics soon.

Questions and negatives split verbs in two. The verb to be is an exception. (Remember that the word "not" is not really part of the verb; it's an adverb modifying the verb.)
Have the carpenters arrived?
I wasn't expecting them because they haven't been on time yet.
Did Armando tell them about the foundation?
The concrete didn't crack after all.
Bobby isn't so doubtful about the project now.

A verb gives clues about the time of an event.
Finally the union has signed a new contract.
The salary scale looks pretty strange.
The contract is upsetting some people who worked on the negotiations.
But I have understood its purpose from the start.
Most of the drill-press operators will understand, too.

The base form of a verb can act as a main verb in a verb string. It can also stand as a single-word verb expressing present or recurring time.
Anyone can see that you need a rest.
If only you would check with your doctor, you'd understand.
She will agree with us, I know.
We all gossip about your workaholic habits.
You should come with us the next time we go out for lunch.

The simple past form acts as a single word verb expressing past time.
Sandra's ten-year-old cooked spaghetti for supper.
He boiled it for half an hour.
It tasted like soap, but we ate it.

He felt proud and offered us all seconds.

We complimented him, and he bragged about it all week.

The present participle ends in -ing. It combines with the forms of the auxiliary to be to express continuing action.

The garden was taking too much of my time last summer.
The weeds were choking out the carrots.
The old woodchuck was driving me crazy.
From now on, I will be leaving the garden in my neighbor’s hands.
My tomatoes are ripening beautifully under his care.

The past participle may combine with a form of the auxiliary to have to express completed action. It may combine with a form of the auxiliary to be to express the passive voice.

Americans have abandoned the thrifty habits of their ancestors.
Even my grandmother has squandered the savings from her old mattress lining.
She had hoarded her spare dollar bills there for years.
Now she has changed her ways and we are amazed by her purchases.
Some peculiar social trends may be revealed here.

Irregular verbs do not follow the usual pattern of changes in their simple past and past participle forms.

Basil was such a good friend until he bought that jeep.
Then he became a fanatic hunter.
He drove further and further into the country on each excursion.
We have seen very little of him lately.
He has begun a whole new life.

Participle forms may act as parts of verb strings. Without auxiliaries, however, they are not verbs. An infinitive does not act as a verb.

Write only the verbs in the spaces provided.
The janitor wanted to get the room ready for the meeting. Without telling us, he removed all our painting equipment. I found two paint cans and some brushes just sitting in the hallway. We complained about the broken ladder and asked him to fix it. He is stubborn enough to hold his ground.

**Verbs may be compounded by one of the following conjunctions:** and, but, yet, or, nor.

**Remember to separate your verbs with a comma.**

My old yellow dog scratches his ear and whines at me. He waddles with age yet wags his tail like a pup. He wiggles like crazy, licks my hand, and rolls over for a good tummy-tickling. He wants to obey but can't remember the moves. Finally he either ignores me or goes to sleep.

### Verbs: Fun With Grammar

**Pattern Puzzle**

Our minds are constantly organizing information. We naturally fit ideas and observations into patterns, and if something doesn't fit a recognizable pattern, we may be confused by it or not even notice it at all. Playing with patterns in the verbs you've been studying may help you to notice useful characteristics of the different verb forms.

1. Look at this jumble of shapes. On scrap paper, arrange them into some orderly pattern. It's easier, of course, to PRINT this page, and then cut out the shapes. If you don't have a color printer, you can work with the shapes in grey.

2. After two or three minutes, show your arrangement to other students and compare your different organizing patterns.
3. When you have finished comparing patterns, click here to see some of the patterns that other students have developed.

4. Now look at this jumble of sentences. On scrap paper, arrange them into some orderly pattern.

   We were waiting.  We wait.
   We had waited.  We waited.
   We will wait.  We are waiting.
   We will be waiting.  We have waited.
   We will have waited.

5. After five minutes, show your arrangement to other students and compare your different organizing patterns. Try to explain why you arranged the sentences as you did and listen to other people's explanations.

   What does your arrangement show you about verbs? What do other people’s arrangements show you about verbs?

6. When you have finished comparing patterns, press here to see some of the patterns that other students have developed.
Chapter 3

Subjects
In a sentence, every verb needs a subject. Once you have found a verb in a sentence, you can identify its subject if you know the typical relationships between verbs and subjects. Recognizing the subjects of your sentences makes it easier for you to clarify and develop your ideas in writing.

In Chapter 3, you will learn that

• the subject answers the question "Who or what (verb)"
• the subject in a statement usually comes before the verb except in questions; the subject in a question is usually between the two parts of the split verb.
• the role of the subject is often played by a noun (sometimes a pronoun can stand in the place of a noun).
• the simple subject is a subject stripped of all the words that describe it.
• sentences can be combined by compounding their subjects.

Inside This Chapter

Begin here to navigate through each section.

1. Your Writing: Narrating an Experience from the Past
2. "Who or What (Verb)?"
3. Placement
4. Nouns and Pronouns as Subjects
5. Simple Subjects
6. Combining Sentences by Compounding Subjects
7. Review & Practice
8. Fun With Grammar: Find That Subject!
9. Return to Your Writing
10. Mastery Test on Subjects

Subjects: Your Writing
Recall an experience from your past (for instance, meeting someone important to you, leaving home, an accident, a surprise, or an adventure). Concentrate on just one incident. Picture yourself as you were then, and try to remember how you felt. Recall the people and things around you, the smells, the sounds, the weather, and so on. On scrap paper, jot notes and freewrite, getting down all that you can remember about that experience.

1. Arrange what you've written into the first few sentences of a paragraph, selecting the details you think are most important. Use the word I at least three times in your story. For example, your paragraph might start like this:

   When I was ten, I met my grandparents from Italy for the first time. I was so excited and scared about their coming that I could hardly eat for a week in advance.

2. Now imagine that someone else is telling this same story about you. Cross out I wherever you've used it, and write in either your name or he or she. Make any other changes necessary for the story to sound as if someone else is telling it. For example:

   When Monica was ten, she met my her grandparents from Italy for the first time. She was so excited and scared about their coming that she could hardly eat for a week in advance.

Many of the words that you cross out and change will be subjects.
If your teacher or study group would like you to develop this exercise into a longer narrative paragraph, please revise it double-spaced on a fresh piece of paper, a word processor, or a class bulletin board.

3.2 Subjects: "Who or What (Verb)?"

Once you've found the verb of a sentence, you can identify the subject by putting the question "Who or what?" in front of the verb.

**Bronson hates jazz.**

In this sentence, *hates* is the verb. You ask, "Who or what hates jazz?" The answer is *Bronson*, so *Bronson* is the subject.

**Enchiladas aren't always hot.** (What aren't hot? *Enchiladas*)

A *friend* of mine in San Diego makes them without peppers. (Who makes them? *friend*)

Even your picky *niece* would eat that kind. (Who would eat them? *niece*)

{You} bring her over on Friday for the big test. (Who brings her? *you*)

Notice that the last sentence is a command in which the subject is not stated, but it's understood. Asking "Who or what . . .?" reveals that the subject must be *you*:

{You} give me a bite.

{You} don't put chili sauce on it.
Subjects: Placement

In most statements, the subject comes before the verb.
You have been dreaming about socks again.
That has some deep significance.

In most questions, you can find the subject after the first part of a split verb.

(Remember that to split a single-word verb, you must add do, does, or did.)

Have you been dreaming about socks again?
Does that image have some deep significance?

When am, is, are, was, or were stands as a single-word verb, it doesn't split for a question, but it does move to the front of the subject in a question:

That is a good luck sign. -- Is that a good luck sign?
You are superstitious. -- Are you superstitious?

Application 2

TIP FOR ESL STUDENTS:
Click on the ESL icon at left to visit "Placement of Subjects in Questions" for an ESL focus on how questions change sentence order. Practice these forms with a teacher or tutor.

Subjects: Nouns and Pronouns as Subjects

The role of subject is often played by a noun. Sometimes a pronoun can stand in the place of a noun.

A noun labels or names a person, a place, a thing, or an idea. The words in bold below are nouns:

The message came from Harold Durum in Illinois, where the sky is broad and the farmers cherish their freedom.

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun.

Gary can't find his polka-dotted shoelace because Gary he dropped the shoelace it behind the bathtub in the dark.

The pronoun it takes the place of the noun shoelace and refers to an earlier mention of that same noun. The pronoun he replaces and refers to Gary. Some other pronouns that replace and point backward to nouns are they, them*, she, her*, he, and him*.

Those shoelaces cost Gary $3.50 and Gary he washed the shoelaces them every night. The shoelaces They meant a lot to Gary him.

Several other pronouns don't have to point backwards to the words they replace because everyone knows
what they stand for:

- I, me*, = the person speaking
- we, us*, = the people speaking
- you = the person or people listening

The pronouns with an asterisk (*) beside them cannot be used as subjects. Chapter 13 examines pronouns in more detail.

**Application 3**

Not all nouns and pronouns are subjects. Some play other roles in their sentences:

You shouldn't tease Gary about shoelaces.

Give him a break.

In this pair of sentences there are several non-subject nouns (Gary, shoelaces, break) and a non-subject pronoun (him). Remember that the pronoun you is understood to be the subject in a command.

**Application 4**

TIP FOR ESL STUDENTS:

Click on the ESL icon at left to visit "Need to Fill Subject Position" for a reminder that, unlike sentences in some other languages, English sentences must include words that express the subject. Practice these forms with a teacher or tutor.

**3.5 Subjects: Simple Subjects**

When a subject is stripped of all the words that describe it, the simple subject is left.

The girls laughed.
The tough girls laughed.
The rowdy, tough girls laughed.
The rowdy, tough girls in the roller derby laughed.
The rowdy, tough girls in the roller derby on TV laughed.

In each of these sentences, the simple subject is girls. A simple subject is only one word.

**Application 5**

Go back and look carefully at the sentences in Application 5. Notice the following words: in, of, to, about, for. These five words are prepositions (discussed in more detail in Chapter 4). The first noun or pronoun that appears after one of these words cannot be the simple subject:

The kids [in my family] love the African Stone Game.
The pattern [of the stones] is always changing.
Chapter 4 describes in more detail how modifiers expand subjects, and Chapter 12 offers more practice with sentences where groups of words come between the simple subject and the verb. Throughout the rest of this book, the word subject refers to the simple subject, the one-word subject without any describing words.

Subjects: Sentence Combining With Compound Subjects

A verb can take more than one subject.
The padlock and chain on his refrigerator door speak louder than words.
Compounding is the process of joining similar parts. Joining separate subjects to go with one verb results in a compound subject. The words that can join subjects are: and, but, yet, or, nor. These words are conjunctions.
Sugar and insulin are always changing their levels in human blood. Sometimes these conjunctions work in partnership with other words:
either . . . or . . .
neither . . . nor . . .
both . . . and . . .
not only . . . but also . . .
Not only sweets but also starches may stimulate the pancreas to produce excess insulin, reducing the blood sugar level.
When more than two subjects are compounded, the conjunction may appear between only the last two, while the others are separated by commas.
Muffins, potatoes, and spaghetti are converted to sugar during digestion.
A brief spurt of energy after eating, a sudden attack of fatigue, and then sustained low spirits can follow eating orgies.

Subjects: Review & Practice

Review and Practice

Instructions

After each review statement below, there are five practice sentences. In the space provided after each practice sentence, write the subject and then the verb or verb string. In situations where there is more than one subject or verb, separate them with a comma and a space.

The subject of a sentence answers the question Who or what . . .?

1. Last week the restaurant served dinner as usual.
2. But the atmosphere had changed drastically.
3. Apparently, the owner has replaced the original manager.

4. The new manager acts on her own ideas about interior decorating.

5. Her daring style will make or break the business.

In statements, the subject usually comes before the verb. In questions, the subject is usually tucked between the two parts of a split verb.

6. The carpenters aren't coming until next week.

7. Were you expecting them today?

8. The lumber yard man with the southern accent just called.

9. His call reminded me of something.

10. Did you put the power tools in the shed?

The role of subject is often played by a noun. Sometimes a pronoun may stand as subject in the place of a noun.

11. My mother invited Uncle Wadd for Thanksgiving.
12. Then he started work on another rocking chair.

13. This time the chair is for him.

14. She'll never get him away from his workshop now.

15. It's a big, beautiful one with broad arm rests.

The simple subject is the subject noun or pronoun without any describing words. The simple subject is only one word.

16. The fine, strong fiber in silk is produced by tiny worms.

17. The cocoons of these worms are prized by silk producers everywhere.

18. These picky little eaters will accept only mulberry leaves for food.

19. During the era of tall silk hats, hat manufacturers in the United States imported most of their silk from mulberry farms in China.

20. Then some enterprising American silk investor with a green thumb brought mulberry trees to New England.
Subjects may be compounded with these joiners: and, but, yet, or, nor.

21. My old yellow dog and the calico cat beg me for treats.

22. Neither the dog nor the cat knows its own name.

23. Still, the kids, the neighbors, and even Uncle Cy can't help loving those raggedy pets.

24. The sound of the dog at night or the sight of the cat in the rain can send the local jokers into fits of glee.

25. Both the superintendent of our building and the storekeeper on the corner tease us about our neighborhood mascots.

Subjects: Fun With Grammar

Find that Subject!

On this page you'll find an excerpt from "The Moose," a poem by Elizabeth Bishop. Read it first just to enjoy the richness of its descriptive language. Then it is interesting to examine how the sentences in this excerpt are built. Finding each subject-verb combination is the key.

1. With a partner or in a small group, spend five minutes listing all the verbs and then asking "who/what (verb)" to find each verb's subject. There are only four sentences, but there are sixteen verbs. Ten of them work in compound pairs, each pair sharing a single subject. Five of the verbs work alone with one subject each. The subject for one verb is complex, giving you a taste of what is to come in Chapter 5.

2. When five minutes have passed, stop and see how many of the combinations you have found. If you're in a class, compare your results with those of other groups.

3. Choose somebody to read the poem aloud. As you listen, notice the lengths of the sentences. What is the effect of the different sentence lengths?

4. Don't look up the answers until after step 3.

from THE MOOSE
— by Elizabeth Bishop
From narrow provinces
of fish and bread and tea,
home of the long tides
where the bay leaves the sea
twice a day and takes
the herrings long rides,

where if the river
enters or retreats
in a wall of brown foam
depends on if it meets
the bay coming in,
the bay not at home;

where, silted red,
sometimes the sun sets
facing a red sea,
and others, veins the flats' lavender, rich mud
in burning rivulets;

on red gravelly roads,
down rows of sugar maples,
past clapboard farmhouses
and neat, clapboard churches,
bleached, ridged as clamshells,
past twin silver birches,

through late afternoon
a bus journeys west,
the windshield flashing pink,
pink glancing off of metal,
brushing the dented flank
of blue, beat-up enamel;

down hollows, up rises,
and waits, patient, while
a lone traveller gives
kisses and embraces
to seven relatives
and a collie supervises.

Goodbye to the elms,
to the farm, to the dog.
The bus starts. The light
grows richer; the fog,
shifting, salty, thin,
comes closing in.
Subjects: Return to Your Writing

Read aloud the paragraph you wrote at the beginning of this chapter. Find several verbs, and then find their subjects by asking "Who/what (verb)?" Most subjects will come before their verbs, but not always. Mark at least four verb/subject combinations in your paragraph. Trade papers with a classmate, and check each other’s work. Wherever you disagree, give reasons for your opinions. Take your questions to a tutor or teacher.
Chapter 4

Completers and Modifiers

A subject + verb combination may need a word or group of words to complete the meaning of the sentence. In addition, a sentence is usually expanded with modifiers that clarify the meaning of the sentence. Recognizing completers and modifiers helps you to understand how sentences work so that you can straighten out tangles more easily as you revise your written sentences.

In Chapter 4, you will learn that

- a completer answers the question "(Subject + verb) whom or what?"
- nouns, pronouns, and describing words can act as completers.
- modifiers add to or limit a word's meaning.
- a modifier can be a single word.
- a prepositional phrase always acts as a modifier.
- sentences can be combined by compounding their completers and modifiers.

Chapter 4.1: Completers and Modifiers: Writing

Take a few minutes to observe the room around you. Notice specific objects, the light, the space, and the atmosphere of the place. Look closely for details, including those that seem unimportant at first, like a shadow on the wall or the rumble of the air conditioner. On scrap paper, jot down all your observations, organizing them into related clusters. (Click here for an introduction to clustering.)

1. Use the clusters of observations to help you write a paragraph that conveys a picture of the room. Start your first sentence with these words: "When I walk into ____________, the first thing I notice is . . ." Go on from there.
2. Looking at your first sentence, put [square brackets] around the word or phrase that you've written after "the first thing I notice is . . ." This is probably a completer. In the next few sentences, look for words that describe other words. Underline these words. These are probably modifiers. Try to decide which other word in the sentence each modifier describes. When you finish Chapter 4, you'll be able to find the rest of the completers and modifiers in your paragraph.

If your teacher or study group would like you to develop this exercise into a longer descriptive paragraph, please revise it double-spaced on a fresh piece of paper, a word processor, or a class bulletin board.
4.2 Completers and Modifiers: "(Subject + Verb) Whom or What?"

Once you've found the subject and verb of a sentence, you can check to see if the sentence has a completer by asking "whom or what?" after the verb.

Bronson hates jazz.

In this sentence, hates is the verb and Bronson is the subject. You ask "Bronson hates whom or what.? The answer is jazz, so jazz is the completer. Here are some others:

Enchiladas aren't always hot. (Enchiladas aren't what? hot)

My friend in San Diego makes them without peppers. (Friend makes what? them)

Believe me. (Remember from Chapter 3 that the subject of a command is you, so for this sentence the question is: "You believe whom?" me)

After one bite of his enchiladas, your prejudice against Mexican food would vanish instantly. (Prejudice would vanish whom? Prejudice would vanish what? No answer, so there is no completer in this sentence.)

4.3 Completers and Modifiers: Words That Act as Completers

The role of completer may be played by a noun, a pronoun, or a word that describes the subject.

The rowdy girls were making trouble. (Noun completer)

The cop finally arrested them. (Pronoun completer)

Behavior like that is crazy. (Completer describes the subject)

A noun names a thing, person, place, or idea. A pronoun takes the place of a noun and makes it possible to avoid repeating that noun. Chapter 13 discusses pronouns in more detail. The kind of completer that describes the subject is a modifier as well as a completer. The later part of this chapter will explore modifiers in more detail.

4.3 Completers and Modifiers: Words That Act as Completers

Application 2

Instructions

Identify each subject and verb below and then ask "(Subject + verb) whom or what?" to find each completer. In the space provided, identify the word that serves as a completer to the sentence. Then, after a comma and space, add one of these terms: noun, pronoun or modifier to specify which kind of completer it is.

Example: My nieces love the dolphins at Mystic Aquarium.

dolphins, noun

1. The dolphins in the aquarium are learning tricks.
2. Apparently, they're enjoying themselves.

3. In just a minute, Soo-Yean will call their names.

4. The dolphins can answer her.

5. She's been training them for months.

6. The seal show is popular, too.

7. Yesterday's act was the best ever.

8. The aquarium is attracting more tourists than ever.

---

Completers and Modifiers: Recognizing the Difference Between Completers and Subjects

Don't confuse completers with subjects.

It's important to see the difference between nouns or pronouns acting as subjects and those acting as completers.

At birth, a baby has three hundred thirty bones.
The verb is has. "Who or what has?" -- baby = subject. "Baby has whom or what?" -- bones = completer.
During growth, many small bones fuse.  
Verb = fuse. "Who or what fuse?" -- bones = subject.  
"Bones fuse whom or what? -- no answer, no completer.

Only two-hundred-six bones finally support an adult's body.  
Verb = support. "Who or what support?" -- bones = subject.  
"Bones support whom or what?" -- body = completer.

To analyze a sentence, always look first for the verb (see Chapter 2 for more help). Then find the subject by asking "Who or what (verb)?" Finally, check to see whether there is a completer by asking, "(Subject + verb) whom or what?" The subject usually comes before the verb, and a completer usually comes after the verb.

Extra Note: We can sort completers further into several groups.

- Jackie brought some coffee with her.
- She offered me a sip.
- It was rich.
- That sip was a tonic for my bad mood.
- I consider Jackie my most thoughtful friend.

Each of the completers above performs a slightly different function in its sentence. If you want to learn the differences among these functions, your teacher may give you information and exercises to help you explore these groups in more detail.

### 4.5 Completers and Modifiers: How Modifiers Work

A modifier adds to or limits a word's meaning.

Modifiers describe other words, making the meaning of those other words more specific. Modifiers answer the following questions about the words they modify:

What kind? Which one(s)? How many or how much? Whose?  
Watch this sentence become more specific as it adds modifiers:  
**BASIC SENTENCE:** Women earn salaries.  
(How many women?) Many women earn salaries.  
(Which women?) Many women in the civil services earn salaries.  
(What kind of salaries?) Many women in the civil services earn good salaries.  
(When?) Many women in the civil services earn good salaries after their first few promotions.

#### Application 4

**TIP FOR ESL STUDENTS:**  
Click on the ESL icon at left to visit "Quantifiers" for additional help
with modifiers like *much* and *many*. Practice these forms with a teacher or tutor.

4.6 Completers and Modifiers: Single Word Modifiers

A **single word may play the role of modifier.**
Some busybodies cause *serious* trouble. (*Some* answers "Which busybodies?" and *serious* answers "What kind of trouble?")

*That* creep *constantly* lies. (*That* answers "Which creep?" and *constantly* answers "When?")

Sometimes several single words, each one acting separately, can modify the same word:
He has *never* felt a *generous human* impulse. (*Never* answers "When?", *a* answers "How many impulses?", and *generous* and *human* answer "What kind of impulse?")

Note that when a verb's modifier splits the verb in two, as in the case of *never* in the example above, the modifier refers to the main verb.

**Application 5**

TIP FOR ESL STUDENTS:
Click on the ESL icon at left to visit "Lack of Plural Markers on Modifiers" for a reminder that English modifiers don't usually have plural forms.
Practice these forms with a teacher or tutor.

There are two kinds of single-word modifiers: **adjectives** and **adverbs**. An adjective modifies a noun or a pronoun, and an adverb modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. Adverbs often end in *-ly*. For extensive descriptions of **Adjectives** and **Adverbs**, click on "Check this out."
Completers and Modifiers: Prepositional Phrase Modifiers

A prepositional phrase begins with a preposition and ends with an object, which is usually a noun or a pronoun.

In the sentences below, the prepositional phrases are in *italics* and enclosed within brackets [ ___ ]. There is an asterisk (*) after each preposition.

Please open that door [*beside* you].

Thank goodness we bought that fan [*by* the window].

We really needed it [*during* the night].

We'd have been miserable [*without* it].

Notice how the preposition in each sentence shows a relationship between the object and the word that the phrase modifies. Prepositions often show space or time relationships (as in the first three examples above) but sometimes they show other kinds of relationship (as in the fourth example above).

Here is a list of some words that often act as prepositions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expressing space relationships</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>above</td>
<td>beyond* Dallas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>across</td>
<td>around* town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>against</td>
<td>beside* the tracks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>along</td>
<td>toward* every stoplight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>among</td>
<td>under* the bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>around</td>
<td>on* these trips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>at</td>
<td>in* her steady good humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>behind</td>
<td>past</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>below</td>
<td>through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beneath</td>
<td>to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beside</td>
<td>toward</td>
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<tr>
<td>between</td>
<td>under</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beyond</td>
<td>up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by</td>
<td>within</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expressing time relationships</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

35
after | since | until* the last moment
before | until | during* the train ride
during |  |  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expressing other relationships</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| about | like | like* mine
| as | of | for* her
| despite | than | despite* the weather
| except | with | about* my best friend
| for | without | from* a small town
| from |  | of* some forgotten old adventures<>

Don't try to memorize this list. Once you get the feel of the relationships signaled by prepositions, you won't need lists like this any more.

**Between a preposition and its object there may be one or more single-word modifiers.**

`[before* the first play]`
`[of* Lewis's most important game]`

**Application 6**

A prepositional phrase always acts as a modifier.
The roads *beyond* Dallas were in terrible shape. (Where?)

I remember that bumpy street *beside* the tracks. (Which?)

You always bounced wildly *toward* every stoplight. (Where?)

I certainly had doubts *about* my best friend then. (What kind?)

**Tip:** No matter how many modifiers a prepositional phrase may contain, the phrase itself always acts as a unit which modifies some other word. For now, stop looking at what's inside the phrase and examine instead how the whole phrase works as a modifier.
**Completers and Modifiers: Prepositional Phrase Modifiers**

### Application 7

**Instructions**

After each sentence below, in the space provided, write the prepositional phrase which answers the given question (in parentheses) about some other word in the sentence. Then write the word which the phrase modifies. Separate the prepositional phrase from the word it modifies with a comma and a space.

Example: I'll take Aunt Betty around town. *(Where?)*

around town, take

She has interests like mine. *(What kind?)*

She’ll love the ice cream shop under the bridge. *(Which one?)*

She lives so intensely on these trips. *(When?)*

During the train ride, she hardly slept a wink. *(When?)*

She was happily entertaining a homesick teenager from a small town. *(Which one?)*

---

**Completers and Modifiers: Combining Sentences**

A subject + verb may take more than one completer.

Completers may be compounded by the conjunctions *and, but, yet, or, nor*.

Every 15,000 miles, **you should change** the oil and the oil filter in your car. A word may take more than one modifier.
Sometimes modifiers simply pile up near the word they modify:

**You may need** an adjustable long-handled filter wrench [with a swivel joint].

At other times, modifiers are connected by the same conjunctions that create compound subjects, verbs, and completers—*and, but, yet, or, nor*:

However, [without tools] but [with a strong bare-handed grip] **you can unscrew** the filter *simply and quickly*.

---

**4.3 Completers and Modifiers: Combining Sentences**

**Application 8**

**Instructions**

Combine each set of sentences by compounding the sentence parts in **bold**. Use the conjunctions given in parentheses.

**Completers**

1. We watch **the papers** for a clue. We watch **the network news** for a clue. (and)

2. That kind of arrogance impresses **Ben**. It doesn't impresses **me**. (but not)

3. Your dog always eats **my garbage**. If not, he eats **my flowers** (or)

4. My father loves your high little voice. He loves the sound of your big old tuba, too. (and)

5. These jokes are not new. They are not funny, either. (neither . . . nor . . .)

**Modifiers**
6. I sing beautifully in the shower. I sing freely in the shower. (and)

7. Mosquitoes buzz in the tent. They don't buzz in the cabin. (but not)

8. Sylvia cooks spaghetti in a wok. If not, she cooks it over her grill. (or)

9. Tricia expresses her feelings easily with most people. She doesn’t express them easily with children. (but not)

10. Hanna wears socks to bed in the winter. She wears them even on chilly nights in the summer. (and)

Fun With Grammar

Jabberwocky

Here is Lewis Carroll's famous nonsense-poem, "Jabberwocky," written in 1855. Read it out loud, just for fun the first time.

We have some specific questions about the first stanza:
1. In the first two lines, after the words "T'was brillig," what is the subject?
2. What two verbs are compounded in these first two lines?
3. What prepositional phrase modifies the verbs?
4. In the fourth line, there are two possible subject/verb combinations. Find both. Which do you like better and why?
5. What are the two completers in lines 7 and 8?
6. Pick out the subject, verb, and completer in line 9.
7. What are the three modifiers in line 9? (One is a prepositional phrase.)
When you've finished analyzing these first lines, go through the rest of the poem and tease out the rest of this nonsense. What makes you think that a word functions as you say it does?

You can click here to see answers to the above questions.

Try writing your own short nonsense-poem and share it with your classmates. See what kind of meanings they attach to your words.

**Jabberwocky**

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogroves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!"

He took his vorpal sword in hand:
Long time the manxome foe he sought—
So he rested by the Tumtum tree,
And stood awhile in thought.

And, as in uffish thought he stood,
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,
And whiffling through the tulgey wood,
And burbled as it came!

One, two! One, two! And through and through
The vorpal blade went snicker - snack!
He left it dead, and with its head
He went galumphing back.

"And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?
Come to my arms my beamish boy!
O frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!"
He chortled in his joy.

'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogroves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.

This is Sir John Tenniel's illustration of "gyre and gimble in the wabe." You can find a host of Tenniel's illustrations for Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*, at a web-site maintained by England's [Sussex](http://www.sussex.net).
University. (Click anywhere on the illustration for quick trip to England.)

4.11 Completers and Modifiers: Return to Your Writing

Read aloud the paragraph you wrote at the beginning of this chapter. Mark two more completers and five more single-word modifiers. Look for two prepositional phrase modifiers. For each modifier, show what word it's modifying. Trade papers with a classmate and check each other's work. Don't be afraid to disagree; grammarians disagree all the time.
Chapter 5

Embedded Thoughts

Some groups of words that look like sentences are really dependent clauses. Some words that look like verbs are really verbals. A dependent clause or a verbal phrase may express a thought that is not able to stand on its own but has become embedded in a larger sentence structure. Understanding how thoughts become embedded will help you to combine ideas and discover relationships among them through your writing.

In Chapter 5, you will learn that:

- A clause is a group of related words containing a subject + verb.
- An independent clause is a clause that can stand by itself as a complete sentence (Everyone can write).
- A dependent clause is a clause that has given up its independence and can no longer stand by itself (that everyone can write).
- A phrase is a group of related words that does not contain a subject + verb combination. (in spite of your writing).
- A verbal is a verb form that has lost its power to play the role of verb in a sentence (to write; writing; written).
- A verbal phrase is a group of words containing a verbal and the verbal's completers or modifiers (to write a clear essay).
- Sentences can be combined by embedding clauses or verbals.
- Sentences can be combined by compounding clauses or verbals.

Embedded Thoughts: Writing

Think about something that irritates you (for example: your neighbor’s radio playing at 2:00 A.M., the way a relative gives you advice you don’t ask for, the smell of peanut butter cookies, the way your roommate leaves the milk on the table to spoil . . .). How do you respond to that irritation and why? What would you like to do about it? On scrap paper, use freewriting or clustering to jot down everything you can think of about the irritation you’ve chosen.

1. Rearrange what you’ve written into one paragraph, selecting the details that you feel the most strongly about. Start your first sentence with the words “I hate . . .,” and write a short paragraph about this pet peeve.
2. Look through your paragraph and put asterisks (*) after any of the following words: because, unless, if, while, until, which. Then put an asterisk after any verb form ending in -ing without an auxiliary in front, or any verb form with the word to in front. These words probably begin embedded thoughts.
Embedded Thoughts: From Independent to Dependent Clause

A clause is a group of words that contains a subject + verb. An independent clause can stand alone as a complete sentence. A clause beginning with a dependent word cannot stand alone but must be embedded in another sentence.

These are the most common dependent words:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>after</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>although</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before</td>
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<tr>
<td>how</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>if</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>since</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here is an independent clause that can stand alone as a complete sentence:

Marriage is old-fashioned.

Watch what happens when a dependent word introduces this clause:

although marriage is old-fashioned

The clause still has a subject and verb, but the addition of the dependent word although makes the clause unable to stand alone. The word although does something else—it prepares the newly dependent clause for embedding in some other sentence:

{Although* marriage is old-fashioned}, I'm getting married in the morning.

The word although shows the relationship between the two clauses as it embeds one into the other. Other dependent words show different relationships between clauses:

{Because* marriage is old-fashioned}, I'm going to live without it.

Cindy is always arguing {that* marriage is old-fashioned}.

Notice the comma in the first sentence, where a dependent clause comes at the beginning of a sentence.
Embedded Thoughts: From Independent to Dependent Clause

Instructions

Turn the sentence into a dependent clause by using the dependent word shown in parentheses. Then, in the space provided, embed the newly dependent clause in a larger sentence. If the dependent clause comes first in the sentence, put a comma at the end of the clause. Everyone's answers will be different for this exercise. The answers given by the computer (click on "One possible answer") are just examples, and your classmates will surely have interesting possibilities.

1. The weather irritates his joints. (when)

2. The soup was cooking. (while)

3. Oranges will be plentiful this year. (that)
4. The whole family will fit into the Honda. (how)

5. The spool of thread dropped into her mitten. (whether)

5.3 Embedded Thoughts: Recognizing Dependent Clauses

Any clause introduced by a dependent word has been deprived of its independence and can function only by playing a role in a larger sentence.

A dependent word does two things: it turns an independent clause into a dependent clause, and it defines a role for that clause to play within a larger sentence:

Zora Neal Hurston was writing during the Harlem Renaissance.
She may not have realized something.
Her novel about Janie Starks would become an American classic.
The addition of dependent words to the first and last sentences above turns them into dependent clauses (see below). The dependent words will also define the roles that the two newly dependent clauses play in a larger sentence:

{While* Zora Neale Hurston was writing during the Harlem Renaissance}, she may not have realized {that* her novel about Janie Starks would become an American classic}.

The independent clause of this new sentence is "she may not have realized." It could stand alone as a sentence if you wanted it to, but you might ask "She may not have realized what?" The answer would be a completer: "{that* her novel about Janie Starks would become an American classic}." And you might ask "When didn't she realize this?" The answer would be a modifier: "{While* Zora Neale Hurston was writing during the Harlem Renaissance}." Both the completer and the modifier are clauses (they each contain a subject and verb and related words), but they begin with dependent words, so they can't stand alone; they must be embedded in a larger sentence which includes an independent clause.
You can think of an embedded clause as a unit within another sentence, a unit that acts in the same way that a single word might act when it plays a role in a sentence:

Eden understands my thoughts. (Subject, verb, noun completer)
Eden understands {how I think}. (Subject, verb, clause completer)

She'll come tonight. (Subject, verb, single-word modifier)
She'll come {before I even call}. (Subject, verb, clause modifier)

Often several dependent clauses may be embedded in a single sentence.
{After Jan earned eight days of vacation time}, she took her handicapped nephew to Cinnamon Bay {because he loved to swim}. (modifiers, "When?" and "Why")

{When evening came}, she would cook {whatever he wanted} on the little camp stove {that came with their rented tent}. (two modifiers, "When?" and "Which?", and one completer, "She would cook what?")

Because a dependent clause contains a subject and a verb, it may look like a sentence. Sometimes a dependent clause is even longer than the independent clause in which it is embedded. A dependent clause, though, is not able to stand alone as a sentence.

### Embedded Thoughts: From Independent to Dependent Clause

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application 2</th>
<th>Application 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Application 2**

**Instructions**

In the space provided write the dependent clause that plays the sentence role and answers the question in parentheses. Put an asterisk at the end of each dependent word.

Example: That slow, bent man whom they follow is Moses. *(modifier, "Which man?")*  

**whom* they follow**

1. Whatever you want is okay with me. *(subject, "What is?")*

2. But I can't understand why you are so upset about the new benefits package. *(completer, "Can't understand what?")*
3. You must report to the union before the managers call you. (modifier, "When")

4. You should address your comments to the woman whom you met yesterday. (modifier, "Which woman")

5. The meeting that you have with the negotiating team could make a difference to all of us. (modifier, "Which meeting")

6. Where the meeting will be held has been kept a big secret. (subject, "What has been kept")

7. One or two managers may explain how they feel. (completer, "Explain what")

8. You can judge their sincerity by whether or not they look at you. (object of preposition by)

9. If I meet with the managers, they'll just argue with me. (modifier, "Under what conditions")

10. They'll probably like you better because you're much calmer in these situations. (modifier, "Why")
### Application 4

#### Instructions

For each sentence below, find the dependent clauses. In each space, write the dependent clause that plays the sentence role identified in red. Put an asterisk at the end of each dependent word.

Example: Although everybody complains about it, the subway still runs when the streets above are in gridlock.
First modifier: **Although** *everyone complains about it*
Second modifier: **when** *the streets above are in gridlock*

1. If I'm in a hurry, that's how I go places.
   
   Modifier Clause: ___________________________
   
   Completer Clause: ___________________________

2. Our subways are just noisier than the ones in Boston are because ours are older.
   
   1st Modifier Clause: ___________________________
   
   2nd Modifier Clause: ___________________________

3. Unless you object, I'll send Mark home on the subway after the party is over.
   
   1st Modifier Clause: ___________________________
   
   2nd Modifier Clause: ___________________________
4. Because he has spent so much time with me, he'll know where he should transfer to the other line.
Modifier Clause:  
Completer Clause:  

5. Whether he eats supper or not can be his choice since we'll have plenty of food.
Subject Clause:  
Modifier Clause:  

5.3 Embedded Thoughts: Recognizing Dependent Clauses

Application 5

Instructions

For further study, COPY these first five sentences from Application 4 and PASTE them in the box provided. Analyze the way they work and mark them as follows:

|all subjects|
|ALL VERBS
{completers of independent clauses only]
{dependent clauses}
dependent words*
If the independent clause’s subject or completer is a dependent clause, put the dependent clause brackets { } inside the other brackets:

Example: {Although* |everybody| COMPLAINS about the subways}, at least |you| KNOW
[that* |they| ARE faster than cars during the rush hour].

1. If I'm in a hurry, that's how I go places.

2. Our subways are just noisier than the ones in Washington are because our equipment is older.

3. Unless you object, I'll send Mark home on the subway after the party is over.

4. Because he's spent so much time with me, he'll know where to make the connection to the other line.

5. Whether he eats supper or not can be his choice since we'll have plenty of food here.

---

5.3 Embedded Thoughts: Recognizing Dependent Clauses

**Application 5**

**Instructions**

For further study, COPY these first five sentences from Application 4 and PASTE them in the box provided. Analyze the way they work and mark them as follows:

| all subjects |
| ALL VERBS |
| [completers of independent clauses only] |
| {dependent clauses} |
| dependent words* |
If the independent clause's subject or completer is a dependent clause, put the dependent clause brackets {} inside the other brackets:

Example: {Although* |everybody| COMPLAINS about the subways}, at least |you| KNOW [{that* |they| ARE faster than cars during the rush hour]}.

1. If I'm in a hurry, that's how I go places.

2. Our subways are just noisier than the ones in Washington are because our equipment is older.

3. Unless you object, I'll send Mark home on the subway after the party is over.

4. Because he's spent so much time with me, he'll know where to make the connection to the other line.

5. Whether he eats supper or not can be his choice since we'll have plenty of food here.

Embedded Thoughts: From Verb to Verbal

A verb may become a verbal, ready for embedding, by the addition of the word to or by the loss of an auxiliary.

In each set of sentences below, the verb in the first sentence has become a verbal in the last one.

Emily takes out the garbage.
Emily wants to take out the garbage.

A full moon was glowing. The snow magnified its light.
The snow magnified the light of the glowing full moon.
Emily had discarded a letter. In the moonlight, she could read the address on the letter.
In the moonlight, Emily could read the address on her discarded letter.

Each set of sentences above illustrates a different kind of verbal. We'll look at the three kinds one at a time.

**First kind of verbal: To + [base form of verb]**
This is called an *infinitive*.

An infinitive may play several sentence roles:

To twitch* at the moment of falling asleep is perfectly natural. (subject, "What is?")

Some people try to control* this motion. (completer, "People try what?")

They lie on their stomachs to suppress* the twitch. (modifier, "Why?")

An infinitive never acts as the verb of a sentence.

**Second kind of verbal: [base form of verb] + -ing with no auxiliary in front**
This is called a *present participle, or in some cases, a gerund*.

The present participle, when it stands without an auxiliary, may play the role of modifier:

Willie Loman was a traveling* salesman. ("What kind?")

Sometimes the same verb form is used in one of the roles that a noun could play. Then it is called a gerund:

Losing* his job pushed him beyond the brink of sanity. (subject, "What pushed?")

People focus on some basic elements of the American character by reading* Death of a Salesman. (object of the preposition by)

Whether the -ing form acts as a modifier or plays a noun's role, if it is not preceded by a form of the auxiliary to be, it cannot work as the verb of its sentence.

**Third kind of verbal: [past participle of verb] with no auxiliary in front**

A past participle, standing alone without an auxiliary, plays the role of modifier:

Ghandi's chosen* strategy of non-violent protest had its roots in Christian as well as Hindu doctrines. ("Which strategy?")

Educated* in Britain, this young lawyer saw the connections between his own Indian traditions and the highest ideals of Western civilization. ("What kind of lawyer?")

Remember that with regular verbs, the simple past and the past participle forms look exactly alike, but that with irregular verbs the two forms may be different. (See Chapter 2.)
TIP FOR ESL STUDENTS:
Click on the ESL icon at left to visit “Choice between Participles” for help in deciding when to use the past/passive form or the present/active form of this modifying verbal. Practice these forms with a teacher or tutor.

5.4 Embedded Thoughts: From Verbs to Verbal

**Application 7**

**Instructions**

For further study, COPY these first five sentences from Application 6 and PASTE them in the box provided. Analyze the way they work and mark them as follows:

-all subjects-
ALL VERBS
[completers]
verbals*

Example: In spite of the announcement, the |conductors| DECIDED [to stay*].

1. Nobody likes to wait.

2. This workshop demonstrates new ways to concentrate.

3. To survive on a minimum wage takes tremendous resourcefulness.

4. Out of the corner of her eye, Anuja glimpsed a shooting star.
5. Diving is not a good idea at this beach.

6. The cleaner will trim that dangling piece of lace.

7. Most students enjoy Ms. Burgess's teasing.

8. The ball flew right between the astonished umpire's knees.

9. Frozen yogurt is becoming a fad in some cities.

10. The unemployed flight attendants are bringing pots and pans to the airport.

Embedded Thoughts: Recognizing Verbal Phrases

A verbal phrase is a verbal plus its completers and modifiers.

Like the verb it came from, a verbal may take a completer and modifiers.

Boiling* uses up more energy than frying* does. (verbals stand alone, without phrases)
{Boiling* eggs} uses up more energy than {frying* them} does. (verbals take completers, creating verbal phrases)

{Boiling* an egg in the winter} will heat your kitchen a bit. (verbal takes a completer and modifier, creating a verbal phrase)

An embedded verbal phrase functions as a unit, acting the way a single word might to play a single role in a larger sentence:

The water is wonderful. (noun subject, verb, completer)

{Swimming* in your pool} is wonderful. (verbal phrase subject, verb, completer)

I'm expecting friends. (subject, verb, noun completer)

I'm expecting {to see* my friends}. (subject, verb, verbal phrase completer)

Because a verbal comes from a verb, it behaves like a verb in several ways. It can take a completer and modifiers. It can also express time and imply action. But a verbal cannot be the verb of a sentence.

TIP FOR ESL STUDENTS:
Click on the ESL icon at left to visit "Infinitive and Gerund Completers" for help in choosing between these two verbals. Practice these forms with a teacher or tutor.

Embedded Thoughts: Recognizing Verbal Phrases

Application 8

Instructions

Find the verbal phrases that play the sentence roles given in parentheses. Write the entire verbal phrase in the space provided. Write an asterisk (*) after each verbal.

Example: Giving concerts all over the country increases the popularity of rock groups. (subject)

Giving* concerts all over the country
1. Some rock singers like to go on tour. (completer)

2. They get a lot of money for appearing live on stage. (object of preposition for)

3. They become inspired in front of audiences cheering them on. (modifier, "What kind of audiences?")

4. A star surrounded by fans feels completely at home. (modifier, "Which star?")

5. Sometimes adults in the audiences will squabble like two-year-olds to get a good view of their idols. (modifier, "Why?")

Embedded Thoughts: Recognizing Verbal Thoughts

Application 9

Instructions

For further study, COPY these sentences from Application 8 and PASTE them in the box provided. Analyze the way they work and mark them as follows:

|all subjects| ALL VERBS [completers] verbals* (verbal phrase)

If the subject or completer is a verbal phrase, put the verbal phrase brackets { } inside the other brackets.

Example: [{Giving* concerts all over the country}] INCREASES the [popularity] of rock groups.

1. Some rock singers like to go on tour.
2. They get a lot of money for appearing live on stage.

3. They become giddy in front of audiences cheering them on.

4. A star surrounded by fans feels completely comfortable.

5. Sometimes adults in the audiences will squabble like two-year-olds to get a good view of their idols.

Embedded Thoughts: Combining Sentences by Embedding Thoughts

Several separate sentences may combine into a more complex sentence when one clause keeps its independence and the others are embedded into it as dependent clauses.

Separate sentences:

Lobbyists are paid by many private and public organizations. The organizations raise money from people. The people want their opinions to be taken seriously on Capitol Hill.

Combined:
Lobbyists are paid by many private and public organizations {that raise money from people} {who want their opinions to be taken seriously on Capitol Hill}.

Application 10
Several separate sentences can be combined into a more complex sentence when the verb in one keeps its full powers and the verbs in the others become embedded verbals.

Separate sentences:

Recent polls show public concern about the influence of money in politics. Public concern is rapidly rising.
U.S citizens spent $49 million on lobbyists in 1985. The citizens were trying to sway congressional votes.

Separate sentences combined:
Recent polls show {rapidly rising} public concern about the influence of money in politics. {Trying to influence congressional votes}, U.S. citizens spent $49 million on lobbyists in 1985.

Application 11

Embedded Thoughts: Combining Sentences by Embedding Thoughts

## Application 10

**Instructions**

Combine each of the following sets of sentences using the dependent word(s) given in parentheses.

1. (who)

2. (whose)
3. (that)

4. (until)

5. (when)

6. (since)

7. He was only nine years old. He wasn't worried. (although)
8. (if, where)

9. He started singing loudly. The moose at the nearby stream froze into stillness. She was both fascinated and afraid. (so that, because)

10. The sky cleared. The boy cut sticks with a knife. He carried a knife in his pocket. (as, that)
Combine the following sets of sentences by changing the words in italics to embedded verbals or verbal phrases.

Examples:
a. (embed a verbal only) That beach may not be open to the public much longer. It is eroding.
   **That eroding beach may not be open to the public much longer.**

b. (embed a verbal phrase) The smaller beach is hidden around the bluff. It has higher and stronger dunes.
   **Hidden around the bluff, the smaller beach has higher and stronger dunes.**

1. The soldiers avoided the children. The children were sleeping.

2. Talitha was singing quietly to herself. She approached the troops.

3. Rosa and the twins shout in the crowd. The crowd is rushing.

4. They are laughing about the meeting. They gesture with their hands.

5. The steel was polished. It was sent to the diecutters.

6. The sample was engraved with the machinist's initials. It went on display for a week.

7. Please clean up Billie Sue's ice cream. It is dripping.
8. We are rushed by the deadline. We're finally throwing out all Dad's old gadgets.

9. Today I looked at my fender. It is scratched.

10. I must have run into that car. It was parked too close to my driveway.

5.7 Embedded Thoughts: Combining Sentences by Compounding Embedded Thoughts

Several embedded thoughts may be compounded in a single sentence.

Judy thought {that the professor would have left} but {that the students would still be in the room}.

Since subjects, completers, and modifiers can be compounded, embedded thoughts that play these sentence roles can also be compounded by the conjunctions and, but, yet, or, nor. Remember that when two or more sentence parts of the same type are compounded, the conjunction usually appears between only the last two, and the others are separated by commas.

Separate sentences with embedded subjects:

{Popping huge gum bubbles} was Judy's specialty.
{Making dramatic entrances} to class was her specialty, too.

Separate sentences with embedded modifiers:

Today she popped one bubble too many and found herself face to face with a {gum-spattered} Professor Scianna.
This was an {astonished} person.
This was an {infuriated} person.
{Not blushing a bit}, Judy shook his hand with great dignity.
{Not cracking a smile}, Judy did this.

Combinations:

{Popping huge gum bubbles} and {making dramatic entrances in class} were Judy's specialties.

Today she popped one bubble too many and found herself face to face with a {gum-spattered}, {astonished}, and {infuriated} Professor Scianna.
{Neither blushing a bit} nor {cracking a smile}, Judy shook his hand with great dignity.

---

### Embedded Thoughts: Combining Sentences

**by Compounding Embedded Thoughts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Application 12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Instructions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combine each set of sentences by compounding the bracketed embedded thoughts. Use the conjunction shown in parentheses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Example: I told you {that last night I watched the news on television}. I told you {that it really made me think hard}.

I told you that last night I watched the news on television and that it really made me think hard.

1. (and)

2. (and)
8. (but)

9. (, , yet)

10. (but)
Instructions

This Review and Practice exercise is an opportunity for you to test your understanding of what you have studied in Chapter 5: Embedded Thoughts.

After the review statements below you'll find dependent clauses, verbals, or verbal phrases. Embed each one in a larger sentence of your own creating. You can compare your answers to the sentences returned to you when you click on "One suggested answer" buttons, but remember that these represent only one possibility.

A dependent word takes away a clause's independence and prepares it for embedding.

1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5.
A verb may become a verbal and become ready for embedding by the addition of the word *to* or by the loss of an auxiliary.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.
Embedding clauses is one way of combining sentences. (Use the dependent words--in bold type--given for each group.)

11. (because, while)

12. (although)

13. (as, who)
Changing verbs to embedded verbals is another way of combining sentences.

Change the words in ALL CAPS to embedded verbals or verbal phrases.)
Compounding embedded thoughts is a third way to combine sentences.
(Using the conjunctions shown in bold type, compound the bracketed embedded thoughts.)

21. (and)

22. (but not)

23. (or)
Embedded Thoughts: Fun With Grammar

The Champion Verbalizer

1. Make a team with two or three other people, and together pick one of the lettered lines below. Each team pick a different line.

   a. spatula, scraped, crust, oily, squirming, train.
   b. bending, wrapped, blanket, stones, knife, children.
   c. coats, cords, scarred, gnawing, bristly, insane.
   d. tractor, natural, kicking, sky, road, soybean
   e. fields, surrounded, giving, lawn, woods, way
   f. certain, curve, hill, sphere, floating, cold
2. With your team, write a long sentence using the words in your line. You can add as many other words as you like, but the result must be a correctly constructed sentence. Use as many verbals as you can.

3. Stop after five minutes and count the words in your sentence. Count the verbals as well. Which team has the longest sentence? Which one used the most verbals?

4. The winning team in each category must read the sentence aloud and let the class judge whether the sentence is correctly constructed. If not, the team with the next highest count should try. Select winners.

If you worked on line a, b, or c, click here to see how E. Annie Proulx used these words in the first paragraph of her novel, *Accordion Crimes*. If you worked on line d, e, or f, click here to see how Randall Kenan used these words in the first paragraph of his short story, "The Foundations of the Earth."

5.10 Embedded Thoughts: Return to Your Writing

Read aloud the paragraph you wrote at the beginning of this chapter. Look at the words you marked, and check to see whether they introduce embedded thoughts. Mark any other embedded thoughts that you find. Trade papers with a classmate and check each other's marks. Ask your tutor or teacher for help with your questions.
Chapter 6

Capitalization and Punctuation

Writers use punctuation marks and capital letters to help readers interpret the structure of their sentences. Each mark has at least one purpose, and some have several, but no mark is ever used without a good reason.

Chapter 6 will help you understand when to use:

• capital letters.
• periods.
• question marks.
• exclamation points.
• commas.
• colons.
• semicolons.
• quotation marks.
• parentheses.

Capitalization and Punctuation: Capital Letters

Every sentence begins with a capital letter.
A penny saved is a penny earned.
People who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones.
A proper noun begins with a capital letter.

A proper noun names a specific person, place, or thing. Proper nouns include people's names, titles, brand names, languages and nationalities, and the names of days and months (but not seasons). For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common noun</th>
<th>Proper noun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>woman</td>
<td>Damaris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>son</td>
<td>Julius</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my uncle</td>
<td>Uncle Ernie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>college president</td>
<td>President Bliss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a new detergent</td>
<td>Cloud Puff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my accounting class</td>
<td>Accounting 243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>studying a language</td>
<td>studying Spanish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The pronoun *I* is always spelled as a capital letter.
When I think of traveling, I always wish I could go to Borneo.

A capital letter begins the first, last, and any important word in the title of a book, magazine article, story, poem, movie, or other work.
Have you read Paul Hoch's analysis of football, *Rip Off the Big Game*?
Use capital letters only when you have a good reason to do so.

### Application 1

#### Instructions

In the space provided after each sentence, rewrite each word that requires capitalization. Separate your rewritten words with commas.

**Example:** their wedding last may was the highlight of the spring season.

*Their, May*

1. i know that canadians celebrate thanksgiving, but is their holiday also in november?

2. david was sitting in the corner of the restaurant, reading a science fiction book called songs of mosquitoes.

3. that new history class on presidents since 1945, history 602, is very popular.

4. i think you are supposed to plant all bulbs in the fall.
5. since last friday, she has spent more time studying german than anything else; her father is tutoring her.
1. I told you not to smoke in front of the children.

2. Did you know that children will mimic the bad habits of children?

3. Most adults who smoke began as teenagers.

4. Why do different brands of cigarettes show different Surgeon General's warnings?

5. You should see the one I read yesterday.

---

**Capitalization and Punctuation: Comma**

A comma marks the breaks between items in a series.

They teased, begged, and flattered until I gave in.
Remember that when more than two items are compounded, the conjunction comes between the last two, and commas separate the others:
They appealed to my pride, to my faith in them, and to my generous instincts.

**Application 5**

A comma comes before the conjunction that compounds independent clauses.

They joked around at my door, and then they won me over.
The girls told me what good drivers they were, but the boys concentrated on washing the car windows.

**Application 6**

A comma marks the end of an introductory modifying phrase or clause.

Since they'd waited all day, I couldn't refuse.
After all, I owed them a favor.
Note that when a modifying clause comes after the independent clause, no comma is necessary:
I was laughing to myself while they were talking to me.  
**BUT**  
While they were talking to me, I was laughing to myself.

A transitional expression at the beginning of a clause will be separated from the rest of the clause by a comma. In the sentences below, *finally* and *therefore* are transitional expressions.

Finally, the water began to boil.  
Nobody noticed it for five minutes; therefore, several ounces evaporated.

### Application 7

**A comma separates an interruption from the rest of a sentence.**

An interruption is any word or group of words that interrupts or is added to a sentence to offer extra information. It can be a whole clause:

Marcel, **who was the oldest**, was a charmer.  
The interruption can be a phrase:  
What they wanted, **of course**, was to borrow my car.  
Sometimes the interruption is merely a word:  
**Yes**, I did it again, **honey**. I loaned them the new car and the keys, **too**.

### Application 8

**A comma separates quoted words from the rest of a sentence.**

"You deserve your great reputation for kindness," Marcel declared. I blushed and replied, "Enough sweet talk. Be back by five."  
Notice that the first word of each quoted sentence is capitalized, even though, in the case of the last one, the mark before *enough* is a comma rather than a period. This is because the words being quoted create a sentence within a sentence.

### Application 9

**A comma separates items in an address or date.**

Come celebrate with us at 24 Morrill Avenue, Waterville, Maine on Monday, June 18, 2002.

### Application 10

**Summary of Comma use**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Use a Comma</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • to mark the breaks between the items in a series.  
• before the conjunction that compounds independent clauses.  
• to mark the end of an introductory modifying phrase or clause.  
• to separate an interruption from the rest of a sentence. |
• to separate quoted words from the rest of a sentence.
• to separate items in an address or date.

### Application 11

#### 6.7 Capitalization and Punctuation: Colon

A colon shows the reader that a list or an explanation follows.

Here's what I want you to do: grab my bag, warm up the car, and take me to the station.

There's one thing about you that makes me mad: the way you lose track of time when you work in the garden.

#### 6.8 Capitalization and Punctuation: Semicolon

A semicolon compounds two independent clauses without a conjunction.

Come with me; you'll be glad you did.

There must be something I can do; I've been sitting here for an hour.

A semicolon compounds two independent clauses where the second clause begins with a transitional expression. In the sentences below, furthermore and however are transitional expressions.

I'll show you the sights of my childhood; furthermore, we'll visit the alley where I learned to skate.

I thought we'd said enough about that; however, the look on your face tells me that you have something more to say.

Notice that a comma follows the transitional expression in the sentences above.

For more on transitional expressions (also known as *adverbial conjuctions*), see the section on Avoiding Run-on Sentences and the section in Chapter 16 on Transitional Expressions.

A semicolon separates items in a series when the items already contain commas.

As program director, she had several responsibilities: planning, budgeting, contracting, and hiring staff for the summer projects; managing the projects and supervising the staff; and at the end of the summer, closing the offices, distributing remaining funds to agency departments, and writing final reports.

#### 6.9 Capitalization and Punctuation: Quotation

Quotation marks identify the exact words of a speaker.

Sheba was whispering, "Not that way; turn left."

"I know what I'm doing," Joan snapped.

Do not use quotation marks simply for emphasis; that's what underlining is for:

This is *your* laundromat; please keep it clean.

not

This is "your" laundromat; please keep it "clean."
Quotation marks identify the title of a story, poem, or other short work.

The first-person point of view in "The Lesson" blends humor with social commentary. The narration is entirely different in "Guests of the Nation."

The title of a long work (such as a book or movie or play) should be written in *italics*. The title of a part (such as a story or a chapter or an article in a journal) should be in quotation marks:

Vanessa Redgrave and Jane Fonda starred in *Julia*, the movie based on "Julia," a chapter in *Pentimento*, Lilian Hellman's autobiography.

If you are using a typewriter that is not capable of creating italicized type or if you are writing by hand, underline what would otherwise appear in *italics*.

*Julia* (in publication or word-processing) = *Julia* (handwritten or using an old-fashioned typewriter)

Application 15

We do not use quotation marks to set off language in the form of "indirect" or "reported" speech.

- The teacher said, "Take care of your computer diskette." (The words in quotation marks are direct speech, the exact words that someone spoke.)
- The teacher told him to take care of his computer diskette. (The teacher's exact words are not included here, so this is indirect or reported speech, and needs no quotation marks.)

Capitalization and Punctuation: Parentheses

Parentheses set off information that is not essential to the sentence.

The price was low ($3.50), so I didn't mind paying.

Any extra information is an interruption (see *commas*), but parentheses are useful when the interruption is too long to be set off with commas, or when the writer wants to separate the information from the rest of the sentence more completely than would be possible with commas. The interruption may be a phrase:

I didn't go anywhere (except to the mailbox) until noon.

Sometimes the interruption is a whole sentence:

The roads (you'll be delighted to hear this) were completely dry by then.

Application 16  Application 17

Quotation marks and parentheses always come in sets. When you mark the start of a quotation, the reader imagines a new voice entering. That new voice continues until you mark the end of the quotation. When you mark the start of a parenthetical interruption, the reader will be looking for the end in order to see where the main
sentence picks up again. Don't leave the reader hanging with only one half of either set.

**TIP FOR ESL STUDENTS:**
Click on the ESL icon at left to visit "Question and Quotation Marks" for help recognizing the form and placement of these marks in English. Practice these forms with a teacher or tutor.

---

**6.11 Capitalization and Punctuation: Review & Practice**

**Review & Practice**

**Instructions**

This exercise is an opportunity for you to test your understanding of the material covered in Chapter 6: Capitization and Punctuation.

A capital letter signals the start of a new sentence. A period, question mark, or exclamation point signals the end of the sentence.

Click each "sentence" button and a sentence with capitalization and punctuation problems will appear. Fix the errors before comparing your work to the computer's response by clicking the "answer" button.

1. 

2. 

3. 

---

**PDF created with pdfFactory trial version [www.pdffactory.com](http://www.pdffactory.com)**
Commas signal the breaks between three or more units in a series. When two or more independent clauses are compounded, a comma comes before the conjunction.

Click on the "sentence" button and a sentence with comma problems will appear. Insert the necessary comma(s) before comparing your work to the computer's response.
When a modifying phrase or clause comes before the independent clause in a sentence, a comma marks the end of the introductory phrase or clause. When an interruption enters a sentence, a comma or commas set it off from the rest of the sentence.

Insert a comma or commas where they are necessary in the following sentences. Compare your work to the computer's responses.
When a quotation is included in a sentence, a comma separates the quoted words from the rest of the sentence. In a date or an address, the items are separated by commas.

Insert commas where appropriate in the following sentences.

16.
A colon introduces a list or an explanation. A semicolon joins independent clauses or separates items in a complex series.

Insert colons or semicolons where they would be appropriate in the following sentences.

21.
Quotation marks enclose the exact words of a speaker or the title of a story, poem, or short work. Parentheses enclose nonessential information.

Insert quotation marks or parentheses where they would be appropriate in the following sentences. Also, don't leave out any appropriate punctuation marks that fall within the quotation marks or parentheses.

26.

27.

28.

29.
**Capitalization and Punctuation : Fun With Grammar**

**Poetic License**

Instructions:
Below are two poems about the earth by American poets Victor Hernandez Cruz and e e cummings. Both poets have felt free to ignore standard capitalization and punctuation rules in order to emphasize other aspects of language. The point of this game is to see what happens when you put the poems into standard sentence form.

Victor Hernandez Cruz's poetry often mixes Spanish and English. In this poem, he lines up one language opposite the other. Choose one of the columns, depending on which language you prefer to play with.

Cruz has used all capital letters and no punctuation in his poem. Write the poem in sentence form, capitalizing only those words that need it and punctuating for standard sentences. Look for four sentences.

If you can, compare the sentences in the two different languages. Is the punctuation different? Discuss the images and the ideas in the poem with other students. It may help to decide who is being addressed with the word "you" in the poem's sixth line.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Version</th>
<th>ción</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EACH LITTLE</td>
<td>CADA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PORE</td>
<td>PORO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAS A LIGHT</td>
<td>TIENE UNA LUZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AND DARKNESS</td>
<td>Y AFUERA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OUTSIDE</td>
<td>OSCURIDAD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
e e cummings doesn't even capitalize his own name. Although he has included some punctuation in the following poem, he has done so in an unusual way, and he has left out other punctuation marks that would help readers see the sentence structure in the poem.

Write the poem as three sentences with standard capitalization and punctuation.

Is the poem easier to understand in sentence form? Discuss the images and the ideas in the poem with other students. What are the advantages of the form that e e cummings used? What are the advantages of the sentence form?

O sweet spontaneous earth how often have the doting

   fingers of prurient philosophers pinched and poked thee, has the naughty thumb of science prodded thy beauty . how often have religions taken thee upon their scraggy knees
squeezing and

buffeting thee that thou mightest conceive
gods
  (but
ture
to the incomparable
couch of death thy
rhythmic
lover

  thou answerest

them only with

spring)

6.13 Capitalization and Punctuation: Return to Your Observation of Writing

Look again at the paragraphs about the picnic at the beginning of this chapter. Think about how the marks that you circled help you as a reader to understand the way in which groups of words work together. Now that you have studied the rules for using capital letters and punctuation marks, write beside each circled mark the reason for its use. In these paragraphs, you should find examples that illustrate the following number of different reasons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Punctuation Mark</th>
<th>Number of reasons for using</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital letter</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question mark</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclamation point</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colon</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semicolon</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comma</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quotation marks</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parentheses</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trade papers with a classmate and check each other's work.
Combining Sentences

Before leaving the study of sentence structure behind, this chapter offers a summary of the sentence combining patterns you’ve learned throughout Part One. These are:

- compounding sentence parts
- embedding clauses
- embedding verbals and verbal phrases
- compounding whole sentences.

Combining Sentences: Your Writing

1. How many of the words on the magnet board (below) can you fit into one sentence? (In the first, random pile of words, some words may be stacked on top of each other; quickly rearrange them until you can see all the words.) Work with one or two partners and try different arrangements until your phrases and clauses fit together to make sense. After three minutes, compare your work with what other students are doing and borrow their ideas to help with your sentence. You will find doubles for the words "the," "your," and "in."

2. Spend at least five minutes playing with the possibilities before you look at the answer provided by the computer (in the pulldown menu below the magnet board).

When you are finished, scroll down here to see a sentence using all these words.

Combining Sentences: Compounding Whole Sentences

Just as similar sentence parts may be compounded, whole sentences also may be compounded. Remember that subjects may be compounded with other subjects, modifiers with other modifiers, and so on. In the same way, one whole sentence may be compounded with another whole sentence by a conjunction (and, but, yet, or, nor). When you are compounding whole sentences, two other conjunctions come into play: for and so. When you compound whole sentences, a comma before the conjunction marks the place where one clause ends and the next begins. When more than two sentences are
compounded, the conjunction usually appears between only the last two, while the others are separated by commas.

### 7.3 Combining Sentences: Sentence Combining

**Summary**

You can combine sentences by compounding two or more sentence parts that play the same sentence role.

A conjunction can connect subject with subject, verb with verb, completer with completer, or modifier with modifier. You may wish to review here:

- Combining Sentences by Compounding Verbs,
- Combining Sentences by Compounding Subjects,
- Combining Sentences by Compounding Completers or Modifiers.

In the example below, the conjunction connects two verbs:

Those blues tunes haunt me. Those blues tunes don't change my mind.
Those blues tunes haunt me **but** don't change my mind.

**Application 2**

You can combine sentences by embedding one within another.

A dependent word can take away a clause's independence and embed it in an independent clause. See "From Independent to Dependent Clause" in Chapter 5.

Those blues tunes haunt me. You play them on your trombone.
Those blues tunes haunt me **when** you play them on your trombone.

**Application 3**

A verb can be reduced to a verbal and embedded in another sentence alone or as a verbal phrase. See "From Verb to Verbal" in Chapter 5.

Those blues tunes **are haunting**. They echo constantly through my brain.
Those **haunting** blues tunes **echo** constantly through my brain.

**OR**

**Haunting me**, those blues tunes **echo** constantly through my brain.

**Application 4**

You can combine sentences by compounding them.

A conjunction with a comma before it connects two independent sentences:

Those blues tunes **are haunting** me. I don't want you to stop playing.
Those blues tunes **are haunting** me, **but** I don't want you to stop playing.

### 7.4 Combining Sentences: Mixing Methods to Combine Sentences
In normal speech, you can fit many ideas into one efficient sentence. Compounding and embedding are both ways of fitting the edges of ideas to each other so that they connect smoothly and avoid unnecessary words. In the example below, the ideas in ten sentences can fit concisely into two sentences, for a total of fewer than 45 words.

**Before combination**

A constellation is a group of stars.
They are easily recognized.
They appear to be close together in the sky.
They appear to form a picture.
To see the picture, lines must be imagined between each star.
The lines are connecting them.

(Combine into a sentence of under 30 words)

Constellations are usually named.
The names are the names of animals.
If not, they're names of common objects.
If not, they're names of characters from mythology.

(Combine into a sentence of under 15 words)

**After combination**

A constellation is a group of easily recognized stars that appear to be close together in the sky and to form a picture if lines are imagined connecting them.
Constellations are usually named for animals, common objects, or characters from mythology. (29 + 12 words)

To help you think about ways of combining sentences, print out a copy of Chart 13: Clause Connectors. This chart organizes conjunctions and dependent words according to categories of purpose. It also includes a third group of connectors, the transitional expressions, which are examined in more detail in Chapter 9. Consult this chart as you combine sentences in the application below.

Combining Sentences: Review And Practice

**Review & Practice**

**Instructions**

This exercise is an opportunity for you to test your understanding of what you have just learned in the text. When you click on the "sentences" button a set of sentences will appear in the text area. Using the conjunction or conjunctions shown in parentheses, combine each set of sentences into a single sentence. The "One possible answer" button will reveal the computer's response, but more than one answer is certainly possible.

1. (whose)
Click on the "paragraphs" button for twenty-eight more sentences in two paragraphs. Combine them to tell the rest of the story in ten to fourteen sentences. Don't leave out any of the information. Use conjunctions or dependent words, or change verbs to verbals, connecting the ideas into fewer but longer sentences. The "One possible answer" button will reveal the computer's suggested response, but many different
10.

Combining Sentences: Fun with Grammar

**Patchwork**

1. Form a team of four students. Give each person a number, 1-4. Take a few pieces of paper and tear them into strips. Give each person a strip.

2. On the strip of paper, quickly draw the part of a body that the directions describe for your number. Cover your work so that your team members don't see what you're doing:
3. After about one minute, show each other your drawings and fit them together.

4. Reassign the four numbers, pass around more strips, and do this again.

5. Now work with sentences instead of bodies. Decide on your numbers, pass around new strips, and on your strip, write the sentence part that the directions describe for your number.

   - Student #1 -- a dependent clause beginning with when, before, or after and using a verb in the simple past tense
   - Student #2 -- an independent clause using a simple past tense verb
   - Student #3 -- a string of connected prepositional phrases ending with a person's name
   - Student #4 -- a dependent clause beginning with who and using the simple past tense

6. When you're all finished with your parts, show them to each other and fit them together in order. You may have to make some adjustments (some prepositions simply won't fit with the previous phrase, some pronouns will need gender or number changes, and so on) and then read the results to the rest of the class.

7. Reassign the four numbers, pass around more strips, and do this again. Press here to see two sentences from previous rounds of this game.

Combining Sentences: Return to Your Writing

Return to the magnet board at the beginning of this chapter. As you were arranging your sentence, which words did you try to use as subjects? Did any of those words eventually get used in some other sentence role? How many different subject and verb combinations did the answer sentence contain?

Obviously, a sentence is more than just a collection of words. The way the words relate to each other is what allows you to create and convey meaning in language. The primary structural relationships within an English sentence are those among subject, verb, completer, and modifier. Once you've got those under control, you can make an infinite number of combinations, communicating and inventing a lifetime of ideas.