Writing Workshops

Writing Workshop 1: The Parts of Speech
Writing Workshop 2: The Parts of a Sentence
Writing Workshop 3: Fragments & Run-ons
Writing Workshop 4: Subject & Verb Agreement
Writing Workshop 5: Pronoun Agreement
Writing Workshop 6: Confusing Modifiers
Writing Workshop 7: Pronoun Reference
Writing Workshop 8: Parallel Structure
Writing Workshop 9: Commas & Semicolons
Writing Workshop 10: Colons & Quotation Marks
Writing Workshop 1

The Parts of Speech

1) A sentence is a group of words expressing a complete thought.

2) A sentence has a Subject and a Predicate. The Subject of the sentence is the naming part of the sentence about which something is said. The Predicate is the telling part of the sentence which says something about the Subject.

   Ex.: Faculty and students planned a new class schedule.

   At the end of the day comes our activity period.

3) A noun is a word used to name a person, an animal, a place, a thing or an idea: a man, a dog, a house, a tree, beauty, love.

   a) A noun usually has an article in front of it:
      i) Definite article: the dog
      ii) Indefinite article: a pen, an apple

4) A pronoun is a word used in the place of one or more nouns.

   Ex.: The man is standing by the door. He is my father.

5) An adjective is a word used to modify or describe a noun or a pronoun: tall, green, fast, good. Adjectives operate in the following ways:

   a) By telling what kind: blue eyes, a strong wind

   b) By pointing out which one: this man, that suggestion

   c) By telling how many: several reasons, ten players

6) A verb is word that expresses an action or otherwise helps to make a statement. All verbs help to make a statement. Some help to make a statement by expressing physical action (hit, play) or mental action (think, imagine).

   a) Other verbs help to make a statement by expressing a state or condition (be, seems). These are called linking verbs.

      Ex.: The man in the dark overcoat looks suspicious.
7) An adverb is a word which modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb. Adverbs operate in the following ways:
   a) By telling how: Tom drives carefully.
   b) By telling when: He drives early in the morning and late at night.
   c) By telling where: He drives everywhere.
   d) By telling to what extent: Sally can almost drive.
   e) By telling how often: Sally drives daily.

8) A **preposition** is word which shows the relation of a noun or pronoun to another word in a sentence.

   Ex.: He works in the laboratory on the fifth floor.

9) A **conjunction** is word used to join words or groups of words together in a sentence.

   Ex.: The dog is in the house, and the cat is outside.

10) An **interjection** is a word that expresses emotion and has no grammatical relation to the other words in the sentence.

    Ex.: Oh! How did that happen? Wow! Did you see that?

**Exercise:**

Write the number (1-8) of the part of speech of each boldfaced word:

1. noun 3. verb 5. adverb 7. conjunction
2. pronoun 4. adjective 6. preposition 8. interjection

Ex.: Wendy is a **welder.** 1
The Parts of a Sentence

I. Subjects & Predicates:

Subject: names something that does an action, receives an action, or exists. 

Predicate: tells something about the subject; completes the thought of the sentence.

```
Simple Subject       Simple Predicate
\                   /
The daring thief     leapt over the fence in a single bound.
Complete Subject     Complete Predicate
```

II. Direct Object: names what receives the action or results from the action of the [verb].

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The batter [hit]  the ball  to right field.
Picasso [developed] the style  of painting known as Cubism.
```

III. Indirect Object: identifies someone or something that receives whatever is named by the Direct Object.

```
The campers [built] themselves  a campfire.
Sam [kicked] Tom  the ball  to score the first goal.
```

IV. Subject Complements:

Subject Complements follow linking verbs (is, was, seem, appear -- verbs that show existence). Subject Complements can act as nouns or as adjectives.

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Bill is a cinematographer.  [ Noun = renames the Subject, Bill ]
Sally is organized.        [ Adjective = describes Subject, Sally ]
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Writing Workshop 2
Exercise:
Label all Parts of Speech, Direct Objects, Indirect Objects, Subject Complement-Nouns, and Subject Complement-Adjectives.

1. The voters sent the candidate donations.

2. The suspected spy was foreign.

3. The suspected spy was a foreign diplomat.

4. The suspected spy shot a foreign diplomat.

V. Phrases:

Words are grouped to work together in a sentence. A phrase is a group of words that does NOT have a Subject or a Predicate. Phrases can act as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs.

Tim's Bar, [a hangout for bikers,] burned down. => Noun

The fibula [of the left leg] is broken. => Adjective

As she turned, her mask fell [to the floor]. => Adverb

VI. Clauses:

A Clause is a group of words that includes a Subject and a Predicate. There are two types of clauses:

A. Independent Clauses express a complete thought and can stand alone as full sentences.

The dog barked at the postman, then bit the milkman.

B. Subordinate Clauses cannot stand alone as sentences and usually complement or form part of Independent clauses. Subordinate clauses can act as adjectives, adverbs, or nouns:

The house [where Lincoln lived] is now a museum. => Adjective
Fred is confident [that he will win the tournament.] ⇒ Adverb

[Whatever you say] will be done immediately. ⇒ Noun

Exercises:
A. Identify the underlined units as phrases or clauses.

1. I have trouble waking up in the morning.

2. After the game, let's go for some lunch.

3. I want to get some lunch after we see the game.

4. Before I come home, I need to see my aunt who lives in Utah.

5. A visit to the desert intrigues tourists from states without deserts.

6. In fifteen minutes, a computer can do work that it would take you months to finish.

7. This essay, which I wrote last year, received a grade of C.

B. Bracket each Subordinate clause and identify it as an ADVERB, NOUN, or ADJECTIVE clause. Draw an arrow to the word the clause modifies.

1. Because it is cold today, I am going to wear my new coat.

2. I need to talk to Dr. Paul whose opinion I value highly.

3. When going to town, you should take the number 10 train which stops at Union Station.

4. Did you see that car that has the orange hubcaps?

5. Whoever wins the election will have many problems.

6. The formulas that are explained in the text are hard to understand.

7. If you take my advice, you won't buy that car.
Writing Workshop 3

Sentence Completeness: Fragments & Run-ons

I. Sentence Fragments:

A group of words is a complete sentence when it has a Subject and a Verb, and makes sense by itself. A Sentence Fragment is a group of words that is capitalized and punctuated as if it were a complete sentence and/or does not have a Subject and its Verb.

When I found out. OR At the edge of a grove of trees.

Sentence fragments may be corrected in several different ways. The most common are the following:

A. Often the fragment can be joined to the sentence that comes just before it or just after it.

Fragment: On the school steps I saw Alice. Waiting for her mother to pick her up.
Revision: On the school steps I saw Alice, waiting for her mother to pick her up.

B. If the fragment is lacking some integral part of a sentence (Subject, Verb, Predicate), it may be revised by supplying the missing element.

Fragment: After the storm, lying in the yard.
Revision: After the storm, the roof was lying in the yard.

OR

Fragment: After the storm, the barn roof in the yard.
Revision: After the storm, the barn roof lay in the yard.

II. Run-on Sentences:

A Run-on sentence occurs when one sentence runs into another without any punctuation to distinguish them from each other.

Run-on: The choice of a camera is difficult there are many good ones on the market today.
A Comma-Splice occurs when a comma (instead of a period, a semicolon, or a conjunction) is used between two complete sentences.

Comma-Splice: Milton took an art class and discovered that he has talent, now he spends his afternoons painting.

Run-on sentences and Comma-Splice errors can be corrected in several ways:

1. By creating two new sentences:
   
   The choice of a camera is difficult. There are many good ones on the market today.

2. By joining the sentences with a comma and a coordinating conjunction:
   
   The choice of a camera is difficult, but there are many good ones on the market today.

3. By introducing one of the sentences with a subordinating conjunction:
   
   The choice of a camera is difficult because there are many good ones on the market today.

4. By joining the sentences with a semi-colon and a conjunctive adverb:
   
   There are many good cameras on the market today; consequently, the choice of a camera is difficult.

5. By joining the sentences with a semi-colon:
   
   The choice of a camera is difficult; there are many good ones on the market today.

Exercises:

Indicate whether each item is a fragment (F), a run-on sentence (RO) or a comma-splice error (CS), and then correct the faulty sentences.

1. Concentration was the secret of his success. Although he undoubtedly had a keen mind.

2. A mysterious package arrived on my porch yesterday. Bearing no return address. I half expected to find a bomb inside.
3. I have never known anyone who was a better worker than Paul. Who always did his homework in half the time I took, he usually had it done twice as well too.

4. I asked Paul to help me with my math once. When I was particularly desperate, I hadn't been getting good grades for several weeks.

5. He could do the problems easily, but he couldn't explain them to me. so that I could understand them, anyway, I didn't ask him for help again.

6. It used to be that each member of a family had certain duties, the father earned the money, the mother took care of the home, and the child was expected to get good grades, school was the job of the child.

7. Sweating under his heavy load. Brian staggered up the stairs to his apartment. He felt like his legs were crumbling beneath him.

8. I tried on an old suit hanging in our basement closet. And discovered, to my surprise, that it was too tight to button.
Writing Workshop 4

Subject & Verb Agreement

Subjects and Verbs must agree in number. A singular subject must be followed by a singular verb, and a plural subject must be followed by a plural verb.

A. Two or more subjects joined by and usually take a plural verb.

The Congress and the president often disagree on domestic policy.

B. Singular subjects joined by or or nor must take a singular verb, and plural subjects joined by or or nor must take a plural verb.

Neither the president of the company nor the sales manager is a college graduate.

Neither the players nor the coaches ever arrive on time.

C. When a singular subject and a plural subject are joined by or or nor, the verb agrees with the nearer subject.

Either the judge or the lawyers are wrong in this decision.

BUT this awkward situation can often be avoided altogether:

Either the judge is wrong or the lawyers are.

D. The following words are singular:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Each</th>
<th>Either</th>
<th>Neither</th>
<th>One</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>no one</td>
<td>every one</td>
<td>everyone</td>
<td>everybody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>anyone</td>
<td>everybody</td>
<td>someone</td>
<td>somebody</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each has his own motorcycle.
Each of the boys has his own motorcycle.
Everyone wants more pay.
Every one of the workmen deserves a raise.
E. The following common words are plural:

several    few    both    many

Several of the regular members were absent.
Few of my family really understand me.
Both of your excuses sound plausible.
Many were surprised to see me.

Exercises:

Rewrite the following sentences using correct subject and verb agreement.

1. Neither the crates nor the plastic boxes was damaged in the accident.

2. One of the islands appear to be inhabited.

3. Have each of the refugees been questioned by immigration officials?

4. Either Pete or his father are going to pick us up.

5. Sam and his brother has a new sailboat.

6. Several of his best stories has been read on the radio.

7. The curtains and the rug match the color of the kitchen tile.

8. The ambassador, accompanied by his family and aides, are returning to Washington tomorrow.
Pronoun Agreement

A pronoun must agree with its antecedent in number and gender. The antecedent of a pronoun is the word to which the pronoun refers. In the following examples, notice that the pronoun is singular when the antecedent is singular, and plural when the antecedent is plural. Notice, too, that the pronoun is masculine (he, him, his) when the antecedent is masculine; feminine (she, her, hers) when the antecedent is feminine; and neuter (it, its) when the antecedent is neither masculine nor feminine.

Exs.:

Mr. Jameson did his best.

One of the boys twisted his ankle.

Neither of the girls achieved her purpose.

The women in the League expressed their opinions forcefully.

The city is proud of its parks.

A. The following words are referred to by a singular pronoun:

each either neither everyone
everybody no one nobody anyone
anybody someone somebody

Each of the men removed his parachute.

Nobody in a position of authority had given his approval.

Neither of the girls had brought her skis with her.

B. Two or more singular antecedents joined by or or nor should be referred to by a singular pronoun. Two or more plural antecedents joined by or or nor should be referred to by a plural pronoun.

Neither Jack nor Bill had his keys with him.

Either the owners or the players will present their position at the meeting today.
C. A compound antecedent joined by and should be referred to by a plural pronoun:

Fred and John had their uniforms on.

Exercises:

I. Fill in the correct pronoun in the sentence, then write the antecedent of each pronoun in the column on the left.

1. _____ Each woman on the commune did _____ share of the chores.
2. _____ If a person promises to meet a deadline, _____ should do so.
3. _____ One cannot blame fate on the state of the world; everyone is the master of _____ life.
4. _____ My friends always leave _____ cars double-parked.
5. _____ The cranes abandon _____ nests each fall.

II. The following sentences contain errors in pronoun agreement. Revise each sentence to correct the error.

1. The telephone company plans to raise their rates again this year.
2. One of the waiters hasn't counted their tips yet.
3. I hope that neither of the senators will change their vote.
4. Both players brought her own equipment.
5. My family values their traditions.
Confusing Modifiers

A sentence can be confusing for many reasons. One of the most common reasons is the clumsy placement of modifiers in a sentence. A modifier can be a single word, a phrase, or a clause. A modifier should clarify or make more definite the meaning of the word it modifies. If the modifier is placed too far from the word it modifies, the effect of the modifier may either be lost or diverted to another word. There are two types of confusing modifiers: misplaced modifiers and dangling modifiers.

I. Misplaced Modifiers:

To avoid confusion, place the phrase and clause modifiers as near as possible to the words they modify.

Confusing: Mr. Richman presented a cabin cruiser to his family, which, it later developed, he was unable to pay for.

Clear: Mr. Richman presented to his family a cabin cruiser, which, it later developed, he was unable to pay for.

Confusing: The thief decided to make a run for it when he saw the policeman, abandoning the stolen car and dashing into the woods.

Clear: ______________________________

_______________________________

_______________________________

II. Dangling Modifiers:

A modifying phrase or clause must clearly and sensibly modify a word in the sentence. When there is no word that the phrase or clause can sensibly modify, the modifier is said to dangle.

Dangling modifier: Carrying a heavy pile of books, (?), his foot caught on the step.
There are two ways to correct this confusion:

1. By adding a word that the phrase can sensibly modify:

   Carrying a heavy pile of books, he caught his foot on the steps.

2. By changing the phrase to a clause:

   While he was carrying a heavy pile of books, his foot caught on the steps.

Confusing: Representing the conservative point of view, the liberals attacked him.

Clear: __________________________________________________________

Exercises:

The sentences in this exercise contain misplaced and dangling modifiers. Revise each sentence to eliminate the error.

1. Mr. and Mrs. Gray chose a village for their new home with about 4000 residents.

2. Rounding the corner of the house, his fears were confirmed.

3. The new school building was described by the school board, which consists of four classrooms, a laboratory, and an industrial arts room.

4. From talking to others, the prevalent opinion favors us.

5. The minister announced that next Sunday's sermon would be an explanation of the nature of sin, in which he hoped the congregation would take great interest.
Pronoun Reference

The meaning of a pronoun is clear only when you know to what it refers. The word to which a pronoun refers is called its antecedent.

I asked Billy for the answer, but he didn't know it.

The Smiths have a new motorboat on which they intend to cruise.

Problems in pronoun reference occur when the pronoun has two or more antecedents, a hidden antecedent, or no antecedent. A problem in reference can also occur when a pronoun is used indefinitely.

I. Two or more antecedents:

Unclear: The President appointed Senator Moore as chairman because he was convinced of the importance of the committee's work.

1) Clear: The President, convinced of the importance of the committee's work, appointed Senator Moore as chairman.

2) Clear: Because Senator Moore was convinced of the importance of the committee's work, the President appointed him as chairman.

II. Hidden antecedents:

Unclear: The boys wore ski boots to their classes which the principal disapproved of.

Clear: The principal disapproved of the boys' wearing ski boots to their classes.

III. No antecedents:

Unclear: We spent the day aboard a fishing boat, but we didn't catch a single one.

Clear: We spent the day aboard a fishing boat, but we didn't catch a single fish.
IV. Indefinite use of pronouns:

Indefinite: In the final chapter, *it* implies that the hero died a martyr's death.

Definite: In the final chapter, *the author* implies that the hero died a martyr's death.

OR

Definite: *The final chapter* implies that the hero died a martyr's death.

Exercises:
Correct the faulty pronoun reference in these sentences.

1. As soon as the students had left the classrooms, the custodians cleaned them.

2. I love horses and believe it to be an enjoyable sport.

3. Western farmers today can produce more because of machines and the many men working under them.

4. He is a very wealthy man, but he never spends any of it.

5. Senator Millsap conferred with the Secretary of State when he was touring the Middle East.

6. Betsy told Allison that she didn't follow through enough.

7. He is a believer in witchcraft, but he doubts that they ride on brooms.
Parallel Structure

Parallelism in sentence structure exists when two or more sentence elements are similarly expressed. Parallel ideas should be expressed in the same grammatical form. Stating equal and closely related ideas in parallel constructions often adds clarity and smoothness to writing.

I. Ideas of Equal Rank:

Faulty: The committee studied all aspects of the problem: humane, political, and cost.  
Parallel: The committee studied all aspects of the problem: humane, political, and financial.  

Faulty: The firm's annual report revealed a growth in productive capacity but that sales had dropped.  
Parallel: 

II. Compared or Contrasted Ideas:

Faulty: Skiing no longer interests me as much as to go scuba-diving.  
Parallel: Skiing no longer interests me as much as scuba-diving.  

Faulty: His novel was praised more for its style than for what it had to say.  
Parallel: 

III. Correlative Constructions:

Faulty: To gain entrance, they tried both persuasion and to force their way in.
Parallel: To gain entrance, they tried both *persuasion* and *force.*

Faulty: The new clerk soon proved himself to be not only capable but also a man who could be trusted.

Parallel: ___________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

Exercises:

1. Tom had finally decided on his college and what profession he would enter.

2. Critics agreed that the movie was unrealistic, and it was too long and that it wasn't interesting.

3. The music was composed by a German, but an American did this arrangement.

4. The audience neither understood the speaker’s words nor what his purpose was.

5. The weather was a greater handicap to the invading army than their enemy.

6. The new models will be expensive to buy, but their cost of operation will be low.
Writing Workshop 9

Punctuation: Commas & Semicolons

I. The Comma:

The comma is used to help provide sentence clarity by marking off words and word groups, and it also has certain conventional uses—the listing of dates, addresses, numbers, and other items.

A. Use commas to separate items in a series.

He was formerly on the staff of the embassies in Moscow, Berlin, Vienna, and Madrid.

N.B.: It is permissible to omit the comma before the and joining the last two items in a series if the comma is not needed to make the meaning clear.

B. Use a comma before and, but, or, nor, for, yet when they join independent clauses, unless the clauses are very short.

The first two acts were slow moving, but the third act was full of action and suspense.

C. Use commas to set off nonessential clauses and nonessential phrases.

Joan Thomas, who was offered scholarships to three colleges, will go to Harvard this year.

Tom's little brother, frightened by thunder, locked himself in a closet.

D. Use a comma after certain introductory elements.

1. Use a comma after words such as well, yes, no, why, etc. when they begin a sentence.

   Yes, you were elected.

   Oh, I wouldn't be so sure about that!

2. Use a comma after an introductory phrase.
Behaving like a spoiled child, he pouted and sulked.

3. Use a comma after a succession of introductory prepositional phrases.

   At the edge of the deep woods near the lake, he built a cabin.

4. Use a comma after an introductory clause.

   When he had finished playing the piano, it was rolled offstage.

E. Use commas to set off expressions that interrupt the sentence.

1. Set off a word and its accompanying modifiers that follow a noun or pronoun and identify or explain it.

   A syndicated column by Fred McGurk, the noted author, will appear in the Elburn Herald, a local paper.

2. Set off words used in direct addresses.

   I don't know, Alice, but you might ask Jim.

3. Set off parenthetical expressions.

   My father, I'm sure, will let me have the car tonight.

F. Use commas in certain conventional situations.

1. Use a comma to separate items in dates and addresses.

   Our son was on Tuesday, April 21, 1992. You can write me at 222 Twin Oaks Road, Akron, Ohio, after the first of the month.

2. Use a comma after the salutation of a friendly letter and after the closing of any letter.

   Dear Fred, Sincerely yours,

3. Use a comma after a name followed by Jr., Sr., Ph.D., etc.

   Frederick McGurk, Ph.D. James Paul Menton, Jr.
II. Semicolons:

A. Use a semicolon between independent clauses not joined by and, but, or, for, nor, yet.

Take with you only indispensable things; leave behind all heavy and bulky items.

N.B.: A semicolon is used only when the ideas in the two clauses are so closely related that a period would make too distinct a break between them.

B. Use a semicolon between independent clauses joined by such words as for example, for instance, that is, besides, accordingly, moreover, nevertheless, furthermore, otherwise, therefore, however, consequently, instead, hence.

Tension rose rapidly during yesterday's meeting; nevertheless, most of the Council members remained calm.

C. Use a semicolon (instead of a comma) to separate independent clauses if there are commas within the clauses.

The Biograph, the new theater on Bank Street, announced programs of Westerns, gangster movies, and re-releases of old horror films; and the crowds, surprisingly enough, were enormous.

D. Use a semicolon between items in a series if the items contain commas.

The following are members of the new committee: Bob Bates, president of the Student Council; Helen Berger, president of the Senior Class; Allan Drew, vice-president of the Honor Society; and James Brown, who, as a member of the Student Choir, proposed that the new committee be formed.
I. The Colon:

There are three principal uses of the colon.

A. A colon is used to indicate that something is to follow, especially a formal statement or series.

   The car trunk was large enough for everything: rackets, golf clubs, fishing rods, suitcases, and a picnic basket.

   You will probably have to answer the following questions: How long have you been unemployed? Why did you leave your last position? What experience have you had?

2. Use a colon in place of a comma before long or formal direct quotations.

   In his most famous speech, Bryan said: "You shall not press down upon the brow of labor a crown of thorns. You shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold."

3. Before a clause which restates the idea of the preceding clause in different words.

   These seat covers are the most durable kind: they are reinforced with double stitching and covered with heavy plastic coating.

II. Quotation Marks:

There are also three principal uses of quotation marks.

1. They are used to enclose a direct quotation (a person's exact words).

   Mother said, "You may have the car until noon."

N.B.: Punctuation marks used with a direct quotation are placed according to the following rules:
a) A direct quotation is set off from the rest of the sentence by commas or by a question mark or exclamation point.

"What did you say about me?" she asked.

b) Commas and periods are always placed inside the closing quotation marks.

"I know," he said, "that we can finish the job today."

c) Semicolons and colons are always placed outside the closing quotation marks.

"Jim," my grandfather said, "you should stop being a burden on your family"; then he suggested that I move out and get a job.

d) Question marks and exclamation points are placed inside closing quotation marks if the quotation is a question or an exclamation; otherwise, they are on the outside.

"How ignorant you are sometimes!" she exclaimed.

Were you surprised when he said, "You've got the job"?

2. Quotation marks are used to enclose titles of chapters, articles, short stories, poems, songs, and other parts of periodicals or books.


3. Quotation marks are used to enclose slang words, technical terms, nicknames, and other expressions that are unusual in formal writing.

I heard him characterized as "loony" and "wacko."

These units of speech are referred to by linguists as "phonemes."