

Advanced Writing

Handout 1

Rudiments

Good writing is an art; not all people are artists. However, you can learn how to write effectively. You only need to have a plan for writing. This plan should have four distinct phases:

1. Pre-writing
2. Organization
3. Support &
4. Grammar & Mechanics

1. Prewriting: Think before writing!

- a. Think about the subject carefully.
- b. Narrow down the subject within the limits teacher has defined for you.
- c. Write a topic sentence includes: The topic, opinion or intent, & some controlling ideas

2. Organization: Prose is linear.

- a. Organize your writing clearly.
- b. Begin & end your writing thoughtfully.
- c. Make relationships between ideas clear.
- d. Move from one sentence to another & from one paragraph to another smoothly

3. Support: What you write is true so that they believe you!

- a. Support your topic sentences.
- b. Differentiate between topic sentence & supporting sentences.
- c. Use appropriate evidence.
- d. Use appropriate methods

4. Grammar & Mechanics:

- a. Use language with precision.
- b. Avoid common errors of grammar & usage.
- c. Make your writing strong through revision.

In English, simple sentences are connected to make complex sentences in one of the two ways:

1. Through the use of **conjunctive adverbs**, or
2. By means of **subordinate conjunctions**.

Both conjunctive adverbs & subordinate conjunctions show **logical relationships** between sentences they link together. Most **conjunctive adverbs** can be classified into five groups based on the type of relationship:

Relationship	Example
1. Addition	moreover, in addition, furthermore, etc.
2. Condition	otherwise, or else, etc.
3. Concession	however, still, nevertheless, etc.
4. Result	therefore, consequently, accordingly, etc.
5. Summary	in brief, in sum, to sum up, briefly, etc.

When you want to link two sentences together by means of these adverbs, you should follow one of these patterns.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX. Conjunctive adverb, XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX; conjunctive adverb, XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.

In these patterns, the X stands for the capital letter at the beginning of the sentence.

Take the following examples:

The student did not study. Otherwise, he would pass the course.

The student did not study; otherwise, he would pass the course.

Notice that other patterns are also possible. For example, some conjunctive adverbs can be placed after the subject of the second sentence within commas.

Subordinate conjunctions are also used to make complex sentences. You can use subordinate conjunctions in one of the following ways:

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX subordinate conjunction XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.

Subordinate conjunction XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX, XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.

In these patterns, X shows the first letter of the sentence which should be capitalized.

Take the following examples:

Although he studied hard, he did not pass the course.

He did not pass the course although he studied hard.

Subordinate conjunctions show **logical relationships** between the sentences they link together.

Relationship	Example
Time	when, while, once, etc.
Place	where, wherever, etc.
Cause	because, since, as, now, etc.
Condition	if, unless, etc.
Contrast	although, even if, though, etc.
Adversative	while, where, whereas, etc.
Purpose	that, in order that, etc.
Result	so that, such ... that, etc.
Comparison	as ... as, etc.
Manner	as if, as though, etc.

Problem

Many Iranian students of English do not correctly distinguish conjunctive adverbs from subordinate conjunctions. Therefore, they sometimes fail to use the correct pattern. This may result in fragmentary writing.

Fragments

A fragment is an incomplete sentence; it is often:

1. Participial (“ing”) phrase or
2. Dependent clause that belongs to the preceding sentence.

To check for fragments, try reading your prose one sentence at a time, starting at the end of your essay. If you find a “sentence” that makes no sense alone, it’s probably a fragment that should be either rewritten or connected to another sentence.

This problem occurs when students try to combine simple sentences to make complex ones. They are usually the result of bad punctuation.

1. Jack did not study.
2. He passed the course.

Although Jack did not study. He passed the course.

Diagnosis & Remedy

- You can also try this test to see whether a group of words is a fragment: say the phrase “It is true that” in front of the words in question.
- In most cases, a complete sentence will still make sense, but a fragment won’t.

Examples

- Francis named her new mutt Super Dog. Because he could leap fences in a single bound.
- It is true that *Francis named her new mutt Super Dog.*
- It is true that *because he could leap fences in a single bound.*
- Sentence fragments are often used in conversations (“yes,” “maybe,” “just a minute”) and in informal or personal writing (notes, letters, e-mail, etc.).

Notice

In some professional & academic writing, intentional fragments or *abbreviated sentences* may be used occasionally for emphasis or to convey a particular tone, such as playfulness, anger, or scorn. However, intentional fragments should be just that: created on purpose to achieve a specific rhetorical goal.

Intentional Fragments

1. After cleaning out the attic, Eloise felt terrible. *Hot. Tired. Cranky with the world.*
2. She agreed to hand over the jewels. *Just exactly what he had had in mind all along.*

Notice: As a general rule, fragments should be avoided in formal writing.

Run-on (or Fused) Sentences

Run-on sentences also cause problems.

A run-on sentence is a very long compound sentence made up of a lot of simple sentences linked together by coordinate conjunctions (i.e., and, so, yet, but, or, nor).

Example

Hasan went to Tehran and he bought a house there and he painted the house and he lived in the house for several years and

There is no end limit to this sentence. In English, **coordinate conjunctions** can only link two sentences together. Other sentences should be kept apart by the use of commas.

Consider the following example:

Hasan went to Tehran, he bought a house there, he painted the house, and he lived in the house for several years.

Diagnosis & Remedy

- Don't run two sentences together without any punctuation.
- Use a:
 - Period
 - Semicolon
 - Comma plus a coordinating conjunction **or**
 - Subordinate one clause.

Examples

1. The indicted police chief submitted his resignation the mayor accepted it gratefully.
2. The indicted police chief submitted his resignation. The mayor accepted it gratefully.
3. The indicted police chief submitted his resignation; the mayor accepted it gratefully.
4. The indicted police chief submitted his resignation, **and** the mayor accepted it gratefully.
5. When the indicted police chief submitted his resignation, the mayor accepted it gratefully.

- You should notice that it is better not to connect more than three sentences in this way.
- Otherwise, your readers will become confused & bored; this type of writing is not reader-friendly.
- As such, your use of coordinate conjunctions should be like this:

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX, and XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.

Or this:

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX, XXXXXXXXXXXXXXX, and XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX.

Notice

- You should keep the same pattern in mind when you want to use other coordinate conjunctions such as *so, yet, or, nor, etc.*
- The capital X shows that you should begin your sentences with a capital letter.

Sentence Variety I

Four Sentence Patterns

1. Simple
2. Compound
3. Complex
4. Compound-complex

1. The Simple Sentence

A simple sentence has a single subject-verb combination.

- a. The game ended early.
- b. My car stalled three times last week.
- c. The lake has been polluted by several neighboring streams.

Note 1: A simple sentence may have more than one subject:

- a. Lola and Tony drove home.
- b. The wind and heat dried my hair.

Note 2: Or more than one verb:

- a. The children smiled and waved at us.
- b. The lawn mower smoked and sputtered.

Note 3: Or several subjects and verbs:

Manny, Jill, and Jack lubricated my car, replaced the oil filter, and cleaned the spark plugs.

2. The Compound Sentence

A compound, or “double,” sentence is made up of two (or more) simple sentences. The two complete statements in a compound sentence are usually connected by a comma plus a joining word: *and, but, for, or, nor, so, yet*.

A **compound sentence** is used when you want to give equal weight to two closely related ideas. The technique of showing that ideas have equal importance is called **coordination**.

Examples

- a. The rain increased, **so** the officials canceled the game.
- b. Denise wanted to go shopping, **but** Fred refused to drive her.

c. I had to give up wood carving, **for** my arthritis had become very painful.

3. The Complex Sentence

A complex sentence is made up of:

A simple sentence + A statement that begins with a dependent word

Here is a list of common dependent words:

Dependent Words

after if, even if when, whenever, although, though, in order that, where, wherever, as, since, whether, because that, so that, which, whichever, before, unless, while, even though, until, who, how, what, whatever, whose

Note: A complex sentence is used when you want to emphasize one idea over another in a sentence.

Example:

Because I forgot the time, **I missed the final exam.**

I missed the final exam —

is expressed as a complete thought. While the dependent word is the less emphasized part of the sentence. The technique of giving one idea less emphasis than another is called **subordination**.

Examples

a. **I checked my money** *before* I invited Pedro for lunch.

b. *When* Jerry lost his temper, **he also lost his job.**

c. *Although* I practiced for three months, **I failed my driving test.**

4. The Compound-Complex Sentence

A compound-complex sentence is made up of:

Two (or more) simple sentences + One or more dependent statements.

Examples

a. When the power line snapped, Jack was listening to the stereo, **and** Linda was reading in bed.

b. After I returned to school following a long illness, the math teacher gave me makeup work,
but the history teacher made me drop her course.

Notice

Keep in mind that, very often, the relationship among ideas in a sentence will be clearer when subordination rather than coordination is used.

Example 1

- a. My car does not start on cold mornings.
- b. I think the battery needs to be replaced.
- c. I already had it recharged once.
- d. I don't think charging it again would help.

Because my car does not start on cold mornings, I think the battery needs to be replaced. I already had it recharged once, **so** I don't think charging it again would help.

Example 2

- a. Carly moved in the desk chair.
- b. Her moving was uneasy.
- c. The chair was hard.
- d. She worked at the assignment.
- e. The assignment was for her English class.

1. Carly **moved** uneasily in the hard desk chair, **working** at the assignment for her English class.
2. **Moving** uneasily in the hard desk chair, Carly worked at the assignment for her English class.
3. Carly **moved** uneasily in the hard desk chair as she **worked** at the assignment for her English class.
4. **While** she **worked** at the assignment for her English class, Carly **moved** uneasily in the hard desk chair.

Parallelism Explained

Words in a pair or series should have parallel structure. By balancing the items in a pair or series so that they have the same kind of structure, you will make the sentence clearer & easier to read. Notice how the parallel sentences that follow read more smoothly than the nonparallel ones.

Nonparallel (Not Balanced)

1. Brit spends her free time reading, listening to music, and she works in the garden.

Parallel (Balanced)

2. Brit spends her free time reading, listening to music, and working in the garden.

(A balanced series of *-ing* words: *reading, listening, working.*)

Nonparallel (Not Balanced)

1. After the camping trip I was exhausted, irritable, and wanted to eat.

Parallel (Balanced)

2. After the camping trip I was exhausted, irritable, and hungry.

(A balanced series of descriptive words: *exhausted, irritable, hungry.*)

Nonparallel (Not Balanced)

1. My hope for retirement is to be healthy, to live in a comfortable house, and having plenty of money.

Parallel (Balanced)

2. My hope for retirement is to be healthy, to live in a comfortable house, and to have plenty of money.

(A balanced series of *two* verbs: *to be, to live, to have.*)

Nonparallel (Not Balanced)

1. Nightly, Fred puts out the trash, checks the locks on the doors, and the burglar alarm is turned on.

Parallel (Balanced)

2. Nightly, Fred puts out the trash, checks the locks on the doors, and turns on the burglar alarm.

(Balanced verbs and word order: *puts out the trash, checks the locks, and turns on the burglar alarm.*)

Notice

- Balanced sentences are not a skill you need to worry about when you are writing first drafts.
- But when you rewrite, you should try to put matching words & ideas into matching structures.
- Such parallelism will improve your writing style.

Exercise

Running is an exercise that can be good for you mentally, physically, and also be helpful for your emotions. A beginning runner should keep three things in mind: the warm-up session, the actual time that you are running, and the cool-down period. Never start a run without first having warmed up through stretching exercises. Stretching reduces muscle stiffness, decreases the possibility of injury, and it's a good method to gradually increase the heart rate. During the run itself, move at a comfortable pace. Your breathing should be steady and with depth. Finally, remember to cool down after a run. An adequate cool-down period allows time for the body to relax and the normalizing of the heart rate.

Sentence Variety II

There is a variety of ways **to write effective & varied sentences**:

1. ing Word Groups

Use an **-ing** word group at some point in a sentence:

- The doctor, **hoping** for the best, examined the X-rays.
- **Jogging** every day, I soon raised my energy level.

Example

- The city bus is fuel efficient.
- It **runs** on solar energy.

The city bus, **running** on solar energy, is fuel efficient.

2. -ed Word Groups

Use an **-ed** word group at some point in a sentence:

- **Tired** of studying, I took a short break.
- Mary, **amused** by the joke, told it to a friend.

Example

- Tim woke up with a start.
- He was troubled by a dream.
 - Troubled by a dream, Tim woke up with a start. **or**
 - Tim, troubled by a dream, woke up with a start.

3. -ly Openers

Use an **-ly** word to open a sentence:

- **Gently**, he mixed the chemicals together.
- **Anxiously**, the contestant looked at the game clock.

Example

- I asked my supervisor for the weekend off.
- I was **nervous**.

Nervously, I asked my supervisor for the weekend off.

4. To Openers

Use a **to** word group to open a sentence:

- *To* succeed in that course, you must attend every class.
- *To* help me sleep better, I learned to quiet my mind through meditation.

Example

- I fertilize the grass every spring.
- I want **to make** it greener.

To make the grass greener, I fertilize it every spring.

5. Prepositional Phrase Openers

Use prepositional phrase openers:

- *From the beginning*, I disliked my boss.
- *In spite of her work*, she failed the course.

Example

- A fire started.
- It did this at 5:00 a.m.
- It did this inside the garage.

At 5:00 A.M., a fire started inside the garage.

6. Series of Items

Use a series of items. Following are two of the many items that can be used in a series: adjectives & verbs.

Adjectives in Series

Adjectives are descriptive words:

- The *husky young* man sanded the *chipped, weather-worn* paint off the fence.

Example

- I sewed a set of buttons onto my coat.
- The buttons were shiny.
- The buttons were black.
- The coat was old.
- The coat was green.

I **sewed** a set of **shiny black** buttons onto my **old green** coat.

Verbs in Series

Verbs are words that express action:

- In my job as a cook's helper, I *prepared* **salads**, *sliced* meat and cheese, and *made* all kinds of sandwiches.

Example

- At the gym, Dirk **asked** his friend to spot him on the free weights.
- He **did** several lateral pull-downs.
- He **jumped** on the elliptical machine for twenty minutes.

At the gym, Dirk **asked** his friend to spot him on the bench press, **did** several lateral pull-downs, and **jumped** on the elliptical machine for twenty minutes.