Discover!

6A

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

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Lesson 3

Good Sentences

By the end of this lesson, you will be able to:

- recognize that good sentences are key to good writing
- identify and correct fragments
- identify and correct run-on sentences
- choose the best sentence type based on context, style, and tone
- identify simple and complete subjects and predicates for all sentence types
- combine sentences using compound subjects and compound predicates

Lesson Review

If you need to review the six traits of writing, please go to the lesson titled "How Far I've Come."

Academic Vocabulary

Read the following vocabulary words and definitions. Look through the lesson. Can you find each vocabulary word? Underline the vocabulary word in your lesson and write the page number where you found each word on the blanks here.

- **comma splice:** when two or more independent clauses are joined by a comma but are missing a conjunction (page ____)
- **complete predicate:** the verb or verb phrase that describes the action of the subject in addition to any modifiers (page ____)
- **complete subject:** the noun or pronoun that tells who or what the sentence is about in addition to any modifiers (page ____)
- **compound predicate:** occurs when a subject does more than one action in a sentence (page ____)
- **compound subject:** two or more simple subjects doing the same action in a sentence (page ____)
- **fused sentence:** when two independent clauses are forced together without punctuation or coordinating conjunctions (page ____)
- **run-on sentence:** when two or more independent clauses are not joined correctly (page ____)
- **sentence fragment:** a piece of a sentence missing its subject or verb, or a dependent clause separated from an independent clause (page ____)
- **simple predicate:** the verb or verb phrase that describes the action of the subject (page ____)
- **simple subject:** the noun or pronoun that tells who or what the sentence is about (page ____)

SAMPLE

EXPLORE

There are so many ways to be misunderstood. Here are some examples.

1. Speak gobbledygook me you?
2. How abstruse! Your obstreperous insinuations are but a murmuration in my auricular canals.
3. That's whack! You throw shade at me? Man, now I've got an earache.

The first example's meaning is obvious: "Why are you speaking nonsense to me?" But no one could understand what the first sentence means. The second example sounds like a crazy professor is trying to impress someone with big words while putting that person down. The third example may be clear to you, but your grandmother may get frustrated trying to figure out what is being said.

Writing is only part of communicating. Words on a page are lifeless without an author (that's you) caring about being heard clearly. Abraham Lincoln said: "Writing, the art of communicating thoughts to the mind through the eye, is the great invention of the world . . . enabling us to converse with the dead, the absent, and the unborn, at all distances of time and space."

To have a conversation with the dead means to read things written way before our own time; you can still hear their voices even though they passed away many years ago. The absent are people far away. Today, people write in emails or tweets instead of constantly writing letters like Lincoln. The unborn means you! Abraham Lincoln just spoke to you from the 1800s.

When you write, the reader can't see you wink, raise an eyebrow, shrug, or move your hands in a descriptive way. The reader cannot hear the stress you put on a word with your voice. A good writer makes the words wink, shrug, and wave their tiny little metaphorical hands.

What do you think are the important qualities of a good writer?

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TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

There are four types of sentences.

1. A simple sentence has a single independent clause.
   Example: Rover is a dog.
2. A complex sentence has an independent clause and a dependent clause.
   Example: Billy laughs a lot because his brother tells jokes.
3. A compound sentence is two independent clauses connected by a comma with coordinating conjunction or by a semicolon.
   Examples: Bobby told jokes, and Billy laughed.
   Bobby told jokes; Billy laughed.
4. A compound-complex sentence has two or more independent clauses and one dependent clause.
   Example: Bobby told jokes, and Billy laughed because the jokes were funny.

SAMPLE

READ

Messy Writing

Sentence fragments and run-on sentences are just fine for a first draft because you are the only reader. However, when it comes time to clean up your writing for a second draft, the fragments and run-ons must go.

A **sentence fragment** is a piece of a sentence missing its subject or verb, or a dependent clause separated from an independent clause.

Examples:

1. Looking forward to that pie! (no subject)
2. He backwards. (no verb)
3. Since I've been a sixth grader. (dependent clause)

Examples one and two are rare. They happen when you rush. Example three is much more common because it sounds like a complete sentence, but it is not. Example three is a dependent clause. Because it is dependent, it cannot stand alone. It must depend on another clause to make a complete sentence.

Here is how to fix each sentence fragment.

Examples:

1. *I am* looking forward to that pie! (You added the subject pronoun *I* and the verb *am*.)
2. He *jumped* backwards. (You added the verb *jumped*.)
3. Since I've been a sixth grader, *my grammar has improved*. (You added a comma and the independent clause "my grammar has improved.")
4. *My grammar has improved* since I've been a sixth grader. (You added the independent clause "my grammar has improved" in front of the dependent clause, so no comma was required.)

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PRACTICE

Cleaning up Fragments

Finish the following fragments so that each makes a complete sentence.

Fragment	Your Correction
Because I said so.	
If I want to.	
Hoping for a miracle.	
When it rains.	
Robby crazy.	

IN THE REAL WORLD

If you were to record a conversation between yourself and a friend, you might be surprised how often you use sentence fragments. In a conversation, especially with yourself, you understand the subject of the sentence by context and leave it out. However, a good writer makes sure the reader knows the context.

SAMPLE

READ

Run-On Sentences

A **run-on sentence** occurs when two or more independent clauses are not joined correctly. There are two types of run-on sentences: fused sentences and comma splices. Run-ons are easy to fix.

1. A **fused sentence** occurs when two independent clauses are forced together without punctuation or coordinating conjunctions. You fix fused sentences by joining or separating them.

   Fused Sentence: Arianna likes spaghetti spicy she adds pepper flakes to the recipe.

   independent clause independent clause

   Add a comma and conjunction: Arianna likes spaghetti spicy, so she adds pepper flakes to the recipe.
   Add a semicolon: Arianna likes spaghetti spicy; she adds pepper flakes to the recipe.
   Separate the independent clauses: Arianna likes spaghetti spicy. She adds pepper flakes to the recipe.

2. A **comma splice** occurs when two or more independent clauses are joined by a comma but are missing a conjunction.

   Comma splice: Tiana wants new roller skates, she also wants a paint-by-number kit.

   independent clause independent clause

   Add a conjunction: Tiana wants new roller skates, and she also wants a paint-by-number kit.
   Replace the comma with a semicolon: Tiana wants new roller skates; she wants a paint-by-number kit..
   Separate the independent clauses: Tiana wants new roller skates. She also wants a paint-by-number kit.

Sometimes, you may want to keep ideas connected together in one sentence using a subordinate clause. This is an excellent solution for longer run-on sentences.

Fused sentence and comma splice:

Billy Bragg is a musician and he is an authority on folk music, he knows so much about English history.

independent clause independent clause independent clause

Add a subordinate clause: Billy Bragg, who is both a musician and a historian, is an authority on both folk music and English history.

subordinate clause

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PRACTICE

Reining in Run-ons

Correct the following run-on sentences.

Run-on	Your Correction
Melissa wants a brother and a sister and she wants someone to play with her.	
John Adams was the second president, he was after George Washington and before Thomas Jefferson.	

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READ

Simple and Complete Subjects and Predicates

Every clause, both dependent and independent, has a simple subject and a simple predicate.

Joey	jumped.	Joey	was jumping.
simple	simple	simple	simple
subject	predicate	subject	predicate

A **simple subject** is the noun or pronoun that tells who or what the sentence is about.

A **simple predicate** is the verb or verb phrase that describes the action of the subject.

A **complete subject** is the noun or pronoun that tells who or what the sentence is about in addition to any modifiers.

A **complete predicate** is the verb or verb phrase that describes the action of the subject in addition to any modifiers.

Joey, the happy kangaroo,	was jumping for joy!
complete subject	complete predicate

Compound Subjects and Compound Predicates

Sam and Larry do everything together, so every sentence about the two young men starts with a compound subject: Sam and Larry.

Aiden never does just one thing at a time. See if you can find the compound predicate in this sentence: *Aiden talks and plays the air guitar at the same time*. If you chose *talks* and *plays*, you were correct.

A **compound subject** is two or more simple subjects doing the same action in a sentence.

A **compound predicate** occurs when a subject does more than one action in a sentence.

PRACTICE

Simple and Complete Subjects and Predicates

Underline the complete subject. Double underline the simple subject. Draw a box around the complete predicate. Draw a circle around the simple predicate.

1. The honest judge retired after many years of service.
2. Because it does not change colors with the seasons, a fir is an evergreen tree.
3. Charlie is good at tennis, but Sarah is better.

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WRITE

Using the instructions below, you are going to rewrite this story to put some style into it. You are also going to show what you know about the different types of sentences.

> [1] Frank always knew he would be a football star. [2] He practiced passing. [3] He practiced kicking. [4] He practiced running. [5] Frank thought about football all the time. [6] Jenny thought about it too. [7] Jenny was Frank's best friend. [8] They lived side by side on Maple Street. [9] They were born in the same week of the same year. [10] Their moms were best friends. [11] Their dads played golf together. [12] They also went to the same college at the same time. [13] They both played on the golf team. [14] Jenny was the fastest girl in her grade. [15] She liked it that she was actually the fastest person in her grade. [16] When the boys tried to show off playing football at school, Frank would throw the ball to Jenny. [17] She always caught the ball. [18] They both laughed as she ran past the boys for a touchdown almost every time.

First, decide what the tone of this story is. Is it spooky? Is it sad? Is it full of joy and happiness? What emotion do you want your reader to feel?

The tone of the story should be _____.

Follow these prompts on a separate sheet of paper.

1. Combine sentences 2, 3, and 4 into one complete sentence.
2. Or combine sentences 1, 2, 3, and 4 into one complete sentence. (This is similar to the first instruction, but you may like the combination better.)
3. Combine sentences 5 and 6 into one complete sentence.
4. Examine sentences 8 through 13. Rewrite these sentences so that the content is clearer and less choppy.
5. Now that you have smoothed the story out, rewrite the entire paragraph. Make sure the tone you wanted comes through in the final draft. You may use the new sentences or the old ones. You can reorder the information if you need to do so. Add any new sentences you think would help the story flow better.

REVIEW

In this lesson, you learned:

- Clear writing means you can be heard.
- Run-ons and sentence fragments make writing hard to understand.
- The type of sentence you choose can change the tone of a piece of writing.
- The simple subject does not include modifiers.
- The simple predicate only includes a verb and helping verbs.
- A compound subject has two or more simple subjects doing the same action.
- A compound predicate has two or more actions.
- Sentences may be combined in many ways.

Think About It

If the future is about computer technology, how important is it to understand how languages work?

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SKILL BUILDER

Comprehension

Read the excerpt from *The Innocents Abroad,* by Mark Twain, and answer the comprehension questions below.

For months the great pleasure excursion to Europe and the Holy Land was chatted about in the newspapers everywhere in America and discussed at countless firesides. It was a novelty in the way of excursions—its like had not been thought of before, and it compelled that interest which attractive novelties always command. It was to be a picnic on a gigantic scale. The participants in it, instead of freighting an ungainly steam ferry—boat with youth and beauty and pies and doughnuts, and paddling up some obscure creek to disembark upon a grassy lawn and wear themselves out with a long summer day's laborious frolicking under the impression that it was fun, were to sail away in a great steamship with flags flying and cannon pealing, and take a royal holiday beyond the broad ocean in many a strange clime and in many a land renowned in history!

1. What is the tone of this passage?

A. bewildered

B. excited

C. sly

D. angry

2. Why was the trip a novelty?

A. It was a new and compelling idea.

B. It was a picnic with pies and doughnuts.

C. t was on an ungainly ferry-boat.

D. It was a ship going to Europe.

3. In the underlined portion of the text, the author writes a long dependent clause that compares a day-trip for a picnic to the extended international cruise described in the rest of the sentence. The author _____.

A. makes the day-trip sound horrible

B. makes the day-trip sound fun

C. makes the day-trip sound boring

D. makes the day-trip sound common

4. What effect does placing the underlined clause inside the sentence, "The participants in it were to sail away in a great steamship with flags flying and cannon pealing, and take a royal holiday beyond the broad ocean in many a strange clime and in many a land renowned in history!" have?

A. horror

B. eeriness

C. thrill

D. humor

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SHOW WHAT YOU KNOW

Circle the correct answer.

1. Which is a fragment?

A. Because it is true.

B. Believe what I say because it is true.

C. Since it is true, believe me.

D. It can be both true and false.

2. Which is a run-on sentence?

A. Bianca ate apples, bananas, and dirt.

B. Pablo ate Mary's pie and Barney's sandwich.

C. He was mad, he was so, so mad.

D. She ran, skipped, jumped, and played until noon.

3. Which is a sentence with a compound subject?

A. He sang, and she cried.

B. Tom and Max are back!

C. She sang and danced all night.

D. Never forget the Alamo!

4. Which is a sentence with a compound predicate?

A. He sang, and she cried.

B. Tom and Max are back!

C. She sang and danced all night.

D. Never forget the Alamo!

CREATE

Choose two characters who like to do everything together. Now, think of the things they like to do. Your challenge is to create three sentences describing your two characters using a compound subject and a compound predicate in each sentence.

.....

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5. Which answer correctly identifies the clauses in a complex sentence?

A. While she dreamed of a better life, Laticia worked hard at her lessons.
independent clause — independent clause

B. While she dreamed of a better life, Laticia worked hard at her lessons.
dependent clause — dependent clause

C. While she dreamed of a better life, Laticia worked hard at her lessons.
independent clause — dependent clause

D. While she dreamed of a better life, Laticia worked hard at her lessons.
dependent clause — independent clause

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