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USING SENTENCES ACCURATELY AND EFFECTIVELY

To use sentences effectively, it is important to consider the sentence types you are using and the impression they convey to the reader. You also need to be aware of common errors with sentences, so that you can be confident about avoiding them.

CHOOSING SENTENCE TYPES FOR STYLE

Most texts work best with a variety of sentence types. This is because a varied text is more likely to hold the reader's interest. In addition, different types of sentence are more suited to particular types of information.

Simple sentences:

- ✓ Are very clear and easy to understand
- ✓ Can be good for emphasis and impact
- ✓ Can provide a sudden, dramatic shift in **tone** within a more descriptive piece
- ✗ Can sound repetitive and even patronising
- ✗ Can lead to unnecessary repetition of the subject of the sentences

Compound and complex sentences:

- ✓ Make your writing flow and often sound more elegant than simple sentences
- ✓ Are good for connecting ideas
- ✓ Can help you avoid repeating the subject of the sentences too often
- ✗ Can be less clear than simple sentences
- ✗ Can lead to important information being 'buried' in a long sentence

Compare the two texts below. Note how the one on the right uses a greater variety of sentence types to create a wider range of effects.

Yosemite National Park is in California. It is named after a tribe that once lived there. It covers an area of over 3,000 square kilometres. Almost four million people go there every year. They want to see the amazing scenery. There are dramatic waterfalls. There are also towering rock faces. Yosemite is also home to giant sequoia trees. The trees grow up to 85 metres tall. They are incredible!

Yosemite National Park is in California. Named after a tribe that once lived there, it covers an area of over 3,000 square kilometres. Almost four million people a year go there to see the amazing scenery, including dramatic waterfalls and towering rock faces. Yosemite is also home to giant sequoia trees, which grow up to 85 metres tall. Incredible!



TOP TIP



When revising or doing practice tests, read your work aloud. This will help you check that it flows well and that your choice of sentence types conveys the meaning and style you want.

COMMON ERRORS WITH SENTENCES

In **run-on sentences**, clauses that should form two or more sentences are written together with no punctuation:

Homework often has little value nevertheless most teachers insist on setting it. ✗

Homework often has little value. Nevertheless, most teachers insist on setting it. ✓

With a **comma splice**, a comma is written where a full stop or **conjunction** should be used:

I believe that homework is necessary, it consolidates learning done in class. ✗

I believe that homework is necessary. It consolidates learning done in class. ✓

I believe that homework is necessary because it consolidates learning done in class. ✓

Remember that a sentence with two main clauses needs a conjunction. If it cannot take a conjunction, such as 'and', 'but' or 'because', you should make it separate sentences or rewrite it with a main and a subordinate clause.

In a **sentence fragment**, a necessary part of the sentence (for example, the subject or the verb) is missing:

So many people on the beach. ✗

There were so many people on the beach. ✓

Sentence fragments can sometimes be used for stylistic effect, especially in creative writing. However, unlike minor sentences, they are not part of correct standard English.

In formal written English, you should not start a sentence with a conjunction such as 'and' or 'but':

Karl accepted the decision. But he was still disappointed. ✗

Karl accepted the decision but he was still disappointed. ✓

Writers sometimes choose to start sentences with these conjunctions, but only for deliberate stylistic effect.

CHECK YOUR SKILLS

- 1 Look at the extract below. Rewrite it on a separate piece of paper, correcting the sentence errors and thinking about your choice of sentence type to make it sound more polished and engaging.

I woke up with a start. I looked around. I didn't understand where James had gone. Then I realised what had happened. The jewels and all my money had gone! I can barely describe how I felt at that moment, angry, scared and utterly betrayed. And I had trusted James that was the worst thing, how could I have been so foolish?

TEST YOURSELF ON ALL THE KEY SKILLS

Now test yourself on everything you have learnt in this book. You can find the answers in Part Seven.

1 Correct the **spellings** that are wrong. Tick the ones that are correct.

- a) allagory
- b) dialogue
- c) omnicient
- d) playwright
- e) euphemism
- f) repitition
- g) onomatapoeia
- h) personification
- i) technique
- j) syllable

2 Write the **plural form** of these words.

- a) wish
- b) story
- c) verse
- d) echo
- e) belief
- f) phenomenon
- g) quality
- h) leaf

3 Circle **one word** in each group that would be particularly appropriate for a frightening story.

- a) hiss / recite / drawl / purr
- b) dewy / wet / clammy / juicy
- c) ooze / flow / spout / run
- d) bend / squat / cower / kneel
- e) eerie / mythical / unusual / eccentric
- f) glide / swim / float / slither

4 Circle the correct word to complete the sentences.

- a) '[Whose / Who's] got the map?' asked James.
- b) Dad took my sister and [I / me] to the ice rink.
- c) Please let the organisers know if [your / you're] going to be late.
- d) The dog has [its / it's] own place to sleep.
- e) Have you seen [there / their / they're] new house?
- f) That is the man [who / whom] gave me the message.

5 Complete these sentences with **comparatives** and **superlatives**. Use the adjectives given in brackets.

- a) That was the exam I've ever done. I'm sure it was than last year's paper. (bad, hard)
- b) The first poem is than the second and is also to understand. (descriptive, easy)
- c) I'm a lot than my sister. London is the she's ever been! (adventurous, far)
- d) You would be able to work if you had a laptop. (fast, good)

6 Some of these sentences contain incorrect grammar. Rewrite each sentence, correcting the grammar. Tick the ones that are correct.

- a) My grandparents lived in Poland when they was younger.
.....
- b) Neither author uses many similes.
.....
- c) His friends should have took him to a doctor.
.....
- d) Jasmine and her friend Laura were late to bed because of the party and hasn't woken up yet.
.....
.....
- e) In the morning, there was less snow on the ground.
.....
- f) King Duncan welcomes Macbeth and Banquo and said he would stay at Macbeth's castle.
.....
.....