

Unit 4: Writing—Using Strategies to Fine-Tune Writing

Overview

The previous unit helped you with your initial writing skills. You worked to select topics for two paragraphs—an expository paragraph and a persuasive paragraph. You also worked to collect information you needed to develop these paragraphs. In addition, you learned ways to organize the information you collected. Finally, you drafted examples of these different paragraphs.



However, these paragraphs are not quite finished. They are your first attempts to write, or *speak*, to your audiences. These first attempts are called first drafts. First drafts are seldom, if ever, perfect. Think back to the last time you looked through a pair of binoculars or the lens of a camera. Most likely, the picture you saw was a little blurred. You found, however, that by *fine tuning* the image, you could make it crystal clear. Your imperfect first drafts need this same kind of adjustment. You need to make sure each paragraph says exactly what you want it to say. You also need to make sure it looks exactly how you want it to look. Only after you have completed this fine tuning process will your writing be ready to share with your readers.

The process of fine tuning your writing has three steps.

- **Step 1: Revising Your Writing.** You will look carefully at what you said. You will make sure your words say exactly what you want. You will have the chance to choose better words. You can also rearrange your sentences. You can add details. You can also omit details.
- **Step 2: Editing Your Writing.** You will check for spelling errors. You will make sure your grammar is correct. You will look for punctuation errors.
- **Step 3: Proofreading Your Writing.** This final step is very important. This step forces you to look carefully at your writing. Have you omitted words? Have you added unnecessary words? Last-minute “accidents” do happen. This step keeps your reader from seeing them.

These three steps are used by all different levels of writers. Even professional writers don't get it right in their very first draft. Writing is a process, and good writing has been adjusted until its message is clear and (nearly) error free.

As you work through Unit 4, please save all of your preliminary expository and persuasive drafts from Unit 3 and any peer evaluations and revised expository and persuasive paragraphs from this unit. You will need to turn those papers in as part of your portfolio for Part 1 of the Unit Assessment for Unit 4.

Steps to Fine-Tuning Your Writing

The writing process gives you many chances to improve your writing. In the last unit you went through the process of prewriting.

- You chose a **topic**.
- You explored it.
- You organized it.

Then you wrote a draft.

Now you will use a three-step process to take a second look at your writing. You will fine-tune your writing using these steps.

- Step 1: **Revising** the content and language of your writing.
- Step 2: **Editing**, by checking for errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
- Step 3: **Proofreading**, the final check to catch any typos, omitted words, and other errors you may have missed.

Step 1: Revision

Revision comes from ancient words that mean *seeing again*. To revise your **paragraphs**, you must see and read them as if you are one of your readers. You must, temporarily, forget that you are the writer. Your mission is to put yourself in your readers' place and see if they can understand clearly what you've written. In addition, since each of these *paragraphs* has a particular purpose, you must make sure you achieve this purpose. In an **expository** paragraph, you must make sure you are explaining or "teaching" specific information. In a **persuasive** paragraph, you must make sure your readers will be convinced by your writing.



Revising an Expository Paragraph

The purpose of *expository* writing is to give information. The type of information will vary. You can explain a **subject**, give directions, or offer a definition. As you write, you should remember that you are, in fact, acting as a teacher. All expository paragraphs must do the following:

1. Begin with a **topic sentence**.
2. Give clear **details**.
3. Give these *details* in correct order.
4. Join these details with key words. These key words move the reader from one step or idea to the next. Key words are also called **transitions** or connecting words. *Transitions* link ideas, **sentences**, and paragraphs together.

Some time has passed since you wrote your paragraph. It's time to look at it again. It's time to revise it. Revising is the first step in fine-tuning your writing. You revise to improve the content and language of your writing.

Before revising yours, let's complete the following practice.

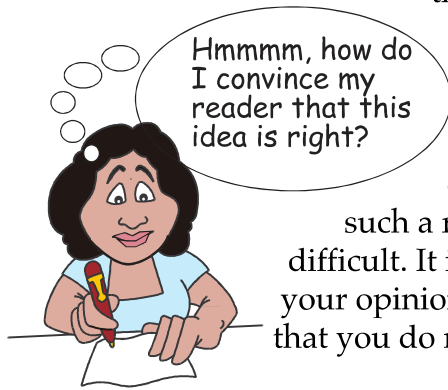
The Escaping Goat

The modern definition of the word *scapegoat* is closely related to its original meaning. This meaning has a long history, and it comes from an ancient Jewish tribal tradition. The original scapegoat was an actual goat. During a yearly religious ritual, members of the tribe would tie ribbons or other tokens to the goat. Each token represented a *sin* or misdeed. Then the goat was allowed to *escape* from the village or community. As the animal escaped, it symbolically carried the tribe's evil acts and thoughts with it. The community was *cleansed* because of this. Today, the word *scapegoat* has a similar meaning. A scapegoat is a person who carries the blame for another's wrongdoing. Some form of blame or guilt is transferred to this person, relieving the actual wrong-doer. Like the tribal village, the guilty person is freed from blame.



Revising a Persuasive Paragraph

The purpose of a *persuasive* paragraph is to give your opinion. In addition, you often hope to convince someone to agree with this opinion. You are also explaining why you feel as you do by giving the reasons you hold



this opinion. Presenting effective persuasive writing is one of the most difficult tasks you will encounter as a writer. This is because you are often presenting strong feelings to readers whose opinion is exactly the opposite of yours. Convincing such a reader to even consider your ideas can be difficult. It is, then, most important that you support your opinion with specific details. It is also important that you do not offend your reader in any way.

Although the purpose of a persuasive paragraph will vary, all persuasive writing should do the following.

1. address the audience
2. state the writer's opinion
3. give valid reasons to support this opinion
4. support each reason with evidence
5. arrange reasons in order of importance
6. use key words to show this order
7. list any concessions the writer wishes to make
8. end with a closing statement or clincher that calls for action.

Before reviewing your persuasive letter complete the following practice.

Let Us Earn the Right to Park

The student handbook states that no student may park his or her car in the school parking lot. This rule makes sense in light of the size of the lot and the need for teachers to have a nearby parking space. *However, I would like to see a few spots set aside as rewards for students who have made the honor roll.* Because the number of honor roll students might exceed the number of special spots, parking spaces would be given to those students who contribute to the school or city community in other ways. All interested students would file an application stating their grade point average and describing their community contributions. A special parking council made up of teachers and students would choose from the pool of applicants. Parking spaces on campus are valuable, and that is a good reason to use a few of them to show those students who earn good grades and contribute their time that they are valued by all of us.

Step 2: Editing

When you *edit* your writing, you check it for any errors in grammar, **punctuation**, or spelling. Of course, before you can check your writing for errors, you must know what the rules of the English language are.

Grammar: The Way Words Work Together

Begin editing by checking the grammar of your writing. In this unit you will learn or review the correct way to use the following:

- sentence formation
- subject and **verb** agreement
- regular and irregular *verbs*
- singular and plural **nouns**
- *noun* and **pronoun** agreement
- possessives

Sentence Formation: Building Correct Sentences

All of your sentences should be complete sentences. A complete sentence has a subject and a verb. It also must be a complete thought. Complete sentences can come in a variety of lengths. Contrast the following two complete sentences:

Sentence: I am going.

Sentence: I am going to the store in search of milk and eggs but not butter and sugar.



Now look at the following examples:

Sentence: I have finished my homework.

Not a Sentence: My homework in history.

Sentence: The door is open.

Not a Sentence: The door to the kitchen.

Sentence: The weather report predicted clouds and rain for this morning.

Not a Sentence: Raining all morning.

The two most common mistakes that writers make when forming sentences are sentence **fragments** and **run-on sentences**. Neither sentence *fragments* nor *run-on sentences* are correct, complete sentences.

Types of Complete Sentences: Declarative, Exclamatory, Imperative, and Interrogative

There are four kinds of complete sentences. Each of these sentences ends in a different **end mark**.

Types of Sentences		
Sentence Type	Definition/Example	End Mark
Declarative	A sentence that makes a statement. <i>Morning is my favorite time of day.</i>	.
Exclamatory	A sentence that expresses a strong feeling. <i>You have to taste Milton's chocolate chip cookies!</i>	!
Imperative	A sentence that gives a command or makes a request. <i>Sit down now! Be careful crossing the street!</i> or <i>Sit down now. Be careful crossing the street.</i>	! or .
Interrogative	A sentence that asks a question. <i>When will you speak to your cousin again?</i>	?

Note: An *imperative sentence* has an understood subject. "Sit down now!" really means "You sit down now!" There is no subject written in this sentence. It is, however, complete, with *you* as the *understood* subject.

Complete and Incomplete Sentences: Finished and Unfinished Thoughts

Correcting sentence fragments is part of revising and editing. In order to correct sentence fragments, you must be able to identify them and then rewrite them so they are complete thoughts. Ask yourself the following questions to help you identify and correct sentence fragments.

1. Does the sentence express a complete thought? If it does not, add the necessary words to make the thought complete.
2. Does the sentence have a subject? Do you know *who* or *what* is performing the action? If the sentence does not have a subject, insert one.
3. Does the sentence have a verb? Do you know what is the *action* or *state of being* of the subject? If the sentence does not have one, add one.

Look at these examples.

Fragment: Sitting in the corner with Latoya. (Not a complete thought.)

Sentence: Sean was sitting in the corner with Latoya.

Fragment: Feeling sick to her stomach. (No subject)

Sentence: Jennifer is feeling sick to her stomach.

Fragment: My best friend at the mall. (No verb)

Sentence: I am seeing my best friend at the mall later this afternoon.

Helping Verbs

A common mistake that writers often make is mistaking verbal forms that end in *-ing* for a verb. Look at the following examples.

Eliza *sitting* at my desk.
My older brother *going* around the corner.

These phrases are *not* complete sentences because the *-ing* words are *not* verbs. In order to make such a construction a verb, you must add a *helping verb*. Helping verbs work with the main verb although they do *not* show action. Add a helping verb to each of the above phrases turns each into a correct sentence.

Eliza *is sitting* at my desk.
My older brother *was going* around the corner.

Read the list of common helping verbs below.

Common Helping Verbs

am, is, are, was, were, be, being, been
has, have, had
do, does, did
may, might, must, can, could, shall, should, will, would

There may be one, two, or even three helping verbs in the verb phrase. For example, see the helping verbs italicized below.

He *was* listening.
He *has been* listening.
He *should have been* listening.

The following verbs can be linking *or* action verbs depending upon their function in a sentence.

Linking and Action Verbs

appear	feel	grow	look	
remain	smell	sound	taste	turn

To tell if they are linking or action verbs, substitute *am*, *is*, or *are* for the verb in the sentence. If the sentence sounds logical, it's a *linking verb*. If *not*, it's an *action verb*.

I <i>smell</i> the pizza.	I <i>am</i> the pizza.	No—action verb
The pizza <i>smells</i> good.	The pizza <i>is</i> good.	Yes—linking verb

Reviewing the Basics

Determine if your sentence has a subject and a verb. Do this by completing a simple diagram. A diagram shows the skeleton of the sentence. You will need to begin by drawing the diagram format.

Sentence Diagram Format



Now look carefully at the following sentence.

Tarama threw Catherine a fast pitch.

To complete a diagram of this sentence, begin by examining the verb. There are two kinds of verbs: **action verbs** and **linking verbs**.



Action Verbs

Action verbs are words that show the action of the subject. The action may be physical or mental. Ask yourself the following:

- Is someone or something doing something?
- If the answer is yes, ask what is he or she doing?

The answer to that is the verb.



Mom brought me my lunch money.

Is someone doing something? *yes*

What is she doing? *bringing money*

The action verb is *brought*.

Let's begin with the verb. There are two kinds of verbs. First, there are action verbs. These are words that show action. Ask yourself: Is someone or something doing something? If the answer is yes, ask what is he or she doing? The answer to that is the verb.

Four-Step Verb-Finding Procedure

Use the example below from the previous page to answer the following.

Tamara threw Catherine a fast pitch.

1. **Ask yourself:** Is someone or something doing something? *Yes.*
2. **Ask yourself:** What is he or she doing? *throwing Catherine a fast pitch*
3. **Tell yourself:** *Threw* is the verb.
4. **Write** *threw* on the diagram for the verb.



Let's take a minute to practice finding action verbs.

Linking Verbs

A second type of verb is a *linking* verb. These verbs do not show action; they show existence. These verbs are called linking for a special reason. They *link* the subject to the rest of the sentence. Sometimes, the words after a linking verb describe the subject. Sometimes, they will rename or identify the subject.


Linking verbs are often forms of the verb *to be*. A list of common forms of *be* is given below. Notice that many of these are more than one word.

Common Forms of <i>Be</i>			
be	has been	shall be	shall have been
being	have been	will be	will have been
been	had been	should be	should have been
am		would be	would have been
is		can be	could have been
are		could be	may have been
was		may be	might have been
were		might be	must have been

Hint: If you can substitute the verb *seems* or *appears* in a sentence, it is a linking verb.

Example: Elizabeth looks pretty today.
("Elizabeth *looks* pretty today." is a sentence. Here, *looks* is a linking verb.)

Elizabeth looks pretty today.



Can you substitute the verb *seems* or *appears* in the sentence? *Yes*

"Elizabeth *appears* pretty today" is a sentence.

The linking verb is *looks*.

Andrew always looks both ways when crossing the street.
("Andrew always *seems* both ways when crossing the street." is not a sentence. It does not make sense. Here, *looks* is used as an action verb.)

Finding the Subject

Once you find the verb, you need to find the subject. You need to find *whom* or *what* the sentence is about.

1. **Ask yourself:** Who or what is performing the verb?

Look at the example sentence:

Tamara threw Catherine a fast pitch.

We know the verb is *threw*. Someone or something *threw* something.




2. **Ask yourself:** Who or what threw?
3. **Tell yourself:** *Tamara* threw, so *Tamara* is the subject.
4. **Write** *Tamara* on the diagram for the subject.

Now look at the diagram of subject and verb.



This sentence has a subject (Tamara) and a verb (threw).

 **Remember:** An *imperative sentence* is tricky. An imperative sentence gives a command or makes a request. The subject of an imperative sentence is understood. So, how would you diagram it if an understood *you* is *always* the subject of a command?

A diagram of the one-word sentence “Stop!” would look like this:



Fragments

As mentioned on pages 258 and 264, fragments are incomplete sentences. Let's quickly review. Some are lacking a subject. Some are lacking a verb. None contain a complete thought. You can correct sentence fragments by supplying the missing sentence parts.

Let's practice identifying and correcting sentence fragments.

Fragment: A baby out of the maple tree.

Sentence: A baby bird fell out of the maple tree.

Fragment: Wished me happy birthday.

Sentence: Mrs. Ferguson wished me happy birthday.

Fragment: Kitty sitting next to Aimee.

Sentence: Kitty is sitting next to Aimee.



Run-On Sentences: When Words Run Stop Signs

Sometimes writers don't know when a sentence should end. They keep writing. Their sentence keeps on going. It *runs on* into the next sentence. Run-on sentences are joined together with commas or without any punctuation. Often you cannot tell where one thought ends and the other begins.



Remember:

Every sentence should begin with a capital letter. It should also be followed by an *end mark*. An end mark is a period (.), a question mark (?), or an exclamation point (!).

Compare the following run-on sentences with their corrected versions.

Run-on: I think endangered species should be protected, I work to save the Florida Manatee from careless boaters.

Sentence: I think endangered species should be protected. I work to save the Florida Manatee from careless boaters.

Run-on: Young people are misrepresented by the media we should not always be portrayed as apathetic and selfish.

Sentence: Young people are misrepresented by the media. We should not always be portrayed as apathetic and selfish.

Check for run-on sentences by reading aloud. You can usually hear where one sentence ends. Usually, you will pause where a sentence should stop.



Antecedents

An **antecedent** is the word that a pronoun replaces or refers to.

Example: Miranda graduated with her degree in marketing in only three years. (her replaces Miranda. Miranda is the pronoun's antecedent.)



If the *antecedent* is singular, the pronoun must be singular. If the antecedent is plural, the pronoun must be plural.

Example: Martin wished he had stayed later. (Martin is the antecedent of he. The antecedent is singular. The pronoun is singular. They agree in number.)

Example: The students wished they had arrived earlier. (The students is the antecedent of they. The antecedent is plural. The pronoun is also plural. They agree in number.)

When two or more antecedents are joined by *and*, the pronoun should be plural.

Example: Carolina and Sunjae can't come to the party because they have an exam the next morning. (Carolina and Sunjae is the antecedent of they. Both the antecedent and the pronoun are plural. They agree in number.)

If two or more antecedents are joined by *or* or *nor*, the pronoun must agree with the *closest* antecedent.

Example: Either Alice or Mary will read a poem she has written. (Mary is the closest antecedent, which is singular. The pronoun she is singular. They agree in number.)

Example: Neither John nor his brothers can find a sweater they like. (Brothers is the closest antecedent, which is plural. The pronoun they is plural. They agree in number.)



Singular Pronouns

Singular pronouns also have *gender*. Singular pronouns are either masculine, feminine, or neuter. *Singular pronouns* must agree with the gender of their antecedents.

Example: Tomas is my best friend, and I have known him for five years.

(The antecedent *Tomas* is masculine. The pronoun *him* is used.)

Example: Anna said that she was tired.

(The antecedent *Anna* is feminine. The pronoun *she* is used.)

Example: That rock has a strange look to it.

(The antecedent *rock* is neuter. The pronoun *it* is used.)

Sometimes, you will need to look in a phrase following the pronoun to determine its gender.

Example: One of the girls lost her keys.

Other times, the gender will be uncertain. You will need to use *his* or *her* in these cases.

Example: Everyone needs his or her own toothbrush.



Note: The following words *each, either, neither, one, another, someone, somebody, something, no one, nobody, nothing, anyone, anybody, anything, everyone, everybody, and everything* are referred to by a singular pronoun—*he, him, his, she, her, hers, it, or its*. Plural pronouns do **not** have gender.

Indefinite Pronouns

You use other types of pronouns when you speak and write. One of the most commonly used types is *indefinite pronouns*.

Indefinite pronouns can be a problem in subject-verb agreement. Certain indefinite pronouns are singular. Others are plural. Still others can be both. You must check for **noun-pronoun agreement**. You must make sure the pronouns match the nouns they refer to. The following charts can be helpful.

These indefinite pronouns are singular. They always require singular verbs.

Hints: The word *one* is part of many. The word *one* can be read after some pronouns.

If the word *single* can be read between a compound pronoun and it makes sense, then the compound pronoun is singular. *One* and *single* tell you the word is singular.

Indefinite Pronouns				
each (each <i>one</i>)	either (either <i>one</i>)	neither (neither <i>one</i>)	one	another
someone	somebody (some <i>single</i> body)	something		
no one	nobody (no <i>single</i> body)	nothing		
anyone	anybody	anything (any <i>single</i> thing)		
everyone	everybody (every <i>single</i> body)	everything (every <i>single</i> thing)		

The following indefinite pronouns are plural. They always require a plural verb.

(**Hint:** You can count these items on your fingers. There will always be more than one. Therefore, the word is plural.)

Indefinite Plural Pronouns			
several	many	both	few

The following indefinite pronouns can be either singular or plural. It depends on the sentence.

If the pronoun refers to a singular noun, it is singular.

If the pronoun refers to a plural noun, it is plural.

Indefinite Singular or Plural Pronouns				
some	all	most	any	none

Look at the following example.

None of the chocolate bars have melted.

Chocolate bars is a plural noun.

None of the chocolate bars would be plural.

The word *none* in this example takes a plural verb.

None of the money is missing.

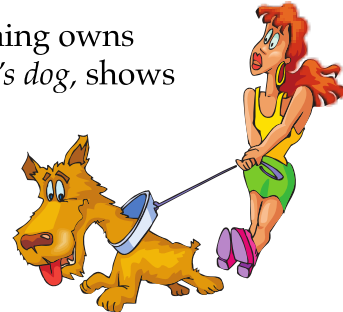
Money is a singular noun.

None of the money would be singular.

The word *none* in this example takes a singular verb.

Possessives: Showing Ownership

Possessives are used to show that one person or thing owns something. For example, the clause, *That is the girl's dog*, shows that the dog is owned by the girl. Possessives are also used to show the relationship between one thing and another. For example, the question, *Who is performing on today's program?*, asks a question about the program that is being presented today. Possessives are shown by an apostrophe and an *s*, or in some cases, by just adding an apostrophe:



That is the girl's dog.

the boy's bicycle (one boy)

the boys' bicycles (more than one boy)

the children's toy box (children)

the ladies' race car (more than one lady)



the ladies' race car

In most cases, it is easy to tell whether a word should be made possessive, as in the examples above. However, some cases are more difficult.

Would you add an apostrophe to the word *days* in the phrase *a days work*? If you are uncertain, simply rewrite the phrase using the word *of*: *the work of a day*. If the *of* fits, then use an apostrophe: *a day's work*.

Study the rules for forming possessives in the chart below.

Rules for Forming Possessive	
<p>▶ To form the possessive of a singular noun, simply add an <i>apostrophe</i> and an <i>s</i>.</p> <hr/>	
the notebook that belongs to Brita	→ Brita's notebook
the cat that belongs to the boy	→ the boy's cat
the eyes that belong to the monster	→ the monster's eyes
<p>▶ To form the possessive of a plural noun ending in <i>s</i>, simply add an <i>apostrophe</i>.</p> <hr/>	
the manes that belong to the horses	→ the horses' manes
the discoveries that belong to the students	→ the students' discoveries
<p>▶ To form the possessive of a plural noun that does <i>not</i> end in <i>s</i>, simply add an <i>apostrophe</i> and an <i>s</i>.</p> <hr/>	
the clubhouse that belongs to the children	→ the children's clubhouse
the antiques that belong to the men	→ the men's antiques

Pronouns present a special case. The possessive case of a pronoun is not formed by adding an apostrophe or an *s*.

Pronoun	→	Possessive
I	→	my, mine
you	→	your, yours
he	→	his
she	→	her, hers
it	→	its (<i>not it's, which means it is</i>)
we	→	our, ours
they	→	their, theirs
who	→	whose

Capitalization: Uppercase Rules

Capitalization means using “uppercase or capital letters.” Capital letters are used for two main reasons. First, they are used to signal the beginning of a sentence. Second, they are used to signal words we consider particularly important. Study the chart below for the rules of *capitalization*.

RULES OF CAPITALIZATION	Always capitalize...	
	the first word of every sentence.	The coffee grounds were in my cup.
	a person's name and any initials.	John F. Kennedy
	titles of people.	Dr. Jones, Mrs. Fisher
	I and O when they are used as words.	It's the duck that I saw. “Exult O shores! and ring O bells!”
	days of the week and months of the year.	Tuesday, March
	religions, creeds, denominations, names applied to the Bible and its parts, other sacred books, and nouns and pronouns referring to a deity.	Christianity, Old Testament, God, the Almighty
	countries, ethnic groups, nationalities, races, and languages.	Spain, Asian, Russian, Caucasian, English
	names of specific cities, states, avenues, streets, routes, and other geographical sections of the country or world, and place names.	Atlanta, Fifth Avenue, Wall Street, Route 66, Middle East, Museum of Art and Science
	names of special organizations—government, businesses, schools, professional, and social.	the Jaycees, Department of Education, Sears, Sandalwood High School
	names of special buildings and other man-made structures, ships, and planes.	the Gulf Life Building, Southpoint Mall, the <i>Titanic</i> ,
	brand or trade names.	Goodyear tires, Kleenex, General Electric
	holidays, special or famous events, historical periods or eras, and famous documents.	Labor Day, the Boston Tea Party, the Gold Rush, the Declaration of Independence
	the first word and all-important words in the title of a book, magazine, movie, television show, and song.	<i>The Hobbit</i> , <i>Sports Illustrated</i> , <i>General Hospital</i> , “America, the Beautiful”
	words that come from names that are capitalized.	San Francisco, San Franciscan
the first word of quoted sentences.	Tom said, “We won the game!”	

Punctuation: Road Signs to Guide Readers

A good way to think of punctuation marks is to imagine them as road signs along a sentence. As the reader travels down the sentence, he or she needs signs to make sense of your writing. Where should the reader stop, pause, or read your sentence as a question rather than as a command?

We use punctuation to help make our writing clearer and easier to understand. Read the examples below.

If John bakes Fred will clean up the kitchen.

Now look at this sentence.

If John bakes, Fred will clean up the kitchen.

Can you see the difference that one comma makes? Did *John bake Fred*? Or did *John bake and Fred clean up*? Without the comma in the second example, the reader might think that Fred was going to be tonight's dessert. Commas and other punctuation marks help the reader understand what is written.

Study the chart below and on the following page for the rules of punctuation.

Rules of Punctuation		
Punctuation Mark	Rules	Examples
Apostrophe ’	1. Apostrophes are used to show possession or ownership.	Joel's sneakers women's clothes
	2. Apostrophes are used to form contractions (they go where the missing letter or letters would have been).	it's can't you've
	3. Apostrophes are used to form plurals of numbers, letters, and symbols if plural would be misunderstood without an apostrophe.	8's and 1980s p's and A's #s
Quotation Marks “ ”	1. Quotation marks are used to show the beginning and end of a direct quotation or a person's exact words.	"You can learn punctuation," said the teacher.
	2. Quotation marks are used to enclose the titles of magazine articles, chapters, short stories, essays, poems, short pieces of music, and single episodes of a TV series.	"The Masque of the Red Death" "The Enemy" "Stairway to Heaven"

Rules of Punctuation

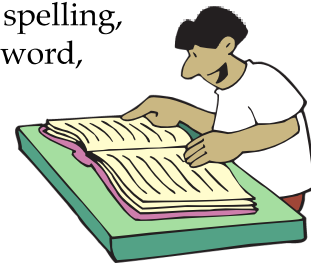
Punctuation Mark	Rules	Examples
Comma ,	1. Commas are used to separate items in a series.	Lindsay forgot her pencil, paper, and textbook.
	2. Commas are used to separate two or more adjectives before a noun.	A polite, kind, and cheerful student is a pleasure to teach.
	3. Commas are used before the conjunctions <i>for</i> , <i>and</i> , <i>nor</i> , <i>but</i> , <i>or</i> , <i>yet</i> , or <i>so</i> when they join independent clauses. (A mnemonic device to remember the words is fanboys , standing for the first letter of each of the conjunctions listed above.)	School was awesome, <i>for</i> I had biology.
	4. Commas are used to set off the name of a person spoken to directly or an introductory word.	James, can you lend me a quarter?
	5. Commas are used to set aside a descriptive phrase which is not essential to the sentence.	Yes, I can help. Spike, my naughty puppy, ate my sandals.
	6. Commas are used to separate items in dates and addresses.	I was born in Tallahassee, Florida, on April 30, 1990.
	7. Commas are used after the greeting and close of a friendly letter.	Dear Mom, Love, Max
Semicolon ;	1. Semicolons are used between independent clauses not joined by <i>for</i> , <i>and</i> , <i>nor</i> , <i>but</i> , <i>or</i> , <i>yet</i> , or <i>so</i> . (fanboys)	Stretch your mind every day; you'll never regret it.
Colon :	1. Colons are used before a list of items (unless there is a verb right before the list).	I enjoy many arts: music, painting, photography, and sculpture. My favorite actors are Johnny Depp, Will Smith, and Vince Vaughn. (no colon needed)
	2. Colons are used to introduce a restatement or explanation linking two sentences	We are left with a question: Who will pay?
Underlining <u> </u>	1. Underlining is used for the titles of books, magazines, works of art, ships, plays, movies, and TV series only when handwritten.	<u>To Kill a Mocking Bird</u> <u>Newsweek</u> <u>Mona Lisa</u> <u>Titanic</u>
	2. <i>Italics</i> are most often used in printed material or when using a computer for composition.	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i> <i>Star Wars</i> <i>The Oprah Winfrey Show</i>

Spelling: Write It Right!

Many people, despite being highly educated and very intelligent, have trouble spelling correctly. This is not surprising. The English language is very difficult to master. There are so many rules and exceptions to these rules. Certain words contain silent letters. Many words sound alike but have different spellings and meanings. Other words simply are not spelled the way they sound. However, becoming a good speller is very important to good communication. Writing filled with spelling mishaps is difficult to read, and it appears sloppy. This makes the writer look unprofessional and unwilling to put the finishing touches on a final product.

Here are some tips for improving your spelling.

- **Be patient.** Don't expect to become an expert speller overnight. Becoming good at anything takes time. This is true of spelling. It takes practice. Good spellers are not born. They work to become good.
- **Check your spelling.** Use a dictionary or a hand-held spell checker. Computer programs also have a spell-check function. Ask your teacher for a list of often-misspelled words. Your classroom textbook probably has such a list.
- **Look up the meaning.** When you check the spelling, find the meaning. If you know how to spell a word, that's good. To use it correctly, you also need to know its meaning.
- **Practice spelling each word.** Do this before you close the dictionary. Close your eyes. Try to see the word. Write the word on a piece of paper. Check the spelling. Keep doing this until you can spell the word.
- **Keep a list.** Write down the words you keep misspelling. Keep this list with you when you write. Use it again as you *proofread*.
- **Write often.** Again, you get better with practice.



Look up the meaning.

Choosing the Right Word

The English language is filled with **homophones**. *Homophones* are words that sound the same. However, they have different meanings and different spellings. Using the wrong word can make your writing hard to understand. It is, then, very important to use the correct word.

For instance, look at the following examples of homophones.

week - a period of seven days

weak - lacking strength or energy

allowed - permitted to happen

aloud - spoken in a normal tone of voice

peace - harmony; lack of war

piece - a part of something

Below is a list of common homophones.

homophones		
ad.....add	haul.....hall	prey.....pray
arc.....ark	hearhere	quarts.....quartz
ax.....acts	heardherd	rain.....reign
ballbawl	hihigh	rapwrap
barebear	himhymn	readred
bazaar.....bizarre	illusion.....allusion	roadrode
berrybury	inn.....in	ruffrough
boulder.....bolder	isleaisle	sceneseen
brake.....break	jellgel	seasee
buildbilled	Jimgym	serf.....surf
cellsell	jean.....gene	shownshone
cent.....sent	kernel.....colonel	sore.....soar
cereal.....serial	knead.....need	sword.....soared
cruisecrews	knowno	tailtale
daysdaze	lapselaps	their.....there, they're
deardeer	leadled	threwthrough
desert.....dessert	lielye	to.....too, two
doe.....dough	lynxlinks	towtoe
effect.....affect	made.....maid	undo.....undue
eight.....ate	mailmale	urnearn
factsfax	maulmall	vainvein
fillPhil	navalnavel	varyvery
flewflu	night.....knight	vilevial
fourfor, fore	not.....knot	waistwaste
gate.....gait	oarore	waitweight
greatgrate	ourhour	waivewave
grizzlygrisly	painpane	weakweek
groangrown	pause.....paws	youewe
hair.....hare	peace.....piece	you'llyule

Recording Mistakes in a Notebook

Are you making the same mistakes again and again? If you are, try keeping a notebook. Record repeated mistakes in your notebook. Refer to them while you are proofreading. An example is given below.

	Mistakes	definition	example
○	bare vs. bear	<i>bare</i> means naked or very simple	His head was <i>bare</i> after he lost his hat.
	four vs. for	<i>four</i> is the number 4	You can buy the shirt in <i>four</i> different colors.
○	pane vs. pain	<i>pane</i> is a piece of glass in a window	The baseball hit the window and broke the <i>pane</i> of glass.
	kernel vs. colonel	<i>kernel</i> is a small bit of grain, like corn or wheat	The little girl loved corn and only left one <i>kernel</i> on the cob.
○	knot vs. not	<i>knot</i> is a tight loop in a rope or thread	He tied his shoe lace in a <i>knot</i> .

Step 3: Proofreading—The Final Check

You have completed *step 1*. You have *revised* the content of your paragraph. You have also completed *step 2*. You have *edited* your paragraph. You have checked for errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Now you are ready to complete *step 3*. You are ready to *proofread* your paragraph.

Step 1: Revise

Step 2: Edit

Step 3: Proofread

Proofreading is the third step in fine-tuning your writing. Proofreading is a very important and final check. It is your last chance to catch any errors you missed. As you proofread you have the chance to check for typos, omitted words, and any other errors. It is the last chance to make your writing as perfect as you can.

Good writers always proofread. They have developed a number of excellent proofreading techniques. These will help you as well.

Proofreading Techniques

1. **Read your work aloud.** Read it slowly. Reading it quickly and silently does *not* help. When you do this, you *see* what you think you wrote. Reading *aloud* and reading *slowly* prevents this. It forces you to read and hear what you really wrote.
2. **Keep a list of common spelling mistakes.** Check this list before you proofread. When one of these words appears, check the list.
3. **Read backwards to check your spelling.** Start at the end of your paragraph. Read to the beginning. Point to each word as you read. Read it aloud. This will force you to look at each word.

Use these professional copyediting symbols as you proofread your writing. Use them for every piece of writing you do or when you are editing someone else's work.

Copyediting Symbols

Symbols	Meaning	Example	Corrected Example
≡	Capitalize a letter.	Harper <u>lee</u> wrote <i>To kill a Mockingbird.</i>	Harper Lee wrote <i>To Kill a Mockingbird.</i>
/	Make a capital letter lowercase.	Scout is Six Years Old when the novel begins.	Scout is six years old when the novel begins.
⊙	Insert a period.	Scout has a brother. His name is Jem.	Scout has a brother. His name is Jem.
○ sp.	Correct the spelling error.	Scout's <u>fathur</u> was an attorney.	Scout's father was an attorney.
∩	Delete.	Scout knew knew how to read when she went to school.	Scout knew how to read when she went to school.
^	Insert here.	Scout's teacher was not that Scout could already read.	Scout's teacher was not pleased that Scout could already read.
↺	Switch words or letters.	Scout was a tomboy.	Scout was a tomboy.