English Language Arts Handbook

for Secondary Students

Learning Technologies Branch

Alberta LEARNING

English Language Arts Handbook for Secondary Students
Alberta Education
ISBN 0-7741-2239-0

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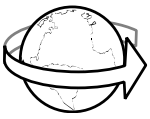

You may find the following Internet sites useful:

- Alberta Education, http://education.alberta.ca
- LearnAlberta.ca, http://www.learnalberta.ca

The use of the Internet is optional. Exploring the electronic information superhighway can be educational and entertaining. However, be aware that these computer networks are not censored. Students may unintentionally or purposely find articles on the Internet that may be offensive or inappropriate. As well, the sources of information are not always cited and the content may not be accurate. Therefore, students may wish to confirm facts with a second source.

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Section 1: Spelling, Punctuation, and Capitalization

Spelling

Spelling is an important aid to written communication. If you misspell words, your readers may not understand you. If you're having some difficulty with spelling, don't be discouraged; spelling can be mastered. Here are some tips to help you:

- Become familiar with the basic rules of spelling.
- Use an electronic speller or spelling dictionary to help you when you're handwriting.
- Whenever you can, use a computer with a good word-processing program, which will identify and help you correct misspelled words.

A conscious effort along with practice will improve your spelling ability.

- Correct your spelling errors as soon as possible to replace an incorrect picture of the word in your mind with a correct one.
- Study each correction until you have a clear picture of the word in your mind.
- Say each word, carefully pronouncing each syllable, so that you hear the word.
- Write the word. Check it to be sure that you've spelled it correctly.
- Keep a list of words that you misspell. If you find that you're misspelling the same words, focus on them. Write them out a few times, and test yourself to see whether you've mastered them.

Vowels and Consonants

The **vowels** are *a, e, i, o, u,* and sometimes *y*. Any letter that is not a vowel is a **consonant**. *Y* is a vowel in words such as *type* and *hyphen* and at the end of words such as *quickly* and *philosophy*. In words like *yacht, yes,* and *yak, y* is a consonant.

A vowel may be sounded long or short. A vowel is said to be long when it sounds like its own name inside a word, as in the following examples:

`bake` `seek` `pine` `note` `mute`

A vowel is said to be short when it takes the sound given in the following words:

`cat` `pet` `tin` `hot` `buck`

A vowel may also be silent. This means it isn't sounded at all. The most frequent silent vowel is the *e* at the end of a word, as in these examples:

bake pine coke cute bike

Roots, Prefixes, and Suffixes

New words can be built up from **root words** by using prefixes and suffixes, which are groups of letters added at the beginning or the end of a word or root. Look at the following examples:

trans + porta + tion = transportation
im + poss + ible = impossible

In each of these examples, a prefix was added at the beginning and a suffix was added at the end of a root to form a word.

Prefixes

A **prefix** is a group of letters fastened to the front of a root word.

Many words begin with prefixes. Here are three typical examples:

decay **inter**fere **con**struction

The addition of different prefixes can significantly alter the meaning of the root word, as in the following examples:

ensure	**un**sure
increase	**de**crease
bicycle	**tri**cycle

The following table contains a number of commonly used prefixes.

Prefix	Meaning	Examples
anti-	against	antibody, antidote
bene-	good	beneficial, benefit, benefactor
bi-	two	bicycle, bisect
circum-	around	circumference, circumscribe
com-, con-	with, together	communicate, contain

contra-, counter-	against	contraband, counteract
de-, dis-	down, not	decrease, decline, disagree, disbelief, disembark
en-, em-	make, cause	enable, enchant, embark
equi-	equal	equidistant, equilateral
ex-	out of	excavate, except, exclude, export
extra-	outside	extracurricular, extraordinary
in-	in, into	increase, invest
in-, im-, il-, ir-	not	insane, impossible, illegible, irresponsible
inter-	between	international, intercom
intra-	within	intramural, intramuscular, intravenous
mal-	bad	malfunction, malnourish, maltreat
mis-	bad, wrong	misbelief, miscalculate, mislead, misspell,
non-	not	nonconformist, nonsense, nonviolent
post-	after	posthumous, postpone, postscript
pre-	before	precaution, precede, preface, preview
re-	again	reappear, reclaim, recopy, reword
sub-	below	subheading, submarine, subzero
super-	beyond	superhuman, supernatural, supertanker
trans-	across, beyond	trans-Canada, transform, translate
un-	not	unafraid, unclear, unfit, unnatural, unfasten

Suffixes

A **suffix** is a group of letters attached to the end of a root word. Suffixes, like prefixes, can significantly alter the meaning of a word. Many suffixes are used in English. The following tables give some of the more common ones.

Noun-Forming Suffixes

Suffix	Meaning	Examples
-er, -or, -ian, -ant, -ent, -eer, -ess, -ist	one who	worker, actor, musician, attendant, superintendent, mountaineer, actress, artist
-age, -ance, -ence, -ation, -dom, -hood, -ism, -ment, -ness, -ship, -ity, -ry	state of being or condition	courage, attendance, independence, hesitation, kingdom, falsehood, socialism, statement, loveliness, friendship, acidity, rivalry
-ance, -ion	the act of	performance, construction

Adjective-Forming Suffixes

Suffix	Meaning	Examples
-ive, -ish, -ic, -al, -ary, -ous, -ly	possessing, having the quality of	descriptive, selfish, chronic, musical, imaginary, courageous, lovely
-less	without	friendless
-ful	full of	hopeful
-like	like	childlike
-ward	toward	westward

Sometimes when you add a suffix, you have to modify the spelling. For example, you may have to drop the *e* on a root, change a *y* to *i*, or double the final consonant. Unfortunately, there is no single rule to follow in these cases. You simply have to learn to spell these words, or use an electronic speller or spellchecker to help you. Look at the examples on the following page.

Drop the *e* when adding the suffix.	
imagine	imaginable
note	notable
excite	excitable
service	servicing
notice	noticing
change	changing

Retain the *e* with the suffix.	
amaze	amazement
sincere	sincerely
excitement	excitement
service	serviceable
notice	noticeable
change	changeable

Double the final consonant when adding a suffix.	
admit	admitting
regret	regretted
occur	occurrence
begin	beginning

Don't double the final consonant when adding a suffix.	
defeat	defeated
regret	regretful
profit	profiting
invert	inverting

Change the *y* to *i*.	
happy	happiness
marry	marriage
carry	carried

Don't change the *y* to *i*.	
enjoy	enjoying
marry	marrying
pray	praying

Dividing Words into Syllables

Words are made up of one or more syllables—word parts containing a sounded vowel. Dividing words into syllables can be a great aid to correct spelling. Look at the word *imperfectly.* When you remove the prefix *im-*, and the suffix *-ly*, you're left with the root word *perfect.*

Clear pronunciation of a word helps in the spelling of it. If you pronounce each word clearly, even to the point of exaggeration, you'll be able to spell it more easily. As an example, look at the word *Canadian.* Divided into syllables, it appears like this: Ca/na/di/an.

When you sound out the word by syllables, you won't make the mistake of writing *Canadain,* a common spelling error.

There are several rules for dividing words into syllables.

Rule 1: Count the number of pronounced vowels. (Ignore silent letters.) There will be one syllable for each vowel that is pronounced:

```
pressure       (2 sounded vowels; 2 syllables)  pres/sure
manager        (3 sounded vowels; 3 syllables)  man/a/ger
gladiator      (4 sounded vowels; 4 syllables)  glad/i/a/tor
interpretation (5 sounded vowels; 5 syllables)  in/ter/pre/ta/tion
```

Rule 2: Divide the word after a prefix or before a suffix:

Prefixes		Suffixes	
decide	**de**/cide	hunting	hunt/**ing**
resort	**re**/sort	coldness	cold/**ness**
unfit	**un**/fit	cupful	cup/**ful**
prorate	**pro**/rate	caption	cap/**tion**

Rule 3: Divide compound words between the separate words that have been joined:

```
classroom       class/room
crowbar         crow/bar
rawhide         raw/hide
```

Rule 4: Generally, divide between double consonants:

```
passage         pas/sage
running         run/ning
village         vil/lage
appear          ap/pear
```

If the double consonants are part of the root word, they're not split. In this case, the division is made after the double consonants, before the suffix:

```
speller         spell/er
telling         tell/ing
crossing        cross/ing
fullness        full/ness
```

Rule 5: Two vowels or two consonants may be divided if they are pronounced separately:

create	cre/ate	sulphur	sul/phur
fluent	flu/ent	suspect	sus/pect
riot	ri/ot	burglar	bur/glar

Silent Letters

Unfortunately, many English words are not spelled the way they are pronounced. English spelling can be rather strange; as a result, you have to take the time to memorize the spelling of some words.

Some of the troublesome words are the ones that contain letters that are not sounded. These letters are called silent letters.

Look at the words listed here. The silent consonants in each word are in colour. Study them carefully.

calm	doubt	foreign	knight	plumber	scent
comb	echo	freight	often	rhea	sigh
debt	flight	ghost	psylla	salmon	yolk

Plurals

Here are a few rules to remember when you're forming the plurals of English nouns.

Rule 1: The plurals of most nouns are made by adding *-s* to the singular form; however, for nouns that end in *-s*, *-x*, *-z*, *-ch*, or *-sh*, the plural is formed by adding *-es* to the word:

journal	journals
box	boxes
lunch	lunches
bus	buses
dish	dishes

Rule 2: When a noun ends in *-y* preceded by a consonant, change the y to *i* and add *-es*. When a noun ends in *-y* preceded by a vowel *(-ay, -ey, -oy, -uy)*, just add *-s* to make the word plural:

glory	glories
day	days
lady	ladies
donkey	donkeys

Proper names are an exception. If a proper name ends in *-y* preceded by a consonant, just add *-s*:

Brady	Bradys
Kennedy	Kennedys
Tarkowsky	Tarkowskys

Rule 3: When a noun ends in *-o* preceded by a vowel, add *-s* to make the word plural:

radio	radios
rodeo	rodeos

When a noun ends in *-o* preceded by a consonant, either *-s* or *-es* can be added to make the word plural. Here are some common words that add *-es*:

echo	echoes
hero	heroes
potato	potatoes
torpedo	torpedoes
embargo	embargoes
tomato	tomatoes
veto	vetoes

Two common words that just add *-s* are

piano	pianos
solo	solos

Rule 4: When a noun ends in *-f* or *-fe*, the plural is formed in one of two ways. One way adds *-s* to the singular. The other way changes *-f* or *-fe* to *-v* and adds *-es*:

roof	roofs
loaf	loaves
self	selves
knife	knives
life	lives
scarf	scarves

Some plurals may be formed either way:

dwarf	dwarfs **or** dwarves
hoof	hoofs **or** hooves

Rule 5: Some nouns change their spelling in some way to indicate the plural:

mouse	mice
ox	oxen
man	men
louse	lice
tooth	teeth
foot	feet

Rule 6: Nouns borrowed from foreign languages vary.

Some nouns use their original endings:

datum	data
alumnus	alumni
chateau	chateaux
criterion	criteria
medium	media

Some nouns use their English endings:

forum	forums
campus	campuses
bonus	bonuses

Some nouns use either ending:

index	indices	**or** indexes
amoeba	amoebae	**or** amoebas
formula	formulae	**or** formulas

Rule 7: Compound words vary.

When compund words are written as one word, *-es* or *-s* is usually added to the word:

cupful	cupfuls
handful	handfuls
toothbrush	toothbrushes
watchdog	watchdogs

Sometimes the principal word is made plural:

editor-in-chief	editors-in-chief
mother-in-law	mothers-in-law

Rule 8: Some nouns have the same form for both singular and plural:

fowl	pants	scissors
deer	sheep	politics

Compound Words

A compound word is a word made by joining two or more separate words. Usually a compound word is made up of two nouns, but adjectives, adverbs, and verbs can also be joined.

Many compound words were originally separate words. Later, they became hyphenated; finally, they were combined to make one word. Here is a list of some compound words that are now written as one word:

brainstorm	afternoon	homework	outside
shoestring	copyright	farewell	newspaper
downstairs	afterward	carefree	quarterback
windshield	warehouse	football	extraordinary
windowpane	therefore	sunshine	gentleman

Some compound words still retain the hyphen. Here are some typical examples:

bull's-eye	pigeon-toe
co-star	city-wide
chain-smoker	twenty-first

Other words that are frequently used together haven't as yet formed compounds. These words are still written separately. Here are some examples:

egg roll	a lot	disk jockey	no one
totem pole	in spite	in fact	
oil rig	tow truck	after all	

The spelling of compound words can be troublesome because you may not always be sure whether you should write them as one word, hyphenate them, or write them as separate words. If you're not sure how to spell a compound word, check it in your dictionary.

Ei or *ie*?

Many people have difficulty spelling words containing *ie* or *ei*. They don't know which vowel comes first. Here's a simple rule, which should help you spell these troublesome words:

> Put *i* before *e*
> except after *c*,
> and when it sounds like *ay*
> as in *neighbour* and *weigh*.

Look at the words in the table to see how this rule works:

i before *e*	After *c*, write *e* before *i*.	To create the *ay* sound, write *e* before *i*.
belief, believe brief chief handkerchief field grief mischief, mischievous niece piece pier priest relief, relieve reprieve retrieve shield shriek thief tier wield wiener yield	ceiling conceit conceive deceit deceive perceive receipt receive	eight freight neighbour sleigh weigh weight

Unfortunately, there are several exceptions to the rule:

```
counterfeit    foreign
either         forfeit
height         protein
leisure        seize
neither        weird
```

Problem Words

Certain words in the English language are particularly confusing when it comes to spelling. Some of these words are **homonyms** (also called *homophones)*. Homonyms are words that have the same sound but different meanings and (usually) spellings. For example, the words *peace* and *piece* are homonyms. The English language has a large number of homonyms. Since spellcheck programs cannot tell you whether you've used the correct homonym, you must learn to proofread your own writing and identify possible errors. Use a dictionary to help you spell the words correctly.

The following list will help you with some confusing words:

accept and **except**

Accept means *to take or receive, to agree to*. *Except* means *to leave out of account* or *not include.*

```
He will accept the position if it is offered him.
Everyone except Grandmother went to the picnic.
```

advice and **advise**

Advice is a noun meaning *guidance* or *counsel*. *Advise* is a verb meaning *to give counsel.*

```
What advice did the mechanic give about the car?
Please advise me about the situation.
```

affect and **effect**

Affect is a verb meaning *cause a change. Effect* is usually a noun meaning *the result of a change.*

```
The test will affect your final mark.
The good mark had a positive effect on the student.
```

already and **all ready**

Already is an adverb meaning *previously. All ready* means *completely ready*.

```
She had already eaten supper.
We were all ready for the party.
```

choose and **chose**

Choose is a present-tense verb meaning *select. Chose* is a past-tense verb meaning *selected*.

```
I like to choose new clothes.
Yesterday, I chose to wear an unusual hat.
```

conscious and **conscience**

Conscious means *to be aware*. A *conscience* is a sense of morals.

```
I am conscious of the need to exercise regularly.
My conscience bothers me when I lie.
```

corps and **corpse**

A *corps* (capitalized when it applies to the military) is a body or organization with specific duties. The word is pronounced *core*. A *corpse* is a dead human or animal.

```
The corps of older men was in charge.
The corpse was removed from the wrecked automobile.
```

council, **councillor**, **counsel**, and **counsellor**

A *council* is a group of people who gather to make decisions. A *councillor* is a person who is part of a *council*. A *counsellor* is an adviser who *counsels* you.

```
The council decided to approve the request.
The counsellor helped me to choose a career.
```

desert and **dessert**

A *desert* is a dry area. *Dessert* is a food.

```
Much of Arizona is a desert.
I always enjoy chocolate desserts.
```

its and **it's**

Its is the possessive pronoun meaning *belonging to it*. *It's* is a contraction meaning *it is*.

```
The cat scratched its ear.
It's a Siamese cat.
```

lead and **led**

Lead is the present and future tense of the verb *to lead*. (Of course, *lead* can also refer to a metal.) *Led* is the past tense of the verb *to lead*.

```
He will lead the expedition.
Lead the kids to the playground.
I led the police officer to the scene of the crime.
```

lose and **loose**

Lose is a verb meaning *no longer have*. *Loose* is an adjective meaning *not fastened well*.

```
Don't lose this money.
This knot is too loose.
```

of and **’ve**

Of is a preposition used to begin a prepositional phrase; *’ve* is a contraction of the verb *have*:

```
Two of the women volunteered to help.
I could’ve (could have) read the book of short stories.
They should’ve (should have) done their work earlier.
```

past and **passed**

Past means *something has already happened. Past* is also a preposition meaning *beyond*. *Passed* is the past tense of the verb *to pass*.

```
We drove past the park.
This story took place in the past.
The ambulance passed us on the highway.
```

principal and **principle**

Principal means *main* or *most important*. The *principal* of a school is the head teacher. A *principle* is a truth or law.

```
The principal idea in the report is to form a new organization.
A person with integrity has strong principles.
```

quiet, **quite**, and **quit**

Quiet is an adjective, noun, or verb meaning *not making sound. Quite* is an adverb meaning *completely*. *Quit* is a verb meaning *stop*.

```
I like to study in a quiet room.
The student has not quite finished the test.
She had to quit writing when the bell rang.
```

right and **write**

Right means *correct. Write* is a verb meaning *to put words to paper*.

```
That answer is right.
She wants to write her father a letter.
```

threw and **through**

Threw is the past tense of the verb *to throw*. *Through* means *to go between the parts of something*.

```
He threw the plastic disk through the air.
```

than and **then**

Than is a conjunction used to show a comparison. *Then* is an adverb meaning *next*.

My sister is a better musician than I am, but I'm a better artist than she is.

We are going to play the hockey game on Saturday; then we will find out if our team is better than their team.

their, **there**, and **they're**

Their is used as a determiner before a noun and refers to something that belongs to *them. There* is an adverb used to indicate place. It also introduces a sentence when the verb comes before the subject. *They're* is a contraction of the words *they are.*

Their house is exquisitely decorated.
Put the new shelf over there.
There are many contestants enrolled.
They're (they are) coming to the celebration.

to, **too**, and **two**

To is a preposition. *Too* is an adverb meaning *also* or *more than enough. Two* is the number after one.

Edward came to the house.
We have too much help.
Two books are sufficient.

waist and **waste**

A *waist* is the part of the body between the chest and the hips. *Waste* means *to use something in a careless way.*

The belt was tied around her waist.
Food does not go to waste when people are starving.

weather and **whether**

Weather refers to the state of the atmosphere—wind, temperature, moisture. *Whether* is used as a conjunction meaning *if*.

The weather was stormy, so the picnic was cancelled.
Albert is not sure whether he will attend.

were, **wear**, and **where**

Were is a past tense of the verb *to be*. *Wear* is a verb meaning *to put on. Where* refers to a place.

```
You were playing very well.
What will you wear to the ceremony?
Where are my new shoes?
```

who's and **whose**

Who's is a contraction of *who is. Whose* is the possessive form of *who* and *which*.

```
Who's (who is) on first base?
The person who's (who is) responsible should explain.
Whose house is that?
Cynthia, whose friend has moved, feels lonely.
```

your and **you're**

Your is a possessive adjective that means *belonging to you. You're* is a contraction of *you are*.

```
Your dog bit me!
You're (You are) telling a lie; my dog doesn't bite!
```

Abbreviations

Generally, when you're writing compositions, you should avoid using abbreviations. However, a few common abbreviations are acceptable. Many abbreviations are capitalized, but some are not. Most abbreviations, but not all of them, are followed by a period.

Proper Nouns

Some abbreviations are used only before proper names:

```
Ms. Knopp
Mr. O'Rourke
Mrs. Molzan
Dr. Vandenberg (but The doctor is here now.)
```

Some abbreviations are acceptable when used after proper names:

```
George Sr.
Alphonse Jr.
Lillian Morris, MD
Pablo Sanchez, Ph.D.
```

Numbers

Some abbreviations are acceptable when used with numbers:

10:00 a.m.
4:35 p.m.
403 B.C.
A.D. 800

Places

The names of provinces and countries can be abbreviated when they're part of an address:

460 Maple Ave.
Ottawa, ON L2J 3W3

Some place names are always abbreviated:

St. John's, Newfoundland
St. Albert, Alberta
St. Paul, Alberta

Organizations and Government Agencies

Abbreviations of names of government agencies and also organizations such as labour unions and associations are normally used without periods when they're used in place of names:

CPR	NAIT
MP	NATO
RCMP	NAFTA
MLA	UN

Non-Abbreviated Words

The following kinds of words should not be abbreviated in formal writing:

- **Countries and Provinces**

Alberta	**not**	Alta. or AB
United Kingdom	**not**	U.K.

  However, countries and provinces are usually abbreviated in addresses on letters and envelopes. Canada Post prefers envelopes to be addressed using the postal symbols for provinces.

- **Months, Days, and Occasions**

February	**not**	Feb.
Wednesday	**not**	Wed.
Christmas	**not**	Xmas

- **School Courses**

  English Literature **not** Eng. Lit.

- **Latin Abbreviations**

  for example **not** e.g.

  Avoid using the abbreviation *etc.* in formal writing.

Metric Symbols

Metric measurements use symbols rather than abbreviations. It is important to pay careful attention to capitalization, because some symbols for metric units are written in lowercase letters whereas others are capitalized. Here are some of the more common metric units and their symbols:

millimetre	mm
metre	m
millilitre	mL
milligram	mg
centimetre	cm
litre	L
kilometre	km
kilogram	kg

Although you use the metric symbols in your assignments for math, science, and Career and Technology classes, you should always write the word for the metric unit rather than the symbol in all formal writing.

Punctuation

Howeasyisitforyoutoreadthisline

You probably had difficulty reading the preceding line. Reading and comprehending a passage is much faster when the words are spread out and when punctuation is used to group words into meaningful units.

Punctuation marks are used in written work to make meaning clearer. Like traffic lights, punctuation marks tell readers when to pause, stop, or go ahead. These marks also signal whether a person is stating, exclaiming, commanding, or questioning. They tell the reader which words belong together, which words are separate items in a series, which words are important, and which are merely side remarks.

Look at the following unpunctuated sentence:

Mary said Mother bring me my hat

Who is the speaker in this sentence? Is it Mary or Mother? The sentence must be punctuated before you can answer that question.

If Mary is the speaker, the sentence would be punctuated this way:

Mary said, “Mother, bring me my hat.”

If Mother is the speaker, the sentence would be punctuated this way:

> “Mary,” said Mother, “bring me my hat.”

As you can see, punctuation is very important to convey meaning. The following information on each type of punctuation mark will help you use punctuation effectively in your writing.

The Exclamation Mark

An exclamation mark is used to end a group of words showing emotion or feeling. Interjections usually end with exclamation marks. One exclamation mark is all you need.

> What a hectic time!
> Hi, there!
> Help!
> Wow!

The Question Mark

A question mark is used to end a sentence that asks a question:

> Are all your lessons completed?
> Where did you obtain your essay facts?

The Period

End of Sentences

The main use of a period is to signal the end of declarative and imperative sentences:

> Aaron closed the door.
> Please close the window.

Abbreviations

Periods are also used in abbreviations:

> Mrs. Amandar moved to Edmonton.

When an abbreviation comes at the end of an imperative or declarative sentence, only one period is needed:

> Our neighbour is Robin Lee Sr.

Initials

Periods are also used after each initial in names:

> Mr. P. W. Kazinski

The Comma

Commas group words in a sentence into meaningful units and usually signal a reader to pause briefly.

Series

Commas are used between words or groups of words in a series:

My lunch contained sandwiches, an apple, cake, and one raw carrot.

Adverb Clause or Phrase

A comma separates an introductory adverb, adverb clause, or adverb phrase from the rest of the sentence:

If you take your time, you'll do well.
On page 11 of the textbook, you'll find the answer.
Later, we'll watch the video.

Interrupting Words

Commas are used to set off words that interrupt the natural flow of a sentence:

Long ago, it is claimed, the Native Peoples of America migrated from Asia.

This storm, however, was much fiercer than predicted.

Non-Essential Clauses and Phrases

A comma sets off non-essential adjective clauses or phrases that give additional, but not essential, information. Essential clauses, which provide information that is necessary to understand a sentence, are not marked off by commas.

- **Non-Essential Clause**
  In the following sentence, the clause describes *London*, but the sentence can be understood without the clause.

  The old man returned to London, *where he had lived as a boy.*

- **Essential Clause**
  In the following sentence, the clause describes *the city*. Without the clause, you wouldn't understand which city the man returned to.

  The old man returned to the city *where he had lived as a boy.*

Appositives

The comma also separates words in apposition—called an appositive. An appositive is a word or phrase that explains the noun or pronoun it follows. In the following sentences, the appositives are in italics:

Mr. Burrough, *the school principal*, said a few words at the meeting.

The school principal, *Mr. Burrough*, said a few words at the meeting.

Person Addressed

Commas set off the name of the person addressed or spoken to:

I have finished my lesson, Miss Jensen.
Close the door, Rachel, when you leave the room.

Independent Clauses

A comma is used before a coordinate conjunction (*and, but, or, for, so, nor, yet*) that joins two independent clauses:

We arrived late, but they did not come at all.
Kelly slept in, yet she wasn't late for work.

Letters

Use a comma after the greeting in friendly letters and after the complimentary close in all letters:

Dear Grandmother,
Yours truly,

Addresses, Dates, Initials, and Titles

Use a comma to separate items in dates and places, to separate initials following surnames, and to separate titles following surnames:

July 1, 1908
Edmonton, Alberta
Mitchell, W. 0.
Stephanie Schmidt, M.A.

The Semicolon

Joining Independent Clauses

A semicolon is used to join two independent clauses when no coordinating conjunction is used. (The coordinating conjunctions are *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *for*, *so*, and *yet*.)

I was born in Canada; my sister was born in Pakistan.
The fish were not biting; we decided to go back to the cabin.

The ideas in the independent clauses being joined by a semicolon should be closely related.

Sometimes a semicolon is assisted by a conjunctive adverb followed by a comma. Examples of conjunctive adverbs are *however*, *therefore*, *furthermore*, *nevertheless*, *otherwise*, *besides*, and *for example*:

He ate all the vegetables on his plate; therefore, he was allowed to have dessert.

She could not afford to buy a new computer; however, she had enough money for a new printer.

Lists

A semicolon is used between items in a list if the items already contain commas:

This airline has weekly flights to Madrid, Spain; Frankfurt, Germany; and London, England.

I have a large, white dog; a cute, cuddly hamster; and many colourful, exotic fish.

The Colon

Explanatory Statements

The colon may be used to indicate that a second statement clarifies or explains the first one:

It was useless to try pleasing him: he criticized everything.

Lists

The colon is used at the end of a clause to introduce a list of items:

I will bring the following items: pop, chips, napkins, and plates.
I have three close friends: Peter, Sam, and Jacob.

Do not use a colon when the list is part of the clause (that is, when the list is actually the complement of the link verb or the object of an action verb):

My friends are Peter, Sam, and Jacob.
For lunch, she ate an apple, a banana, and a pear.

Do not use a colon when the list is already connected to the clause with a preposition:

She enjoyed many sports, such as tennis, golf, and skiing.
He devoted his life to his family, his job, and his art.

Quotations

A colon is used after a clause to introduce a quotation:

Shakespeare uses a metaphor to explain how difficult life can be:
“O, how full of briers is this working-day world!”

Greeting

The colon is used after the greeting in a business letter:

Dear Ms. Chan:

Time, Acts, and Titles

A colon is used to separate the hours and minutes in time, acts and scenes in a play, chapters and verses in the Bible, and a title and its subtitle:

8:30
Act IV: Scene iii **or** IV:iii **or** 4:3
Proverbs 10:1
Composition: Models and Exercises

Quotation Marks

Direct Quotations

Quotation marks are used to enclose the exact words of a speaker:

Timu asked, “Where is the canoe?”
“What did Robert want?” she questioned.

Single quotation marks are used to enclose direct speech within a quotation:

Marie said, “I distinctly heard Dad reply, ‘No!’ when Bill asked if he could have the car.”

Periods and commas always go inside closing quotation marks; colons and semicolons go outside:

> “The thing we must do,” said Mr. Tymchuk, “is work harder.”
>
> Loretta replied, “If you can’t do it, you can’t”; then she added, “Live with it.”

When question marks or exclamation marks are used with quotation marks, they’re placed inside the quotation marks if they apply only to the quoted material. If they apply to the complete sentence, they are placed outside the quotation marks:

> Jim asked, “What time is it?”
> He shouted, “Get out of the yard!”
> Did you hear Corey say, “It’s not my fault”?

When writing compositions that contain direct speech, be sure to begin a new paragraph each time the speaker changes. If the same speaker continues, and a new paragraph is part of the extended speech, then a set of quotation marks is needed at the beginning of the new paragraph:

> “What happened to you?” Sylvia asked. “I thought you were supposed to meet me at four o’clock.”
>
> Andrew grinned. “I was delayed,” he explained as he unloaded his gym bag, “by Ms. Franchuk.”
>
> Sylvia stared at him. “You won the medal,” she guessed. “Congratulations!”

Quotations Within a Text

Quotation marks are used to enclose words borrowed from someone else:

> The words “still” and “tranquil” are used frequently in this poem.
>
> Robert Frost compares life to “a pathless wood.”
>
> Mrs. Faber, a neighbour who lives across the street from Dan Rathysen, described him as “unfriendly and unpleasant.”

Identifying Words

Quotation marks can be used to identify words:

> The words “advice” and “advise” are frequently confused.

Don’t use quotation marks to apologize to the reader for using slang, colloquial expressions, or clichés or to justify an attempt at humour. Either omit the quotation marks, or rephrase your sentence.

Avoid writing this:

Mr. Lakusta was at his computer doing some “surfing.”

When we get a virus alert, our systems analysts “hit the ground running.”

Write this instead:

Mr. Lakusta was at his computer doing some surfing.

When we get a virus alert, our systems analysts respond to the threat quickly.

Technical Words

Quotation marks are used to enclose technical words in non-technical writing or to define a word:

In poetry, the term “alliteration” refers to the repetition of beginning sounds of words.

Do you know that the term “piano” means “soft”?

Titles

Quotation marks are used to enclose the titles of chapters, magazine articles, and short works such as essays, short stories, short poems, and songs:

In Lesson 2, you read the poem “Lochinvar.”
I especially enjoyed the story called “The Winner.”

However, the names of newspapers and magazines, and the titles of longer works such as novels, plays, and films are not enclosed by quotation marks. These titles are underlined or placed in italics.

Underlining/Italics

The names of newspapers, magazines, novels, plays, films, and TV programs are underlined (when handwritten or typed) or placed in italics (when printed or done on a computer):

I saw the movie Titanic.
I saw the movie *Titanic.*

The Edmonton Journal is a daily newspaper.
The *Edmonton Journal* is a daily newspaper.

Underlining or italics can also be used to identify or emphasize words:

You should always sign your name on a letter.
You should *always* sign your name on a letter.

The Ellipsis

An ellipsis indicates that words have been left out or that a thought is incomplete. Use three spaced periods to create an ellipsis (or four if the omitted words include the end of the sentence):

The dying lady gasped, “Find the hidden . . . .”

Shakespeare wrote, “All the world’s a stage . . . and one man in his time plays many parts.”

Alexander Pope said, “To err is human . . . .”

The Dash

The dash can be an effective punctuation mark when it is used properly, but if used too frequently, it may lose its impact. On a computer, make a dash by typing two hyphens with no space between them. Don’t put a space before the dash or after it.

Shift in Thought or Tone

The dash is used within a sentence to indicate an abrupt break in thought or a sharp change of tone:

I want to explain—but let us close the door first.
She was polite and considerate—when it suited her.

Interruptions

A pair of dashes may be used to enclose an interrupting word or word group, especially when such a word group needs emphasis or contains commas:

He quickly picked up his equipment—wet suit, mask, flippers, and oxygen tank—and hurried to the boat.

I’ll help you wash the dishes—you’ll owe me for this—so that you can go to the movie.

I received a call from Paul Conway—a big surprise—asking me to be his new assistant.

Parentheses

Parentheses can be used to enclose an unimportant interrupting word or word group that adds information but does not change the meaning of a sentence:

Our teacher (a recent graduate) introduced himself.
World War I (1914–1918) involved most nations in Europe.

Parentheses may be used to enclose directions and references:

```
The comma (see Lesson 2) is often misused.
```

Parentheses, like the dash, should be used sparingly to retain their force.

Brackets

Use brackets to enclose words that you insert into a direct quotation so that it makes sense. Brackets show the reader that these words are not part of the original quotation.

```
The police officer explained, "I arrested [the accused] immediately
after I found the stolen goods."
```

The Apostrophe

Showing Possession

Apostrophes are used to show possession. Here are some rules to help you use them correctly.

Rule 1: To show possession in singular nouns, add an apostrophe and *s*:

the horse	the horse's neck	(its neck)
a year	a year's growth	(its growth)
the lady	the lady's hat	(her hat)
her son-in-law	her son-in-law's car	(his car)
the printer	the printer's ink	(its, his, or her ink)

Rule 2: To show possession when the singular noun ends in *s*, add either an apostrophe alone or an apostrophe and *s:*

Mr. Jones	Mr. Jones' family
	Mr. Jones's family
James	James' bicycle
	James's bicycle
the glass	the glass' design
	the glass's design

Rule 3: For the possessive plural ending in *s*, add only an apostrophe:

the ducks	the ducks' feet	(their feet)
the babies	the babies' carriages	(their carriages)
the Furnesses	the Furnesses' home	(their home)
ten cents	ten cents' worth	(their worth)
the knives	the knives' blades	(their blades)

Rule 4: To show possession if the plural does not end in *s*, add the apostrophe and *s*:

geese	geese's feathers	(their feathers)
gentlemen	gentlemen's agreement	(their agreement)
women	women's locker room	(their locker room)
children	children's playground	(their playground)
people	the people's reaction	(their reaction)

Rule 5: Nouns joined by *and* show possession in two ways.

To show joint ownership, the last noun is made possessive:

Dick and Ellen's cat is at the door.
(The cat belongs to both people.)

Your mother and father's farm is next to mine.
(The farm belongs to both people.)

To show separate ownership (each person has his or her own item), each noun is made possessive:

Dick's and Ellen's cats are at the door.
(Dick and Ellen both own cats.)

The boys' and girls' ideas are excellent.
(Several boys and several girls have excellent ideas.)

Contractions

Apostrophes are also used to show that a letter has been omitted in a contraction. Put the apostrophe in the spot where the letter or letters are omitted:

has not	hasn't
it is	it's
cannot	can't
you will	you'll
they are	they're
did not	didn't

Note that no apostrophes are used with possessive pronouns:

his hers its ours yours theirs

Special Plurals

An apostrophe can be used with the letter *s* to form the plurals of lowercase letters, symbols, or words used as words:

Mind your p's and q's.
You should not use &'s in your writing.
How many *and*'s are in that one sentence?

The Hyphen

Don't confuse the hyphen with the dash. Hyphens are shorter than dashes and are used very differently.

Compound Words

The hyphen is used to join parts of some compound words. Not all compound words require hyphens, so if you're in doubt, check in a dictionary.

```
good-bye    sugar-coated
```

Compound Modifiers

A hyphen is used to connect words when they come before a noun and modify that noun:

```
The drawn-out meeting lasted three hours.
The three-hour meeting was drawn out unnecessarily.

The well-known politician shook hands with everyone.
The hand-shaking politician was well known.
```

Numbers

Hyphens are used in compound numbers from *twenty-one* to *ninety-nine*:

```
Juanita is thirty-seven years old.
I earned ninety-three dollars last week.
```

Dividing Words at Margins

A hyphen is also used to make the division of a word at the end of a line of writing when there is not enough room to put the entire word on one line. To do this, you must divide the word between syllables. A dictionary will show you how words are divided into syllables.

```
Mother said, "Do not be late for din-
ner on Sunday."
```

Today, there is little need for hyphenating at margins: computers either hyphenate automatically or not at all. Hyphenating should be avoided in handwritten compositions because it sometimes causes confusion.

Prefixes

Hyphens are used with some prefixes:

```
Their views are very pro-American.
Pat is extremely self-sufficient.
Her ex-husband lives in Toronto.
```

Capitalization

Like punctuation, capital letters are helpful to readers. They indicate the beginnings of sentences, and they also perform other important functions.

Sentence Beginnings

The first word of a sentence is always capitalized:

```
The sun shone brightly after the snowstorm.
After he came home, he started to make supper.
```

The Pronoun *I*

The pronoun *I* is always capitalized:

```
Although I can't ski very well, I enjoy the exercise.
```

Proper Nouns

The names of cities, provinces, states, countries, continents, and bodies of water should be capitalized:

Sam Horton	Red Deer River	Spain
Alberta	Victoria	California
North America	Lake Superior	Calgary

Capitalize titles that indicate family relationships when these titles are used with a name or in place of a name:

Aunt Gertrude	**but**	her aunt
Grandfather Derksen	**but**	our grandfather
Where is Mother?	**but**	My mother came.
Dad is here.	**but**	Your dad is here.

Capitalize official titles when these titles are used with a name:

Mayor Jones	**but**	the mayor
Doctor Hawrelko	**but**	the doctor
Professor Richards	**but**	the professor

Capitalize the name of a school subject when it is the name of a specific course. Capitalize the names of languages and words derived from the names of countries. Do not capitalize general subject areas.

Spanish	**but**	a language course
English History	**but**	history class
Pure Mathematics 10	**but**	mathematics

Capitalize trade and brand names, but not the products:

Scotch™ tape Minute Maid® orange juice Timex® watches

Capitalize the names of specific buildings, bridges, schools, parks, streets, ships, planes, and trains:

The Empress of China	Rochefort Bridge
Banff National Park	University of Alberta

Capitalize the names of particular organizations, clubs, companies, and government bodies:

United Mine Workers	Canadian Cancer Society
House of Commons	Citizens for Action

Capitalize the names of political parties and their adherents (supporters), but not their theories or systems:

Conservative Party	**but**	conservatism
New Democrats	**but**	democratic society
Communist Party	**but**	communism

Capitalize the names of races, languages, and nationalities and the adjectives derived from them:

African American
Italian cooking
Japanese
Spanish music

Capitalize the names of religions, the adjectives derived from them, the followers of each religion, and their sacred writings:

Catholicism
a Buddhist temple
the Bible
Jewish holidays

Capitalize the names of months, days of the week, and holidays; don't capitalize the names of the seasons:

Monday
Thanksgiving Day
December
summer

Capitalize the names of historical events, documents, and periods of time:

Middle Ages
Industrial Revolution
Red River Rebellion
War of 1812

Capitalize the geographical areas of the country. Don't capitalize *north, south, east,* and *west* when referring to directions unless they're part of a street address.

When jobs were scarce in the East, the family moved to the West.
If you walk north on West Street, you'll find the correct address.

Capitalize the titles of books, chapters, poems, stories, newspapers, magazines, articles, musical works, plays, and motion pictures. Within the titles, don't capitalize connectors, prepositions of four letters or fewer, or the words *a* and *an* unless they're used as the first word in the title. *The* is capitalized when it's the first word of titles other than those of newspapers and magazines. (Titles of books, magazines, newspapers, films, and plays must also be underlined or italicized.)

Patterns of Communicating
Canadian Geographic
the *Calgary Herald*
Anne of Green Gables

Section 2: Grammar

Parts of Speech

There are eight basic parts of speech in the English language:

- **Nouns** are naming words.
- **Pronouns** are words that stand for nouns.
- **Verbs** are action or being words.
- **Adjectives** are words that modify nouns and pronouns.
- **Adverbs** are words that modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs.
- **Prepositions** are connecting words that introduce phrases.
- **Conjunctions** are words that join two parts of a sentence.
- **Interjections** are words that express surprise or emotion.

Nouns

A noun is a naming word.

Some nouns, called *concrete* nouns, stand for things that you can actually see and touch:

people: `John, teacher`
animals: `dog, crocodile`
places: `school, Toronto`
things: `bridge, book`

Nouns that name things you cannot see and touch are called *abstract* nouns:

ideas: `courage, freedom, fairness`
emotions: `fear, sadness, pain, love`

Singular and Plural Nouns

Nouns can indicate number. A noun that names only one thing is a singular noun. A noun that names more than one thing is a plural noun.

Singular	Plural
man	men
toy	toys
goose	geese
ranch	ranches

The rules for forming plural nouns are explained in **Section 1: Spelling, Punctuation, and Capitalization.**

Collective Nouns

Sometimes a singular noun names a collection or group of persons, animals, or things. A noun used as the name of a group like this is called a *collective* noun. Here are some examples of collective nouns:

a pack of wolves	a committee
a herd of cows	a jury
a school of fish	a team
a fleet of ships	a panel of judges

Common and Proper Nouns

Nouns can be common or proper. Words that name specific people, places, or things are proper nouns. Proper nouns always begin with a capital letter:

Joyce
Mr. Armbruster
Banff

Nouns that don't name anything particular or specific are common nouns and aren't capitalized:

courage
lizard
book

Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that takes the place of a noun to avoid monotonous repetition. The pronouns in the second sentence are bolded and italicized:

Jane bought the red dress even though the red dress cost more, because Jane liked the red dress best.

Jane bought the red dress even though ***it*** cost more, because ***she*** liked ***it*** best.

Antecedents

The noun that a pronoun replaces is called the antecedent:

The *car* stopped because ***it*** ran out of gas.
antecedent noun — pronoun

Because the pronoun refers to the same person or thing as the noun, the pronoun must have the same number as the antecedent. If the antecedent is singular, the pronoun must be singular. If the antecedent is plural, the pronoun must be plural:

The *cars* stopped because ***they*** ran out of gas.
antecedent noun — pronoun

Personal Pronouns

Personal pronouns have specific antecedents. They stand for definite people, places, things, qualities, or ideas.

Personal pronouns have a feature called *case*; that is, they sometimes change depending on the role they're playing in a sentence. For example, when referring to yourself with a personal pronoun, you sometimes say *I* (I hit the ball) and you sometimes say *me* (The ball hit me). Here are some examples of personal pronouns:

Subjective	Objective	Possessive
I	me	mine
we	us	ours
you	you	yours
he	him	his
she	her	hers
it	it	its
they	them	theirs

Reflexive Pronouns

Reflexive pronouns always refer to the subject of the sentence:

I hurt ***myself***. (singular)
We hurt ***ourselves***. (plural)

These are the reflexive pronouns:

myself
yourself
himself
herself
itself
oneself
ourselves
yourselves
themselves

Relative Pronouns

Relative pronouns usually begin a dependent clause and have a definite antecedent in the main clause:

Trees ***that*** lose their leaves in winter are called deciduous trees.

That is the relative pronoun linking the dependent clause *that lose their leaves in winter* to the independent clause *trees are called deciduous trees*.

The relative pronouns are *who, whose, whom, which,* and *that*.

Indefinite Pronouns

Indefinite pronouns don't have definite antecedents. They refer to people or things in general. Here are some examples of indefinite pronouns:

someone	everybody
none	some
anything	somebody
all	each
several	anyone
many	everyone
one	anybody
both	few
any	nobody

If an indefinite pronoun refers to one person or thing, the verb used with it must be singular. If an indefinite pronoun refers to more than one person or thing, the verb used with it must be plural:

Each of the horses ***is*** lame. (singular)
All of the participants ***are*** here. (plural)

For more information on subject/verb agreement, see **Section 3: Writing Effectively**.

Interrogative Pronouns

Interrogative pronouns are used when questions are asked. The interrogative pronouns are *who*, *whom*, *whose*, *which*, and *what*.

An interrogative pronoun is usually the first word in the question:

Who is your new friend?
Whom do you want?
Whose is that?
Which of these books belongs to you?
What will your answer be?

Demonstrative Pronouns

Demonstrative pronouns are used to point out a specific person or thing:

Please move ***those*** at once.
Does ***this*** belong to you?

The demonstrative pronouns are *this*, *these*, *that*, and *those*.

Don’t confuse demonstrative pronouns with demonstrative adjectives. Pronouns take the place of nouns; therefore, a pronoun does not modify or describe a noun:

I bought ***this*** at the store.

On the other hand, adjectives describe nouns, as in this sentence:

I bought ***this*** *book* at the store.

Verbs

Verbs are words that tell what action is taking place or what situation exists. There are two basic types of verbs: action verbs and linking verbs.

Action Verbs

Verbs that show action (even actions you can’t see) are called action verbs:

Stacey ***runs***.
Carmello ***walked***.
Irina *is* ***skipping***.
David ***thought***.
Marcel ***hoped***.

Linking Verbs

Verbs that show a state of being or an existing situation are called *linking verbs*. These verbs link the subject with a noun, pronoun, or adjective that follows the verb:

Anton and Alicia ***are*** the leaders.
The treasurer ***will be*** someone new.
This novel ***is*** hilarious.
Hilde ***appears*** happy.
The dessert ***looks*** wonderful.

The most common linking verb is the verb *to be*, which can appear in many forms: *am, is, are, was, were, will be, been,* and *being.* Other verbs that sometimes act as link verbs are *seem, appear, become, smell, look, appear, sound, grow, feel, remain, stay,* and *taste*.

Helping Verbs (Auxiliary Verbs)

Sometimes the verb in a sentence is a single word; however, often the main verb needs one or more helpers to express its meaning. These verbs, called *helping verbs* or *auxiliary verbs*, are listed here:

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

Some of these helping verbs can also act by themselves as a main verb:

- She ***has*** a new bike. (***Has*** is the main verb in this sentence.)
  She ***has lost*** her bike. (***Has*** is helping the verb ***lost***.)

- They ***were*** my best friends. (***Were*** is the main verb.)
  They ***were walking*** on the beach. (***Were*** is helping ***walking***.)

In questions, the helping verb is usually separated from the main verb:

Did you *hear* anything?
Were the chores *done*?
Have you *read* this book?

Verb Tense

All verbs show the time of an action or state of being. The present tense is used for the present time, the past tense is used for past time, and the future tense is used for future time.

- **Present Tense**
  The present tense of a verb is used when the action is going on right now. The subject at this time is involved in doing the action of the verb:

  He ***talks*** slowly.
  They ***know*** their lessons.
  We ***are*** at home.

- **Past Tense**
  The past tense of a verb is used when the action of the verb has been completed in the past; the action has already happened:

  He ***talked*** slowly.
  They ***knew*** their lessons.
  We ***were*** at home.

  Most verbs in the past tense are formed by adding *-ed* to the main form of the verb. These are called *regular verbs*:

lock	locked
play	played
revolt	revolted

  Sometimes slight spelling changes are needed. If a final syllable ends in one consonant that has one vowel just before it, the final consonant is usually doubled before adding *-ed*:

drop	dropped
stir	stirred

If a verb ends in *-y*, change the *-y* to *i* before adding *-ed*:

study	studied
carry	carried
bury	buried

Some verbs form their past tense in unusual ways. These verbs are called *irregular verbs:*

say	said
do	did
drink	drank
go	went
see	saw

- **Future Tense**
  The future tense of a verb is used when the action of the verb has not yet taken place, but will take place in the future. To form the future tense, use the main form of the verb, and add the words *shall* or *will* before the main part of the verb:

  He ***will*** *speak* at the meeting.
  They ***will*** *learn* their lessons at school.

The Perfect Tenses

The three simple tenses (past, present, and future) are used to express basic time distinctions. There are other distinctions made in speaking and writing, particularly among past actions. These distinctions are called the perfect tenses. The word *perfect* means *completed*. The perfect tense is used to show that an action begun in the past has been completed or come to a conclusion by the time the statement about it is made. Look at these sentences:

I ***have heard*** that story.
She ***has finished*** her assignment.
The dog ***had run*** away from home previously.

Note that in each sentence the verb includes a helping verb *have*, *has*, or *had.*

- **Present Perfect**
  The present perfect tense is used to show that an action that was begun in the past has just been completed or is completed by the time the statement about it is made:

  I ***have completed*** my chores.
  (The action has now been completed.)

  The helping verb *has* or *have* is used to form the present perfect tense.

- **Past Perfect**
  The past perfect tense is used to show that an action that was begun in the past was also completed in the past:

  I ***had completed*** my chores when the phone rang.
  (The action was completed some time ago.)

  The helping verb *had* is used to form the past perfect tense.

- **Future Perfect**
  The future perfect tense is used to show that an action that was begun in the past will be completed at some time after the statement about it has been made:

  I ***will have completed*** my chores by this evening.
  (The action is not yet completed.)

  The helping verb *have* is used along with *will* to form the future perfect tense.

The following table gives examples of simple tenses:

Simple Tenses		
Present	**Past**	**Future**
I walk.	I walked.	I will walk.
He smiles.	He smiled.	He will smile.
They collect.	They collected.	They will collect.
We paint.	We painted.	We will paint.
She learns.	She learned.	She will learn.
You cook.	You cooked.	You will cook.

This table shows examples of perfect tenses:

Perfect Tenses		
Present Perfect	**Past Perfect**	**Future Perfect**
I have walked.	I had walked.	I will have walked.
He has smiled.	He had smiled.	He will have smiled.
They have collected.	They had collected.	They will have collected.
We have painted.	We had painted.	We will have painted.
She has learned.	She had learned.	She will have learned.
You have cooked.	You had cooked.	You will have cooked.

The Progressive Tenses

If you want to show that an action is in progress, you use a tense that shows continuing action, called the *progressive tense*:

He ***is waiting*** for his sister.

Every verb has three progressive tenses: past, present, and future. They are made by using a helping verb from the verb *to be* and adding *-ing* to the present tense of the verb. The following table shows examples:

Present Progressive Tense	Past Progressive Tense	Future Progressive Tense
I am reading.	I was reading.	I will be reading.
He/she is reading.	He/she was reading.	He/she will be reading.
We are reading.	We were reading.	We will be reading.
You are reading.	You were reading.	You will be reading.
They are reading.	They were reading.	They will be reading.

Irregular Verbs

Every verb has four basic forms:

- The base form is the present tense. Use the phrase *Today I…* to find the base form of a verb:

```
Today I walk.  Today he/she walks.
Today I bring. Today he/she brings.
```

- By saying *Yesterday I…*, the past tense can be found:

```
Yesterday I thought.
Yesterday I saw.
```

- By saying *Many times I have…*, the past participle can be found:

```
Many times I have laughed.
Many times I have found.
```

- The present participle is always formed with *-ing*. By saying *Now I am…*, you can find the present participle:

```
Now I am building.
Now I am throwing.
```

Regular verbs form the past or past participle by adding *-d* or *-ed* to the present tense of the verb. Verbs that form their past or past participle in some other way are called *irregular verbs*. The following table shows the three forms of some irregular verbs. (The present participle hasn't been included because it is always formed by adding *-ing*.)

Present Tense	Past Tense	Past Participle
begin	began	begun
blow	blew	blown
break	broke	broken
bring	brought	brought
catch	caught	caught
choose	chose	chosen
come	came	come
dive	dived or dove	dived
do	did	done
drink	drank	drunk
eat	ate	eaten
fall	fell	fallen
fly	flew	flown

freeze	froze	frozen
give	gave	given
go	went	gone
grow	grew	grown
hide	hid	hidden
lead	led	led
lie (to rest)	lay	lain
run	ran	run
see	saw	seen
sink	sank	sunk
shake	shook	shaken
sit	sat	sat
speak	spoke	spoken
swim	swam	swum
take	took	taken
throw	threw	thrown
write	wrote	written

When you're unsure of the correct form of the verb, consult a dictionary. When you look up the verb in the present tense (for example, *sleep*), you'll see the past tense and the participles (*slept, sleeping*).

Special Verb Forms

Sometimes special verb forms are used as other parts of speech.

- **Infinitives**
  Infinitives are verb forms that are preceded by the word *to*. They may be used as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs:

  `The girl loves` ***`to read`***`.` (*To read* is used as a noun.)
  `She has many books` ***`to read`***`.` (*To read* is used as an adjective.)
  `She reads` ***`to learn`***`.` (*To learn* is used as an adverb.)

- **Gerunds**
  Gerunds are verb forms ending in *-ing*. They are used as nouns:

  `Reading` `is the girl's favourite pastime.` (*Reading* is used as a noun.)

  `She loved` ***`being asked`*** `about her` *`reading`*`.` (*Being asked* and *reading* are both used as nouns.)

- **Participles**
  Participles are verb forms usually ending in *-ing* or *-ed*. Participles are used as adjectives:

  `The` ***`frightened`*** `boy heard the` ***`howling`*** `dog.` (*Frightened* and *howling* are both used as adjectives.)

Active and Passive Voice

When the subject of a sentence is the performer of the action, the verb is in the *active voice*:

The hunter **chased** the fox.
The girl **threw** the javelin.

When the subject of the sentence is the receiver of the action, the verb is in the *passive voice*:

The fox **was chased** by the hunter.
The javelin **was thrown** by the girl.

While the active and passive voices can be used to add variety to writing, many writers prefer the active voice because it's more vigorous and interesting:

Active voice: My teacher **assigned** all this homework to me.
Passive voice: All this homework **was assigned** to me by my teacher.

Active voice: An animal **chewed** our carrots.
Passive voice: Our carrots **were chewed** by an animal.

The passive voice can be used to place special emphasis on the subject:

Active voice: A bee **stung** the young girl.
Passive voice: The young girl **was stung** by a bee.

In the first sentence, *bee* is the subject of the sentence and is given the most importance. In the second sentence, *the young girl* is placed in the subject position and becomes most important. Thus, writers use the active and passive voice to place emphasis where they wish.

Adjectives

An adjective is a word that describes (or modifies) a noun or a pronoun. Using adjectives helps to make the meaning of the sentence more interesting or precise.

Descriptive Adjectives

Descriptive adjectives are the most common type. They modify nouns by describing them. They are placed in front of the noun, as shown in the following examples:

the ***ancient*** ruins
the ***seven-year-old*** child
the ***black*** dog

Predicate Adjectives

When an adjective comes *after* the noun, it is called a *predicate adjective* or *adjective complement* because it's placed in the predicate. A predicate adjective follows a linking verb and modifies the subject of that verb:

She is ***beautiful***.
Diane appears ***happy***.
He seems ***kind***.

Note that it's the role an adjective plays in a sentence that makes it a descriptive adjective or a predicate adjective. Most adjectives can play either role:

That house is ***enormous***. (predicate adjective)
That's an ***enormous*** house. (descriptive adjective)

Limiting Adjectives

Limiting adjectives actually limit the meaning of a noun rather than describe it:

that book ***some*** friends
each house ***five*** students

Determiners

Determiners are special adjectives that signal a noun is coming. The three most common determiners are *a*, *an*, and *the*:

a pencil
an oyster
the doll

Numbers can be determiners when they come before a noun:

one child
sixty seconds
twelve people

The possessive pronouns *my*, *your*, *his*, *her*, *its*, *our*, and *their* are often used as determiners:

my car ***its*** paint
your house ***his*** coat

Some determiners indicate a general or indefinite number:

any candidate
some candy
no teachers

The demonstrative adjectives *this*, *that*, *these*, and *those* may also be considered determiners:

this book
that animal
these desks
those people

Comparison of Adjectives

Because adjectives are used to make the meanings of other words more precise, they must be able to express shades of meaning. For example, although a person may be *strong*, another may be *stronger*, and a third may be the *strongest*. When shades of meaning are indicated in an adjective in this way, the adjective is being *compared*. Adjectives may be said to have three degrees of comparison.

The *positive degree* describes one noun:

Austin is a ***tall*** boy.

The *comparative degree* is used when making a comparison between two nouns:

Austin is the ***taller*** of the two boys.

The *superlative degree* is used when three or more nouns are being compared:

Austin is the ***tallest*** boy in his class.

Here are some rules to help you when you are using adjectives:

Rule 1: Most adjectives of one syllable form the comparative and superlative by adding *-er* and *-est* to the positive form:

tall	taller	tallest
cheap	cheaper	cheapest

Rule 2: Some two-syllable adjectives form the comparative and superlative by adding *-er* and *-est* to the positive form:

quiet	quieter	quietest
funny	funnier	funniest

Rule 3: Other adjectives of two syllables form the comparative and superlative by putting *more* and *most* or *less* and *least* before the positive form:

hostile	more hostile	most hostile
	less hostile	least hostile
timid	more timid	most timid
	less timid	least timid

Rule 4: Adjectives of three or more syllables always form the comparative and superlative with *more, most, less,* or *least*:

beautiful	more beautiful	most beautiful
	less beautiful	least beautiful
reliable	more reliable	most reliable
	less reliable	least reliable

Rule 5: A few adjectives form the comparative and superlative irregularly. These adjectives have to be learned individually. Here are four common examples:

good	better	best
bad	worse	worst
little	less	least
many	more	most

Rule 6: Avoid using a double comparison (*more louder*) or a double superlative (*most unkindest*). *More* and *-er* or *most* and *-est* should not be used together:

Incorrect: This is the more stronger rope.
Correct: This is the stronger rope.

Incorrect: This is the most hardest question.
Correct: This is the hardest question.

Rule 7: Some adjectives cannot be compared because they're *absolute*. No comparison is possible for these adjectives. For example, if something is perfect, it's impossible for something else to be more perfect. (To be precise, you might want to use *nearly perfect.*) Here is a list of some absolute adjectives:

circular	equal
endless	preferable
unique	single
round	perfect

Adjectives and Linking Verbs

After a linking verb, use a predicate adjective (not an adverb) to describe the subject. Linking verbs include *be*, *become*, *grow*, *make*, *appear*, *look*, *feel*, *taste*, *smell*, and *sound*:

Incorrect: That rose smells *sweetly*.
Correct: That rose smells *sweet*.

Incorrect: She feels badly about her mistake.
Correct: She feels bad about her mistake.

Adverbs

An *adverb* is a word that modifies, intensifies, or qualifies a verb, adjective, or adverb. Many adverbs are easy to recognize because they're formed by adding *-ly* to the adjective. Check these examples:

Adjective	Adverb
slow	slowly
loud	loudly
gentle	gently
careful	carefully

Not all words ending in *-ly* are adverbs, however. A few adjectives such as *surly*, *silly*, and *holy* end in *-ly*.

At the same time, there are a number of adverbs that do not end in *-ly*. Here are some common examples:

afterwards	always	never	perhaps	sometimes
almost	ever	not	quite	somewhat
already	forward	now	rather	soon
also	here	often	seldom	then
altogether	just	once	so	there
yesterday	well	very	twice	too

Adverbs Modifying Verbs

Adverbs frequently modify verbs, telling *how*, *when*, or *where* something happened:

She ran ***clumsily***. (showing *how* she ran)
I'll do it ***today***. (showing *when* I'll do it)
Put the box ***here***. (showing *where* the box should be put)

Adverbs Modifying Adjectives

Adverbs can be used to modify, qualify, or intensify adjectives:

That suitcase is ***quite*** big.
That's a ***very*** unusual dress!
It's going to be ***extremely*** hot today.
He is the ***most*** reliable boy in the group.

Adverbs Modifying Other Adverbs

Adverbs can be used to modify, qualify, or intensify other adverbs:

She drove ***somewhat*** cautiously.
He spoke ***rather*** fast.
They played ***very*** well.
She swims ***much*** better than I do.

Adverbs Modifying Clauses

Adverbs can sometimes be used to modify not one word, but an entire clause:

Happily, everything worked out.
Luckily, no one was hurt.

Conjunctive Adverbs

Some adverbs assist in linking ideas. These adverbs are often called *transitional devices* because they provide bridges between ideas. Conjunctive adverbs are sometimes used with semicolons. (See The Semicolon in Punctuation of **Section 1: Spelling, Punctuation, and Capitalization**.)

Tania is worried; **however**, she is trying to be cheerful.

Corey and Alec are working out in the gym regularly. **Furthermore**, they have given up junk food.

These facts **also** suggest that more staff should be hired.

Here is a list of commonly used conjunctive adverbs:

also	nonetheless	finally
besides	otherwise	later
furthermore	still	meanwhile
indeed	consequently	next
moreover	hence	now
however	therefore	subsequently
instead	thus	then
nevertheless	earlier	

Confusion of Adjectives and Adverbs

A common error is to use an adjective where an adverb is needed. Remember to use adjectives to modify nouns and pronouns. Adverbs must be used to modify verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Note these examples:

Incorrect: He sings *loud*.
Correct: He sings *loudly*.

Incorrect: She works *real* hard.
Correct: She works *really* hard.

One of the most common confusions of this sort involves the adjective *good* and the adverb *well*:

Incorrect: It worked out *good*.
Correct: It worked out *well*.

Comparison of Adverbs

Adverbs, like adjectives, can have comparative and superlative forms. Some form the comparative by adding *-er* and the superlative by adding *-est*:

Adverb	Comparative	Superlative
low	lower	lowest
early	earlier	earliest

Most adverbs, however, use *more* and *most* for the comparative and superlative forms:

Adverb	Comparative	Superlative
quietly	more quietly	most quietly
happily	more happily	most happily

A few adverbs don't use these forms. They have irregular comparatives and superlatives. Here are a few examples:

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
much, many	more	most
well	better	best
badly	worse	worst
little	less	least

Prepositions

A preposition begins a phrase that shows a relationship between a noun or pronoun and some other word in the sentence. These phrases are called *prepositional phrases*:

during the exciting game
with his mother
at the elementary school
from him
to them

Prepositions often connect nouns (or pronouns) to other nouns (or pronouns):

I saw ***Kyle*** ***beside*** the ***pool***.
noun preposition noun

He is ***like*** his ***father***.
pronoun preposition noun

At other times, prepositions connect nouns and pronouns to verbs:

He ***was*** ***playing*** ***in*** the ***sandpit***.
verb preposition noun

We ***hurried*** ***across*** the ***bridge***.
verb preposition noun

Here is a list of commonly used prepositions:

about	at	despite	like	outside	under
above	before	down	minus	over	underneath
across	behind	during	near	past	unlike
after	below	except	of	round	until
against	beneath	for	off	since	up
along	beside	from	on	through	upon
amid	between	in	onto	throughout	with
among	beyond	inside	opposite	to	within
around	by	into	out	toward	without

For more information on prepositional phrases, see *Phrases* under *Parts of the Sentence* in **Section 2: Grammar**.

Using Prepositions Correctly

Some prepositions are troublesome. Here are some tips to help you use prepositions correctly:

- Use *between* for two; *among* for more than two:

  The remainder of the pie was divided ***between*** John and Charles.
  Peter walked ***between*** the two little girls.
  Santa Claus distributed the presents ***among*** the children.

- After *different*, the preposition *from* should be used rather than the conjunction *than*. Although *than* is used frequently in informal speech and writing, *from* is always correct:

  Your drawing is different ***from*** mine.
  The outcome was different ***from*** what I had expected.

- While you would pick an apple *off* a tree or take an apple *off* a plate, you would take an apple *from* your mother. Always use *from* when speaking of people. Never use *off of*.

  Incorrect: I picked this pen off of the floor.
  Correct: I picked this pen *off* the floor.

- When you're changing your position, you're moving *into* something. When you're not moving, you're staying *in* one place.

Incorrect: We went in the building.
Correct: We went *into* the building.

Correct: The ice cream is *in* the freezer.
Correct: Put the ice cream *into* the freezer.

Conjunctions

A conjunction is a word that joins two parts of a sentence. These parts may be two clauses, two phrases, or two parts of speech. There are three types of conjunctions:

- *Coordinating conjunctions* join two equal things.
- *Subordinating conjunctions* join two things of unequal rank.
- *Correlative conjunctions* are used in pairs to show a special relationship.

Coordinating Conjunctions

A coordinating conjunction joins words, phrases, or clauses that are of the same class and importance within the sentence. The coordinating conjunctions are *and, but, or, nor, for, so,* and *yet.*

In the following sentence, the coordinating conjunction joins two nouns:

You may write the *exam* or the *essay*.
noun noun

Here, the conjunction joins two prepositional phrases:

John went *to the dance* and *to the party*.
prepositional phrase prepositional phrase

In this example, the conjunction joins two independent clauses:

Savannah was friendly, but *Jamie was rude*.
independent clause independent clause

Subordinating Conjunctions

Subordinating conjunctions join two elements of unequal worth. Subordinating conjunctions show that one clause (the dependent clause) is less important than the other; that is, one is dependent on the other for its meaning:

I can't leave *because* I'm not finished.
independent clause subordinating conjunction dependent clause

Here are some frequently used subordinating conjunctions:

how	whose	whereas	unless	as
why	whoever	whether	before	if
what	which	though	after	
when	whenever	although	than	
who	while	since	that	
whom	where	because	until	

Some subordinating conjunctions are phrases rather than single words:

so that	as soon as
as if	even though
as long as	provided that

Subordinating conjunctions are used to show a relationship between two parts of a sentence. The most common kinds of relationships are shown in the table that follows:

Relationship	Conjunction Used
Place	where, wherever
Time	when, whenever, while, before, after, as, until, since
Manner	as if, as though
Cause or reason	because, so that, why, since, whereas
Condition	unless, if, whether, lest, so that, as long as, provided that
Concession	although, though, if, while, whereas, even though

Correlative Conjunctions

Correlative conjunctions are coordinating conjunctions that are used in pairs:

not only...but also
not only...but
both...and
whether...or
either...or
neither...nor

When correlative conjunctions are used, they should connect parts that are parallel in form. If a prepositional phrase follows the first conjunction, then a prepositional phrase should follow the second. If a verb follows the first, then a verb in the same form should follow the second:

Not parallel: Paul liked not only ***fishing*** but also ***to hunt.*** (incorrect)
Parallel: Paul liked not only ***to fish*** but also ***to hunt.*** (correct)
Parallel: Paul liked not only ***fishing*** but also ***hunting.*** (correct)

Interjections

Interjections are words that express emotion or surprise. They are usually followed by an exclamation mark. Many interjections are unacceptable in formal writing because they are slang words, like the following:

Oops! Great! Yeah! Wow! Super!

Parts of the Sentence

A *sentence* is a group of words expressing a complete thought. Its most important parts are its *subject* and *predicate*.

Subjects

The subject of a sentence is a noun or a pronoun. A subject is the person, place, thing, idea, or emotion that is doing something or being talked about in a sentence:

Babies cry quite often.
Ducks swim in the pond.
The train whistled loudly.

The subjects in the preceding sentences are not modified. In other words, no adjectives are used to describe them; thus, not much is known about them. Subjects without modifiers are called *bare subjects*. Notice the changes in meaning when modifiers are added to these bare subjects:

Hungry babies cry quite often.
Tame ducks swim in the pond.
The toy train whistled loudly.

By adding modifiers to bare subjects, you give more information about them and make them more complete. The bare subject, along with all of its modifiers, forms the *complete subject*.

The subject usually does the action:

The boy	chased	the dog.
doing the action	action verb	receiving the action

To find the subject, ask *who* or *what* is doing something or is being or having something:

Question: *Who* chased?
Answer: *The boy* chased.
Therefore: *The boy* is the subject of the verb *chased*.

Compound Subjects

A subject containing two or more nouns or pronouns is called a *compound subject*:

Babies and small children cry quite often.
Ducks and geese swim in the pond.
The train and steamship whistled loudly.

Position of Subject

Subjects are not always found at the beginning of sentences:

- **Questions**
  In questions, the subject sometimes interrupts the verb:

  Did ***Judy*** take this photograph?
  When will ***winter*** end?

- **Commands**
  In commands (imperative sentences), the subject is usually left out. *You* is the implied subject.

  [*You*] Clean your room, please.
  [*You*] Phone your brother.

- **Sentences beginning with *here* and *there***
  In sentences beginning with the words *here* and *there*, the subject follows the verb:

  There were ***two hundred people*** at the meeting.
  Here is ***my last assignment.***

- **Inverted sentences**
  To create emphasis, some sentences are deliberately written in the opposite order, with the subject following the verb:

  Along the path crept ***the soldiers***.
  Down the stairs tumbled ***the toddler***.

Predicates

Verbs are the most important part of the predicate in sentences. Verbs are words that show what action is taking place or what situation exists:

Babies ***cry***.
Ducks ***swim***.
The train ***whistled***.

The verbs in these sentences are not modified. In other words, no adverbs are used to describe them; thus, not much is known about them. You know what is being done, but you don't know how, when, where, or why. A verb without modifiers is called a *bare predicate*. Notice the changes in meaning when modifiers are added to these bare predicates:

Babies ***cry quite often***.
Ducks ***swim in the pond***.
The train ***whistled loudly***.

When modifiers are added to bare predicates, more information is given about them so they're more complete.

When the predicate contains two or more main verbs, it's called a *compound predicate*. Note the following examples:

Babies ***cry and gurgle*** quite often.
Ducks ***swim and dive*** in the pond.
The train ***whistled and screeched*** quite loudly.

Objects

Predicates may contain more than verbs and modifiers. In some sentences, when action verbs are used, a noun or pronoun follows the verb. Some action verbs are even followed by two nouns or pronouns. The noun or pronoun following an action verb is called an *object*.

Direct Object of a Verb

Many action verbs (but not all of them) have a receiver of that action:

The boy	chased	the dog.
subject	action verb	receiver of the action

The receiver of the action is called the *direct object*. To find the direct object, ask *who* or *what* is receiving the action of the subject:

Question: The boy chased *what*?
Answer: The boy chased *the dog*.
Therefore: *The dog* is the direct object of the verb *chased.*

Each of the following sentences contains an action verb and a direct object. To find the direct object, ask *who* or *what* is receiving the action of the subject:

`Jason hugged his brother.`

Question: Jason hugged *whom*?
Answer: Jason hugged *his brother*.
Therefore: *His brother* is the direct object of the verb *hugged*.

`The farmer raises cattle.`

Question: The farmer raises *what*?
Answer: The farmer raises *cattle*.
Therefore: *Cattle* is the direct object of the verb *raises*.

`Birds eat seeds.`

Question: Birds eat *what*?
Answer: Birds eat *seeds*.
Therefore: *Seeds* is the direct object of the verb *eat*.

Indirect Object of a Verb

Some action verbs also have an indirect object. An indirect object is a noun or pronoun that *follows the action verb* and *comes in front of the direct object*. Indirect objects answer the questions *to* or *for:*

`I sold him the book.`

Question: I sold *what*?
Answer: I sold the *book*.
Therefore: *Book* is the direct object of the verb *sold*.
To whom? I sold the book **to** *him.*
Therefore: *Him* is the indirect object.

`I made my aunt some cookies.`

Question: I made *what?*
Answer: I made *some cookies.*
Therefore: *Some cookies* is the direct object of the verb *made.*
For whom? I made some cookies **for** *my aunt.*
Therefore: *My aunt* is the indirect object.

Here are some other examples of sentences with direct and indirect objects:

Subject	Action Verb	Indirect Object	Direct Object
Stefan	gave	me	some candy.
Dad	read	Jody	a story.
The coach	showed	us	our mistakes.
We	told	Mom	the truth.

Complements

Some predicates contain linking verbs instead of action verbs. Linking verbs are followed by *complements.* A complement is a noun, pronoun, or adjective that follows a linking verb.

The woman **is** (linking verb) a *carpenter* (complement).

In this example, *carpenter* does not receive any action; therefore, it's not an object. *Carpenter* and *woman* both refer to the same person. In this sentence, *carpenter* is called a *complement* because it completes the meaning of the sentence.

Noun Complements

The following sentences contain *noun complements* after the linking verbs:

Tracy remains **the *captain***.
These people have become **my *friends***.
The superintendent was ***Mr. Kabaroff***.

Adjective Complements

The following sentence contains an adjective complement:

The carpenter is ***busy***.

The adjective *busy* completes the meaning of the sentence. An *adjective complement* or a *predicate adjective* always describes the subject.

Here are three more sentences containing predicate adjectives:

The weather has been ***cool***.
The fabric feels ***soft***.
The hired hand seems ***ambitious***.

Pronoun Complements

Some linking verbs are followed by pronoun complements:

This student was ***the one*** selected.
Claudette is ***someone*** to trust.
The guilty person isn't ***anyone*** here.

Phrases

A *phrase* is a group of words without a subject and/or a verb. A phrase functions as a single grammatical unit in a sentence.

There are several different types of phrases:

- verb
- prepositional
- appositive
- infinitive
- participial
- gerund
- absolute

Verb Phrases

A *verb phrase* is a group of two or more words acting as a verb. A verb phrase includes the main verb and its helping verbs:

She ***will have eaten*** by then.
They ***are working*** very hard.
We ***would have finished*** earlier with your help.
You ***should have been notified*** immediately.

Prepositional Phrases

A *prepositional phrase* is a group of words that begins with a preposition and ends with a noun or pronoun.

The noun or pronoun that appears at the end of a prepositional phrase is called the *object of the preposition*:

under the **bed**
preposition **noun (object of the preposition)**

with great **speed**
behind the **dresser**
in the **yard**

Prepositional phrases come in two types: adverb phrases and adjective phrases.

- **Adverb Phrases**

  A prepositional phrase that takes the place or does the work of an adverb is an adverb phrase. An adverb phrase will answer the questions *how? when? where?* and *why?*

The pupils sat ***in the classroom***.	(tells *where* they sat)
We ate ***with great care***.	(tells *how* we ate)
Flowers bloom ***in the spring***.	(tells *when* they bloom)

- **Adjective Phrases**

  A prepositional phrase that takes the place or does the work of an adjective is an adjective phrase:

We watched the bird ***in the tree***.	(tells *which* bird)
The boys ***behind the truck*** were smoking.	(tells *which* boys)

  To avoid confusion, place prepositional phrases as closely as possible to the words they modify. Look at this example:

  I saw the doctor who took out my tonsils **on the golf course**.

  The sentence makes more sense written this way:

  On the golf course, I saw the doctor who took out my tonsils.

Appositive Phrases

Appositive phrases consist of a noun or noun group, or a pronoun following a noun or pronoun. The appositive explains the preceding noun or pronoun.

Jessie James, ***a notorious bandit***, robbed several banks.
The club president, ***Arthur Wong***, will meet with you.

Sometimes appositives will include other phrases or clauses:

Mrs. Morris, ***the lady who won the raffle***, is here to claim her prize.

This poem, ***one of my favourites***, has wonderful sound effects.

Don't confuse an appositive and a participial phrase. An appositive begins with a noun or pronoun. A participial phrase begins with a verb form ending in *-d, -ed,* or *-ing.*

Infinitive Phrases

An *infinitive* is the basic form of a verb, beginning with the word *to*:

to go
to walk
to think

Infinitives used in sentences frequently begin phrases:

The woman decided ***to walk the dog***.
Those are the easiest ones ***to do quickly***.
He decided ***to cook the supper***.

Infinitive phrases can function as nouns, adjectives, and adverbs:

To finish the job was his task.
(*To finish the job* acts as a noun, the subject of the sentence.)

He wanted ***to ask a question***.
(*To ask a question* acts as a noun, the direct object in the sentence.)

Those are the best ones ***to get now***.
(*To get now* acts as an adjective describing the noun *ones*.)

He was determined ***to win the race***.
(*To win the race* acts as an adverb describing the adjective *determined*.)

Participial Phrases

A participle is a form of a verb that comes in two varieties: past and present.

The past participles of most verbs end in *-ed*:

painted
discussed

Some past participles, however, are irregular:

written
thought
seen

Present participles always end in *-ing*:

painting	thinking
discussing	seeing
writing	lying

Participles function as adjectives:

Look at the ***painted*** houses. (*Painted* describes houses.)
Running, Max tripped and fell. (*Running* describes Max.)

Participles frequently introduce *participial phrases*:

Look at the house ***painted so nicely***.
Running to school, Max tripped and fell.
This poem, ***written by Robert Frost***, is my favourite.

Because it acts as an adjective, a participle or participial phrase must have something in the sentence to modify or describe.

Correct: Running to school, Max tripped and fell.
Incorrect: Running to school, a book dropped from Max's knapsack.

In the first sentence, the participial phrase modifies Max. In the second sentence, the participial phrase has nothing to modify; therefore, it's said to be a *dangling participle*. One way to correct the sentence would be to convert the participial phrase into an adverb clause:

While he was running to school, Max dropped a book from his knapsack.

Another way to correct the sentence is to rewrite it so that the participial phrase modifies the subject:

Running to school, *Max* dropped a book from his knapsack.

For more information about dangling participles, see **Section 3: Writing Effectively.**

The Gerund Phrase

Gerunds look like present participles because they always end in *-ing*. However, they function in sentences as nouns rather than adjectives. Note the contrast:

It was a frightening movie.
(*Frightening* is a participle modifying *movie*.)

Frightening people is cruel.
(*Frightening* is a gerund acting as a noun. In this sentence, *frightening* is the subject of the sentence.)

A gerund can be the direct object of a sentence:

Tanya took up ***sailing*** last summer.

A gerund can also act as the noun in a prepositional phrase (the object of the preposition):

She drank some water after ***playing*** *basketball*.

Gerunds can begin *gerund phrases*:

Lifting weights is a way to gain strength.
He decided to give up ***eating junk food***.

Absolute Phrases

An absolute phrase is nearly a complete sentence; only part of the verb is missing. Unlike the other types of phrases, an absolute phrase doesn't modify a particular part of the sentence or perform the job of a noun, adjective, or adverb. Check these examples:

All things considered, I think I'll go.
The night being cold, she wore a coat.
His eye covered with a bandage, he looked like a pirate.

Sentence Patterns

Sentences can be classified into four basic patterns. All sentences are variations of these basic patterns.

Pattern One: Subject/Action Verb

This sentence pattern consists of a subject and an action verb:

Dylan shouted.

Many sentences with a subject/action verb pattern are much longer than two words. The subject and verb may have many modifying words and phrases.

Running across the soccer field, Dylan shouted to his team.

Pattern Two: Subject/Action Verb/Direct Object

This pattern has three parts: a subject, an action verb, and a direct object.

Doreen wrote a letter.

Sentences with this pattern may also have additional modifying words and phrases.

To please her mother, Doreen quickly wrote a short letter apologizing for being rude.

Pattern Three: Subject/Action Verb/Indirect Object/Direct Object

This pattern has four essential parts: a subject, an action verb, an indirect object, and a direct object.

Dad gave us a treat.

Modifying words and phrases may also be added to this pattern.

After supper, Dad suddenly gave us a special treat for being helpful.

Pattern Four: Subject/Linking Verb/Complement

This pattern is different from the other three because it has a linking verb and complement. The complement can be a noun, pronoun, or adjective.

Mrs. Bertram became the president.
She is efficient.

You can also add modifying words and phrases to this pattern.

After the election, Mrs. Bertram, a trained nurse, became the new president.

According to her employer, she is very efficient in the office.

Clauses

A *clause* is a group of words containing a subject and a verb. There are two basic types of clauses: independent (or principal) clauses and dependent (or subordinate) clauses.

Independent Clauses

If a clause can stand by itself as a sentence, it's called an *independent clause*. Each of the sentences that follow contains a subject and a verb. Each stands by itself and has a complete meaning, so each is an independent clause.

She often ***came*** late.
subject **verb**

Men ***work*** noisily on the project.
subject **verb**

Students ***study*** for final examinations.
subject **verb**

Every sentence must have at least one independent clause. Some sentences have two (or more) independent clauses:

She often came late, but *she never left early*.
independent clause **independent clause**

Dependent Clauses

When sentences contain two subjects and two verbs, they have two clauses:

Friends who are loyal are respected.
subject subject verb verb

(The two clauses are *friends are respected* and *who are loyal*.)

We visited the city where he lived.
subject verb subject verb

(The two clauses are *we visited the city* and *where he lived*.)

Snoopy came when I called him.
subject verb subject verb

(The two clauses are *Snoopy came* and *when I called him*.)

This is a game that I enjoy.
subject verb subject verb

(The two clauses are *this is a game* and *that I enjoy*.)

In the following sentences, one clause can stand by itself as a complete sentence. The other clause is incomplete. It depends on other words or some part of another clause to make its meaning clear. The clauses in the first group are independent clauses; the clauses in the second group are dependent clauses:

Independent Clauses	Dependent Clauses
Friends are respected. subject verb	who are loyal subject verb
We visited the city. subject verb	where he lived subject verb
Snoopy came. subject verb	when I called him subject verb
This is a game. subject verb	that I enjoy subject verb

Dependent clauses begin with *subordinating conjunctions*. For a list of subordinating conjunctions, see *Conjunctions* under *Parts of Speech* in **Section 2: Grammar**.

Remember: While an independent clause can be a sentence on its own, a dependent clause cannot stand alone. A dependent clause is always attached to the independent clause with a subordinating conjunction.

These are three types of dependent clauses: adjective, adverb, and noun.

Adjective Dependent Clauses

Adjectives are words used to modify or describe nouns. A dependent clause doing the work of an adjective is called an *adjective clause*. Look at the following sentence:

We sat under a *shady* tree.

This sentence contains only one subject and one verb. It also contains an adjective, *shady*, which modifies the noun *tree*.

Now examine a slightly different sentence:

We sat under a tree *that was shady*.
independent clause dependent clause

This sentence has two subjects (the pronouns *we* and *that*) and two verbs (*sat* and *was*). The dependent clause *that was shady* describes the noun *tree*.

Here are some tips to help you understand adjective clauses:

- An adjective clause is usually introduced by a relative pronoun. For information on relative pronouns, see *Pronouns* under *Parts of Speech* in **Section 2: Grammar**.

- *Who*, *whom*, and *whose* begin adjective clauses that describe people.
  – ***Who*** is used when the relative pronoun is the subject of the verb in the dependent clause:

    She introduced me to a man ***who was very interesting***.

  – ***Whom*** is used when the relative pronoun is the object of either the verb in the dependent clause or a preposition.

    The man ***whom we met*** is Jean's cousin.
    (*Whom* is the object of the verb *met*.)

    The lady ***to whom you spoke*** is my aunt.
    (*Whom* is the object of the preposition *to*.)

  – ***Whose*** is used to show possession:

    These are the people ***whose*** **names are on the list**.

- *Which* begins an adjective clause that describes a specific place or thing:

    I found my uncle's medals, **which he won during the war**.

- *That* begins an adjective clause that describes a general place or thing:

  I found the medals **that my uncle won during the war**.

- The words *when* and *where* sometimes introduce adjective clauses. When they do, the sentence will indicate the time (*when*) and the place (*where*).

  The calf was born in spring, **when the snow was melting**.
  This is the place **where he was born**.

- Adjective clauses should be placed as closely as possible to the words they modify to eliminate confusion. Therefore, an adjective clause sometimes has to interrupt a main clause:

  The boys ***who passed their test*** rode the horses.

  Imagine the confusion if the sentence were written like this:

  The boys rode the horses ***who passed their test***.

- Adjective clauses can be restrictive or non-restrictive.
  – Commas are not used with restrictive adjective clauses. Restrictive clauses are used to limit the meaning of a sentence. They provide essential information about whatever the clause is referring to:

    The girl ***who came to dinner*** was an excellent student.

    In this sentence, *who came to dinner* explains which particular girl is meant. This clause limits the meaning; it makes the sentence refer to a particular girl.

  – Commas are used to enclose a non-restrictive adjective clause. A non-restrictive clause gives added information about whatever the clause is referring to. This added information is not essential to grasp the main meaning of the sentence:

    Jeff Saunders, ***who had won an athletic award***, came first in the race.

    The clause *who had won an athletic award* simply adds more information to the sentence because the person who won the race has already been identified by name.

Adverb Dependent Clauses

An adverb is used to modify a verb, an adjective, or another adverb; a dependent clause doing the work of an adverb is called an *adverb clause*. Adverb clauses usually tell *how*, *when*, *where*, and sometimes *why*. Look at this sentence:

I went ***early***.

The sentence contains an adverb, *early*, that modifies the verb *went*. It tells *when I went*. Now examine a slightly different sentence:

I went *though it was early*.
independent clause dependent clause

In this sentence, the dependent clause acts as an adverb because it modifies the verb *went*; therefore, *though it was early* is an adverb clause.

Here are some tips to help you with adverb clauses:

- Adverb clauses begin with subordinating conjunctions, such as *if, as, since, because, when, where, until, unless, than, before, after, while, whereas, though, even though,* and *although.*

- When the adverb clause comes at the beginning of the sentence, the adverb clause is usually followed by a comma:

  When he came, he was surprised.

- While most adverb clauses tell *how*, *when*, *where*, or *why*, some indicate *degree*.

  The horse ran more quickly ***than we expected***.

- In some adverb clauses, especially those beginning with *as* or *than*, the second verb is omitted but understood:

  He works as hard ***as you [do].***
  Meat is now more expensive ***than [it was] before***.

  With this type of sentence construction, remember that *than* or *as* is a subordinating conjunction introducing a clause. A common mistake is to consider *than* or *as* as a preposition, as in this sentence:

  He is taller than me.

  Although this sentence construction is used informally in speech, it is incorrect because the writer has incorrectly used *than* as a preposition, and has followed it with the objective form of the pronoun, *me*. If you expand the sentence to include the verb in the dependent clause, you'll see that the subjective form of the personal pronoun is required:

  He is taller than I [am].
  (This sentence construction is correct and appropriate for formal speech and writing.)

You can improve your writing by properly using adverb clauses. Many writers create sentences with several independent clauses combined with coordinating conjunctions such as *and* or *but*. Very often these sentence constructions can be improved if one of the independent clauses is changed into an adverb clause. The following sentence contains two independent clauses:

Canada is a huge country, but **only a small part of it is habitable**.
independent clause — independent clause

This sentence can be changed so that it has an adverb clause and an independent clause:

Although Canada is a huge country, **only a small part of it is habitable**.
dependent clause — independent clause

Changing some independent clauses into adverb clauses and occasionally beginning a sentence with an adverb clause will give variety to your writing.

Noun Dependent Clauses

Just as an adjective clause does the work of an adjective, and an adverb clause does the work of an adverb, a *noun clause* does the work of a noun or pronoun. Like nouns and pronouns, noun clauses can function as subjects, objects, or complements.

Because of the work it does in the sentence, a noun clause often becomes an essential part of the independent clause. The independent clause may not be able to stand alone without the noun clause:

Whoever finds the wallet will receive a reward.
noun clause

In this sentence, the entire noun clause (*whoever finds the wallet*) is acting as the subject of the independent clause. The noun clause alone makes no sense, but without it, neither does the independent clause.

Here are some tips to help you understand noun clauses:

- Noun clauses also begin with subordinating conjunctions, such as *that, who, what, whatever, whether, whoever, how,* and *why.*

  The judge knew *that the prisoner was innocent*.
  independent clause — noun clause

  In this sentence, the word *that* signals that a noun clause has begun; but be careful—very often the word *that* is left out, as in this example:

  The judge knew the prisoner was innocent.

- Noun clauses can be objects of verbs.

  The teacher believed ***what he was told***.
  noun clause acting as object of verb

  I explained ***why I didn't pay him***.
  noun clause acting as object of verb

  I don't know ***whether I'll go***.
  noun clause acting as object of verb

- A noun clause, like a noun or pronoun, can be the subject of a verb:

  That my friend will be late for dinner is certain.
  noun clause acting as a subject

  What has become of him will remain a mystery.
  noun clause acting as a subject

  How they will construct the new bridge is a puzzle.
  noun clause acting as a subject

  Whoever wins the prize will be a lucky person.
  noun clause acting as a subject

- A noun clause can also act as an object of a preposition.

  I am aware of ***what you have done***.
  noun clause acting as object of preposition *of*

  He went back to ***where he had been before***.
  noun clause acting as object of preposition *to*

  You must concentrate on ***how the correct method works***.
  noun clause acting as object of preposition *on*

- A noun clause can be the complement of a linking verb.

  The result was ***that he became famous***.
  noun clause as complement

  That is ***what he decided***.
  noun clause as complement

Types of Sentences

Sentences can be classified according to their structure or according to their function.

Sentence Construction

Grouped according to their structure, there are four types of sentences: simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex.

Simple Sentences

A sentence with only one independent clause is called a *simple sentence*:

The paperboy collected on Monday.
subject verb

We arrived on time.
subject verb

Some simple sentences have two subjects (compound subject) or two predicates (compound predicate). However, this type of sentence still has only one independent clause. The sentence cannot be split into two clauses:

Tom and his cousin *stopped us and offered their help.*
compound subject compound predicate

Compound Sentences

A sentence with two or more independent clauses is a *compound sentence*. The independent clauses are joined with a coordinating conjunction, a semicolon, or a colon.

The paperboy collected on Wednesday, but we had no money.
subject verb subject verb

We arrived on time; they were late.
subject verb subject verb

Complex Sentences

A sentence with one independent clause and one or more dependent clauses is called a *complex sentence*. A subordinating conjunction joins the dependent clause to the independent clause.

I answered the telephone
subject verb
independent clause

when it rang.
subordinating conjunction subject verb
dependent clause

This sentence contains two clauses. Because the first clause, *I answered the telephone*, can stand by itself, it's an independent clause. The second clause, *when it rang*, cannot stand alone and make sense; therefore, it's a dependent clause.

Here are a few more complex sentences. In each, the independent clause is bolded and the dependent clause is italicized:

Although it's warm, **I feel chilly**.
Students *who work hard* **generally pass their tests**.
Animals *that are treated kindly* **become good pets**.

Notice that the independent clause may be separated by the dependent clause.

Compound-Complex Sentences

A sentence that contains one or more dependent clauses and two or more independent clauses is called a *compound-complex sentence*. A compound-complex sentence must have at least three clauses, joined by a subordinating conjunction and a coordinating conjunction or a semicolon or colon.

After Father made several vain attempts, **he landed on**
subject verb subject verb

the beach, but **the birds had disappeared**.
subject verb

This sentence contains three clauses. The first clause, *After Father made several vain attempts*, is a dependent clause. The other two clauses can each stand by themselves: **he landed on the beach** and **the birds had disappeared**. Thus, this sentence is a compound sentence, as well as being a complex sentence. Such a sentence is called a compound-complex sentence.

Here are more examples of compound-complex sentences. The independent clauses are bolded; the dependent clauses are italicized.

The food was strange and highly seasoned, but **the travellers ate eagerly** *because they had not touched a morsel of food all day*.

While the crowd waved joyfully, **the diesel engines roared to life**, and **the big ship left the pier**.

We could relax on the beach, or **we could go to the pool**, *where there are umbrellas for shade*.

Emlyn, *whose hand was bleeding*, **looked frightened**; however, **he didn't cry**.

Sentence Function

Grouped according to their functions, there are four basic kinds of sentences: statements, questions, commands, and exclamatory sentences. The punctuation mark at the end of the sentence helps to indicate the type of sentence.

Statements (Declarative Sentences)

The most common kind of sentence is the one that states information. These declarative sentences end with a period:

```
Edmonton is the capital of Alberta.
There is much to learn in school.
I want to learn how to roller-skate.
```

In most statements, the verb follows the subject. However, in *inverted* sentences, the usual order is reversed. The subject follows the verb:

```
Across the stage stomped the director.
On top of the hill stood the castle.
```

Questions (Interrogative Sentences)

A sentence that asks a question is called an *interrogative* sentence. It always ends with a question mark:

```
Have you done the dishes?
When will the train arrive?
```

In questions, the subject usually separates the verb.

Commands (Imperative Sentences)

A sentence that gives a command or asks a favour is called an *imperative* sentence and ends with a period:

```
Do your homework.
Please open the door.
```

Commands usually begin with the verb. The subject appears to be missing, but it is implied to be *you*.

Exclamatory Sentences

An exclamatory sentence is one that shows surprise or anger. It's punctuated with an exclamation mark:

```
What a wonderful treat!
How kind you are!
Let's get going!
Stop that quarrelling!
```

Section 3: Writing Effectively

Writing Correctly

As a writer, you must try to communicate as clearly as you can. One way to be sure that you are expressing your ideas clearly is to avoid making mistakes that can confuse the reader.

Fragments

A sentence is a group of related words that expresses a complete thought. A sentence must contain a subject and a predicate. At times, however, people don't use complete sentences. Look at the following conversation:

```
Jack: What time is it?
 Joe: Five-thirty.
Jack: What're you eating?
 Joe: Pizza.
Jack: Looks good.
 Joe: Join me?
Jack: Thanks. Move over.
```

You'll notice that most of this conversation is made up of incomplete sentences. This kind of informal language is used in everyday speech and is often used in stories, novels, and plays. However, incomplete sentences should be avoided in formal situations and in most other written work.

Incomplete sentences that have mistakenly been written as if they were complete sentences are often called *sentence fragments*. A fragment is a piece or part of something; a sentence fragment is a part or piece of a sentence. Look at these examples:

```
Two hundred cheering spectators
Climbing over the fence near the barn
After they built a snow fence
The character who escapes from the villain
```

None of the examples is complete by itself. The first one, *Two hundred cheering spectators*, doesn't have a predicate telling what these people are doing.

The second fragment, *Climbing over the fence near the barn*, doesn't have a subject telling who did the climbing.

The third example, *After they built a snow fence*, has both a subject and a predicate, but they are in a dependent clause. What's missing is the main subject and predicate (the independent clause) telling what they did after building the fence.

The last sentence fragment has a subject (*the character*) followed by a dependent clause. However, there's no predicate to complete the independent clause: what happened to the character?

To complete these fragments, you must add the missing parts. Here are examples:

Two hundred cheering spectators ***attended the game***.

Climbing over the fence near the barn, ***the boys cautiously approached the horse***. Or add a subject and change the verb: *The boys climbed* over the fence near the barn.

After they built a snow fence, ***they went home to warm up***. Or drop the subordinating conjunction and convert the dependent clause to an independent one: They built a snow fence.

The character who escapes from the villain ***later marries him.***

Run-On Sentences

When speakers or writers allow their thoughts to run together, the result is a run-on sentence—the opposite of a sentence fragment. To tell if a group of words is a run-on sentence, ask yourself these two questions:

- Does this group of words express a single, complete idea?
- If two or more related ideas are expressed, are they joined by a conjunction, semicolon, or colon?

Run-on sentences are sometimes called *fused sentences* because two complete sentences are incorrectly fused into one. The most common type of run-on, or fused, sentence is the *comma splice*. A comma splice occurs when two sentences are incorrectly joined by a comma, as in this example:

The teacher was respected by all the students, she put up with no nonsense.

This sentence consists of two clauses, each with its own subject and predicate:

The teacher was respected by all the students.
She put up with no nonsense.

Clauses cannot be joined with a comma; they must be joined by a conjunction, a semicolon, or a colon.

How to Correct Run-On Sentences

You can correct run-on sentences by using one of these methods:

- Use a period to separate the clauses into two sentences:

Incorrect: The teacher was respected by all the students, she put up with no nonsense.

Correct: The teacher was respected by all the students. She put up with no nonsense.

When you insert a period at the end of the first complete thought, you turn a run-on sentence into two complete sentences. Here's another example:

Incorrect: I was late, I ran to school.
Correct: I was late. I ran to school

Although this method creates two correct sentences, the result may be two short, ineffective sentences. This can make your writing very choppy, but you can correct this problem by joining the two clauses with a conjunction or a semicolon.

- Use a conjunction to join the clauses into an effective sentence:

  The teacher was respected by all the students, ***but*** she put up with no nonsense.

  I was late, ***so*** I ran to school.

  Because I was late, I ran to school.

- Use a semicolon to join the clauses into an effective sentence:

  The teacher was respected by all the students; nevertheless, she put up with no nonsense.

  I was late; consequently, I ran to school.

Subject/Verb Agreement

Verbs, like nouns and pronouns, may be singular or plural.

- If the subject is singular, then the verb must be singular.
- If the subject is plural, then the verb must be plural.

Here are some examples to show the agreement between subjects and their verbs:

Present Tense Singular	Present Tense Plural
The farm ***looks*** large.	The farms ***look*** large.
The boy ***writes*** neatly.	The boys ***write*** neatly.
The man ***goes*** to work.	The men ***go*** to work.

In the past and future tenses, the verb stays the same for both singular and plural:

Past Tense	Future Tense
The boy ran quickly.	The boy will run quickly.
The boys ran quickly.	The boys will run quickly.

Finding the Subject

Because the verb must agree with its subject, it's important to be able to find the bare subject.

When there's only one noun or pronoun in the complete subject, finding the bare subject is easy:

The red bicycle rides well.
Dark, muddy water has covered the floor.
He is my brother's friend.

When there are two or more nouns in the complete subject, choosing the bare subject is more difficult:

The five boys on the bench are cheering loudly.
The bicycle with the red fenders has been damaged.

The best way to find the bare subject is to ask who or what did the action in the sentence. Often a prepositional phrase modifying the subject will confuse you when you're choosing the bare subject. In each of the preceding examples, there's a prepositional phrase: *on the bench* and *with the red fenders*. Remember that **the bare subject of a sentence is never part of a prepositional phrase.**

In each of the following sentences, the bare subject is followed by a prepositional phrase. Remember that the verb must agree with the bare subject, not the phrase:

The five boys on the bench *are cheering* loudly.
plural subject — plural verb

The bicycle with the red fenders *has been damaged*.
singular subject — singular verb

A box of candies *was left* on the table.
singular subject — singular verb

The subject usually comes before the verb in a sentence. However, when the sentence begins with words such as *here* or *there*, the subject comes after the verb.

Singular Subject and Verb: Here ***is*** the **book**.
(This sentence means *The book is here*.) singular verb, singular subject

Plural Subject and Verb: There ***are*** the **books**.
(This sentence means *The books are there.)* plural verb, plural subject

In some sentences, the subject has a plural form but a singular meaning. Words such as *measles*, *mathematics*, and *series* all appear to be plural because of the *-s* ending, but each takes a singular verb because each is considered to have a singular meaning:

Measles **is** a childhood disease.
Mathematics **was** my best subject in school.
A series of droughts **has been** harmful to farming.
Fifty dollars **is** too much to pay.

Compound Subjects

Two or more subjects with the same verb joined by *and*, *or*, or *nor* form a *compound subject*. Here are some examples:

You ***and*** I were there.
Neither a sweater ***nor*** a coat is needed.
Either the puppy ***or*** the kitten sleeps in the basket.

It's often difficult to decide whether a singular or plural verb should be used with a compound subject. These two rules will help:

- When the parts are joined by *and*, use a plural verb:

  The mother *and* father ***were*** present.
  (This sentence means *They were present.)*

  Toys, books, *and* puzzles ***are*** everywhere.
  (This sentence means *They are everywhere.)*

- When the parts are joined by *or*, or *nor*, the verb agrees with the part that's closer to the verb.

  A frog **or a toad** *was* sunning itself.
  Either the puppy **or the kittens** *have* upset the vase.
  Neither the coats **nor the jacket** *is* a good fit.
  A cake **or cookies** *are* easiest to serve.

Collective Nouns

A collective noun names a group or a collection of persons or things. Some examples are *committee, team, army, herd, flock,* and *class.*

When a collective noun is the subject of a sentence, and the group is thought of as a *unit*, a singular verb is used. A collective noun takes a plural verb when the *individuals* in the group are considered:

The team ***has*** selected a manager.
(The team is acting as one group.)

The team ***have*** disagreed on a manager.
(The members of the team are acting as individuals.)

Indefinite Pronouns

Pronouns that don't have definite antecedents are called *indefinite pronouns*. Look at these examples:

I gave my ticket to ***someone*** on the bus.
Anyone can come to the dance.

The following indefinite pronouns are always singular and require a singular verb:

anybody	anyone	anything	each
either	everybody	everyone	everything
neither	no one	nobody	none
nothing	somebody	someone	something

These sentences illustrate that a singular verb is used with these indefinite pronouns:

Everybody *is* here.
Nobody *was* home.
Everyone in the group *is coming* to the party.
Someone in the class *has been elected.*
None of us wants to go.

These indefinite pronouns are always plural and require a plural verb:

both	many
few	several

All, *any*, *more*, *most*, *some*, and *such* can be either singular or plural depending on whether they refer to a single quantity or a number of units within a group:

Some of the papers *are* missing. (several papers)
Some of the money *is* missing. (a single sum)

All of the cake *has* been eaten. (the whole amount)
All of the sandwiches *have* been eaten. (several sandwiches)

Verb Tense Shift

The tense of a verb indicates the time of the action or state of being. Shifting from one tense to another without a reason causes confusion:

Just when I ***thought*** myself safe, my sister ***finds*** me and ***tells*** me to help with the dishes.

This sentence begins with a verb in the past tense (*thought*), but then shifts to the present tense (*finds*, *tells*). To be consistent, the three verbs should all be in the past tense:

Just when I ***thought*** myself safe, my sister ***found*** me and ***told*** me to help with the dishes.

You should also avoid using the past perfect tense instead of the past tense. The past perfect tense always uses the helping verb *had*. Use the past perfect tense when you're writing in the past tense and you want to show an action that has been completed earlier:

When the alarm rang, I had already got up.

I thought that I had escaped.

By the time the blizzard grew fierce, all the children had gone home.

Subjective and Objective Pronouns

Personal pronouns have three forms: subjective, objective, and possessive.

Subjective	Objective	Possessive
I	me	mine
we	us	ours
you	you	yours
he	him	his
she	her	hers
it	it	its
they	them	theirs

Subjective pronouns must not be confused with objective pronouns. Generally, subjective pronouns should be used as subjects, and objective pronouns as objects. Errors usually happen when two pronouns are joined by *and* or when a pronoun is joined with a noun:

```
Beth and her went to the airport.
```

The verb in this sentence is *went*. The subject is *Beth and her.* But *her* isn't a subjective pronoun. As the chart shows, *her* is an objective pronoun.

Another way of finding the proper pronoun is to separate the two subjects:

```
Beth went to the airport.
Her went to the airport.
```

Does the second sentence sound right? If you change the objective pronoun *her* to the subjective pronoun *she*, you use the correct form:

```
Beth and she went to the airport.
```

Here's another example:

```
This is the story of how my family and me got lost.
```

This sentence has two clauses, each with its own subject and verb:

```
This is the story.
My family and me got lost.
```

In the second sentence, *my family and me* is the subject of the verb *got*. However, *me* is not a subjective pronoun. Here's the correct version:

```
This is the story of how my family and I got lost.
```

To avoid confusing subjective and objective pronouns, observe the following rules:

Subjective Pronouns

Use subjective pronouns as subjects of verbs.

```
Jill and I will visit her.
His uncle and he are going to the rodeo.
```

Use subjective pronouns in complements after linking verbs.

```
It is they who will judge the contest.
The winners were Ken and he.
```

Objective Pronouns

Use objective pronouns as objects (direct and indirect) of action verbs.

Gordon took Betty and **me** to the doctor.
Give Steve and **him** the message.

Use objective pronouns in prepositional phrases (as objects of prepositions).

Are the books for my brother and **me**?
Send the bill to Marik and **him**.
The gift is from Sheila and **her**.

Pronoun Agreement

A pronoun and its antecedent must agree with each other. If the antecedent is singular, you need a singular pronoun. If the antecedent is plural, you must use a plural pronoun. It's also important not to change pronoun forms in a sentence.

Incorrect: Once you learn to ride ***a bicycle***, you never forget how to ride ***them***.

Correct: Once you learn to ride *a* **bicycle**, you never forget how to ride **one**.

Incorrect: ***Anyone*** can have this job; I'll gladly give it to ***them***.
Correct: **Anyone** can have this job; I'll gladly give it to **someone**.

Incorrect: Things become natural to ***us*** once ***you've*** learned them.
Correct: Things become natural to **us** once **we've** learned them.

A problem exists in English with singular, third-person pronouns. Look at this sentence:

Incorrect: If ***a person*** works hard, ***they'll*** go far.
Correct: If **a person** works hard, **he**'ll go far.

Because *a person* is singular, a singular pronoun is needed to refer to it. In times past, the masculine pronoun *he* was used in cases like this, as in the preceding example. Today, however, this usage is considered sexist.

To resolve the problem, you can use both a masculine and feminine pronoun:

If **a person** works hard, **he or she** will go far.

You can also make the sentence plural:

If **people** work hard, **they**'ll go far.

When an indefinite pronoun is the antecedent, the subsequent pronoun must agree. In the following sentences, the indefinite pronoun is singular so the following pronoun must also be singular:

Each of the girls has offered **her** advice.
None of the boys wants **his** name given.
Everyone in the club has **his or her** favourite activity.

In the next sentences, the indefinite pronoun is plural, so the subsequent pronoun must be plural:

All of the students hope **their** marks will be high.
Both of the men told **their** families that ***they*** would be late.

Ambiguous Pronouns

Ambiguous expressions are words or phrases used carelessly so that the meaning is unclear.

Personal pronouns can be unclear if you don't know which antecedent (the noun that the pronoun replaces) is being referred to. Every personal pronoun must have a clear antecedent:

The boy's homework was neat, and ***it*** was all correct.

In this sentence, *it* is a pronoun. The antecedent of *it* is the noun *homework.*

Now consider the following sentences:

When the bus hit the house, ***it*** was badly damaged.

Mr. Smith gave Walter a ride, but ***he*** didn't talk on the way to town.

What was damaged, the bus or the house? Who didn't talk, Mr. Smith or Walter?

These sentences can be corrected in a variety of ways:

The house was badly damaged when hit by the bus.

When the bus hit the house, the house was damaged extensively.

When given a ride by Mr. Smith, Walter didn't talk on the way to town.

Mr. Smith, who gave Walter a ride, didn't talk on the way to town.

Sometimes, confusion is caused when no antecedent is used:

They should repair the potholes in the roads.
I wonder if ***it*** will be on TV tonight.

Always check your writing to see that each pronoun can be clearly understood. If the pronoun doesn't refer to a specific antecedent, you must revise the sentence to make the meaning clear.

Double Negatives

Negative adverbs and pronouns convey a negative meaning. Words like *not*, *no*, *never*, *nothing*, *none*, *nobody*, *barely*, and *hardly* are negatives. Don't use more than one negative in a clause.

Incorrect: I did***n't*** do ***nothing***.
Correct: I did nothing.
Correct: I didn't do anything.

Incorrect: He has***n't never*** seen a circus.
Correct: He's never seen a circus.
Correct: He hasn't ever seen a circus.

Incorrect: Jean does***n't*** talk to ***nobody***.
Correct: Jean doesn't talk to anybody.
Correct: Jean talks to nobody.

Incorrect: I **ca*n't hardly*** hear the speech.
Correct: I can hardly hear the speech.

Confusion of Adjectives and Adverbs

Adjectives describe or modify nouns and pronouns. Adverbs modify verbs, adjectives, and other adverbs. Don't use an adjective when an adverb is required.

Incorrect: He played **bad** throughout the game.
Correct: He played **badly** throughout the game.

Incorrect: I did **good** on the test.
Correct: I did **well** on the test.

Incorrect: Mario works **careful**.
Correct: Mario works **carefully**.

Incorrect: The cake was **real** good.
Correct: The cake was **really** good.

Dangling Participles

When a writer uses a participial phrase that's not connected to the noun it describes, the reader is left with a confusing sentence. The participial phrase "dangles" because it's not close to the noun it modifies or describes.

John painted the fence listening to music.

Was the fence listening to music or was John? The following sentence is clearer:

While listening to music, John painted the fence.

Here's another example:

Dragging its broken wing, Sandra found the bird after the storm.

Did Sandra have the broken wing or did the bird? Eliminate the confusion by writing the sentence like this:

After the storm, Sandra found the bird, dragging its broken wing.

Misplaced Modifiers

Another source of possible writing confusion occurs with the use of adverbs or adverb phrases, which can usually be placed in a number of positions in the sentence. Sometimes, however, the position of the adverb can change the sentence's meaning. As a writer, you must be sure that the adverb conveys the meaning you want.

Incorrect: I ***only*** want one piece of pizza.
Correct: I want ***only*** one piece of pizza.

Incorrect: The star player didn't ***even*** score once.
Correct: The star player didn't score ***even*** once.

Incorrect: All children are***n't*** noisy.
Correct: ***Not*** all children are noisy.

Incorrect: We spoke about our raft trip ***in the gym***.
Correct: ***In the gym***, we spoke about our raft trip.

Improving Your Writing Style

Even when you've ensured that your sentences are constructed correctly, you can still produce awkwardly written compositions. English is a language of variety. You can choose many different words to convey your meaning, and you can write sentences in numerous ways. Your job as a writer is to use effective words and sentences to make your writing clear, lively, and pleasing.

Word Choices

Your diction (the words that you choose) is just as important as the sentences you write. The following information will help you make effective word choices.

Formal or Informal Diction

The degree of formality that you use in your writing depends upon your purpose and audience. (You can learn more about purpose and audience in The Writing Process in **Section 3: Writing Effectively**.)

When you write informally, you may decide to use

- contractions

  I'm *can't*
  aren't *he's*
  isn't *she'd*

- colloquial expressions (everyday language) or slang

  She resented that she had been kept ***in the dark*** about her friends' plans.

  My brother Glen is such a ***show-off***.

  He's a ***real cool dude***!

- personal pronouns

  I think that ***we*** should recycle as much as possible.
  This issue is very important to ***me***.
  We believe that it's essential to know a second language.

When you write formally, you choose your words and expressions more carefully. You avoid contractions and casual language. (Slang quickly goes out of date, and many people may not be familiar with slang expressions.) You may even decide not to use personal pronouns:

People should recycle as much as possible.
This issue is very important.
It is essential to know a second language.

Specific and General Diction

Good writing usually features specific words rather than general ones. Specific words help your reader understand and visualize exactly what you mean. Think about the differences in the examples shown:

General Diction	Specific Diction
horse	steed, charger, hack, nag, pony, courser
thing	idea, object, suggestion, fact, belief, item
to move	stir, budge, drift, twist, stampede, act
nice	pleasant, friendly, kind, cheerful, charming
tired	weary, fatigued, bedraggled, listless
upset	angry, frustrated, bitter, indignant, irate
brown	amber, tan, rusty, dun-coloured, tawny
to make	prepare, arrange, provide, create, construct
to hide	conceal, disguise, camouflage, cover, mask

Use a dictionary and a thesaurus to help you select words so that you express your meaning precisely.

Denotation and Connotation

The actual definition of a word is its *denotation*. However, as a word is used over time, it acquires emotional meaning as well. Some words are used in positive ways; others are used in negative ways. The emotional meaning of a word is its *connotation*.

Think about words like *democracy* and *communism.* To most people in Canada, democracy is associated with rights and freedom. On the other hand, communism is often associated with dictatorship and oppression. In fact, in many places, the word *communist* is an insult. Yet the actual definition (the denotation) of *communism* is an economic system based on shared ownership of property. The denotative meaning is quite different from the connotation.

As you use words, you need to be aware of their connotative meaning. If you call someone's pet a *mongrel*, you should know that you're criticizing the dog. Over time, words can also change their connotation. For example, the word *cheap* once implied that something was inferior; now, it's often used to mean a shrewd bargain.

When you use a thesaurus, keep in mind that many synonyms don't have identical meanings. Synonyms may vary in both denotation and connotation. Think about the following words:

arrogance pride vanity

These words share a common meaning of *having a high opinion of oneself.* Yet taking pride in doing something well is considered to be a virtue; arrogance and vanity (having too much pride) are considered to be vices.

As you select words, consider both the denotation and connotation. When in doubt, use a dictionary to check the exact meaning of a word.

Overused Words and Expressions

Some words and expressions are overused. If you say that you "slept like a log" or that you're "as busy as a bee," you're using a *cliché* or overused expression. Here are a few other clichés that you're probably familiar with:

```
crystal clear
light as a feather
starting out at the bottom of the ladder
playing with fire
out of the frying pan into the fire
```

Avoid clichés in your writing. In informal writing, create your own original expressions to make your writing lively and interesting.

Joining Sentences Effectively

Many students make the mistake of joining all of their ideas with conjunctions like *and*, as in this example:

```
We were ready for bed and the camp counsellor hadn't yet come in so
we found her pyjamas and sewed them up and put them back where she
kept them and we pretended to be asleep and waited for her to
return.
```

This sentence may be correct, but it sounds awkward. It can be improved by joining ideas more effectively:

```
We were ready for bed, but the camp counsellor hadn't yet come in.
We found her pyjamas, sewed them up, and put them back where she'd
put them. Then, pretending to be asleep, we waited for her to
return.
```

Sentences can be effectively joined in many different ways. Try to use a variety of joining techniques in your writing.

Using Coordinating Conjunctions

Every idea a writer wants to express can be written with the use of a simple sentence; however, using only simple sentences would make the writing jerky, choppy, and hard to read:

> Stamp collecting is fun. It's an expensive hobby. Many types of collections exist. You can have a country-by-country collection. You can have a topical collection.

Sentences that are related can be joined by coordinating conjunctions such as *and*, *but*, *or*, *nor*, *for*, *so*, and *yet*. This method can help make your writing flow smoothly:

> Stamp collecting is fun, ***but*** it can be an expensive hobby. Many types of collections exist. You can have a country-by-country collection, ***or*** you can have a topical collection.

Using Dependent Clauses

Simple sentences can be joined by making one sentence into a dependent clause. Join the sentences with a subordinating conjunction, such as *when*, *that*, *after*, *although*, *before*, *if*, *since*, *where*, *although*, *unless*, *until*, *because*, *who*, *while*, or *as.*

> Stamp collecting is fun ***although*** it can be an expensive hobby. ***Since*** many types of collections exist, you can have a country-by-country collection or a topical collection.

Using Semicolons

Another way to combine two simple sentences is to use a semicolon:

> Stamp collecting is fun; however, it's an expensive hobby. Many types of collections exist. You can have a country-by-country collection; you can have a topical collection.

Using Participial Phrases and Appositives

Your writing style can be greatly enhanced by making use of participial phrases and appositives. This technique can reduce the length of clauses, making your writing crisp, clear, and compact:

> Stamp collecting, ***an expensive hobby***, is fun. It can focus on many types of collections, ***dealing with countries or topics***.

Using Parallel Structure

Creating a list or series is another way of combining ideas. Ideas of equal importance in a sentence should be expressed in parallel (or similar) forms. In this example, the items in the list all end in *-ing*:

> Stamp collecting is ***interesting***, ***rewarding***, and ***entertaining***.

Other forms can be used in a parallel structure as well:

A stamp collector is compelled ***to read*** about stamps and ***to search*** for them.

A stamp collector must learn ***that some stamps are valuable*** and ***that others are worthless***.

Variety in Sentence Types

Effectively written paragraphs contain a variety of sentence structures. Try to avoid using the same type of sentence throughout a composition.

Although most of the sentences you write will likely be statements (declarative sentences), you might occasionally be able to include a question, command, or exclamatory sentence:

How can this problem be solved?
Solve this problem as quickly as you can.
Never has a problem been solved more quickly!

Another possibility is to create an *inverted* sentence. The usual order in a declarative sentence is a subject followed by its verb. An inverted sentence places the verb ahead of the subject. Notice the difference:

The fire fighter stumbled out of the burning building.
Out of the burning building stumbled the fire fighter.

As you join ideas in different ways, you also create a variety of sentence structures. Keep these points in mind:

- When you use too many short, simple sentences, you create a choppy effect.
- When you use too many coordinating conjunctions (especially *and*), you create long, boring sentences.
- When you use subordinating conjunctions, don't always rely on the same conjunction. Avoid starting two sentences in a short paragraph with the same conjunction (for example, *as* or *when*).

Variety in Sentence Beginnings

Declarative sentences (statements) don't have to begin with the bare subject of the main (independent) clause. Good writers often use a variety of sentence beginnings.

The following sentence begins with its bare subject:

The park warden asked us for help.

Begin with an Adverb

An adverb (or adverb phrase) can be placed ahead of the bare subject:

Later, the park warden asked us for help.
The next day, the park warden asked us for help.
Consequently, the park warden asked us for help.

Begin with a Phrase

Phrases are another way to start sentences. You can use a prepositional phrase, an infinitive phrase, a participial phrase, or even an absolute phrase at the beginning of a sentence. (For more information on phrases, see **Section 2: Grammar**.)

During the storm, the park warden asked us for help.
Shouting from the boat, the park warden asked us for help.
Disabled from the fall, the park warden asked us for help.
To speed up the rescue, the park warden asked us for help.
Her truck unable to start, the park warden asked us for help.

Begin with a Dependent Clause

Instead of starting a sentence with the subject of the independent clause and then adding a dependent clause, you can reverse the sentence. When you begin with a subordinating conjunction and the dependent clause, you often create more emphasis in a sentence.

The park warden asked us for help *because her partner had been injured*.
(This sentence begins with the independent clause; the dependent clause is attached with the conjunction *because*.)

Because her partner had been injured, **the park warden asked us for help**.
(This sentence begins with the dependent clause.)

Here are a few more examples of sentences that begin with dependent clauses:

Although we were inexperienced climbers, **the park warden asked us for help**.

After we had put away our gear, **the park warden asked us for help**.

While we were waiting at the base of the mountain, **the park warden asked us for help**.

Using a variety of beginnings for your sentences will help make your writing effective.

Variety in Sentence Length

Effective paragraphs often feature sentences of different lengths. When all the sentences in a paragraph are long, the paragraph may be difficult to read and even confusing. When all the sentences are short, the paragraph will sound choppy. Varying your sentence length is another technique of effective writing. Including an occasional short sentence will create emphasis. In the following paragraph, the writer uses two fairly long sentences as well as several shorter ones:

> When Jesse climbed the ladder to the loft of his uncle's barn, he was surprised to find a long rope hanging from one of the rafters. The rope had a big loop tied at the bottom. He grabbed a pole that was lying on the floor and crawled up the pile of hay in the corner. Then, using the pole, he pulled the rope toward him. With both hands, he grasped the rope. After placing one foot on the loop, he cautiously lifted his other leg. He found himself sailing across the loft through the dusty air, high above the hay piled on the floor below.

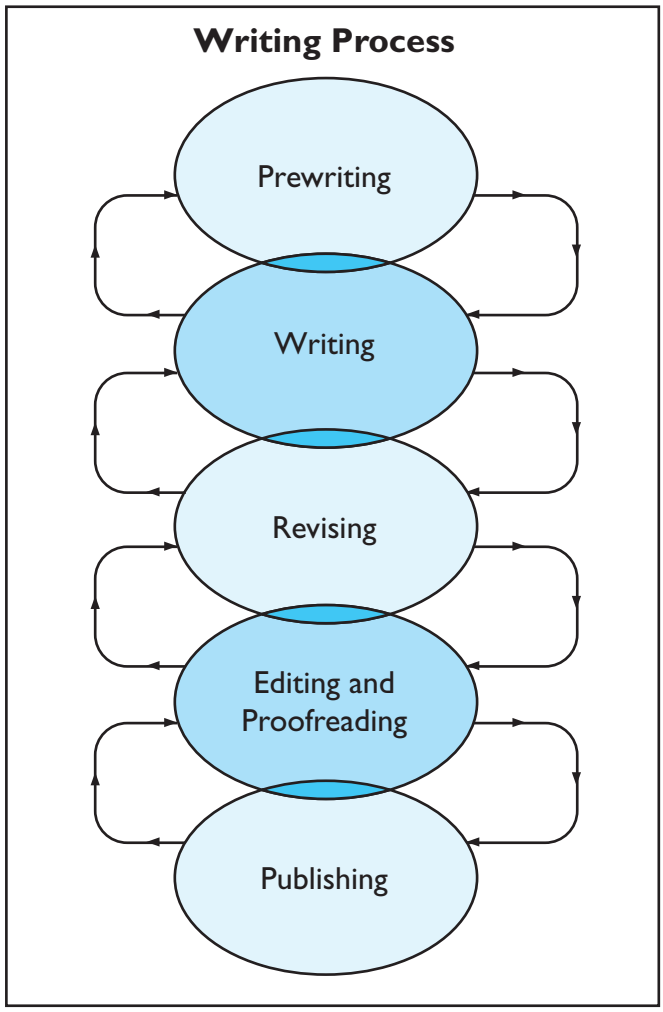
Variety in sentence beginnings, length, and type is essential for effective writing. As you write, look for opportunities to make dull sentences more interesting by changing their structure.

The Writing Process

Whenever you write, no matter what your purpose is or who your audience is, it helps to have a process of getting and organizing ideas, putting your thoughts on paper, and polishing your work until it's ready to share. This is called the *writing process*.

The writing process has several stages, as noted below, and in the following illustration:

- prewriting
- writing
- revising
- editing and proofreading
- publishing



It's a mistake, though, to think of this process as moving neatly from one stage to the next. In fact, most writers find that they go back and forth between the stages until they get an end product that satisfies them. For example, at the revising stage, you may find it necessary to go back and get more information. This means going back to the prewriting stage.

Still, whenever you write, you engage in a process that is similar to the one described here.

Prewriting

The *prewriting* stage has several steps:

- determining your purpose and audience
- generating ideas
- limiting the topic
- organizing your ideas

Purpose and Audience

Writers put words on paper for a variety of reasons. Sometimes they simply want to play with words or ideas. At other times, writers may wish (or need) to have their work read by someone else (an audience) because they have messages to communicate. For example, when you write a letter or a note to a friend, you share a message that you wish to communicate. When you write a test, you need to communicate what you know about that subject to your teacher. The type of writing you do depends on the audience you're hoping to reach. The key to your success as a writer is your ability and willingness to communicate clearly and effectively.

Here are some reasons writers write:

- to express an opinion on a particular topic
- to influence the reader to think in a certain way
- to entertain the reader
- to poke fun at an event or a characteristic of an individual or of society
- to share an experience
- to amuse the reader
- to clarify their own thoughts
- to present information
- to share feelings

A writer may have two or more purposes in mind when writing. For example, an article may appear to have been written only to amuse, but careful reading will indicate that the writer is also expressing an opinion on the topic. Sometimes, the writer may start out with one purpose in mind, but soon discovers other purposes. In fact, writing often helps writers discover what they really want to write about!

As a writer, you should always try to be fully aware of what your purpose is. You should also be aware of who your audience will be. Just as you'd write very differently if your purpose were to entertain and amuse rather than to communicate scientific information, so, too, you should write differently for different audiences. If you were writing a friendly letter to a close friend, for instance, your style of writing would be very different from the style you would use if you were writing a letter to the editor of your local newspaper.

Before you begin, you should ask yourself the following questions:

- What is my topic?
- What's my reason for writing about it?
- Who is my audience?
- How do I want my audience to react, think, or feel about what I say?
- How will I achieve my purpose?

Generating Ideas

Where do writers get ideas? You've probably asked yourself this question many times; all writers do. Here are a few things writers can do to come up with topics:

- **Exploring**
  Ideas come from the material you read and the conversations you have with other people. Ideas can also be gained by viewing the physical world around you or the world pictured in photographs, television, or movies.

- **Experience**
  Many ideas come from both positive and negative life *experiences*. You've met many people who have shaped your view of the world—some kind and helpful, others selfish and inconsiderate. Your past is a goldmine of writing ideas.

  Many writers use a *diary* to record their daily experiences and feelings. Keeping a diary helps writers to grow in their ability to express in words the experiences and feelings of day-to-day life. A diary is extremely interesting to look back on as time passes—it becomes your own personal history.

- **Brainstorming**
  A useful technique for generating ideas is *brainstorming*. When using this technique, you want to create a "storm" of ideas from which you can choose the ones most useful for your writing. Take a blank sheet of paper and jot down all the ideas that pop into your head, no matter how trivial they may seem. You'll most likely find that as you jot down these ideas, more thoughts will occur to you.

  Brainstorming with a partner or group is often better than brainstorming by yourself. When each person shares his or her ideas with the rest of the group, all members can make use of a larger pool of ideas.

- **Freewriting**
  Another way to generate ideas is to spend a short period of time (about ten minutes, for example) writing on a topic non-stop. Ideas will come to you as you're writing. If you run out of ideas, keep repeating a single idea until you come up with something new. Don't worry about spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar. In fact, write in fragments if you prefer. The important idea in *freewriting* is that as you write, you stimulate your brain to generate ideas.

- **Journals**
  Another great source of ideas for writing is the *personal journal*. A personal journal is simply a notebook where writers jot down ideas, experiences, feelings, impressions, descriptions, interesting words or phrases, quotations—anything that in some way interests them. These writings will help stimulate your thoughts about a wide variety of topics and preserving them for use in other writings.

Here's a list of possible journal entry topics to help you get started if you're stuck:

– Describe a place you've visited.
– Describe a member of your family or a friend.
– Tell about an exciting, funny, or strange event you saw or experienced.
– Tell about someone who's influenced you.
– Create an unusual character or a creature.
– Imagine that you're an alien landing on Earth; describe what you see.
– Write a poem.
– Outline a short story or novel.
– Give your opinion on current happenings in Alberta, Canada, or the world.
– Describe an experience that evoked a strong emotional response.
– Tell about your favourite daydream.
– Tell what you would do if you won a million dollars.
– Tell about your favourite colour, song, pet, sport, hobby, or TV program.
– Explain how to do something.
– Pretend to be an animal. What would you be?
– Describe your room.
– Describe the person sitting next to you.
– Describe your ideal car, place, or career.
– Give your reaction to a book you've recently read or a movie you've seen.
– Imagine you have landed on another planet. Describe the planet.
– Tell about a place that you'd like to go on a vacation.

- **Research**

  Once you have an idea for the topic of a research paper, you'll have to gather all available material you need that's related to it. Sources of information include encyclopedias, newspapers, magazines and periodicals, pamphlets, non-fiction books, and the Internet.

  Another method of obtaining information is to interview a resource person—someone who's able to give you some information on your topic. For example, if you were writing a report on the history of Alberta, you might be able to interview a senior citizen in your community to receive some first-hand information. Or, if your topic was World War II, you might interview a war veteran about his or her war-time experiences. (**Section 6: Locating Information** has more information on how to do research and interviews.)

- **Listing**

  Listing is a simple, but useful, method of generating ideas:

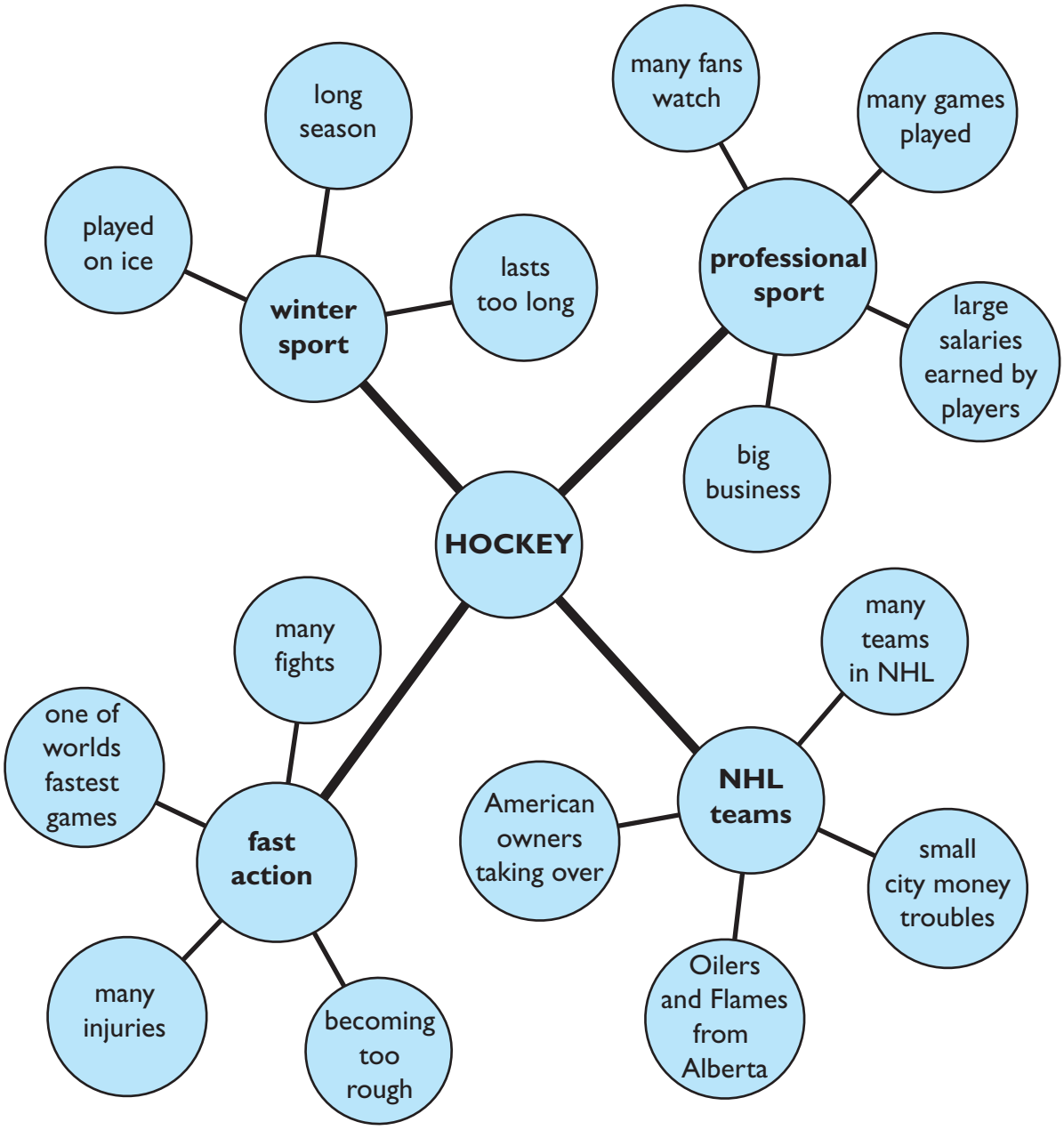
  – Choose your general topic.
  – Brainstorm and list all the ideas you can think of about your topic.
  – For each of the ideas on your list, brainstorm again, and list as many ideas as you can.
  – Choose the topic that you seem most interested in and brainstorm it further.
  – Arrange your listed ideas in order. Try to end with your most important detail.

- **Webbing**

  Webbing (also called *mapping* or *clustering*) is similar to listing, but with webbing you draw a web or diagram to sort out your ideas:

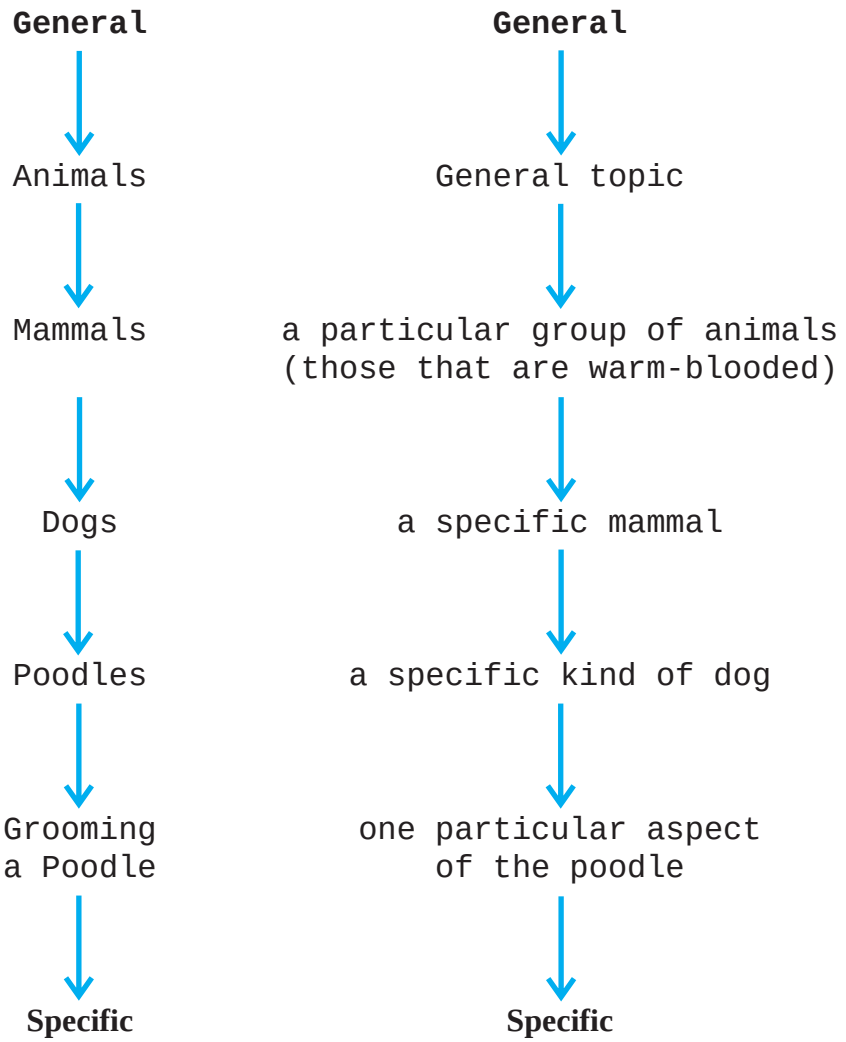
  – Place your general topic in a circle in the middle of the page.
  – Think of more specific, related topics and place them around your general topic.
  – Focus on each sub-topic and jot down related ideas.

  Here's a simple web that began with the general topic "hockey."



Limiting Your Topic

Before beginning to write, make sure you've chosen a subject that's quite specific. Inexperienced writers often make the mistake of choosing topics that cover too wide a range. It's important to learn to limit or narrow the topic as this will make your writing more informative. For example, if you choose to write about animals, you could write endlessly. Look at how the topic of animals can be narrowed:



You can also use a list or web to narrow a topic. Looking back at the web on hockey, you can see that the general topic *hockey* can quickly be limited to a more manageable topic like "The Problems Small Cities Have Paying for NHL Teams," "Hockey Is Becoming Too Rough," or "Are NHL Players Overpaid?" Of course, each of these topics can be narrowed down further.

Narrowing or limiting your topic will help you focus your ideas. Your writing will have a stronger impact when you limit the scope of a report or essay instead of writing only a little about many aspects of a broad topic.

Organizing Your Information

Before you begin to write, it's important that you choose a way of organizing your ideas. Webbing works well for limiting a topic and organizing the ideas within a composition.

Another method of organizing your ideas is to create an *outline*. An outline is simply a plan of what you intend to write. Writing is much easier if you've taken the time to organize your ideas into an outline.

An outline is a guide that is intended to be an aid in organizing your writing. It's not a rigid structure, but rather, a flexible listing of your ideas. When you begin the actual writing of a composition, you may find that you can't follow the outline exactly. Don't let your outline hold you back if you feel the need to change things as you write.

After completing the outline, use it to assist you in writing the composition. Although an outline doesn't eliminate the need for a rough copy, it does reduce the possibility of making unnecessary errors in the organization of ideas. A good outline will also speed up the actual writing of a composition.

There are two types of outlines: the topic outline and the sentence outline.

- **The Topic Outline**
  Outlines that use only single words or groups of words are called *topic outlines*.

  Look at the following outline for a paragraph. Since it's for a paragraph, this outline has no title and only one main idea:

```
the elephant's handy trunk     }     main idea

-picks up food                 )
-sprays water                  )     ideas you wish
-carries tree trunks           )     to include
-swats insects                 )
```

  Here's a paragraph that was formed from this topic outline. The details are given in the same order in which they appear in the outline.

> The elephant has a very handy trunk. Besides picking up food, the elephant uses its trunk to spray water, to carry tree trunks, and to swat insects. The mother elephant even uses her trunk to lift her baby. She spanks her calf with her trunk when the calf is naughty. Besides all these things, the elephant uses its versatile trunk to trumpet danger to the herd.

Here's another topic outline for a composition seven paragraphs long:

The Canada Goose

1. Canada Goose
    - what it is
    - its familiar qualities
2. Description
    - size
    - weight
    - length
    - colour
    - shape
3. Vegetarian Diet
    - in water
    - on land
4. Nesting Habits
    - material
    - location
    - eggs
5. Migratory Habits
    - wing development
    - how often
    - how far
6. Popularity of Canada Goose
    - to bird-watchers
    - as emblem of Canada

Now here's the report that was formed from the topic outline:

The Canada Goose

Perhaps the finest of Canada's waterfowl is the Canada goose. Everyone is familiar with the discordant music of the "honker." People marvel at the "V" formation used in the group flights southward in autumn. The size and beauty of this bird make it popular among many bird-watchers.

The goose may weigh from 3 to 4.5 kilograms. Its length varies from 76 to 90 centimetres. The general colour is grey or brownish-grey with a black tail and neck. Beneath its head is a white V-shaped marking. The under part of the body is almost white. The strong bill is black, as are its large webbed feet.

"Honkers" are almost completely vegetarian. In water, they find seeds and roots of aquatic plants. On land, they feed on grain obtained in the stubble fields. Often, in the autumn, huge flocks are seen feeding near a lake edge or in the grain fields.

The Canada goose often nests within the Arctic Circle in uninhabited areas. The nest is usually made on the ground near water. It is made of soft grasses and is lined with down. Geese have been known to reline an old hawk's nest on the ground, but such departures from regular behaviour are rare. From four to eight eggs are laid, and the goslings are raised in these far northern areas.

Shortly after the young are hatched, the adult birds shed their wing feathers so their power of flight is restricted. By late fall the new feathers have developed so the geese's wide, strong wings are ready for the long annual migration south. This flight of from 13 to 16 thousand kilometres will take them to the Antarctic region for the summer season there. Many bird-watchers await the late autumn migration.

The Canada goose would make a good emblem for Canada. Jack Miner, a national naturalist, spoke wisely when he said, "To know the Canada goose is to love him forever."

- **The Sentence Outline**

  Another type of organization is the *sentence outline*, in which ideas and details are written in sentences.

  A sentence outline takes more effort than a topic outline, because it requires you to think about your ideas thoroughly and put them into specific, detailed statements. However, after you've created a sentence outline, your writing will be easy.

  Study the following sentence outline:

How Do Fish Get Their Food?

1. Fish have several characteristics that enable them to gather food.
   - Their swimming ability helps.
   - They have highly developed senses.
   - Their method of breathing aids them.
2. Fish are able to swim quickly.
   - The shape of their bodies enables them to move quickly through water.
   - The fins help them to swim rapidly.
   - The need to escape being eaten by other fish has taught them to swim quickly.
3. Some of their senses are highly developed.
   - Their sense of smell is keen.
   - Some fish, such as catfish, have a delicate sense of touch.
   - Most fish have excellent eyesight.
   - Although their sense of taste is poor, they have many sharp teeth that enable them to hold onto their food.

4. Their method of breathing helps.

    - They open their mouths regularly to breathe.
    - The water passes out through the gills.
    - The food is strained out of the water.

5. The unique characteristics of fish enable them to get their food easily.

Now here is the report that was written from this sentence outline. Notice how each main topic from the sentence outline has become the topic sentence (in italics) of each paragraph. The supporting statements from the outline are now supporting sentences in each of the paragraphs. The general topic statement has become the title of the finished composition.

How Do Fish Get Their Food?

Fish have several characteristics that enable them to gather food. Their swimming ability helps. They have highly developed senses. Their method of breathing aids them.

Fish are able to swim quickly. The shape of their bodies enables them to move quickly through water. Their fins help them to swim rapidly. The need to escape being eaten by other fish has taught them to swim quickly.

Some of their senses are highly developed. Their sense of smell is keen. Some fish, such as catfish, have a delicate sense of touch. Most fish have excellent eyesight. Although their sense of taste is poor, they have many sharp teeth that enable them to hold onto their food.

Their method of breathing helps. They open their mouths regularly to breathe. The water passes out through the gills. The food is strained out of the water.

The unique characteristics of fish enable them to get their food easily. Without these special qualities, fish would be a lot hungrier, and there would be fewer fish for people to catch.

Writing

After prewriting comes the *writing* (or *drafting*) stage, when you take your material, follow your outline (unless you find a good reason to deviate from it), and produce your *first draft* (also called a *rough draft* or *working copy*).

Some writers produce a single rough draft before writing the final copy. Other writers may produce more than one rough draft before being satisfied with the structure and content of a piece of writing.

It's important to remember that a first draft is just that—a first attempt to get your ideas down. Reworking and polishing your writing will come later. Here are some guidelines for writing a first draft:

- Write quickly. Get your ideas down without worrying that everything is perfect.
- Don't stop to check spelling and punctuation rules. There will be time for that later.
- If you're using a pen rather than a computer, write on every other line. This will leave room for corrections. Similarly, leave wide margins.
- Always keep your audience and purpose in mind.
- If you don't like a word or sentence, cross it out and rewrite it. Don't start over. A first draft should look messy. Use arrows to tell yourself to rearrange ideas later, and make margin notes as reminders of needed additions.
- If you can, use a computer to write; the delete, cut, copy, and paste features of word-processing programs make producing a first draft much easier. But don't forget to save your work frequently.
- If you get stuck, put the draft aside for a while and go back to the prewriting stage for more ideas.

Unity in Paragraphs

Paragraphs are the building blocks of compositions. A very short composition may consist of only one paragraph; a long research paper may have hundreds of paragraphs. Different kinds of paragraphs can be developed in different ways; however, all paragraphs should have a topic sentence, supporting ideas, and a concluding sentence.

A paragraph is said to have *unity* when all of the sentences are related to one main idea. The sentence presenting this main idea is the *topic sentence*. Often, the topic sentence is the first sentence of the paragraph, but this isn't necessarily the case. Note where the topic sentences occur in the following paragraphs.

- Topic Sentence at the Beginning

  Last summer, I had a wonderful time at the lake. Most of the first two weeks I spent out on (or in) the water—canoeing, fishing, sailing, and swimming. When I'd had my fill of this, I began to explore the woods around the cottage and found all sorts of interesting trails and old logging roads. I took my camera along and got some terrific shots of wildlife, including one of an adult black bear. I snapped that one in a hurry and beat a hasty retreat!

- Topic Sentence at the End

  Much of the first two weeks at the lake I spent on (or in) the water—swimming, sailing, canoeing, and fishing. When I tired of this, I began to explore the woods around the cottage and followed some old logging roads and animal paths I discovered. I took my camera along and got some great photographs of wildlife, including a black bear. **All in all, I can say without any reservations that I had a really wonderful time.**

- Topic Sentence in the Middle

  The first two weeks I spent at the lake last summer I devoted to water sports—swimming, sailing, canoeing, and fishing. When I tired of these activities, however, I began to explore the surrounding woods. **That's when I really discovered what I'd been missing in the city.** I found lots of animal trails and old logging roads that hadn't been used for years. I saw lots of wildlife, too, and took photographs of quite a number of animals, including one of an adult black bear. Needless to say, I didn't hang around long enough to take more than one shot.

Narrative Paragraphs

A *narrative paragraph* tells a story. It tells about something that has happened and how it happened.

When composing a narrative paragraph, remember to write about events as they occur. Begin with the event that happened first; then tell about events that follow. End with the event that happened last. This logical order of events in a narrative paragraph is called *time sequence* or *chronological order*.

Here's an example of a narrative paragraph taken from the story, "The Loon's Necklace," by William Toye:

> Carefully he felt his way down to the frozen river's edge where the village sweat houses stood on the sandy bank. Four times he steamed himself in the sweat house and four times he plunged into the ice-cold river. Then he made his way home, put on his sacred collar of dentilium shells, and sang aloud his mystical songs. He strung his magical bow and picked out four arrows with their sharp stone tips.

Descriptive Paragraphs

A *descriptive paragraph* describes something: a person, a place, an animal, an idea, an emotion, or an object. A descriptive paragraph uses many modifiers and tells how something looks or feels.

The following paragraph is from *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*. Note that Mark Twain expresses some of his feelings about the house, as well as describing it.

> I can remember the bare wooden stairway in my uncle's house, and the rafters and the slanting roof over my bed, and the squares of moonlight on the floor, and the white cold world of snow outside seen through the curtainless window. I can remember the howling of the wind and the quaking of the house on stormy nights, and how snug and cozy one felt, under the blankets, listening, and how the powdery snow used to sift in, around the sashes, and lie in little ridges on the floor and make the place look chilly in the morning and curb the wild desire to get up—in case there was any.

When you *read* a descriptive paragraph, you should be able to experience what the author is seeing, tasting, feeling, hearing, or smelling. Therefore, when you *write* a descriptive paragraph, you want to pass these same experiences on to your reader. In a descriptive paragraph, you should give the reader a mental picture of the person, object, animal, or scene you're describing.

Expository Paragraphs

A paragraph that explains or informs is an *expository paragraph*. Being able to tell someone clearly and accurately how to do something is an important skill to develop. For example, someone may ask you how to play chess. In such a case, a clear, accurate explanation is required.

When directions are given orally, your listeners can ask questions if they're confused. With a written explanation, however, the writer is not present to be questioned. For this reason, the paragraph must be well planned and easily understood.

When you plan a paragraph that explains, follow these steps:

- Make sure you know your subject well. If you're not sure of some of the details, get the information before you begin.
- Take time before you write to think about your explanation. It's a good idea first to list the details you'll include in your paragraph.
- Include only the relevant details when you write your paragraph. Arrange them in a logical manner.
- Reread your paragraph to make sure that all the necessary steps are included.

You can see how important planning is when you write an expository paragraph. Notice how precise the following expository paragraph is:

> Opening a car door that has a frozen lock is a problem that many motorists have to solve in winter. Some motorists carry a small container of lock de-icer in their cars, but this is of no use if they are unable to get into the car. With patience, a key that has been heated by a match or lighter flame can usually be inserted into the ice-coated hole. Then, by warming the outside end of the key in a similar manner, heat can be transferred to the inside to melt the ice that prevents it from turning. At the end of the process, if all goes well, the motorist will have thawed the lock without ruining the paint on the door or burning his or her hand.

Persuasive Paragraphs

Have you ever tried to change someone's opinion or get that person to act in a particular way? Perhaps you've tried to convince your teacher you really did do your homework, or persuade your mother that it wasn't your turn to do the dishes. Although you may not realize it, you probably know quite a lot about persuasion.

When you try to persuade someone, you must try to prove that what you're saying is true or has some merit. You must have facts to support what you're saying and thus give a logical argument. To be convincing, your facts must be reasonable and logical.

When you prepare to write a persuasive paragraph, you must first gather all the facts or details that you'll use in your argument. It's a good idea to use an outline, web, or list to organize your supporting details.

Once you've organized your material, you're ready to write a persuasive paragraph. You must have a topic sentence in which you state your opinion clearly. You also need a concluding sentence to clinch your argument.

Here are two examples of persuasive paragraphs. They're both on the same topic, but each one expresses, in a logical manner, a different opinion.

Paragraph A

> Work is a necessary evil. We need to work to obtain money for buying the things we require to live. Not everyone can survive by living off the land. Most of us must rely on money to buy what we need; in order to buy food, clothing, and shelter, we must work. This does not make work good; it only makes it necessary. What is good about working hard for long hours and for wages that many of us find very poor? Human beings were given a brain and a soul. They should be able to use them and not spend most of their lives just trying to survive. Most people are frustrated by their jobs, which is why they consider work to be necessary, but evil.

Paragraph B

> Work is good for people. It stimulates them physically, intellectually, and emotionally. People who work are healthier then those who don't work. Our bodies are kept active and fit when we work. Even sitting at a desk can keep a person physically fit by improving posture and circulating blood. Just as the body does not lie dormant during work, neither does the mind. Our brains are always active, solving problems and creating new ideas. The saying "a healthy body, a healthy mind" is true. Since work keeps our brains active as they should be, we are able to solve problems faster and more easily than we would if we were not used to working. Work—whether physical or intellectual—makes the difference between just being alive and living our lives to the fullest.

Both authors have written effective, persuasive paragraphs. The author of the first paragraph doesn't like work. She makes this clear by calling it a "necessary evil." Besides stating her opinion, she gives logical support. She states why work is necessary and why it can be considered "evil." You may disagree with her opinion, but she has supported her ideas.

The author of the second paragraph has also written an effective paragraph. Her opinion differs from that of the previous author, but she, too, has given logical support to her opinion.

The knowledge of paragraph structure is vital to effective writing, since it's within the framework of the paragraph that you must formulate your thoughts, express your feelings and emotions, and support your ideas with relevant facts and details.

Here's a checklist to help you write effective paragraphs:

- ❑ I've chosen a subject or topic.
- ❑ I've made a statement about the topic that *controls* the paragraph (the topic sentence).
- ❑ The topic sentence contains the *key words*.
- ❑ All of the sentences are related to, or support, the key words.
- ❑ All of the sentences are related to each other.
- ❑ I've finished my paragraph by concluding with the most important statement supporting the key words in the topic sentence.
- ❑ I've chosen precise and specific words.

Revising

When you revise, you work on refining the content of your writing. In this task, you focus on *improving* the writing. You may need to add or delete some information. You may make the connections between your ideas clearer and improve the wording.

You may use a writer's handbook to find appropriate transitional expressions. You may also use a thesaurus to help you locate different or more interesting words.

Sometimes you may need to deviate a little from your initial plan or outline and change the order of some of your sentences or paragraphs to make things flow more smoothly and logically. When you revise, you take the time to make sure that your writing achieves your purpose and meets the needs of your audience.

Many writers revise and edit their writing at the same time. Others prefer to deal with revising and editing as two separate tasks.

Coherence

A paragraph has *coherence* when all of the ideas are clearly connected and are joined in a logical order.

Transitional devices are words or phrases that link sentences and paragraphs together in a smooth order. Writers use transitional devices to express their ideas in a clear, orderly manner and to help their readers understand how the ideas are related.

Here are some of the more common transitional devices:

also	these	although	nevertheless
next	hence	therefore	consequently
thus	unlike	at length	furthermore
then	finally	in addition	for example
first	instead	as a result	for instance
later	since	similarly	to begin with
such	likewise	however	for this reason
even	another	meanwhile	in conclusion
soon	because	accordingly	in fact

Note how the following paragraph is improved when transitional devices are included.

Without Adequate Transitional Devices

> How can anyone doubt the reality of the Loch Ness monster? Hundreds of people claim to have seen it. Many people say it's a hoax, but I'm convinced it's really there. I can't prove it. There is, I think, enough evidence to make a very strong case. There is a film of something big swimming across the loch, leaving a large wake. There is a photograph of a reptilian head and neck protruding from Loch Ness. This could be faked, but it seems doubtful. There is a photograph, taken from a mini-sub, that looks like a flipper of a large aquatic animal. I feel sure there is some sort of monster living in Loch Ness.

With Adequate Transitional Devices

> How can anyone doubt the reality of the Loch Ness monster? **In fact**, hundreds of people claim to have seen it. Many people say it's a hoax, but I'm convinced it's really there. **However**, I can't prove it. There is, I think, enough evidence to make a very strong case. **For one thing**, there is a film of something big swimming across the loch, leaving a large wake. **Another** piece of evidence is a photograph of a reptilian head and neck protruding from Loch Ness. This could be faked, but it seems doubtful. There is **also** a photograph, taken from a mini-sub, that looks like a flipper of a large aquatic animal. **For these reasons**, I feel sure there is some sort of monster living in Loch Ness.

As well as ensuring that your paragraphs are well structured and have both unity and coherence, you should look for other ways to improve your writing at the revising stage. The following checklist should help you with revising your work.

Revision Checklist

Word Usage

- ❑ Have I avoided using slang and colloquial language unless there's a good reason?
- ❑ Have I avoided unnecessary repetition?
- ❑ Have I replaced common and overused words with fresh, lively, descriptive words?
- ❑ Have I eliminated excessive use of *and*, *so*, and *then*?
- ❑ Have I used specific words rather than general words wherever I can?

Sentence Structure

- ❑ Have I broken long sentences into shorter, easy-to-read sentences?
- ❑ Have I combined short, choppy sentences into longer sentences?
- ❑ Have I used a variety of sentence types and lengths for interest?
- ❑ Have I used a variety of sentence beginnings?

Paragraph Structure

- ❑ Have I made sure each paragraph has a topic sentence?
- ❑ Have I used transitional words and phrases to link ideas?
- ❑ Have I supported my topic sentences with examples, details, or reasons?
- ❑ Have I ended my paragraphs with forceful, effective concluding sentences?

Composition Structure

- ❑ Have I begun with an introductory paragraph identifying the topic of my composition?
- ❑ Have I used a different paragraph to discuss each major idea?
- ❑ Have I ended with an effective closing paragraph that sums up my major ideas?

Editing and Proofreading

When you edit, you concentrate on improving grammar and correcting errors in spelling and punctuation. In this task, you're focusing on *correctness.* A writer's handbook and a dictionary are tools to use at this point.

When you proofread your composition, look for mistakes that you might have made. Here's a quick checklist that can help with editing:

Editing Checklist

- ❑ Is everything spelled correctly? Have I checked every word I'm not sure about, using an electronic speller, a spell checker, or the dictionary?
- ❑ Is my punctuation correct? Have I checked everything I should in this or another handbook?
- ❑ Have I capitalized everything properly?
- ❑ Are my sentences properly constructed? Have I checked for these problems?
  - ❑ run-on sentences
  - ❑ sentence fragments
  - ❑ double negatives
  - ❑ dangling participles
  - ❑ adjectives used where adverbs belong
  - ❑ subjective and objective pronouns
  - ❑ misplaced modifiers
  - ❑ pronoun-antecedent agreement
  - ❑ subject-verb agreement
- ❑ Do all my sentences make sense? Have I accidentally left out words?
- ❑ Are my verb tenses consistent?

One final hint for successful editing: If possible, have someone else proofread your compositions after you've corrected all of the flaws you can find. It's often surprising how many mistakes a fresh pair of eyes can spot.

Publishing

The final stage in the writing process is *publishing* (or sharing). This is the stage where you produce your polished copy and share it with readers. It's time to celebrate!

Handwriting Your Polished Copy

If you're writing out your final copy by hand, follow these guidelines:

- Be sure to use your best penmanship. Form your letters carefully, and leave adequate spaces between words. Try to maintain a consistent slant.
- Use a pen with blue or black ink.
- Double space unless you're using paper with lines widely spaced.
- Write on only one side of the paper.
- Make corrections neatly.
- Indent paragraphs clearly.
- Designate your headings by underlining them and leaving a space before and after them.

Using a Computer For Your Polished Copy

If you're using a computer, follow these guidelines:

- Arrange your text neatly on the page. Leave at least 2.5 cm (one-inch) margins top and bottom, left and right.
- Use an appropriate, easy-to-read font and type size. (Times Roman, 12 point is generally acceptable.)
- Designate your headings with a larger font or underline them. Leave a space before and after headings.
- Double space your text.
- Indent paragraphs (five spaces).
- Check your printed copy to be sure that it's clear.

Titles and Title Pages

To make your polished copy look attractive, you may wish to create a title page. Reports often have simple title pages. (A sample title page is shown in **Section 4: Communicating in Writing**.) However, if you've written a poem or story, you may want to design a colourful, attractive title page. Keep in mind that title pages should clearly show the title and author's name.

A polished composition should have an interesting title to alert or intrigue your reader. When you're picking a title, you should also consider the purpose of your composition and its audience. Here are some suggestions to help you create a title:

- A title should relate to the topic of the composition.
- A title is usually fairly short (less than ten words): "Why Teens Smoke."
- A title can have two parts, joined by a colon: "Why Teens Smoke: A Study of Teens and Nicotine."
- A title should attract attention: "Suicide by Smoking."
- A title can be humorous: "Smoke Till You're Broke!"
- A title can use alliteration (words that begin with the same consonant sound): "Say No to Nicotine!"

Sharing Your Compositions

There are many ways to share a composition:

- Hand it in to a teacher for assessment or comments.
- Read it aloud to someone (or a group).
- Display it, perhaps on a bulletin board at school or in the library. Be sure to display it carefully and attractively.
- Illustrate it (and perhaps bind it as a book).
- Give it to someone as a gift.
- Read it on an audiocassette or create a digital audio file on the computer.
- Send copies to friends or relatives.
- If you're particularly proud of it, submit it to a young people's magazine or consider publishing it on the Internet.

Section 4: Communicating in Writing

Writing may be classified as expressive or exploratory, narrative, descriptive, or expository. As well, writing may be done in a wide variety of forms from the informal, such as a brief casual note, to the very formal research report. This section of your handbook looks at some of these types of writing and forms of written composition.

Expressive/Exploratory Writing

Expressive or exploratory writing is informal writing that allows you to express and explore ideas and feelings. Many people use diaries and journals for this purpose. Writing poems is another way of expressing yourself.

Journal Writing

Writing in a journal or diary is like talking to a close friend. You can use a journal to express your deepest feelings, explore your innermost thoughts, and discover new ideas. Journal writing can also help you resolve conflicts and make decisions.

Personal Journals

Keeping a personal journal can be an interesting and worthwhile experience. You can record your activities, feelings, reactions, and ideas. Later, you'll enjoy going back to earlier journals to see how you've changed as you've grown older. You'll find a list of topics to help you start a personal journal in **Section 3: Writing Effectively**.

Keep in mind that you may not want to share your personal journal with anyone—including your friends or family. You'll have to find a way to keep your journal private if you don't want anyone else to read it.

Response Journals

In English Language Arts classes, you may be asked to keep a response journal. This type of journal writing allows you to have a conversation with yourself or your teacher about ideas and texts that you've read, viewed, or listened to. When you write in a response journal, you express and explore your own ideas and feelings as well as react to other people's ideas and feelings. You also develop your ability to write fluently.

In some classes, you may be asked to share your journals with other students or with the teacher. You may be required to hand in your response journal for marking. In other courses, you may be asked to occasionally submit a journal for evaluation.

A response journal is not a notebook. Your responses shouldn't be plot summaries (a summary of the events). Instead, you should focus on three or four points. For example, after reading a story, you might decide to write about the behaviour of the main character, the surprise you felt at the outcome of the story, and the similarity you noticed between this story and another one you've read.

Here are some ideas to help you write responses in your journal:

- Did you enjoy reading, viewing, or listening to this text? Why or why not?
- Did you like the characters? Did they seem realistic? Do you understand why the characters acted as they did? Do you sympathize with the characters?
- Would you have acted the way that the characters did? Do the characters remind you of yourself or anyone you know?
- Did the author (or filmmaker) create suspense? Were the events predictable?
- Did you like the ending? Were you able to predict the ending, or was it a surprise? Would you have preferred a different ending?
- Did you find anything difficult to understand? What questions do you still have?
- Did you like the writing style (or the techniques used by the artist, filmmaker, or speaker)?
- Did anything remind you of a personal experience? Do you see any similarities between this text and another?
- Did you learn anything from this text? Did this text change your ideas or opinions?

Poetry

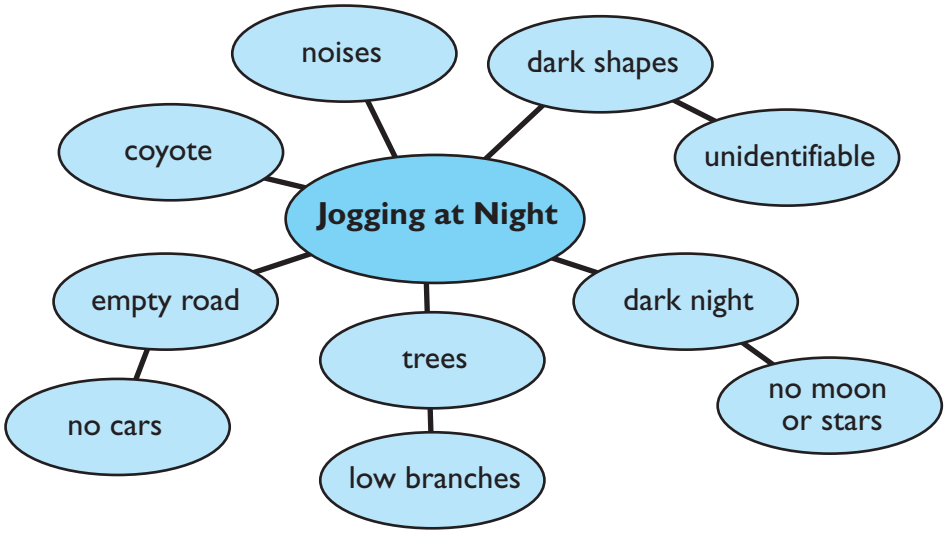
Many people write poems to express their ideas and feelings. To learn more about the different kinds of poems, see **Section 7: Understanding Literature**.

One type of poem that you could use for expressive writing is *free verse*. When you write free verse, you're not concerned about rhyme or a regular rhythm. You're *free* to concentrate on your ideas and feelings. The challenge in writing a free verse poem is to express yourself in an unusual and thoughtful way.

Most free-verse poetry contains vivid *imagery* (language that appeals to the senses). Using everyday language and tired expressions won't create an interesting poem. You need to find strong, specific words that allow the reader to see, smell, hear, touch, taste, and experience what you're describing.

When you write a poem, follow the steps of the writing process. First, generate ideas; then draft your poem. Next, revise and edit. Finally, you're ready to share and celebrate your poem. Although poems are usually short, the drafting and revising steps often take a long time to complete because most writers need time to find exactly the right words to express their ideas and feelings.

Here's an example of the process used to write a free-verse poem. The writer first used a web to generate ideas:



Next, the writer used freewriting (a way of generating ideas by writing freely, without pausing and worrying about errors):

> The road is deserted, there are no stars or moon. A coyote howls, where is it? I speed up, pretend I don't hear the wind moving the leaves and branches. I am afraid of the unknown, the dark. Is something out there?

Then the writer drafted pieces of the poem, searching for the precise words:

```
the narrow road
    rough
    gravel

the dark night
   moonless
empty dark sky

trees menacing
low branches reach out

a coyote howls
        yowls

unchaining spirits
loosing
unleashing
```

The writer then began to shape the words into a poem:

```
Before me
the narrow road is deserted
in the moonless night.
A coyote howls.
Cringing, I jog
past the menacing trees
whose branches try
to imprison me
pretending
not to hear the wind
shuffling leaves
stirring branches
loosing spirits
in the night.
```

After revision, the writer produced a more polished poem:

Night Jogging

```
Before me
the narrow gravel road lies
deserted
in the moonless night.
A coyote yowls,
its cry piercing me
like a lance.
Jogging past menacing trees,
their branches reaching out
to take me prisoner,
I cringe,
pretending
not to hear the wind
shuffling leaves
stirring branches
unleashing the spirits
of the night.
```

Writing a free-verse poem takes time and patience, but it is an excellent way to express your feelings. A dictionary and thesaurus will help you find the precise words to express your ideas and feelings.

Narrative and Descriptive Writing

Narrative writing is storytelling. Most authors use a lot of descriptive writing in their stories; they describe the characters, setting, and events. You can find examples of narrative and descriptive paragraphs in **Section 3: Writing Effectively**.

Stories

When you write a fictional story, you should include the elements of setting, character, plot, and theme. You also need to decide how you're going to tell the story (your point of view). For more information about these elements, see **Section 7: Understanding Literature**.

Here are some suggestions to help you write an interesting story.

Conflict and Plot

An essential component of every interesting story is conflict. The main conflict can be person versus person, person versus environment, or person versus self. The conflict is actually the story's topic. Look at these examples:

- **Person versus person conflict:** two friends compete to have the best birthday party
- **Person versus environment conflict:** a girl gets lost on a camping trip and fights to survive
- **Person versus self conflict:** a teenager is faced with the choice of joining his friends, who are involved in vandalism

After you've decided on the conflict, make a short list or outline of the story's plot:

- How will the story begin? What will be the first sign of conflict?
- What event or events will create tension or suspense?
- What will the climax (the high point of conflict) be?
- How will the story end?

Characters

Many short stories have only two or three characters. Usually, a story will have a main character, possibly an antagonist (the person opposing the main character), and one or two minor characters. Before you begin to write, visualize your characters:

- What names will you give your characters?
- How old will your characters be?
- How will they look?
- What personality traits will they have?

As you introduce your characters in the story, you should describe them so that the reader can visualize each character. Here are some samples of character descriptions taken from well-known stories:

> A red-haired, unshaven, untidy man sat in a rocking chair by a window. He had just lighted a pipe, and was puffing blue clouds with great satisfaction. He had removed his shoes and donned a pair of blue, faded carpet-slippers.
>
> O. Henry, "The Guilty Party"

> A slim, dark woman of about forty answered the door. She wore slacks and a sweater. Her features were too strong for prettiness, and her manner and expression were pleasant and confident.
>
> John D. MacDonald, "Hit and Run"

> Uncle Henry, who was the manager of the sawmill, was a big, burly man weighing more than two hundred and thirty pounds, and he had a rough-skinned, brick-coloured face.
>
> Morley Callaghan, "Luke Baldwin's Vow"

Setting

The setting of a story deals with the time and place of the action. Sometimes, the setting contributes to the mood (the atmosphere) of the story. Before you write, visualize the main places in your story:

- Does the story happen in the past, present, or future?
- What time of year is it? What time of day is it? What kind of day or night is it?
- Where does the story happen? Does the place need a name?
- How does this place look?
- What mood suits this story? How can the setting contribute to the mood?

Here's an example of a place description in a story:

> As they crossed over to a road that led back the way they had come, they saw a farmhouse set on the edge of the beach. It was two storeys high. Its metal-sheathed roof gleamed with a cold light. Topped with a black iron widow's walk, enclosed on two sides by a spindled veranda, it rose above the drifting snow like the superstructure of some great ship.[1]

[1] W. D. Valgardson, *Red Dust* (Ottawa: Oberon Press, 1984). Reprinted by permission of the author.

Theme

It's important that your story have a main idea or theme. Even simple stories can have a message about life. Look at these examples:

- **Conflict:** Two friends compete to have the best birthday party.
  Theme: Competition can ruin a friendship.

- **Conflict:** A girl gets lost on a camping trip and fights to survive.
  Theme: Common sense and self-control can help people survive.

- **Conflict:** A teenager is faced with a choice of joining his friends who are involved in vandalism.
  Theme: Teens sometimes need support from others to withstand peer pressure.

Point of View

Before you begin to write your story, you need to decide how you'll tell it. If you choose the first-person point of view, you pretend that you are one of the characters, and you tell the story as you see it or experience it. This character becomes the *narrator*.

If you choose an omniscient point of view, you tell the story as though you are an unseen observer watching the characters. In the omniscient point of view, you can explain the feelings and thoughts of one character or all the characters.

Changing the point of view in a story can change the story and its theme. Think about a story of a girl lost on a camping trip. This story could be told in several ways:

- The lost girl could tell the story, focusing on how she got lost and how she fights to survive.
- Her mother could tell the story, focusing on her worries and fears about her daughter.
- The girl's stepfather could tell the story, focusing on the family relationships.
- One of the rescuers could tell the story, focusing on the search.
- The girl's brother could tell the story, focusing on his guilt because of a fight that he had with his sister just before she got lost.
- An unseen observer could tell the story using the omniscient point of view. The observer could focus on one character (the lost girl, perhaps) or on several characters.

It's hard to invent both a new conflict and plot for a story, but you can make a story different and interesting by choosing an unusual point of view. When you're planning a story, make a list of different ways that you could tell it. Then choose the point of view that you think will result in the most interesting story.

The Narrative Hook

A good story always has an appealing opening that hooks the reader's interest. Sometimes, the opening sentence will simply contain one key word that acts as a hook. Here are some opening examples from a few well-known stories:

> The approaching jungle night was, in itself, a threat.
>
> Jim Kjelgaard, "The Tiger's Heart"

> Of all the pupils at the knight school Gawaine le Coeur-Hardy was among the least promising.
>
> Heywood Broun, "The Fifty-first Dragon"

> Most people would say, if their opinion was asked for, that holding up a train would be a hard job.
>
> O. Henry, "Holding Up a Train"

> There it was again, that sinister feeling in the pine shadows and a sense of something watching, waiting among the dense trees up ahead.
>
> Paul Annixter, "Accounts Settled"

> True!—nervous—very, very, dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why *will* you say that I am mad?
>
> Edgar Allan Poe, "The Telltale Heart"

Dialogue

Most stories contain dialogue (conversation). Dialogue helps bring characters to life. The way characters talk reveals their personalities, thoughts, and feelings. To make characters realistic, dialogue should be *authentic* (true to life). Teenagers, police officers, and business executives, for example, will not always use the same vocabulary and expressions when they speak. Dialogues should include language that suits the characters.

Authors make dialogue authentic by having their characters use

- non-standard English (speech that has grammatical errors)
- slang and colloquial language (casual, everyday speech)
- dialect (speech that is spoken by a particular group of people living in a particular place)
- jargon (words and expressions that are unique to a particular group or profession)
- profanity (vulgar words and expressions)
- fragments (pieces of sentences)
- interruptions (dashes and ellipsis marks show that a speech hasn't been finished)

The conversations in stories should always serve a purpose, such as developing character or conflict, foreshadowing an event, or creating suspense. In dialogue, the characters' words are enclosed in quotation marks. The correct way to use quotation marks in dialogue is explained in **Section 1: Spelling, Punctuation, and Capitalization**.

When you write dialogue, you must show who is speaking the words. Usually, you use a *tag* to indicate the speaker. The tag consists of a noun or pronoun, a verb, and sometimes an adverb. The most common verb is *said*, but you can use many other verbs and adverbs to show how words are spoken:

"Don't tell my dad," ***she pleaded.***
Dave asked nervously, "Will this hurt?"
"Get down!" ***the officer ordered immediately.***
Mrs. Keenan insisted, "I'm not guilty."

A variety of tags and realistic speech will make the dialogue in your story sound interesting and lifelike.

Anecdotes

An *anecdote* is a story that's based on personal experience. Writing an anecdote will give you a chance to write about yourself, and to share your personal experiences and ideas. The tone of an anecdote is usually less formal than that of some other forms of writing.

Telling an anecdote can be similar to writing a fictional story. Here are some tips to help you write an interesting anecdote:

- Create an effective opening.
- Describe the people, places, and events.
- Include dialogue (conversation) to create realism.
- Add humour when appropriate.

The following anecdote, written by a Grade 8 student, illustrates this informal and relaxed style:

A Frightening Experience

Cows are known as calm, docile creatures that eat grass and moo contentedly. But it's possible to get them angered, as my friend and I discovered one day.

It all happened years ago when my friend and I were young and foolish. We were bored as the summer holidays wore on, so we decided to go and bother the cattle in the pasture. Now, the cows weren't bothering a soul as they munched on the pasture grass. We decided to try and disturb their tranquility, so we began pitching rocks at them.

One of the rocks happened to hit a mean-looking bull right square between the eyes. He glared, snorted, dug his heels into the ground, and then charged us. The other cattle stopped staring at us and followed the bull.

My friend yelled, “Run!” We turned and dashed toward the fence. It seemed so far away as we raced toward it. When we reached the fence, we scrambled over the barbed wire, tearing our clothes and scratching our hands and legs.

That day we learned a valuable lesson. Don’t bother someone who isn’t bothering you.

Plays

A play is a story told through action and dialogue. A play, like a story, needs a strong conflict to make it interesting. For more information on plays, see **Section 7: Understanding Literature**.

The scripts of most plays begin with a list of characters. The playwright (the play’s author) may also include a list of *props* (properties; the furniture and other items that the actors use on stage) and a description of the *set* (the scenery on the stage). In some plays, the set changes from one act to the next. For example, the first act could happen inside a castle, and the next one could take place on a battlefield.

The playwright then writes the words that the characters speak. The playwright also writes *stage directions* for the actors, explaining how they should speak and act. Usually, these directions are written in italics and placed in parentheses. As well, the stage directions should tell when actors enter and exit the stage.

In a play, the dialogue reveals character, foreshadows events, and provides suspense. Unlike conversations in stories, the dialogue in plays is not written with quotation marks and tags. Instead, the script of a play is written in a special way so that the actors can easily read their lines. Here’s an example of a script:

Scene One: Pat is sitting in a chair, reading a paper. Enter Jody.

Jody: (*moving to the window to look out)* I wonder who’s moving into the new house down the street?

Pat: *(uninterested, reading the paper)* Why does it matter?

Jody: *(staring out the window)* Well, whoever it is must have a strange pet. They’re unloading a huge cage from a truck.

Pat: *(curious now)* What? Are you sure?

Jody: *(still staring out the window)* A very big cage. Big enough to hold a lion or tiger.

Pat: *(scoffing)* You can’t keep a lion or tiger in a backyard.

(Pat frowns. He rises and walks toward the window. The phone rings, and Jody answers it.)

Short plays may have only one act, but longer plays may have several acts and scenes. Generally, a new act or scene indicates a change in the time or place of the action.

Radio plays are written to be broadcast on radio. These plays are meant to be heard, not seen. Special sound effects are often included to help the listeners imagine the characters and action. Sometimes a narrator is used to give additional information to the listeners.

When you write a play, planning is important, just as it is when you write a story.

Here are some suggestions to help you write a play:

- Generate ideas about a conflict, characters, and a setting.
- When you plan the events of your plot, keep in mind that you must be able to *show* the events on stage or have characters *tell* the audience about them. For example, if your conflict involves a theft, you can either show someone stealing or have a character announce that something has been stolen.
- Create a new scene or act when the time or place changes. For instance, the first scene may occur in the morning and the second one in the evening.
- For a short play, try to have the action take place in one location (for example, a living room or a campsite). Instead of moving the characters to different places, have the characters come to the location.
- If you're writing on a computer, use italics to show the stage directions. If you're handwriting, use pens of different colours or write the stage directions and print the dialogue. Place the stage directions in parentheses.
- Introduce the conflict as soon as possible to get the audience's attention.

Expository Writing

Writing that explains and persuades is called *expository*. This category of writing includes essays, research papers, book reports, news reports, letters, minutes, memos, and e-mail.

Essays

An *essay* is a composition with several paragraphs. Expository essays are written to explain, express opinions, compare and contrast, and persuade. When you write an essay, you follow a procedure similar to writing a paragraph.

Paragraphs	Essays
A topic sentence defines and limits the topic.	An introductory paragraph defines and limits the topic.
Supporting sentences are related to the topic sentence.	Supporting paragraphs are related to the introductory paragraph.
A concluding sentence shows that the discussion of the topic is finished.	A concluding paragraph shows that the discussion of the topic is finished.

To help write effective paragraphs, see The Writing Process in **Section 3: Writing Effectively**.

The Introductory Paragraph

The *introductory paragraph* of an essay is very important. Like the topic sentence of a paragraph, it defines and limits the topic. Since an essay deals with a much broader topic than does a paragraph, this is a much harder job. The introductory paragraph must introduce the entire essay. Reading an essay without a good introduction is like being thrown unexpectedly into a cold lake. An effective introduction eases and entices the reader into the essay.

If you're unsure how to begin an essay, here are a few standard techniques that may help you:

- Begin with a quotation, followed by an explanation:

  "Canada is an absurdity; its very creation was an historical accident that ought never to have occurred." So argues Dr. Gertrude Sorensen in her recent book *Canada's Destiny*.

- Begin by speaking directly to the reader:

  Perhaps you have never thought seriously about the role of the Senate in Canada. If not, it...

- Begin by referring to or repeating your title:

  The Canadian Seal Hunt

  The Canadian seal hunt has been a focus of worldwide attention over the past few years, and has attracted so much negative publicity that many people believe it should be stopped.

- Begin with a startling statement:

  Patriotism breeds war! Throughout history…

- Begin by correcting a common misconception:

  It is sometimes said that only through great suffering can great art be produced. Not so.

- Begin by asking a question:

  Why is it that Canadians are so reluctant to honour their heroes?

- Begin with a brief anecdote:

  When Marcie Adams learned that her dog had an incurable disease, she had to decide whether she would do everything possible to prolong its life or end its suffering immediately.

An effective opening is vital to an interesting essay, but an introduction needs more than an enticing beginning. An introduction should end with a *thesis statement*, which is a summary of the main idea in your essay. Generally, strong thesis statements lead to effective essays.

Here are some examples of thesis statements:

Canadians should be given the right to vote at the age of sixteen.

The seal hunt should be treated much like the hunting of other animals: it should be regulated but not outlawed.

Greed has been responsible for most human suffering in the 20th century.

Canadians should follow the example of their American neighbours and celebrate Canadian heroes.

Body Paragraphs

Just as a single paragraph requires supporting sentences that are related to the topic, so does an essay require *supporting* (or *body*) *paragraphs*. To ensure that the essay has *unity*, these supporting paragraphs must relate to the thesis statement given in the introductory paragraph.

One way to achieve unity is to use the *key word* method. Pick out the key word (or phrase) in your thesis statement. Use this key word in the topic sentence of every body paragraph and in the first sentence of your conclusion. For example, if the key word in a thesis statement is *the Senate*, the topic in every body paragraph should include those words. The key word method helps to ensure that every paragraph in an essay deals with the same topic.

An essay also needs coherence: paragraphs must move logically from one to the next. An outline will help you ensure that this happens. Using *transitions*—words or phrases that connect ideas—will also help. Here are some transitional words and phrases that are useful when you write an essay:

also	as a result	although
as well	accordingly	in contrast
in addition	for this reason	instead
furthermore	for example	first
moreover	for instance	next
similarly	of course	later
besides	in fact	finally
another	however	meanwhile
therefore	on the other hand	in conclusion
thus	still	
consequently	nevertheless	

The Concluding Paragraph

The *concluding paragraph* of an essay, like the concluding sentence of a paragraph, must show that the discussion of the topic is finished. It must also be linked to the supporting paragraphs that precede it. Writing a concluding paragraph is similar to writing a concluding sentence:

- Try to have the conclusion develop naturally. It should not appear added on as an afterthought.
- Don't add any new ideas or details.
- Avoid clichés like *To sum up...* or *In closing let me state....*
- Don't ramble or become wordy. When you've said what you have to say, stop.
- End with a strong statement, not a weak one.

Here are a few techniques that may help you create an interesting conclusion:

- Summarize the central idea of the essay:

> It's clear, then, that the causes of World War II can be traced back to the harsh terms in the Treaty of Versailles in 1919. Had Germany not been treated so badly then, very likely the democratic Weimar government would have survived—and the world would never have known Adolf Hitler.

- Refer to your title:

  Suppose that the title of your essay is “The Return of the Whooping Crane.” Your concluding paragraph could contain the title:

  > The return of the whooping crane is one of the few success stories in the struggle to prevent the extinction of endangered species. The process has been slow, and the number of whooping cranes is still small. It will be a long time before their survival is assured. However, this experience shows that people, if they have the will to do so, can correct some of the damage to the world’s ecology that they have caused.

- Ask a question:

  > Despite the evidence we have examined, the fact is that no hard proof of the existence of the Sasquatch has yet been produced. The only way we will know for sure if the Sasquatch really exists is to go out into the woods and bring one back. Perhaps the person who will do this will be someone who has read this essay. Might you be the one?

- Bring up a final point if your essay is a short one:

  > One final point should be made. Although genealogy can be an absorbing and rewarding hobby, we should be wary of taking it too seriously. It may be fun to know who our ancestors were and where they came from, but we must not let this lead to an obsessive fascination with ourselves and our roots. What really matters is that we are able to deal effectively with the problems that face our society today. Enjoy tracing your family tree as a hobby, but remember it is just that—a hobby.

- End with a quotation, direct or indirect:

  > Running your own small business is clearly a challenge few people are willing to meet, but one with potential for great rewards. Here’s how one successful entrepreneur put it: “I work 16 hours a day and haven’t taken a holiday in 12 years. But I’m my own boss—and I wouldn’t have it any other way.”

If you’ve written an effective conclusion, you should be able to answer “yes” to all of these questions:

- Is my conclusion smoothly written? Does my last sentence have a sense of closure?
- By restating my central idea, have I reminded the reader that I’ve accomplished my purpose?
- Does my conclusion leave the reader with a sense of completeness about the topic?

Research Papers and Reports

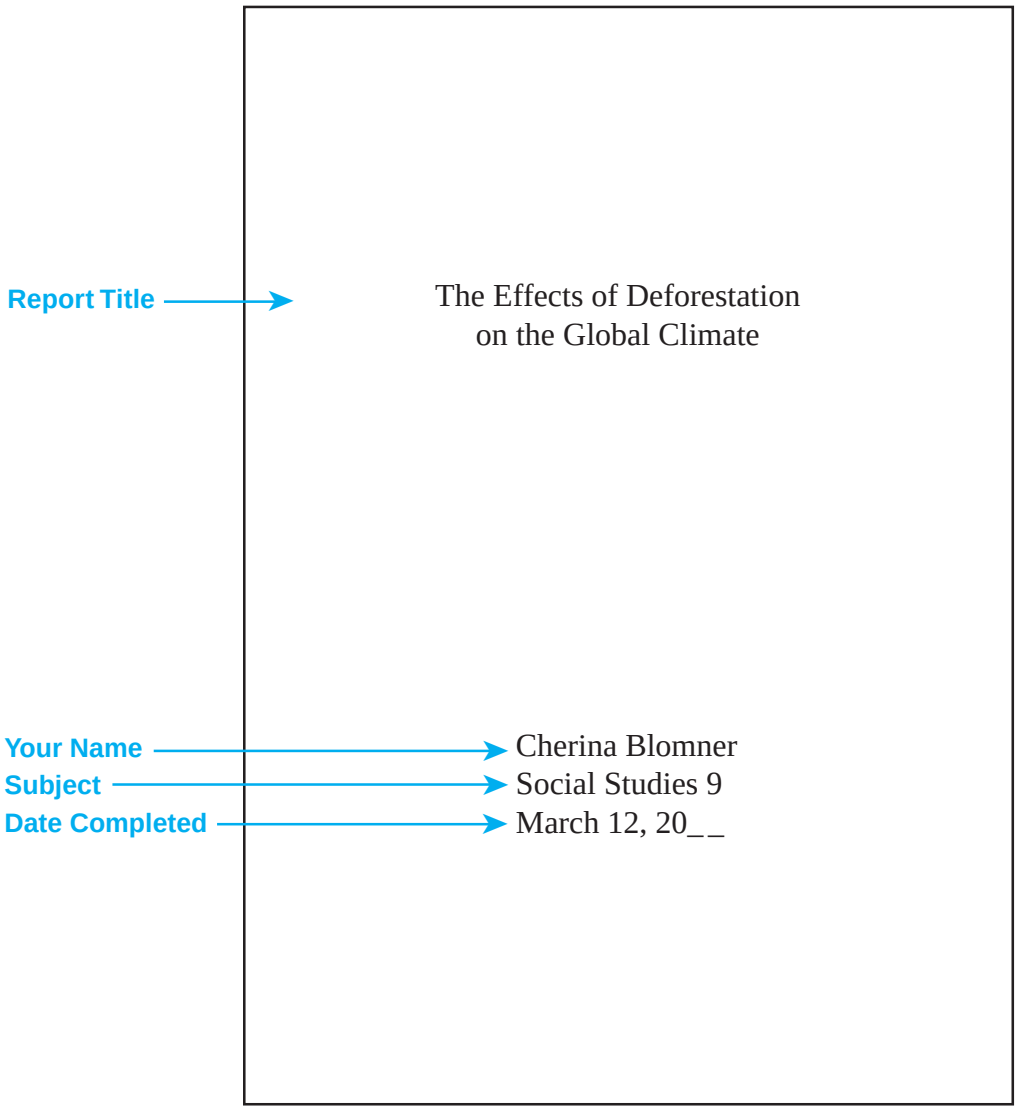
A *research paper*, as its name suggests, is based on research. A short research paper is often called a *report*. The style of a research paper is more formal than the style of some other forms of writing.

Since a report or research paper requires you to do some digging to find the material to be presented in the report, it's important to know how to research properly. For directions and hints on how to use a library and other sources effectively for research purposes, see **Section 6: Locating Information**.

Research papers must be set up according to an accepted format. To prepare a research paper, you need to know how to set up a title page and a bibliography. You must also be aware of how to cite the sources of your information within the paper.

The Title Page

Though different teachers may have their own preferences for formatting a title page, the following example is a good model to follow in most cases:



The Format of a Research Paper

Like any piece of writing, the final copy of a research paper can be typed on a computer or handwritten. Since a research paper is a formal document, you should use a computer and printer if you can.

Whether you're producing a handwritten or printed copy, follow these guidelines in your final copy:

- Use double spacing.
- Use only one side of each sheet of paper.
- Leave wide margins on both sides (1-inch or 2.5-cm margins are generally acceptable).
- Number each page.

If you can use a computer, here are a few more hints that will give your paper a professional look:

- Distinguish headings by using features like boldface, a large point size, or a different type font.

- Type your report in a standard font and size (for example, Times New Roman, 12 point). If you're using different fonts for headings or examples, don't use more than two in your paper.

If you handwrite your report, make the headings noticeable by underlining them and leaving a space before and after them.

Quoting from Other Sources

Because the information presented in a report or research paper has been taken from other sources (such as books, magazines, newspapers, videos, and websites), you may wish to quote from one of these sources. There are two ways of doing this:

- Short Quotations

  For short quotations (less than five lines long), use quotation marks to set off the quoted material. Put the page number in parentheses after the quotation. Here's an example:

  ```
  Laroche goes on to say that the grizzly bear population in
  western Canada "may well be in a state of crisis" (p 18).
  However, others disagree.
  ```

- Long Quotations

  When a quotation is five lines or longer, set it off in a separate paragraph. Don't use quotation marks. It's a good idea to set the margins in on both the left and right sides; if you're using a computer, you may use a slightly smaller font size. Put the page number after the quotation. Look at the next example.

Laroche stresses the seriousness of this situation in his well-known book *A Lament for the Grizzly Bear*:

> Western Canada's grizzly bear population may well be in a state of crisis already. The fact is that because of their migrating lifestyles, no one knows just how many bears there are or how quickly their numbers are declining. What we do know is that until we have more hard facts, it's far wiser to err on the side of caution and suspend all hunting. If we wait, it just may be too late to save this majestic symbol of the western wilderness. (18)

Knowing When to Quote

Many students tend to put too many direct quotations into their reports and research papers. You should quote directly only when a writer makes a point in such an interesting and succinct way that it deserves to be retained intact rather than paraphrased. Normally keep such quotations as brief as possible.

To avoid using an excessive number of quotations, research your topic so thoroughly that you, too, are something of an expert in it. Then paraphrase and summarize the information you read. Never directly copy words unless you use quotation marks. Copying without quoting is called *plagiarizing*; it is stealing someone else's words.

Acknowledging Your Sources

When you use information from other sources in your writing, you must frequently acknowledge, or identify, those sources. This is done by *in-text citations* (identifying the source within the text of your report).

You must use citations in two situations:

- when you borrow another writer's words with a direct quotation
- when you present facts or ideas that originate from a particular person or source

Use a citation in reports and research papers after each direct quotation, paraphrase, or reference to a source. Do this by putting your citations in parentheses (not square brackets) after the quotation, paraphrase, or reference. Include the author's last name or the title of the work if you haven't mentioned it in the text, along with a page number. Readers can then turn to the bibliography at the back of your paper to get more information.

Here are a few general rules to follow:

- Place any punctuation marks after the closing parentheses.

- If you've quoted directly, place the citation after the closing quotation mark and before any punctuation mark.

- If you quote a lengthy passage (five lines or more), put the citation after the quotation. In this case, place the citation after the period of the last quoted sentence.

Here are some examples that you can model your citations after:

- You haven't identified the author in the words introducing the quotation:

  This situation was seen to be "something that all thinking people must reject as intolerable in a decent society" (Lewis 72).

- The author is already named in the text of the report:

  Lewis feels that this situation is something any decent society must reject (72).

- You've used two books by the same author:

  As one writer has put it, this situation is "something that all thinking people must reject as intolerable in a decent society" (Lewis, *Society* 72).

  (In this example, *Society* is a key word identifying the book *Society in Question*. If you're handwriting your paper, underline the name of the book.)

- You're using a long quotation:

  Culture and identity are gradually being eroded in modern society:

  > Today, more than ever, people must become aware of the pressures to conform to an all-pervasive model of how to think, act, dress, and relate to others. Now that the globe has shrunk to village-size, thanks to our advanced telecommunication systems and air travel, we are all in danger of losing our individual cultural identities and being merged into one, big cauldron where everyone will be melted down and poured out into the same mould. (Lewis 73)

- Your source has two or more authors:

  Some writers have even gone so far as to consider human beings a "cancer that is slowly destroying its host—the planet Earth" (Schmidt, Linesy, and Irving 219).

- Your source has more than three authors (*et al* means *and others*):

```
Some writers have even gone so far as to consider human beings
a “cancer” in the planet Earth (Schmidt et al. 219).
```

- You are using a source with no identified author:

```
Global warming, as this article points out, has reached the
point of “critical mass” (“Life Today” 17).
```

The Bibliography

A bibliography (or works cited list) is a list in alphabetical order of the sources you’ve used in researching your report or research paper. A bibliography is included so that the readers of the report can obtain information about the sources and locate them. For written works, a bibliography includes

- the author’s name
- the title of the book or article
- the place of publication
- the publishing company
- the year of publication

Unless you’re doing reports frequently, you likely won’t remember how to do a bibliography. Most writers use a handbook to help them remember the format. Follow these guidelines when writing a bibliography:

- A bibliography is placed on a separate sheet of paper at the end of a report or research paper.
- A bibliography lists the sources that have been used in writing the paper (for example, books, magazines, and websites).
- Sources in the bibliography are listed alphabetically by the last name of the author (or, if no author is given, by the title).
- In each entry of the bibliography, the lines after the first one are indented five spaces. (This is called a *hanging indent*.)
- The titles of books, magazines, films, and newspapers are italicized or underlined.

Different types of sources are listed differently in a bibliography. Here are some examples of bibliographic entries to use as a guide:

- a book by one author

> Frazer, James G. *The Golden Bough: The Roots of Religion and Folklore*. New York: Avenel, 1981.

- a book by more than one author

  Dodd, John, and Gail Helgason. *The Canadian Rockies Access Guide*. Edmonton: Lone Pine, 1987.

- a book edited by one or more editors

  Ford, Theresa M. ed. *Diversions*. Edmonton: Alberta Education, 1971.

- a poem in an edited collection

  Nowlan, Alden, "The Execution." *The Blue Guitar*. Donald Rutledge and John M. Bassett. eds. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1968.

- a signed article from an encyclopedia

  Marsh, James. "Labrador." *The Canadian Encyclopedia.* 2nd ed. 1988.

- an article in a magazine

  Crump, Jennifer Burke. "Four Who Made a Difference." *Reader's Digest.* May 2001: 54–61.

- an unsigned article in a newspaper

  "Our Literary Bench Strength." Editorial. *Edmonton Journal*. 18 May 2001: A18.

- information from a website

  "The Museum," *Royal Tyrrell Museum*. Internet. 2 August 2002. Available: www.tyrrellmuseum.com.

Book Reports

A book report on a novel should be written in essay form. A book report usually includes your personal responses to the novel as well as comments on the book elements. (The main elements of a novel are setting, plot, characters, and theme. See **Section 7: Understanding Literature** for more information on novels.)

The introductory paragraph should clearly identify the book (title and author). You should also include a thesis statement that summarizes your opinion of the book.

The second paragraph can present a plot summary. A good way to write a plot summary is to first create a list of major events and then to rewrite the events into a smooth-flowing paragraph. Keep your plot summary brief.

In the next paragraphs, express your personal evaluation of the elements (characters, plot, setting, and theme). Support your ideas with reasons and details from the book.

Here are some ideas to help you write a book report:

- Were the characters realistic (believable)?
- Was the plot of the story believable?
- Was the ending satisfactory?
- Was the setting realistic and well-described?
- Was the author's writing style interesting?
- Did the novel have an important message or theme for the reader?
- What did you learn from reading this novel?
- Would you recommend this novel to another reader? Why or why not?

The final paragraph of your book report should bring your review to a smooth conclusion.

Here's a sample book report:

The Pearl by John Steinbeck

The Pearl by John Steinbeck is the story of Kino, a poor Mexican pearl diver, who finds a magnificent pearl. Steinbeck's portrayal of Kino is very realistic, and his theme, while depressing, is very thought-provoking.

The Pearl begins in Kino's coastal village in Mexico. Kino's son, Coyotito, is bitten by a deadly scorpion. Because Kino and his wife, Juana, are poor, the doctor refuses to see Coyotito. Luckily, Coyotito survives. Then Kino discovers a magnificent pearl. Their problems seem to be over, but in reality they are just beginning. Many people try to take Kino's pearl. Finally, when Kino cannot get a fair price for the pearl in his own village, he decides to travel to the capital. The journey, however, proves to be disastrous. Kino kills a man who tries to steal the pearl. Then the family is pursued. Tragically, Coyotito is killed by one of their pursuers. Defeated and grief-stricken, Kino and Juana return to their village and hurl the pearl into the sea.

Steinbeck's portrayal of Kino is very convincing. Kino is a realistic character—neither all good nor all bad. Kino's mistake is his obsession with the pearl and this leads him to kill. I can, however, appreciate Kino's desire for a better way of life. I can also feel the deep grief and disillusionment he finally feels.

The theme of Steinbeck's novel is that wealth can corrupt. Indeed, the pearl brings no happiness to Kino and his family. Because of it, he loses his canoe, his home, his values, and his son. Moreover, all the people Kino comes in contact with are also corrupted by their desire for the pearl.

The Pearl is a powerful book. Although I found the theme depressing, I became very involved in reading the novel. I would seriously recommend it.

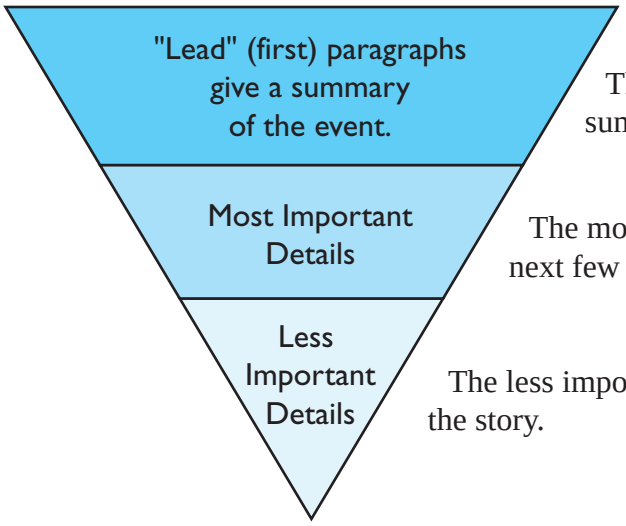
As with any form of composition, your teacher may have additional guidelines for writing book reports. The preceding example is just one of a variety of approaches to use.

News Reports

Newspapers contain different kinds of writing. *Hard news* stories are the reports of events. *Human interest* stories (sometimes called *soft news*) focus on people and their achievements or problems. *Editorials* are essays expressing opinions. *Letters to the Editor* are letters written by readers expressing their opinions.

Hard news stories report events clearly and concisely. A good news report follows the *inverted pyramid* form so that readers can obtain the most important information at the beginning of the story. They may then choose to read the rest of the story for the details or go to another story. A hard news story answers the five Ws—*who, what, when, where, why,* as well as *how.*

Inverted Pyramid



The first paragraphs of a news report provide a summary of the event being reported.

The most important details of the report are presented in the next few paragraphs.

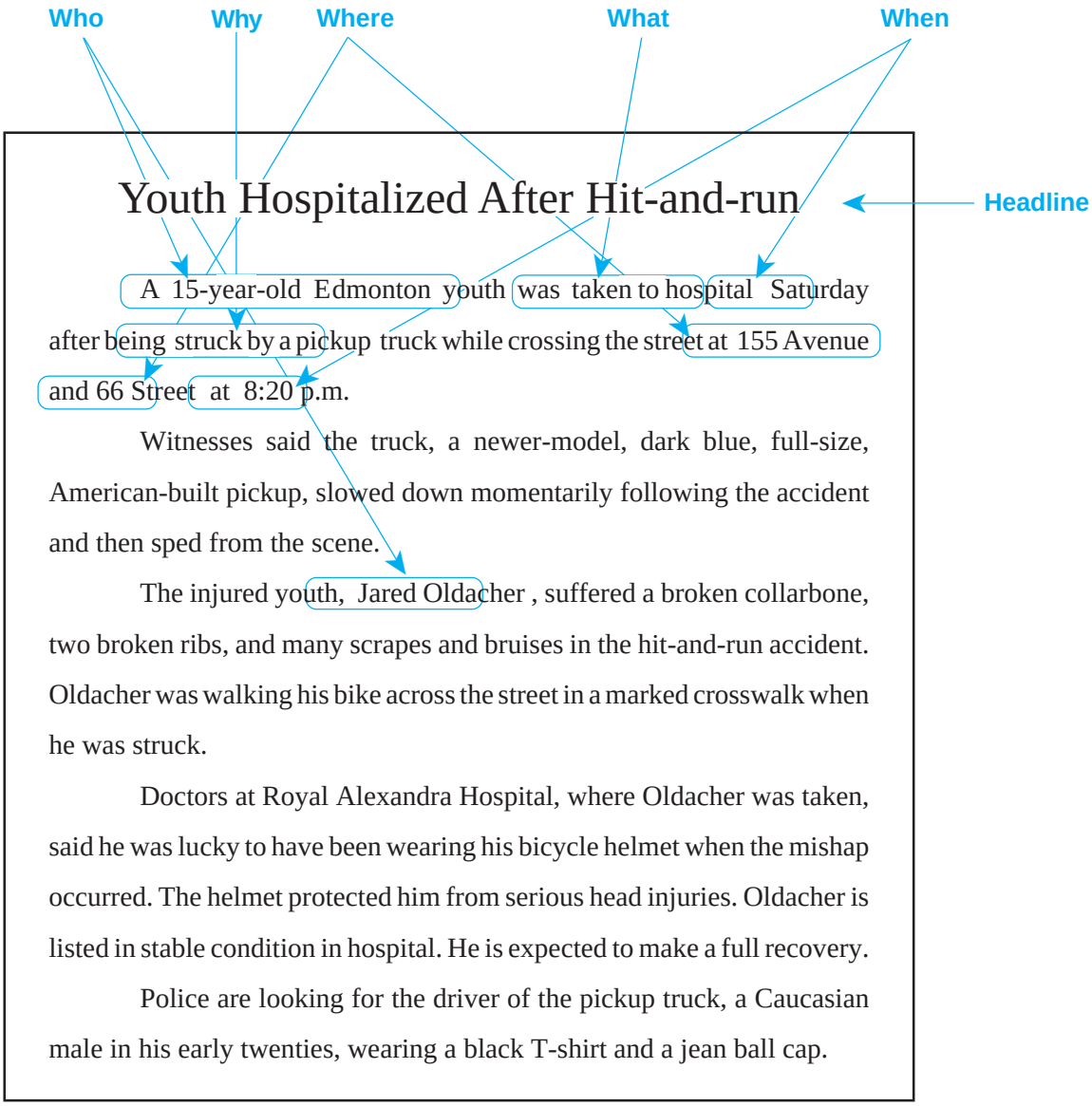
The less important details are presented in the final paragraphs of the story.

News reports don't include the reporter's opinions, although they may include the opinions of people who were involved in the event and who were interviewed by the reporter.

When writing a news report, follow these guidelines:

- Answer the five *Ws* and *how*.
- Use inverted-pyramid form. Give the most important details first, the less important details later.
- Give a complete but brief summary of the event in the opening paragraphs.
- Develop a strong lead sentence to interest the reader.
- Create a short but attention-grabbing headline.

Here's an example of a news report:



Letters

Most people will write many letters in their lifetimes for a variety of purposes. It's important to know how to write them in the proper way.

Friendly Letters

A *friendly letter* is a way of talking personally to someone who's absent. When you write a friendly letter to a relative or friend, you're really putting a part of yourself into the letter as you describe your activities and interests. It's important, however, to think not only of yourself but of the person to whom you're writing. It's also significant that the letter be neat and easy to read.

Friendly letters are more relaxed in style than business letters, and these days people sometimes take liberties with the traditional journal. A traditional friendly letter should have the following five components.

The Heading

- Include your complete return address as well as the date.
- Begin each line directly in line with the one above it.
- Put commas in the address and date, but don't use punctuation at the end of the lines.

The Greeting or Salutation

- Leave a space of three lines between the heading and the greeting.
- Insert a comma after the greeting.

The Body

- Keep the body of the letter in line with the greeting.

- When you're handwriting a friendly letter, indent the first line of each paragraph. When you're typing a letter on a computer, you may prefer not to indent paragraphs.

- Write your letter in paragraphs. When you're typing a letter, leave a space between paragraphs.

The Closing

- Use a capital letter for the first word in the closing, but not on the second word, as in this example:

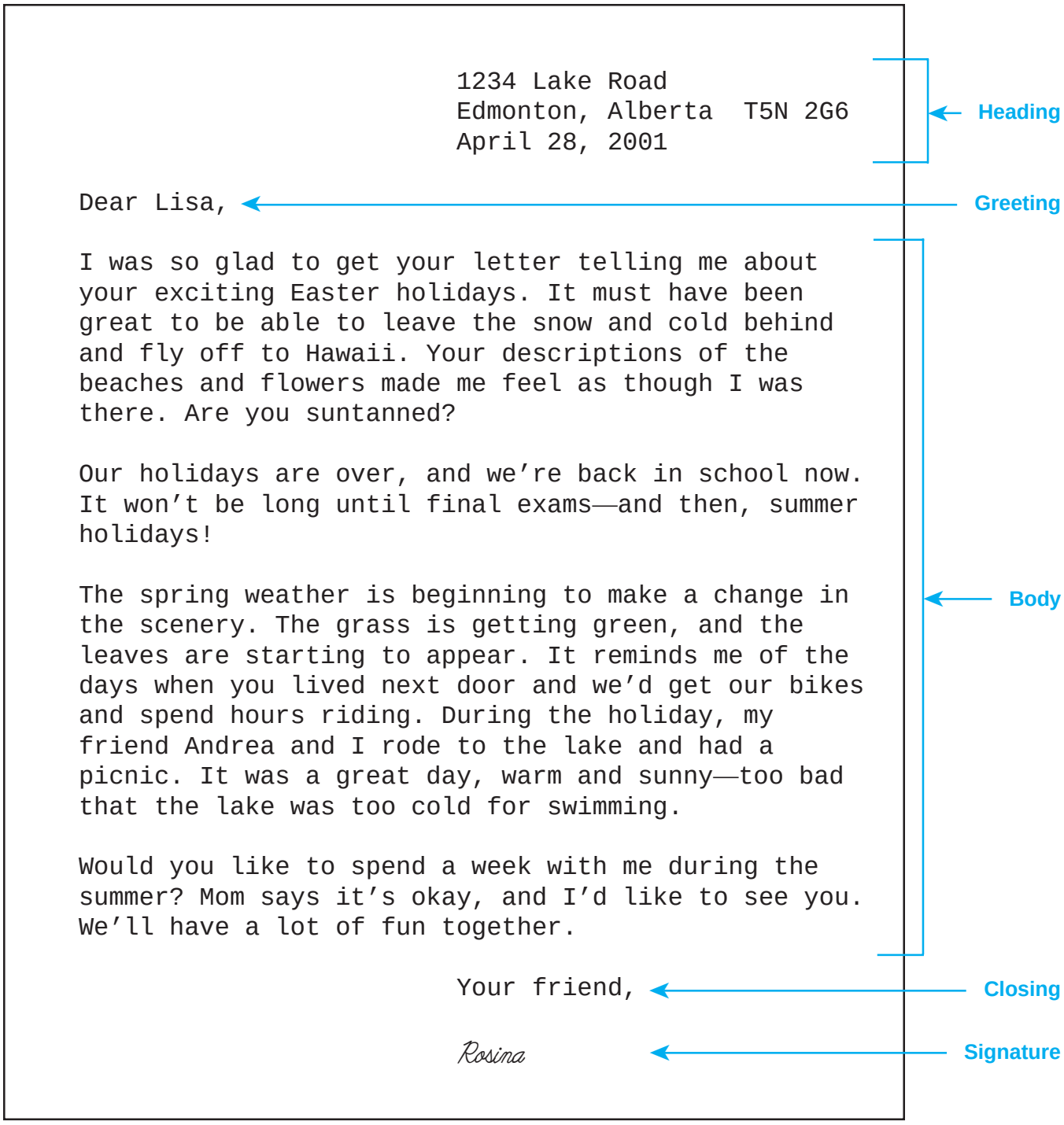
```
Your friend,
```

- Place a comma after the closing.
- Align the closing with the heading.

The Signature

- Write your signature directly below the closing.

Most friendly letters would probably be much longer than the following sample. However, this illustration shows you the parts of a friendly letter:



The Envelope

Properly addressed envelopes ensure that the letter reaches its destination.

ROSINA DILOPPA
1234 LAKE ROAD
EDMONTON AB T5N 2G6

MISS LISA GRANT
86 BOULEVARD ST NW
CALGARY AB T2P 6B3

Here are some tips to help you address envelopes correctly:

- Use a block form for envelopes. (In other words, don't indent the lines.)
- Use capital letters for all words and names. Write clearly and neatly.
- Don't use punctuation marks, except when they're part of a proper name (like ST. JOHN'S).
- Use the correct symbols for provinces and correct abbreviations of street types.
- Place the postal code on the same line as the city and province. Leave two spaces between the province and the postal code.
- Write the return address in the upper left-hand corner. It contains all the information needed to get the letter back to you if it can't be delivered for some reason.
- Begin the address of the person receiving the letter about halfway down the envelope. Put this address in approximately the middle of the envelope.
- When in doubt, refer to Canada Post's *Canadian Addressing Guide*.

It's important to be aware that some special situations may require a different address format. For example, wedding invitations may need to be addressed in a particular way to follow the rules of proper etiquette. Canada Post accommodates such variations, although it may slow down the processing and delivery of the letter.

You may find extra information on the website for Canada Post:

http://www.canadapost.ca/

The Thank-You Letter

A form of social letter that you may write frequently is a thank-you letter. It's courteous and thoughtful to write a thank-you letter promptly after receiving a gift or having been a guest at someone's home.

Here's an example of a thank-you letter:

465 Ash Street
Red Deer, Alberta T0G 2Z0
October 6, 2001

Dear Grandma,

Thanks so much for the CD and the sweatshirt that you sent me for my birthday. The sweatshirt fits perfectly and goes really well with the new jeans that I got from Mom and Dad. I'm sending along a picture of me wearing my new clothes.

I love the CD, too. How did you know that Raw Aliens is my favourite group? Someday, I'd like to go to one of their concerts.

Will you be coming to stay with us over the holidays again this year? I'd really like that. Maybe we can go skiing together again.

Once again, thanks for the gifts.

With love,

Terry

The Formal Letter

A well-written formal letter communicates a message clearly and makes a good impression on the person receiving the letter.

You might write a formal letter when you

- apply for a job, an award, or a scholarship
- ask for information
- purchase something
- complain about a product, service, or decision
- express your opinion
- invite someone to an event
- thank someone for a gift, a favour, or assistance
- answer a formal request

The format of a formal letter is similar to that of a friendly letter, with one addition. There are six components of a formal letter:

The Heading

The heading consists of the writer's address, followed by the date on which the letter is written.

The Inside Address

This is the name and title of the letter's recipient (the person receiving the letter) along with his or her address.

The Greeting or Salutation

The usual greeting begins with the word *Dear* and is followed by *Mr., Mrs., Miss,* or *Ms.* (or the person's title) and the person's last name. The greeting ends with a colon:

```
Dear Ms. Kendicot:          Dear Dr. Leontey:
Dear Colonel Renfrew:       Dear Reverend Nilssen:
```

If you don't know the name of the person, use the following greeting:

```
Dear Sir or Madam:
```

The Body

Body paragraphs are usually short. Don't indent them. Leave one space between each paragraph.

The Closing

The closing begins with a capital letter and ends with a comma:

```
Yours truly,      Yours sincerely,
```

The Signature

Sign your letter in blue or black ink. Beneath your signature, type (or print) your name so that it is legible. (Some people's signatures are very difficult to read.) You may also include your title:

Pat Morrison

```
Pat Morrison
Secretary
```

When you're writing a formal letter, use the five Cs as a guideline:

- **Complete:** Make certain all necessary information is given. In most cases, begin by stating your purpose. End your letter by offering thanks or requesting a reply or some action. In some letters, you might offer to meet the person. Include your phone number so that the person can contact you to discuss the matter further.

- **Correct:** Punctuate the six parts properly. Use a block style with margins of at least one inch. (If your letter is short, you can increase your margins to 3.75 cm or $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches.) Leave approximately the same amount of space at the top of your letter as at the bottom. Don't forget to proofread your letter to eliminate mistakes in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, sentence structure, and grammar.

- **Clear:** State exactly what you're writing about. Accurate wording may prevent a delay or error and save time.

- **Concise:** Keep the letter brief. State what you have to say concisely but without appearing abrupt.

- **Courteous:** Use a courteous tone. The formal letter should be polite, even when you're complaining or criticizing. Here are words and phrases that will help you achieve a courteous tone:

```
please                  I/we wish to express
kindly                  I/we would be obliged
thank you               I/we would like
on behalf of            I/we would welcome
at your convenience     I/we would be honoured
if possible             I/we are grateful
if you would prefer     I/we would appreciate
```

Nearly all formal letters are now typed, but if you must handwrite a letter, here are some suggestions:

- Write clearly so that your message is easy to read.
- Use blue or black ink.
- Make a draft, which you can revise and edit. The copy of the letter that you mail should have no errors or corrections.
- Use plain white paper. (**Hint**: Put a lined sheet under the plain paper when you're writing so that you can follow the lines.)
- Write on only one side of the paper.
- Print your name beneath your signature so that your reader knows who has written the letter.

Many word-processing programs will help you write a formal letter. Keep in mind the following points:

- Choose a simple font, such as Times New Roman, size 12.
- Print your letter on plain white paper. Be sure that the copy is readable.
- Before printing, preview your letter to check its appearance on the page.
- If your letter is short, centre your letter on the page so that there is approximately the same amount of space at the top and bottom.
- If your letter is short, you can also adjust the left and right margins slightly. (The default margin is usually 2.5 cm (1 inch). Adjust the margin to 4 cm ($1\frac{1}{2}$ inches).
- Proofread your letter carefully before mailing it. If you find mistakes, correct them and reprint the letter.
- Leave approximately four spaces for your signature. Type your name beneath the space.
- Sign your letter in blue or black ink.

It's appropriate that a formal letter should be mailed in a business envelope sized 10.5×24 cm $\left(4\frac{1}{5} \text{ inches} \times 9\frac{3}{5} \text{ inches}\right)$ so that the letter doesn't have to be folded more than necessary. Address the envelope in the same way you'd address the envelope for a friendly letter.

Here's an example of a formal letter:

The Critic
Edmonton High School
10682 – 105 Street NW
Edmonton, Alberta T5H 2X2
June 3, 2001

Ms. Sonia Inglewood, Manager
Edmonton News
10006 – 101 Street NW
Edmonton, Alberta T5C 0N3

Dear Ms. Inglewood:

The staff of our school newspaper would like to visit your printing shop if this is convenient for you. We think it would be interesting and educational to see the machines in operation.

Would it be possible to have someone show and explain to us how the news is printed? If so, when would it be most convenient for you? There are six of us on the school paper staff.

Thank you very much for considering this request. If you would like to discuss this visit further, please call me at the school: phone 411-9876.

Yours truly,

Eva C. Roth

Eva C. Roth
Editor

Here's an example of an addressed envelope for a formal letter:

EVA ROTH, EDITOR
THE CRITIC
EDMONTON HIGH SCHOOL
10682 – 105 ST NW
EDMONTON AB T5H 2X2

MS. SONIA INGLEWOOD, MANAGER
EDMONTON NEWS
10006 – 101 ST NW
EDMONTON AB T5C 0N3

Letter of Application

One type of formal letter that you'll likely write at some point in your life will be a job-application letter. If this job is important to you, you'll want to impress the letter's recipient by sending a well-written, error-free, correctly formatted letter.

To be sure that you format the letter correctly, follow the guidelines in *The Formal Letter* in this section. Here are some additional suggestions to help you create an effective letter of application:

- Begin your letter by indicating what job you're applying for and why you're interested in this job.
- In the next paragraph, briefly explain your educational background. Point out any special courses that you think will help you in this job. For example, you may have training in computers, CTS, or art. Or perhaps you've taken a CPR or first-aid course.
- Briefly outline any work experience that you have. Include volunteer work that you've done. Explain the responsibilities that you had in each job.
- You may want to stress some skills that you have, some awards that you've received, or relate an experience that you think is relevant to the job. For example, you may be the secretary of an organization, or you may have excelled in public speaking.
- Offer to meet the employer for an interview. Give a phone number where you can be reached. You can also offer to supply references (people who will testify to your work skills and integrity).
- Thank the employer for reading your application. Include a final statement expressing your interest in the job.
- Proofread your letter to ensure it has no errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization.

Letter to the Editor

A letter to the editor of a newspaper or magazine is something you write when you have a concern or opinion that you wish to communicate publicly. Newspapers and magazines provide space for some of these letters to be printed. Only the best letters are selected, so if you want yours to appear, it's important to write the letter effectively.

Here are some general rules to follow when you're writing a letter to the editor:

- Use the formal letter format (though your printed letter won't appear in this form).
- Be sure your writing is neat and legible. If possible, type your letter on a computer.
- Begin with a statement that indicates your topic or concern. Give enough background information so that the readers will understand what you're writing about.
- Express your ideas clearly but concisely. Many newspapers and magazines place a limit on the number of words (usually a maximum of 250–300 words). Sometimes, letters will be shortened.
- Use a reasonable and courteous tone. Be forceful if you wish, but never become abusive or nasty.
- Newspapers and magazines will usually not publish unsigned letters. Occasionally, a writer requests that his or her name not be published, and you may see *Name withheld by request* at the bottom of a letter.
- Proofread your letter before mailing it.

Here's an example of the body of a letter to the editor:

> I wish to comment on your recent editorial ("Space Tourism," May 19, 2001) regarding the beginning of tours into space.
>
> It's unfortunate that wealthy people would consider spending ten million dollars (or more) simply to have a ride in a spaceship or spend a few days on a space station. They may experience a short thrill and have a great story to tell their relatives and friends, but their money could bring society a far greater return.
>
> Why not provide scholarships for poor children to attend college, or fund medical research to help those who are suffering from terrible diseases? Why not build or donate money toward facilities to benefit everyone living in the community?
>
> The wealthy people I admire are those who help others, not those who indulge their own selfish whims.
>
> Anne Smith, Lakeside, AB

Memos and E-Mail

People who want to communicate short messages often write *memos* (an abbreviation for *memoranda*). Today, most memos are sent as *e-mail* (*electronic mail* sent from one computer to another).

Memos and e-mail are generally written in an informal style. However, informal does not mean incorrect. Some writers make the mistake of writing fragments or run-on sentences, using words incorrectly, and failing to edit their messages.

When you're writing a memo or e-mail message to anyone other than a close friend, keep in mind that most e-mail messages are saved, and some are duplicated for other readers. Be cautious about *what* you say and *how* you say it.

Like formal letters, effective e-mail messages and memos should follow the five Cs:

- **Complete**
  Include all necessary information.

- **Concise**
  Keep your message brief.

- **Courteous**
  Be polite, even when you're complaining or criticizing.

- **Clear**
  Choose your words carefully so that your message is easily understood.

- **Correct**
  Proofread your message. Check your sentence structure, grammar, spelling, and punctuation for errors.

Minutes

If you've ever attended a meeting, you may have noticed that someone took notes. At every meeting, the secretary of the organization (or someone else appointed to the task) takes notes and then writes an account of the meeting: these are called the *minutes*. The secretary then distributes copies of the minutes to people prior to the next meeting or reads the minutes at the next meeting. If any errors or omissions have been made, they're corrected at the next meeting. Then the minutes are adopted as the official record of the previous meeting and kept for future reference.

At some time, you may be asked to act as secretary for a group, so it's helpful to know the proper form for writing minutes.

The minutes for a meeting should follow the order of items on the *agenda* (a list of items to be discussed at the meeting). Minutes usually include the following points:

- the time and place of the meeting
- the type of meeting (regular, special, emergency, committee, annual, and so on)
- who chaired the meeting
- how many members were present (or the names of all the people present)
- how the minutes of the previous meeting were dealt with
- what business arising from the minutes of the previous meeting was discussed
- what new business was discussed
- who made and seconded each motion and whether the motion was carried or defeated
- when the meeting was adjourned

Here is an example of minutes of the Crestview School Council meeting:

A regular meeting of the Crestview School Council was held in the library of Crestview Junior High School on Friday, April 6, 2001. Twenty-four members were present.

President Darlene Jacks called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

Minutes of the March 5 meeting were read and adopted.

The treasurer's report was read and adopted.

The president then suggested that the business from the last meeting regarding the spring bake sale be discussed.

Moved by Kim Hui and seconded by Dave Winter that the sale be held on Saturday, May 5 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. in the school library. Motion carried.

Yuri Markovich volunteered to be in charge of advertising, and Cynthia Anderson accepted the responsibility for picking up baking donations from all students. The social committee agreed to take charge of sales.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m. on a motion by Lise Dupont.

Respectfully submitted,
Dan O'Brien
Secretary

This example shows one typical set of minutes. Although all minutes provide essentially the same type of information, different groups and organizations may use slightly different formats. Some groups use a numbering system to help organize the agenda items. This numbering system is then used in the minutes as well.

For some organizations, the minutes are considerably longer and more detailed than the example you've just looked at. Each newly-formed group or organization needs to make decisions about the format of its minutes. If you're taking on the secretary position in an established group, follow the format of the group's previous minutes.

Section 5: Communicating in Other Ways

Much of this handbook is devoted to skills related to writing. However, communication occurs in many other ways as well. This section focuses on reading, viewing, representing, speaking, and listening.

Reading

With the changes in communication in the last 50 years, you might think that reading has become less important. In fact, it's more important than ever. Today, people still spend a lot of their time reading, although many people probably read fewer books than they used to. Instead, people are reading magazines, newspapers, pamphlets, e-mail, faxes, and information on a computer.

Purpose and Speed

The best readers are flexible. They don't read everything in the same way. Reading speed should depend on reading material and purpose. Although some reading situations demand speed, it's not appropriate for all purposes and materials.

You should develop various reading rates from slow, careful reading to very rapid reading. Learn which reading rate is most appropriate for each reading situation that you experience. For every reading situation, there are three steps to take before beginning to read.

- *Know your purpose for reading*. You may be reading the material to find one particular fact, to get a general idea of the topic, to learn every detail in the selection, or perhaps to understand how to do a certain task. Establishing a clear reason for reading the material forces your mind to focus on only the necessary details in the selection. You read to satisfy that purpose. You'll find reading easier if you know why you're reading and what you want to gain from it.

- *Preview the material* to get an idea of its organization, content, and difficulty. Familiarity with the general layout, organization, and topic of the selection acts as a road map, guiding you through the selection and allowing you to notice the details you need to satisfy your purpose.

- *Determine the reading speed and technique* that best suits your purpose and material. If your purpose is reading for pleasure, or the material is easy, your reading speed will naturally increase. Complex material demands slow, careful reading. Your ability to adjust your rate is necessary to maximize your reading efficiency.

The table that follows indicates the type of reading and the approximate reading speed required for various purposes and materials. The reading speed is measured in words per minute (WPM).

Type of Reading	Reading Speed (in WPM)	Purpose for Reading	Difficulty of the Material
Scanning	1500	locating specific facts	almost any level of difficulty and factual material
Skimming (Surveying)	1000	gaining a general impression; looking for main ideas; previewing a book, website, or other longer text for its content, structure, or usefulness	almost any level of difficulty and factual material
Very Rapid	400 to 500	leisure reading (for entertainment)	easy, light, fast-moving fiction
Rapid	350 to 400	looking for important ideas or facts	fairly easy material
Average	250 to 350	looking for ideas and general information	average difficulty (for example, magazines, travel books, more difficult novels)
Slow and Careful	50 to 250	retaining every detail; learning new information; evaluating the worth of ideas	material with difficult concepts and vocabulary (for example, technical material and material to be studied for tests)

Skimming and Scanning

Two ways of locating information rapidly are skimming and scanning. If you become skilful at skimming and scanning, you'll save yourself a lot of time.

Scanning

Scanning is a technique used to quickly find a specific fact or piece of information. When scanning, you don't read the selection word for word. Instead, you let your eyes run over the sentences until you spot the key fact that you want. As you scan, you're reading approximately 1500 words per minute. You likely already use this skill when you look at the classified advertisements in a newspaper. You run your eye very quickly through the items to find the section you want. You also use this reading skill to scan indexes, tables of contents, and boldface chapter headings to determine whether a particular book has the specific information that you need.

If you want to find out what's on television at nine o'clock on Tuesday evening, you don't read the whole "TV Listings" from the front cover to nine o'clock. Instead, you leaf through the pages until your eyes catch the appropriate day. Then your eyes quickly skip down the columns until 9:00 catches your attention. This type of reading is scanning, looking for specific information. Good scanners race along, extremely quickly, and after scanning an article, are usually able to answer only the question they're researching.

There are three levels of scanning:

- The first level is very rapid. You're looking for a particular item such as a proper name or date. For example, if you are looking for the year that Alberta became a province, you know that you must look for numbers arranged in the form of a date.

- The second level involves looking for an answer worded like the question. For example, if you are asked *What is the temperature range for an Alberta winter*, you would look for the words *Alberta*, *temperature*, and *winter*.

- The third level involves looking for an answer that isn't worded like the question. For example, if you are asked about the climate of Alberta, you would look for the words associated with climate, such as *temperature*, *humidity*, and *rainfall*.

When scanning, follow these steps:

- Be sure you have your *purpose* clearly in mind. Often your purpose is set for you in the questions that you must answer.

- Predict or speculate about what form the information will take. For example, if the question asks, *"Who...?"* you could speculate that the answer is a name. Thus, your eyes would search for capital letters beginning a name. If the question asks *"When...?"* you'd look for target words having some relationship to time. It could be a specific time of day, so you'd look for numbers, like 2:10 p.m. Or it could be a date or time in history, usually requiring you to search for numbers, like June 15, 1944, or in the 17th century. The question could also be asking for time in a more general sense, such as in the morning, or late in the evening.

- Speculate on possible answers to alert your eyes to notice only the appropriate types of information as your eyes sweep the page.

- Move your eyes rapidly down the columns of print, recognizing only the words related to the type of information you're scanning for.

Skimming

Skimming is the ability to read quickly (about 1000 words per minute), skipping large sections of material. When you skim a selection, you read headings, topic sentences, summary paragraphs, plus key words and phrases. You also look at illustrations, captions, sidebars, graphs, charts, tables, and diagrams.

It's important to set your purpose before skimming. Is your purpose to find the main idea, or to recognize the important details? Is it to get just a general idea of what the article is about, or what areas its content covers? Are you skimming to find information to help you answer particular questions? Or are you skimming familiar material, looking for something new or unfamiliar?

Once your purpose is set, you must speculate on how you'll achieve it. Suppose you wish to find the main ideas in a selection. In speculating, you should consider that the main ideas are most often presented in the introduction, topic sentences of paragraphs, and in the conclusion. Therefore, you would read those sections more carefully as you skim.

If you want a general impression of a selection, what would you look at most carefully? Again, the introduction and conclusion would suggest the overall topic, the author's attitude and style, and the types of details that might be included in the body of the selection. You would read those parts more carefully and rapidly glance through the remainder of the selection, noting any other interesting or unusual points.

Previewing

Previewing (or surveying) requires both scanning and skimming. When you preview a text, you glance through it quickly to see its organization and general content. Previewing can save you time because, after you've understood how the material is organized, you can focus your attention on selected parts or relate new material to something you already know.

To preview a text effectively, you should look for the following things:

- The *title page* usually gives you the author's and/or editor's name, the complete title, and the publisher. (An editor is someone who gathers material usually written by other people.)

- The *copyright* date or publishing date is generally found on the back of the title page. This date will help you to understand how current the material is.

- The *ISBN* is an international identification number given to books. If you want to purchase a copy of the book or find another copy of it somewhere, this number is useful.

- The *table of contents* shows you how the material is organized. For example, it may be organized into sections or chapters. The table of contents will also indicate page numbers and whether the material includes other features.

- A *foreword* or *preface*, which is an introduction written by the author or some other authority, may be included at the beginning of the material.

- The *visual layout* of the material is its overall appearance. When you scan the contents, you can see whether illustrations, diagrams, charts, photographs, or graphs are included. You'll also notice how colour is used.

- The *headings* or *titles* show how the material is organized. Generally, the main headings will be larger than the subheadings. Previewing helps you understand how each section or chapter is arranged.

- A *glossary* is a list of words or terms and their definitions. If you're unfamiliar with some of the vocabulary in the material, you may need to refer to the glossary. A glossary can also be helpful for reviewing or studying.

- An *appendix* contains additional, but not essential, information placed at the back of the main material. Some texts have several appendices.

- A *bibliography* or list of *acknowledgments* or *credits* indicates the sources of information used by the author or the people who assisted the author. If you want to delve into the subject further, you may want to locate some of the resources that the author has used.

- An *index* is an alphabetical listing of topics covered in the book. If you're interested in a particular topic, you can save time by locating it in the index, turning to the page indicated, and reading only the relevant pages.

Reading Directions

Reading is a thinking process. You must be actively involved and thinking about what you're doing. This is especially true when reading directions.

Directions require slow and careful reading and very often slow and careful rereading. Sometimes people will rush through directions in an effort to save a few seconds, only to waste valuable hours by doing unnecessary or incorrect work.

Like all sentences and paragraphs, sets of directions have *key words* and *ideas*. Often, portions of directions aren't directions at all; they merely provide information. You must be able to extract exactly what you must do from a set of directions.

Underlining the important points in a set of directions can be very helpful. You might also want to use a highlighter (if you own the material) to emphasize important words or steps.

Most directions involve a sequence or order that you must follow. If the steps aren't numbered, add numbers yourself so that you completely understand the sequence. If you're writing directions for someone else, be sure to indicate the order by numbering the steps or using words such as *first*, *next*, *then*, and *finally*.

Look carefully at diagrams, maps, or illustrations. A clear visual can often be more useful than a wordy explanation. For example, it's usually easier to use a map to find a place than to read directions. When you're writing directions for someone, create a clearly marked illustration to supplement the text.

The SQ3R Method

Much of the reading you do when taking school courses requires that you remember the material you've read. A lot of your time is spent reading texts and other course materials, or studying for exams. Therefore, it's very important to develop skills that will enable you to do this type of reading quickly and efficiently.

Many readers find that the best way to achieve maximum benefit from the time they spend reading, researching, or studying material, is to use a method of reading called *SQ3R*.

In the beginning, SQ3R may seem to be extra work. However, this method is an organized, efficient way of studying material and taking notes. It's worthwhile for you to become skilful in the five steps of SQ3R: survey, question, read, recite, and review.

Survey

In the first step, you *survey* (preview or skim) the article, chapter, or story. Read titles, headings, introductory and concluding paragraphs, and topic sentences of other paragraphs. Look over any illustrations, such as graphs or pictures. Surveying helps you to understand the general topic, the main ideas, and the organization of the selection. In your survey, you also might decide to separate a long text into smaller, more manageable parts.

Question

From your surveying, what *questions* are raised? Formulate questions about the points you noticed while surveying. You could transform headings into questions. For example, a heading such as *The Effects of Air Pollution* can be transformed into the question *What are the effects of air pollution?* These questions focus your mind on specific details you want to find.

Read

Next, *read* the selection (or the part of it that you've decided to concentrate on) from beginning to end, actively looking for answers to the questions you asked. It's a good idea to take notes as you read.

Recite

When you've finished reading, pause and *recite* to yourself the answers to the questions you raised. If new questions come up as you read, answer them too. If you find that you're unable to recite the main ideas or answer the questions, you have to reread the material.

Review

Finally, review what you've read. Repeat to yourself the questions and their answers. Review your notes to be sure that you understand them. You may want to make an outline showing the main points.

The SQ3R method helps to make you an active reader, actively involved with reading and searching for specific information. It can shorten the time spent on studying and help you to remember the material.

Viewing and Representing

Today more than ever, it's important to have well-developed *viewing* skills—skills in interpreting visual messages. Similarly, it's important to have *representing* skills—in creating effective visual messages. People who can interpret visual messages and create effective ones of their own are said to be *visually literate*.

Today, visual messages are found everywhere—people's facial expressions, body gestures, postures, photographs, road signs, billboards, drawings, television shows, movies, comics, advertisements, architecture, clothing, the Internet, and on and on. You see these messages—but do you view them critically?

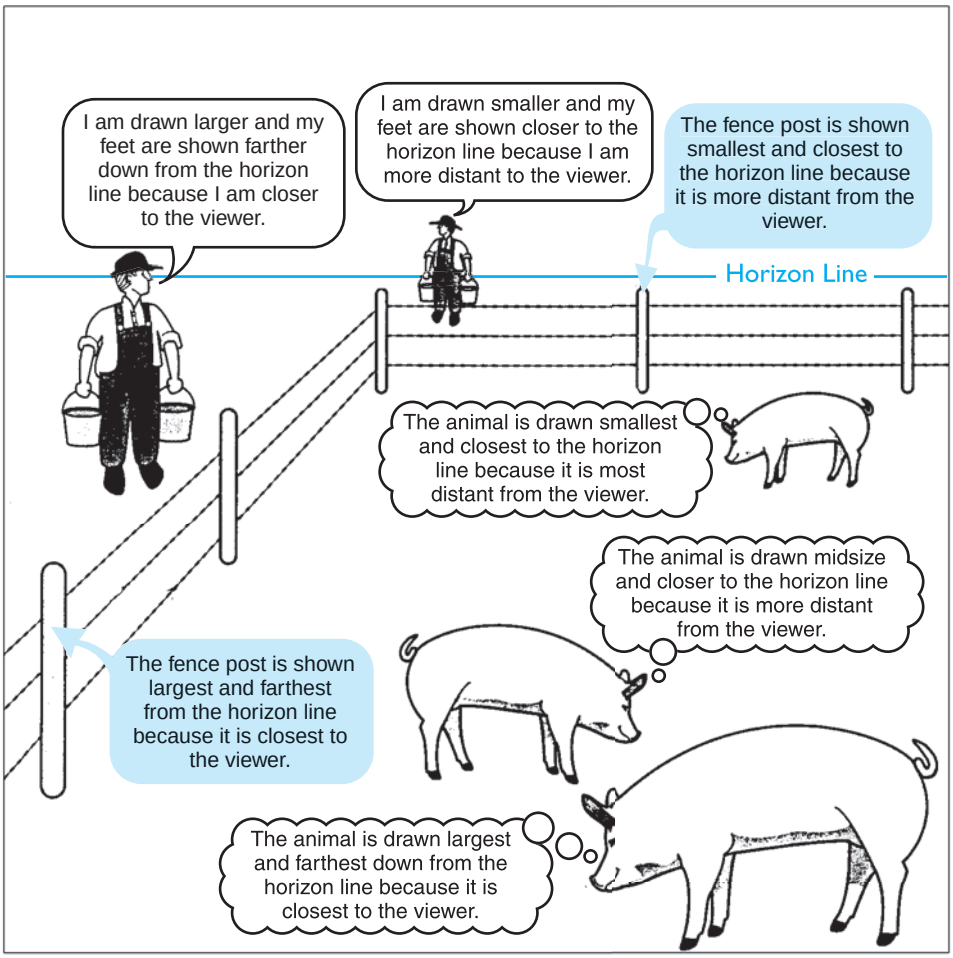
Viewing is different from simple looking. To look at something is to be passive, whereas to view is to be active. To view is to look, to see, and to analyse and interpret what you see. It is, above all, to be aware of what you're looking at and what message the visual conveys.

Drawings and Paintings

Visual artists who draw and paint use a variety of strategies to communicate their feelings, moods, and ideas. Some techniques that they use are distance and perspective, viewpoint, composition, and tone.

Distance and Perspective

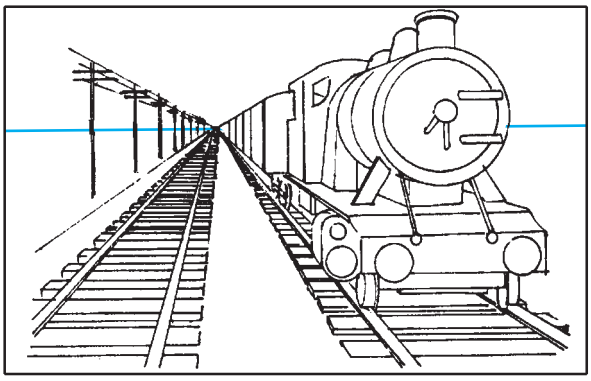
Visual artists can produce a feeling of distance in their works by including a *horizon line*—a line indicating where the ground and sky meet. This creates the feeling of depth. Objects closer to the horizon line appear to be farther away and in the *background*, whereas objects lower down and farther away from the horizon line appear to be in the *foreground* and closer to the viewer.



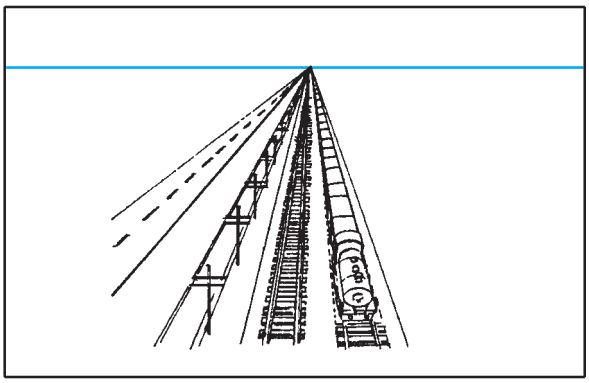
Viewpoint

Visual artists can create very different impressions by using viewpoint effectively.

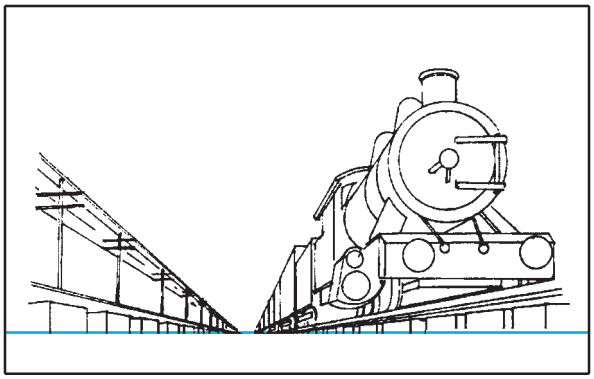
- The impression of looking straight at a scene is created by putting the horizon line near the centre of the picture.



- The impression that the viewer is looking down at a scene is created by putting the horizon line higher in the picture.



- The impression that the viewer is looking up at a scene is created by putting the horizon line near the bottom of the picture.

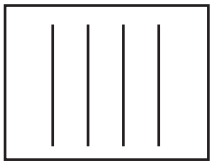


Composition

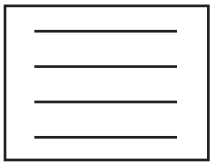
The term *composition* refers to the arrangement of the subject matter of a work of art such as a drawing or painting. The subject may be positioned high or low, left or right, in the centre, or close or far.

A picture's composition can have a dominant line—straight, curved, vertical, horizontal, or diagonal. For example, a frame in which people are standing against background pillars would be said to have dominant straight, vertical lines.

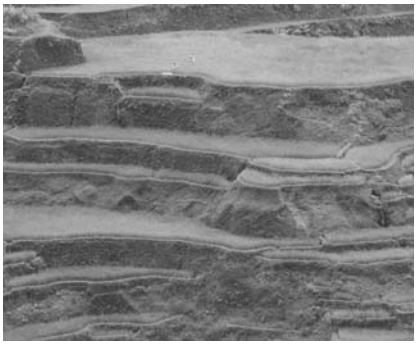
Here are a few basic guidelines to help you understand dominant lines:

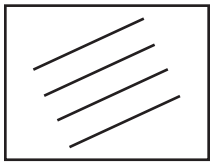


- Vertical lines give a feeling of power, strength, dignity, and importance.

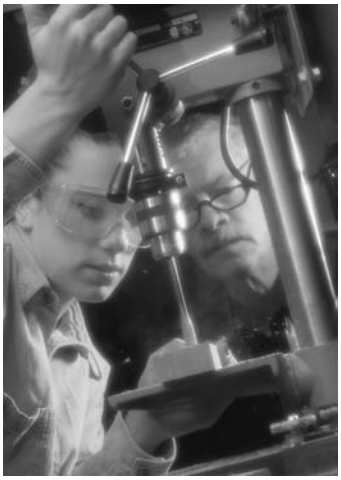


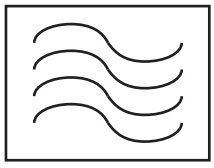
- Horizontal lines give a feeling of peace, stability, and rest.



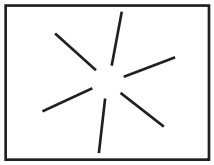


- Diagonal lines give a feeling of forceful action and movement forward.





- Wavy lines give a feeling of grace, beauty, and rhythm.



- Radiating lines give a feeling of forceful expansion and power.

Tone and Colour

Different degrees of light create different *tones* in a painting or drawing. Light tones generally convey a feeling of happiness or liveliness, while dark tones often convey a feeling of depression, somberness, or foreboding.

The artist's choice of colour also contributes to the tone. Warm colours, such as red, yellow, and orange, may create a bright, cheerful, or energetic mood. Cool colours, such as blue and green, may be calming and relaxing. Dark shades and colours may convey an ominous or sinister mood.

Photographs

Most of the techniques that apply to paintings and drawings also apply to photographs. Here are some of the other techniques that you should be aware of when viewing and producing photographs.

Distance

The distance of the subject from the camera can be varied to create different effects. Photographers often speak of three different types of shots: long, medium, and close-ups.

- **Long or Wide Shots**
  Long or wide shots are taken from a distance (or taken with a wide-angle lens). They can include many people, who will appear too far away to show much detail. Long shots are best used to show an entire scene or landscape.

- **Medium Shots**
  Medium shots show subjects in their settings. A medium shot of a person, for instance, would show his or her whole body and the immediate surroundings—such as the chair or bench the person might be sitting on and other articles, such as furniture, plants, vehicles, pets, and so on close by.

- **Close-up Shots**
  Close-up shots are taken from close enough to show their subjects in detail. The subjects of close-ups generally fill most of the picture. A close-up shot of a person will normally show his or her head and shoulders and will allow viewers to see the person's facial expression.

Camera Angles

The angle of the camera in relation to the subject can also be varied to create specific effects. Three common camera angles are high, low, and eye level. As well, some photographs are taken from great heights (aerial shots).

- **High-Angle Shots**
  High-angle shots (sometimes called *bird's-eye view*) are taken from above. They make subjects appear to be smaller and less significant than they would otherwise seem.

- **Low-Angle Shots**
  Low-angle shots (sometimes called *worm's-eye* view) are taken from low down. They make their subjects appear larger than life and perhaps threatening.

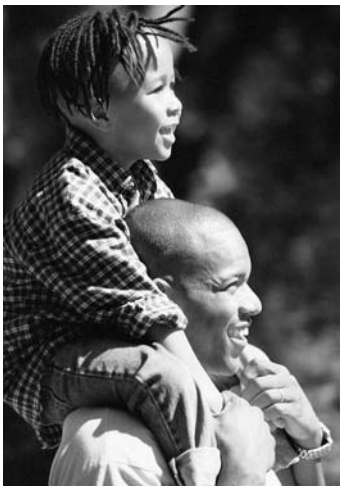
- **Eye-Level Shots**
  Eye-level shots are taken with the camera positioned at the level of the subject's eyes. These "neutral angle" shots produce the most natural, but not necessarily the most interesting, effect.

- **Aerial Shots**
  Aerial shots are taken from a crane, plane, or helicopter. These shots show the general location or the landscape. One of these shots may also emphasize the vulnerability of something or someone on the ground and the power or superiority of someone or something in the air.

Lighting

Photographers can use lighting to create effects and convey feelings. A natural light can create a calm, relaxed feeling, while a strong light can make subjects appear stark. Dark lighting can create a somber tone; on the other hand, strong contrasts between light and dark areas create a dramatic, harsh effect.

In a photograph of people, lighting from below can create a sinister effect. Lighting from the side can be used to emphasize facial expressions.



Colour

Photographers can use colour to create effects and convey messages. Bright colours are cheerful, whereas dull colours are sombre. Blues and greens tend to be cold, while reds and yellows are warm and inviting. Black-and-white photos create a dramatic effect because of their stark contrasts.

Sometimes photographers put colour filters on their camera lenses to create special effects. A room shot through a yellow filter, for example, will appear warm, rich, and inviting.

Blurring

Have you ever seen a photograph of a runner, a vehicle, or something else in movement where the subject has been blurred? The effect is that the subject was moving so fast that the camera couldn't catch it. Photographers sometimes blur their subjects (or backgrounds) deliberately by using a technique called *selective focusing*. A blurry background makes a subject in the foreground stand out even more. Blurred edges create a warm, fuzzy feeling.

Movies and Films

People who operate movie or video cameras use most of the techniques that photographers use, along with a few more. Here are some terms you should know to understand these techniques:

dollying-in: moving the camera closer to the subject while filming

dollying-out: moving the camera farther away from the subject while filming

zooming in and **out:** using telescopic features of the camera to move in suddenly for a closer shot or farther away for a longer shot

panning: sweeping the camera around horizontally to create a sensation of vastness, speed, and movement

tilting: swivelling the camera up and down vertically to show a tall person or object and magnify the height

tracking: following a moving subject with the camera (For example, a camera mounted on one car may travel alongside another to film it.)

one-shot: a shot of one person or object

two-shot: a shot of two people or objects

split screen: a television or movie screen divided into two or more parts, each with its own shots

superimposition: an effect achieved when two shots are kept on the screen at the same time, one appearing to be on top of the other

wipe: a line that sweeps across a screen erasing one scene and introducing another

These days, computer technology is making possible many special effects. Called *sfx*, these effects often make the impossible seem real. Keep in mind that special effects are created by experts, using advanced technology. However real these images look, they are magical illusions meant solely for entertainment.

Advertising

Advertisers bombard you with messages on the radio, TV, and Internet; in newspapers and magazines; on billboards, walls, and signs on vehicles; through the mail; and sometimes even in the air with balloons and signs dangling from airplanes. To defend yourself from the onslaught of advertising, you need to be aware of the techniques and devices used by advertisers.

The purpose of advertising is to inform you about products and services and to persuade you to buy them. Most ads and commercials have a *target audience*, a group of people that the ad is directed toward. The ad will be designed to appeal to that audience. Naturally, an ad designed for teens will look and sound different from an ad designed for seniors.

Ads and commercials need to have powerful *visual appeal*. Since most viewers respond strongly to what they see, movement and colour are both very important to grab attention. Actions speak louder than words, so most commercials show the product being used.

Sound or *auditory appeal* is also an important component. Songs, musical themes, and *slogans* (words or phrases that a business or organization uses to identify itself) may stick in people's minds and remind them of the product. Often, the main message is repeated to ensure that viewers and listeners don't forget it.

Perhaps the most important element of an ad or commercial is the *brand name*. After all, the whole point of advertising is lost if the listener or viewer doesn't remember the name of the product or service. The brand name is usually repeated several times. In a print ad, the name is generally placed in an eye-catching position. The colour and size of print also ensure that the viewer sees the brand name. Some businesses or organizations use *logos* (emblems or symbols) to help imprint their name in the viewer's memory.

Gimmicks

Advertisers often use *gimmicks* to sell their products and services. Coupons, prizes, samples, and sales are some examples of gimmicks. Consumers may be assured of the best price or given an opportunity to save money. Here are some examples of gimmicks:

```
Buy now and save!
Today is discount day.
Buy today, and we'll pay the GST.
Scratch and save!
Buy two; pay for one!
This is guaranteed to be your lowest price for this year.
Bring us your old ones, and we'll give you credit on the new ones.
```

Advertising Claims

Advertisers must be careful when they make claims about their products and services. If an ad directly promises something, the product or service must be able to do whatever is promised; otherwise, the business or organization could be fined or sued for false or misleading advertising. To avoid making false claims and promises, advertisers often suggest a message, using words that imply rather than directly state.

- **Weasel Words**
  The messages in many ads and commercials are worded so that they seem to promise or claim something. However, when you look closely at the message, you see that the business has protected itself by using a *weasel word* (a word that weakens a claim) in the message. Here are some sample messages containing weasel words (the weasel words are in italics):

  Fabuzaz ***helps*** to keep your skin blemish free.

  Your dishes will be ***virtually*** spotless when you use Fabuzaz.

  With Fabuzaz, you'll use ***up to*** 40% less detergent in every wash.

  Fabuzaz will improve your gas mileage by ***as much as*** 30%.

  Fabuzaz ***fights*** bad breath.

  Fabuzaz tastes just ***like*** real fruit.

  Fabuzaz ***can reduce*** signs of aging.

  Fabuzaz ***can increase*** your energy.

- **Unfinished Comparisons**
  Many advertisers use an incomplete comparison to suggest that their product or service is better than that of a competitor. However, the ad never makes clear which products and services are being compared:

  Fabuzaz cleans ***better***.
  Fabuzaz is used **by *more*** moms.
  Fabuzaz works ***harder*** to eliminate odours.
  The flavour of Fabuzaz lasts ***longer***.
  Fabuzaz is ***more*** relaxing and *more* soothing.

- **The "New and Improved" Claim**
  After products have been on the market for awhile, their sales may decrease. To re-awaken interest in the product, the manufacturer may alter the original product in some way. (Sometimes only the packaging is changed.) Then a new advertising campaign claims that the product is new and improved:

  Taste the ***new flavour*** of Fabuzaz.
  Try Fabuzaz with its ***new fragrance***.
  Fabuzaz, ***improved with Sadivan***; it's better than ever.
  Try Fabuzaz, now ***strengthened with Ludex***.

Advertising Appeals

To create an effective ad or commercial, advertisers do market research and learn how people feel, think, and behave. Then ads are designed to appeal to the needs and wants of the target audience. Here are some of the appeals used in advertising:

- **Complimenting the Consumer**
  Some ads flatter their customers. By making the customer feel good, advertisers hope that the customer will associate the product with a feeling of satisfaction. The product becomes a reward for the consumer, as shown in these examples:

  You deserve the best.
  You're number one.
  You're worth it.

- **Testimonials**
  Many ads feature celebrities or experts (and sometimes actors dressed up to look like experts) to recommend a product. Keep in mind that these people are paid to endorse the product. Because people admire celebrities and respect authorities and experts, many consumers will trust the endorsement and buy the product:

  As a dentist, I encourage my patients to use Fabuzaz.
  When I'm in a game, I know that Fabuzaz helmets will protect me.
  My hair looks great because I use Fabuzaz.

- **The Bandwagon Appeal**
  The bandwagon appeal is based on the belief that most people want to be part of a group; they want to feel that they belong, that they have friends, and that they're popular. This type of ad implies that everyone is using the product, and you'll be left out if you don't get on the bandwagon. These ads often feature a group of happy people having a great time:

  ```
  Join the crowd and have a great time at Fabuzaz.
  Everyone's raving about Fabuzaz.
  ```

- **The Snob/Glamour Appeal**
  Many people want to feel superior or sophisticated. Some ads appeal to this desire by implying that those customers who buy their product appreciate quality. The ad may also associate the product with a glamorous lifestyle. These ads often feature well-dressed, gorgeous models and luxurious surroundings:

  ```
  You want the best, and Fabuzaz gives it to you.
  You'll appreciate the quality of Fabuzaz.
  Fabuzaz—a cut above the rest.
  Fabuzaz—for the successful woman.
  ```

- **The Plain Folks Appeal**
  The plain folks appeal suggests that simple, old-fashioned beliefs and values are still the best. Ads using the plain folks appeal feature healthy, happy models, country life, and the outdoors; and they associate their product with these people and this lifestyle. Check these examples:

  ```
  Down here on the farm, we like sunshine, rain, and Fabuzaz.
  A sunset, the cry of a loon, and Fabuzaz—could life be better?
  ```

- **Sex Appeal**
  Many ads appeal to people's interest in sex. These ads feature good-looking models, sometimes partially nude or provocatively dressed. Sometimes the ads imply that you'll be more sexually appealing if you use the product. Here are some examples:

  ```
  Your girlfriend will love the scent of Fabuzaz.
  Men adore women who wear Fabuzaz.
  Use Fabuzaz, and everyone will notice you.
  ```

- **Health, Safety, and Security Appeal**
  Most adults are concerned about safety and security. As people get older, they also worry more about their health. Some ads create feelings of fear and insecurity; then they suggest that their product is the answer to the problem. Other ads simply try to associate the product with good health and security. Read these samples:

  ```
  You won't have to worry if you buy Fabuzaz.
  Forget your fears when you have Fabuzaz.
  I want to see my grandchildren grow up, so I take Fabuzaz.
  ```

- **Humour Appeal**
  Most people are attracted to something humorous, so ads often use comedy to attract and hold attention. Humour can be created through characters, action, words, and music. Sometimes, animation is used, or the ads may feature stereotyped models such as a grumpy old man, a mischievous boy, a howling baby, or a stern grandmother. An out-of-control skier who just manages to avoid colliding with everyone and everything on the ski hill might be so funny and entertaining that viewers readily remember the name of the product being advertised.

Cartoons

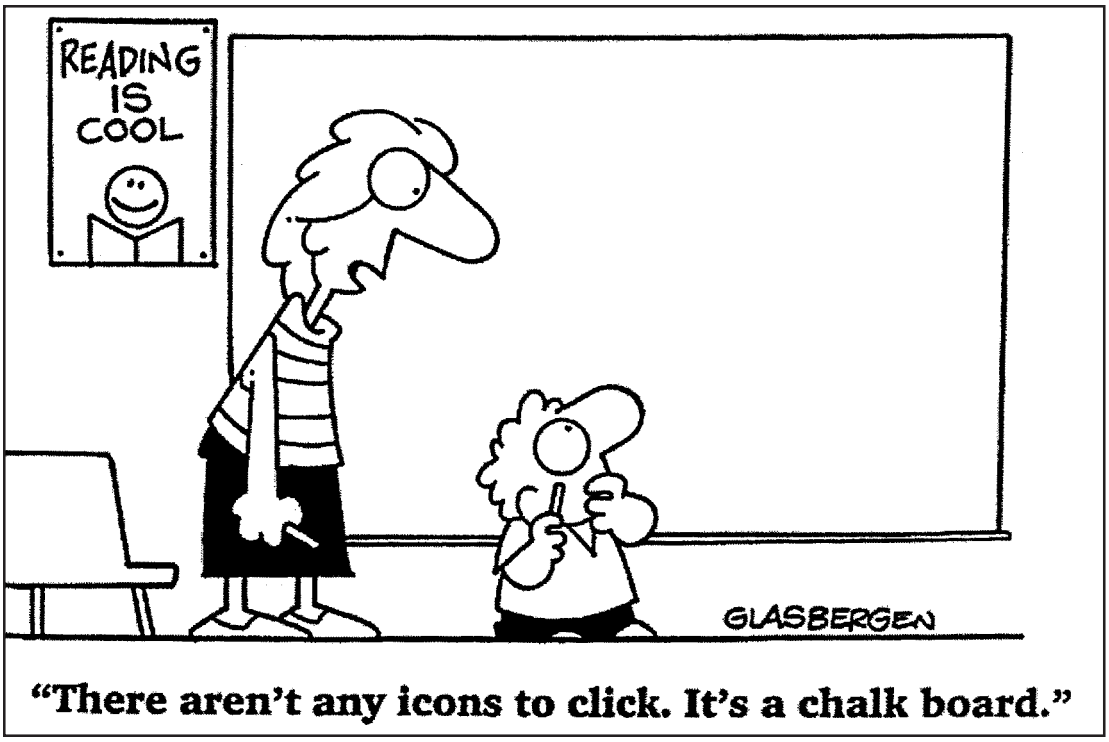
Most cartoons make you laugh, but they can also present opinions. *Political* (or *editorial*) *cartoons* usually ridicule politicians or political decisions. Political cartoonists express their points of view through humour, but they are also criticizing (or sometimes praising) their subjects.

Cartoons may consist of a single *frame* (one picture) or several frames that tell a story. When you are viewing a cartoon, you should be aware of the techniques used by cartoonists to present their message.

The Visual Message in a Cartoon

Part of the message in a cartoon is expressed by the drawing. Political cartoonists often create *caricatures* (drawings that exaggerate features of the subject) so that viewers can recognize the figures. Other cartoonists may also exaggerate features to create *stereotypes* that viewers will recognize. For example, a farmer may be drawn as a hefty man wearing overalls and a cap. Older women are typically drawn with plump bodies, glasses, and frizzy hair. Like all stereotypes, these exaggerations aren't accurate portrayals of people as they really are, and viewers must always recognize this fact.

When you look at a cartoon, consider the facial features, body, and clothing of the figures. All of these details contribute to the visual message. The facial features reveal emotions such as surprise, anger, or satisfaction. The body and clothing suggest the age and status of the figures. Details like a bald head, a dark nose, a big chin, a long neck, a chubby body, or thick glasses all contribute to developing the character. The body positions may reveal actions and emotions like aggression, pride, and humiliation.



[1]

In addition to the figures, look at other details in a cartoon. The artist may include items in the background: a large desk to suggest a business executive, a barn to suggest a farm, or a cluttered space to suggest a teenager's room. Sometimes, an object is exaggerated for emphasis or humour. For example, a huge computer screen might imply that computers have become powerful tools; an oversized TV camera might stress the presence of the media.

The Verbal Message in a Cartoon

Most cartoons have words as well as pictures. Sometimes the characters' words are placed in *speech bubbles* with arrows pointing to the character who is speaking. In single-frame cartoons, a character's words may be placed in a *caption* (the words beneath the drawing).

Sound effects may be created through words like *Bang!* or *Crack!* In a comic strip, the artist may use words like *A few days later* or *Meanwhile, at the office* to show a change in place or time. The last frame of a comic strip generally contains a *punch line* (a final speech that creates a surprise or twist and makes you laugh).

The humour in a cartoon often comes from *irony*. The words may imply a meaning that is opposite to what is actually said, or the events may lead to an unexpected twist at the end. Another source of humour comes from seeing cartoon figures behave exactly as real people or animals do. Cartoonists also use *puns* (jokes created by using a word that has more than one meaning).

[1] Randy Glasbergen, http://www.glasbergen.com, 1996. Reprinted by permission.

Creating a Comic Strip

A comic strip is really a short story told in pictures and words. Here are some tips to help you create a comic strip:

- Develop an idea for a story. Your comic strip needs characters, a setting, a conflict, and an ending. If you're creating a comic book, you can develop suspense. (See **Section 7: Understanding Literature** for information on short stories.)

- Decide how to draw your characters. Give each character distinctive features so that the viewers will recognize the figure in each frame. Comic strips with four or five frames usually have only two or three characters.

- Develop a *storyboard* to plan your comic strip. A storyboard is a rough drawing showing each frame in the strip. Like an outline for an essay, a storyboard establishes an order for the events. Each frame should include the figures and their words.

- When you're satisfied with your storyboard, create a polished copy. Use unlined paper, and don't make your frames too small. Be sure that the characters are clearly drawn and the words are easy to read.

Symbols and Signs

A visual symbol is a picture that represents an idea or a message. Because symbols are meant to communicate quickly and with as little chance of error as possible, they're usually made of a simple, easily recognized shape with few details. Symbols can be a universal form of communication (except for people with sight impairments), no matter what a person's language is.

Here are some examples of everyday symbols that you're probably familiar with:

Mixed-Media Presentations

While viewing skills are often important in conveying and interpreting messages, you'll likely be called on just as frequently to respond to, and create, *mixed-media presentations.* As its name suggests, a mixed-media presentation is anything you create to convey meaning, using more than one medium. Here are a few very common examples:

- a poster (combining print and pictures)
- a cartoon or comic strip (combining print and pictures)
- a television show or movie (combining film and sound)
- an animated cartoon (combining animated pictures, voice, and sound effects)
- a play or a skit (combining actors' gestures, facial expressions, and voices)
- a puppet show (combining puppets and voice)
- a presentation (combining an oral report and a video or transparencies)

Creating an Effective Poster

Probably the easiest type of mixed-media presentation to produce is the poster. Combining words and pictures, a poster can convey a powerful message. Here are some suggestions for creating posters:

- The visual image on a poster should attract attention. The image needs to be large, clear, and striking. Often, a large drawing of a single object or person is more effective than small drawings of several items.

- Colour can be used to attract attention, to emphasize parts of the drawing, and to create a mood.

- The words on a poster should be printed large enough so that they can be read easily. The letters should be carefully drawn in black or another dark colour so that the message is visible. Always check for spelling mistakes before printing the words. A short message written in large letters is usually more effective than a long message written in small print.

ALBERTA CAREER DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT

Speaking and Listening

As a human being, you'll continue to communicate in some form or other for the rest of your life. Your speaking skills will constantly be used—talking with your family and friends, answering the phone, inquiring about items that you wish to purchase while shopping, and having day-to-day conversations.

In addition to speaking skills, your listening skills are also very important. Studies have shown that most people spend more time during the day listening than speaking. Despite this fact, few people practise good listening skills.

People's personalities in regard to speaking and listening are shaped by social situations. By the time children start school, they're already outgoing, bubbly talkers or shy, quiet, reserved listeners or somewhere between these two extremes. The challenge for a talkative person is to develop listening skills and sensitivity to the fact that everyone wants to speak and have a chance at contributing to the conversation. By contrast, a quiet listener must learn to be more assertive and take part in social conversations and working groups.

Working in Groups

No matter where you live or work, you'll almost certainly have to cooperate with other people in group situations. The groups you participate in may be committees, clubs, teams, or simply small groups formed to accomplish a particular purpose, such as organizing a picnic or planning a celebration. To function well in a group, you need to practise excellent speaking and listening skills.

Communicating in Groups

As a group member, you'll use your speaking skills to

- ask and answer questions
- voice opinions
- make suggestions
- encourage others to voice opinions
- agree or disagree politely with other people
- praise others for their ideas and efforts

As a group member, you'll also need to listen to other people's ideas, opinions, and suggestions. You need to be considerate of other people's feelings. When you disagree with someone or want to criticize an idea or suggestion, be sure that you don't verbally attack or embarrass the person. Instead, politely explain why you disagree. Your tone of voice should show courtesy and respect rather than anger or disgust.

Group Roles

To accomplish goals within a group, every member needs to make a contribution. A group is only as strong as its weakest member; when there are no weak members, the group can be very successful.

Every group member is expected to

- help establish the group's goals or tasks
- remain on task and avoid distracting others from the task
- contribute ideas and suggestions
- listen to other group members and ask questions to clarify your understanding
- show appreciation for the ideas and efforts of others in the group
- treat other group members with respect
- disagree with others politely
- volunteer to undertake duties or assist others
- share responsibility for accomplishing the group goals

There are many roles in a group. Sometimes, roles within groups are assigned. In other cases, people are elected to do certain tasks. In informal groups, people generally volunteer to perform duties. Here are some of the roles that you might be expected to perform in a group:

- The *organizer* (also called a chairperson, president, or coordinator) is usually the leader of the group. The organizer should be confident and enthusiastic about the group's task. However, the organizer must be careful not to take control of the group and become a dictator. A leader must respect the wishes of the group and listen to everyone's ideas.

  As an organizer, you would
  – welcome all group members
  – help establish the group's goals or tasks
  – guide the group to reach decisions
  – keep everyone on task
  – help the group reach agreement
  – resolve conflicts within the group
  – set up a schedule to get the work done
  – praise the ideas and efforts of other members
  – take responsibility for accomplishing the goals

- The *recorder* (also called a secretary) keeps a record of the group's decisions and actions. In many meetings, an official record called *minutes* is kept. (For more information on how to record minutes, see **Section 4: Communicating in Writing**.) Recorders need to keep an accurate and complete record of the group's decisions.

  As a recorder, you would
  – note the time and place of the meeting
  – keep track of those who are present and absent
  – record the decisions made
  – record any other necessary information
  – write letters and deal with information that the group receives

- The *speaker* is the person who represents the group and shares the group's ideas with others. Sometimes the organizer or recorder will act as a speaker.

  As a speaker, you would
  – report the decisions or actions of the group to the audience or to other groups
  – explain the ideas and thoughts of the group
  – answer questions that the audience or other groups may have

Some groups have other positions as well; for example, when money is involved, some groups have a treasurer who keeps track of income and expenses.

Here are some roles that don't help the group accomplish its goals:

- The *parasite* depends on others to do the work. This person sits back and relaxes while everyone else is working.

- The *lion* tries to control the group. This person wants everyone in the group to follow his or her lead. Lions think they are good leaders, but they seldom listen to other people's opinions or advice. When the group fails, lions blame other people.

- The *mouse* never volunteers to do anything and never offers ideas. This person sits quietly and watches others do the work.

- The *magpie* talks constantly, interrupting and distracting others. This person sometimes has good ideas but is a poor listener.

- The *crow* complains about other people. This person is quick to criticize others but seldom undertakes responsibilities.

- The *bee* eagerly volunteers to do any job. This person enjoys rewards and recognition and selfishly excludes others by refusing to share ideas and tasks.

Keep in mind that most achievements are accomplished by groups, not individuals. If every person does his or her share in a group, the workload is much lighter and the goal will soon be achieved.

Oral Reading

You'll likely be faced with many occasions when you're asked to read out loud. For example, you may have to read a report or the minutes at a meeting. You may be asked to read in a church service, a community celebration, or a ceremony. In school, you may be asked to read a piece of literature.

The skills you use in oral reading are similar to those needed for making a speech or presentation. Here are some oral reading tips:

- Always rehearse a reading. You should become familiar with the subject matter and the words. Check the pronunciation of unfamiliar words and names.
- When you're reading, speak loudly enough so that everyone can hear you.
- Don't read too quickly. Pause at the punctuation marks so that the audience has time to digest your words and ideas. Also, take the time to pronounce words clearly. When you rush, your words are slurred, and your reading will become meaningless.
- Read with a tone that suits the material and the occasion. (You'll use a different voice in a church service than you'll use when you read a poem to a group of children.)
- Look at your audience as much as possible. With practice, you should be able to glance at your text and then look up while you say the words.

Making a Speech

Both talkative and quiet people must learn how to give effective and interesting speeches on various occasions. For instance, you may be asked to give or reply to a toast at a wedding reception. If you change jobs, you may be required to say a few words of thanks for a going-away presentation. If you decide to run for civic office, you'll need to be articulate in the art of effective communication. You'll use public speaking skills on numerous occasions throughout your life.

When a person is making a serious attempt to communicate with an audience, speaking isn't just a matter of uttering words. Effective speaking requires advance planning, organization, preparation, and practice.

Purpose and Audience

Two main factors must be taken into account when giving a public speech: the purpose of the speech and the audience.

If the *purpose* of your speech is to present a social studies project to your class (your *audience*), you'll probably talk in a serious, factual manner, but you'll use a pleasant, conversational tone because you know the students by name. If your purpose in speaking is to open a meeting, you'll be serious and formal. You'll follow the rules of order that regulate your organization.

If members of your nature club ask you to present slides and talk about an overnight hiking expedition at Jasper National Park, you'll use a more informal tone. Your talk will be on a casual level because you'll be meeting with friends in a relaxed atmosphere. You'll feel free to use slang, but you won't joke around so much that nothing is accomplished.

When you're planning a speech, ask yourself these questions:

- What is the purpose of this speech?
- Who is the audience? How many people will I be speaking to?
- How can I interest this group of people in my topic?
- How long should this speech be?
- What is the appropriate tone to use in this situation?

Research and Organization

Once you're fully aware of the purpose of your speech and the audience you'll be addressing, it's time to do research and gather information. If you're giving an informal talk about a personal experience, you likely won't have to do any research. On the other hand, for some speeches, you may have to prepare your presentation as you would a report or research paper.

If you have to do serious research, follow the suggestions in **Section 6: Locating Information**. When writing your speech, be sure to follow the steps of the writing process. (See The Writing Process in **Section 3: Writing Effectively**.) Outlining is especially important if you don't want a rambling, confusing presentation.

Preparing Your Speech

If you've seen many speeches and presentations, you'll have noticed that some speakers write out and read their entire speech while others refer to their main points on note cards to keep their speech focused. Still others seem to talk easily without notes. There are pros and cons to all of these methods, as the following table shows:

	Reading	Using Cards	Speaking Without Support
Pros	• no chance of forgetting your ideas • little chance of getting mixed up	• no chance of forgetting your ideas • little chance of getting mixed up • opportunity for eye contact with audience • sounds natural • allows for skipping around	• sounds natural • allows maximum contact with audience • seems least boring and contrived
Cons	• can sound dull and contrived • reduces contact with audience	• chance of forgetting details • chance of dropping and mixing up cards	• risk of forgetting ideas • risk of getting points mixed up • risk of omitting important points

The method you use will depend on how experienced you are. The best speakers often rely on very few notes or use no notes at all. Beginners, by contrast, usually feel more comfortable with the whole speech written out. A good compromise is to write your main points on small cue cards. This allows a fresh, spontaneous feeling and lots of audience contact—along with the security of knowing that you won't forget what to say.

Your choice will also depend partly on the length and type of speech you are giving. You may be able to make a short thank-you speech without notes. However, if you're presenting complex information for ten minutes, you'll likely want to use note cards or read your speech.

Using Your Voice Effectively

Delivering a speech can be a nerve-racking experience. Many beginners are tempted to read quickly or stumble their way through a prepared presentation to get the whole thing over with. You may never overcome your nervousness entirely, but you can reduce it by rehearsing your speech. Use a tape recorder or video camera to record yourself; listen or watch, and learn from your mistakes. Practise your speech until you're confident that you can deliver it effectively.

You've probably heard many presentations where the speakers quickly lost their audiences by droning on and on in a flat, monotone voice or by speaking so quietly that people past the first few rows simply couldn't hear properly. The fact is that voice is an extremely important component in any speech. Here are some tips on using your voice effectively:

- **Pace**
  Pace is essentially the speed at which you speak. If you talk too fast, the audience will have trouble keeping up with you, and if you go too slowly, people will lose interest. It's not uncommon for inexperienced speakers to speed through a presentation, partly because they're nervous and partly because they want to get the presentation over with and return to the safety of their seat.

  Whenever you speak, take your time. Force yourself to slow down and take pauses. They may seem like an eternity to you, but to your audience, they'll seem natural and welcome. And be sure, as well, to vary your pace. Slow down even more to emphasize important ideas. Not only will this help your audience focus on your principal points, but it will also give a welcome variety to the pace of your talk.

- **Volume**
  Volume is how loudly you speak. Your voice needs to carry to all members of the audience. It shouldn't be too soft or too loud, though for most beginning speakers the challenge is usually to make it loud enough without shouting. If a microphone is available and you plan to use it, try to test it beforehand.

- **Clarity**
  Clarity is, of course, how clear you sound. It's important not to slur your words; each one must be enunciated clearly. If you don't do this, the audience may not understand what you're saying and quickly lose interest. Be sure to check the correct pronunciation of words and names in advance so that you don't stumble over unfamiliar words.

- **Pitch**
  Pitch refers to the high, mid, and low tones of voices. Speakers who never vary the pitch of their voices quickly bore their audiences. Whenever you speak, you can add variety to your presentation by using different vocal ranges to emphasize key ideas. Even when you aren't stressing a key idea, some variety in pitch will be pleasing to the ears of your listeners, adding a slight musical quality to your voice.

- **Expression**
  Vocal expression is a term used to describe the way speakers use all four of the preceding qualities to create a pleasing and effective presentation. Expression allows you to capture and hold the attention of your audience and add emphasis to your important points. Always strive for a *well-modulated voice*, that is, a voice that displays a pleasing variety of clarity, pitch, pace, and volume.

Body Language

When you think of communication among human beings, you might first think of verbal communication—using words to exchange ideas. Studies have shown, however, that human beings communicate vast amounts to each other through visual signals.

The term used to describe the collection of visual signals people send each other is *body language*. Often the communication that people transmit through their body language is accidental. They don't mean to slouch or look nervous or fidget; they just do it. People can, however, learn to control their bodily signals and make these signs work for them. The job candidate, for instance, who sends out positive non-verbal signals during an interview will have a much better chance of getting the position than someone who appears sullen, bored, nervous, or unfriendly.

When you give a speech or presentation, you need to be aware of your body language. Here are some ways that you convey non-verbal cues to your audience:

- **Facial Expressions**
  Have you ever noticed how television newscasters will smile broadly during a cat-in-a-tree story that has a happy ending and then switch to a sad face for the story of a highway fatality? This is a simple example of how *facial expressions* can be used to elicit an appropriate audience response.

  It may seem obvious; no one, after all, would relate a tragic story while wearing a broad smile. Many inexperienced presenters, however, forget all about using facial expressions to complement their material. Usually because of nervousness, they'll deliver their entire presentation with the same wooden expression. This has precisely the same effect on an audience as delivering a speech with a complete lack of vocal expression. When you begin a speech, take a moment to look at your audience and smile. If you're nervous, take a few breaths before you begin to speak. You could even jot a reminder to smile on your note cards or papers.

- **Eye Contact**
  Making and maintaining *eye contact* with your audience, however frightening, is one of the most important elements of speech delivery. Eyes are sometimes called the "windows to the soul," and through them the audience will evaluate how confident and sincere you are in your presentation. Eyes that are downcast or shifty suggest unpreparedness and embarrassment. Eyes that stare blankly straight ahead denote extreme nervousness.

  Whenever you make a presentation, make eye contact with different individuals in your audience throughout the speech. Hold that contact for several seconds as you make a point; then do the same with another member of the audience. In this way, each person will think that you've communicated directly with him or her, and each will have a much better feeling toward you and your subject matter.

  Eye contact is also a great tool for checking your audience's attention and understanding. If you receive blank looks, you've lost their attention, and it's time to do something to get their attention back.

  If you decide to read your speech, you can still make eye contact. Rehearse your speech in advance so that you know it well. Then, as you read it to your audience, pause at the end of sentences and look at your audience. With practice, you should also be able to glance quickly at your paper and then look up while delivering the words. If you rehearse many times, you'll become so familiar with it that you'll be able to read it without appearing to be reading.

- **Posture, Gestures, and Body Movement**
  Posture and *body movement* sound pretty easy to master. After all, if you're standing in front of an audience or a camera to make a presentation, it's unlikely that you would lean heavily against the wall or choose that moment to scratch your back.

  Gestures are related to posture and body movement, but this term is generally used to refer specifically to hand motions. Using your hands effectively can help convey thought and emotion and emphasize important points. However, use gestures sparingly and at the right times; if overused, the technique can become monotonous and lose its punch. Madly waving arms can even distract your audience from what you're saying and end up being counter-productive.

  Here are tips about posture and movement during a traditional speech or presentation:

  – Stand straight, but not stiffly; try not to look like a soldier on parade.

  – Balance your weight between your feet. (Don't prop a foot on the podium, and don't rock or tap your toes.)

  – Don't move around more that is necessary; that is, don't fidget.

  – Avoid making distracting gestures with your hands. Don't keep your hands in your pockets.

  The goal is to look alert and in charge—but relaxed and natural.

Listening

You may be surprised to find out that listening is the communication skill used most often. In fact, much of your day is probably spent listening. No doubt, you spend a good portion of the day listening to your family and friends—and teachers! When you use the phone, you're listening for part of the time. Perhaps you listen to a radio, a CD player, or a television set.

Unfortunately, this important skill is taken for granted much of the time. How often have you done an assignment or errand incorrectly because the instructions were given orally, and you didn't completely understand or listen attentively to them? Listening is more than just hearing; it involves far more attention and reaction.

If you're reading a book and run into difficulty, you can easily go over the difficult section until you fully understand it. Listening offers no second chance, so you must learn to concentrate.

A good listener will also become a better reader, writer, and speaker. A good listener doesn't dominate a conversation or constantly interrupt. A good listener pays attention to what you're saying. Good listening pays off both educationally and socially.

Listening to a speaker or presenter, as opposed to social listening or listening to music, for instance, puts special demands on the listener. Just as the speaker has responsibilities in regard to purpose and audience, so, too, the listener has responsibilities toward the speaker. But no matter what sort of listening situations you're in, you should work at becoming an *active listener*.

Here are some of the things you can do to become an active listener:

- **Concentrate on what the speaker is saying**. Ignore distractions, and look directly at the speaker. Doing this will provide positive feedback for the speaker and will help ensure that a clearer message is being communicated.

- **Decide on your purpose for listening**. Each situation presents a different reason for listening. The subject matter of a formal lecture is quite different from the subject matter of a casual conversation with a friend. In the first situation, a listener might want to glean information in order to pass an examination; in the second situation, the listener is provided with a chance to develop closeness with a friend.

- **Plan how to fulfill your purpose for listening**. If you're listening for information, you should bring along a notebook to write down the most important points. If you've forgotten to bring a notebook, be sure to write notes soon after the talk has been presented so that you remember as many of the major points as possible. Your responsibility in listening to a friend is to try to understand the person's feelings, ideas, and point of view. You should ask questions that show an interest in the other person and encourage him or her to continue speaking.

- **Listen for the main ideas**. Try to keep these in your mind. Write down the important points and fill in the details later.

- **Try to tell the difference between fact and opinion**. Ask yourself whether the speaker is a reliable source of information or has obtained knowledge from a reliable source.

- **Avoid getting emotionally upset and attacking the speaker in your mind**. Give the speaker a chance to finish before you present arguments. Keep your mind open, and try to understand the speaker's point of view. Consider the speaker's support for his or her opinion.

- **Evaluate *what is said* and not how it is said**. Don't let the speaker's voice, dress, personality, or manner of speaking distract you from the message.

- **Keep your mind alive**. Remain mentally alert by keeping yourself focused on the speaker's ideas.

Section 6: Locating Information

Although some of the information you're learning comes from your parents, mentors, and teachers, you also have to be able to locate information by yourself. You're likely to be asked to do research for assignments such as reports and research papers. The material in this section will help you to locate information from various sources.

The Dictionary and Thesaurus

Every writer needs three basic tools: a writer's handbook, a dictionary, and a thesaurus. Even the most skilful writers use these tools to help with editing, to check word meanings, and to locate synonyms.

Using a Dictionary

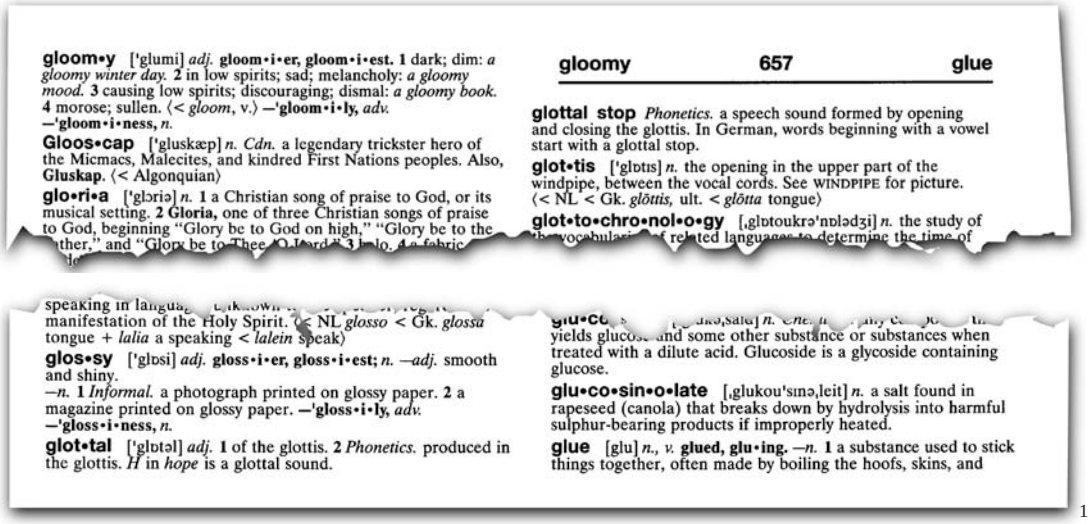
A dictionary is a very useful reference book because it can be the source of a great deal of information. You should form a habit of using your dictionary to look up the meanings, spellings, pronunciations, and histories of words.

Guide Words

Knowing how a dictionary is arranged can help you make better use of this reference book. A dictionary lists words in alphabetical order, but even when you know the alphabet, you can spend a lot of time trying to find a word. A large dictionary has many pages, and it's easy to waste time turning pages to find a word. You can speed up your search by using *guide words.*

Two guide words are printed in boldface type at the top of each page in a dictionary. The guide word on the left side corresponds to the first entry word on that page in the first column. The guide word on the right side corresponds to the last entry word on the page in the second column.

Note the guide words and entry words in the following sample from page 657 of the *Gage Canadian Dictionary* ©1998:



gloom•y ['glumi] *adj.* **gloom•i•er, gloom•i•est. 1** dark; dim: *a gloomy winter day.* **2** in low spirits; sad; melancholy: *a gloomy mood.* **3** causing low spirits; discouraging; dismal: *a gloomy book.* **4** morose; sullen. ⟨< *gloom*, v.⟩ **—'gloom•i•ly,** *adv.* **—'gloom•i•ness,** *n.*

Gloos•cap ['gluskæp] *n. Cdn.* a legendary trickster hero of the Micmacs, Malecites, and kindred First Nations peoples. Also, **Gluskap.** ⟨< Algonquian⟩

glo•ri•a ['glɔriə] *n.* **1** a Christian song of praise to God, or its musical setting. **2 Gloria,** one of three Christian songs of praise to God, beginning "Glory be to God on high," "Glory be to the ...ther," and "Glory be to Thee, O Lord." **3** halo. **4** a fabric ...

glottal stop *Phonetics.* a speech sound formed by opening and closing the glottis. In German, words beginning with a vowel start with a glottal stop.

glot•tis ['glɒtɪs] *n.* the opening in the upper part of the windpipe, between the vocal cords. See WINDPIPE for picture. ⟨< NL < Gk. *glōttis,* ult. < *glōtta* tongue⟩

glot•to•chro•nol•o•gy [ˌglɒtoukrəˈnɒlədʒi] *n.* the study of ...vocabulari... of related languages to determine the time of ...

... speaking in langua... [illegible] ... manifestation of the Holy Spirit. ⟨< NL *glosso* < Gk. *glossa* tongue + *lalia* a speaking < *lalein* speak⟩

glos•sy ['glɒsi] *adj.* **gloss•i•er, gloss•i•est;** *n. —adj.* smooth and shiny.
—n. **1** *Informal.* a photograph printed on glossy paper. **2** a magazine printed on glossy paper. **—'gloss•i•ly,** *adv.* **—'gloss•i•ness,** *n.*

glot•tal ['glɒtəl] *adj.* **1** of the glottis. **2** *Phonetics.* produced in the glottis. *H* in *hope* is a glottal sound.

glu•co... [...ˌsaɪd] *n.* ... yields gluco... and some other substance or substances when treated with a dilute acid. Glucoside is a glycoside containing glucose.

glu•co•sin•o•late [ˌglukou'sɪnəˌleit] *n.* a salt found in rapeseed (canola) that breaks down by hydrolysis into harmful sulphur-bearing products if improperly heated.

glue [glu] *n., v.* **glued, glu•ing.** *—n.* **1** a substance used to stick things together, often made by boiling the hoofs, skins, and

[1]

The guide words **gloomy** and **glue** show that on this page of the dictionary you'll find these two words, as well as words that fall between them, in alphabetical order.

Page numbers aren't important in a dictionary because the guide words alone tell you whether the word you're looking for is on that page.

Pronunciation

A dictionary can tell you how to pronounce words. Every dictionary has a pronunciation key, though these keys can differ from one dictionary to another. This key uses symbols to show how the letters in a word are pronounced. Remember that these are symbols, not just letters of the alphabet.

Dictionaries also divide words into syllables and use an accent mark (ˈ) to show which syllables are stressed more strongly than the others. Some dictionaries, like the *Gage Canadian Dictionary*, show syllables having a secondary stress using this symbol (ˌ).

Following is the complete pronunciation key from the *Gage Canadian Dictionary* © 1998:

[1] *Gage Canadian Dictionary* (Toronto: Gage Educational Publishing Company, 1998). Reprinted by permission.

Complete Pronunciation Key

The pronunciation of each word is shown after the word, in this way: **mem•o•ry** [ˈmɛməri]. The symbols are pronounced as in the words below. The mark [ˈ] is placed before a syllable with primary or heavy stress, as in the example above. The mark [ˌ] before a syllable shows a secondary or lighter stress, as in **mem•o•rize** [ˈmɛməˌraɪz].

[i]	m*ee*k, b*e*, pretty, mar*i*ne	[p]	*p*aper, cu*p*		
[ɪ]	*i*t, p*i*n	[b]	*b*ad, ro*b*		
		[m]	*m*e, a*m*		
[ei]	*a*ge, f*a*ce	[f]	*f*at, *f*		
[ɛ]	l*e*t, b*e*d	[v]	*v*ery, sa*v*e		
		[w]	*w*ill, *w*oman		
[æ]	h*a*t, c*a*b	[θ]	*th*in, bo*th*		
[ɑ]	c*a*rt, b*a*rn	[ð]	*th*en, smoo*th*		
[aɪ]	f*i*ve, h*i*gh				
[aʊ]	l*ou*d, c*ow*	[t]	*t*ell, i*t*		
		[d]	*d*ie, re*d*		
[ʌ]	b*u*n, b*u*tter	[n]	*n*o, i*n*		
[ɔi]	*i*ce, b*i*te	[s]	*s*ay, ye*s*		
[ʌu]	l*ou*t, h*ou*se	[z]	*z*ero, breeze		
[ə]	*a*bove, penc*i*l, lem*o*n, circ*u*s	[tʃ]	*ch*ild, mu*ch*		
		[dʒ]	*j*am, en*j*oy		
[ɚ]	wat*er*, adv*er*tise				
[ɜr]	t*er*m, l*ear*n	[ʃ]	*sh*e, ru*sh*		
		[ʒ]	measure, sei*z*ure		
[ɒ]	h*o*t, r*o*d	[j]	*y*our, *y*et		
		[l]	*l*and, coa*l*		
[ɔ]	*o*rder, d*oo*r	[r]	*r*un, ca*r*		
[ɔɪ]	*oi*l, v*oi*ce				
[ou]	co*a*t, ro*d*e, g*o*	[k]	*k*ind, see*k*		
		[g]	*g*o, ba*g*		
[ʊ]	f*u*ll, p*u*t	[ŋ]	lo*ng*, si*ng*er		
[u]	r*u*le, r*oo*t	[h]	*h*ow, a*h*ead		

Sounds from Other Languages

[a] low central vowel, lax: prim*a*, k*a*putt, t*a*sse.

[~] over a vowel means it is nasalized, as in French *un* [œ̃], b*on* [ɔ̃], f*in* [ɛ̃], s*ans* [ɑ̃].

[y] French and German rounded high front vowel: t**u**, F**ü**hrer.

[e] unrounded mid front vowel: entr*é*e, S*e*ele, bu*e*no.

[ø] French rounded low front vowel: s*oeu*r.

[œ] French and German rounded mid front vowel: fam*eu*se, sch**ö**n.

[o] rounded mid back vowel: b*eau*, bu*e*no, K*oh*le.

[ʀ] French and German *r*: t*r*ès, Führer.

[x] German *ch*: Bu*ch*.

[ç] German (front) *ch*: i*ch*.

[1]

[1] *Gage Canadian Dictionary* (Toronto: Gage Educational Publishing Company, 1998). Reprinted by permission.

When you look at the pronunciation of a word in the dictionary, go through the word syllable by syllable, sound by sound. Don't overlook anything. For example, in the *Gage Canadian Dictionary*, the word *hesitate* has this pronunciation: [ˈhɛzəˌteit].

According to the given pronunciation key, this means you should pronounce *hesitate* with the following sounds:

[h]	which sounds like the *h* in *h*ow
[ɛ]	which sounds like the *e* in b*e*d
[z]	which sounds like the *z* in *z*ero
[ə]	which sounds like the *a* in *a*bove (or the *i* in penc*i*l)
[t]	which sounds like the *t* in *t*ell
[ei]	which sounds like the *a* in f*a*ce
[t]	which sounds like the *t* in *t*ell

The accent (or stress mark) placed high up before the first syllable of *hesitate* tells you that this syllable receives the most stress (*primary stress*). The accent placed lower down before the third syllable tells you that this syllable receives the second-most stress (the *secondary stress*).

Word Meanings

One of the most important reasons for using a dictionary is to find the meaning of a word. A word can have several meanings. You should read every meaning given for the word you're looking up; then choose the one that fits best into the particular context.

Pay attention as well to the part of speech. The dictionary entry for any word will tell you whether the meaning given is for the word used as a noun, an adjective, or any other part of speech. In the example that follows, note the different parts of speech the word can be and how its meaning changes accordingly.

plough or **plow** [plaʊ] *n.*, *v.* *–n.* **1** a farm implement used for cutting the soil and turning it over. **2** a machine for removing snow; snowplough.
–v. **1** turn over (soil) with a plough. **2** use a plough. **3** move as a plough does; advance slowly and with effort: *The ship ploughed through the waves. The student ploughed through two books to get material for an essay.* **4** remove with a plough or as if with a plough: *to plough up old roots.* **5** furrow: *to plough a field, wrinkles ploughed in one's face by time.* **6** cut the surface of (water). **7** *Brit. Slang.* reject (a candidate) or be rejected in an examination.
plough back, reinvest (profits) in the same business.
plough into, *Informal.* **a** hit hard or at speed and travel into: *The car went out of control and ploughed into the building.* **b** start (an activity) vigorously or with energy and determination: *to plough into one's homework. They ploughed into dinner as if they were starving.*
plough through, work one's way through: *The students must plough through a lot of material for their course work.*
plough under, **a** plough into the ground to enrich the soil.
b defeat; destroy; overwhelm. ⟨OE *plōg*⟩ – **ˈplough•er** or **ˈplow•er**, *n.*

[1]

[1] *Gage Canadian Dictionary* (Toronto: Gage Educational Publishing Company, 1998). Reprinted by permission.

Sometimes you don't need a dictionary to find a word's meaning. The sentence in which the word is contained (the *context*) can often help you discover the meaning. Look at this sentence as an example:

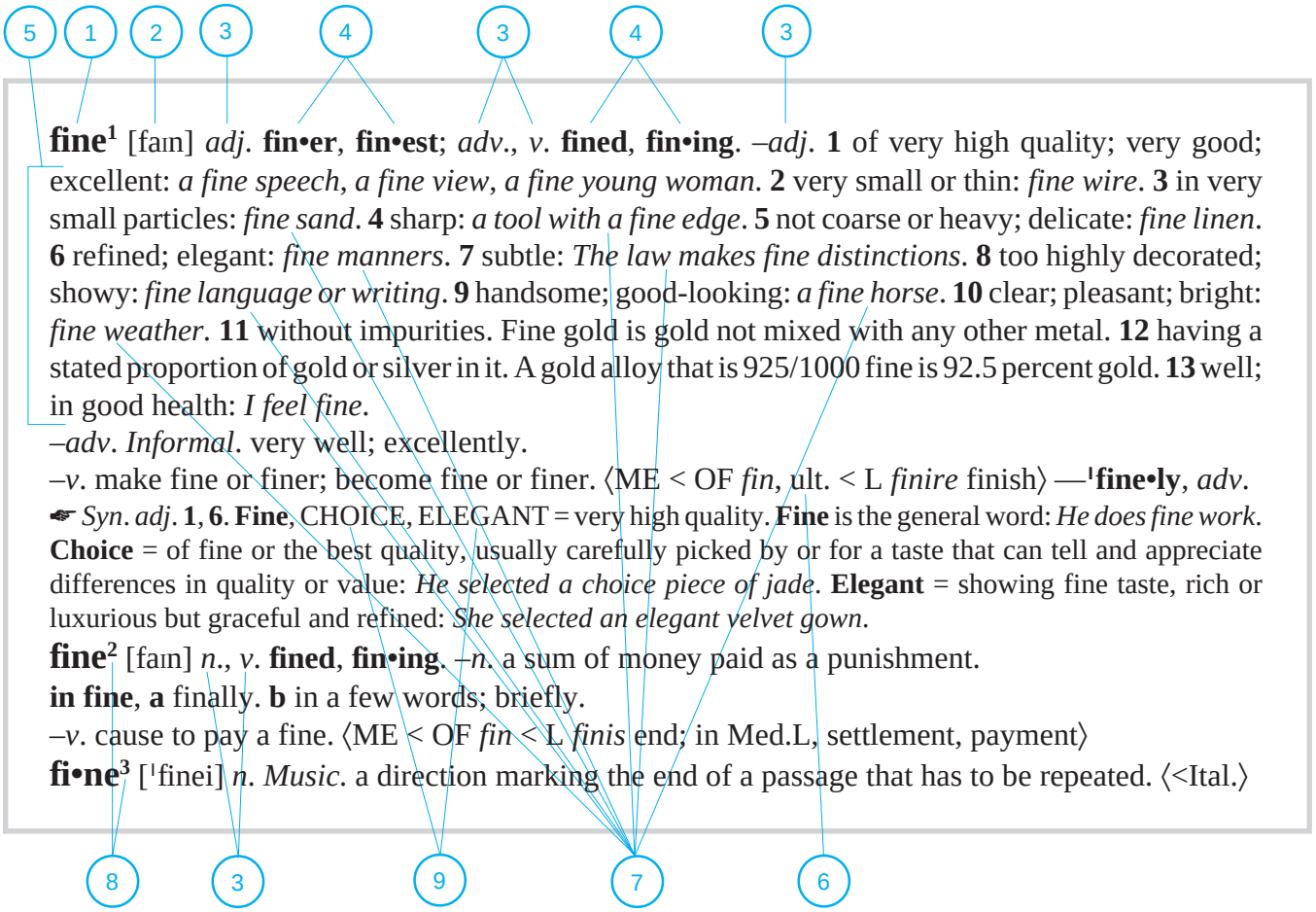
> He's a pugnacious fellow, attacking anyone the first chance he gets.

The word *pugnacious* is easily understood from the context as meaning *looking for a fight*.

On the other hand, using context clues to find the meaning of the word can sometimes lead to mistakes in interpretation. Use a dictionary to be sure of the correct meaning.

The Parts of a Dictionary Entry

Examine the sample dictionary entry and the explanations of the numbered parts (on the following page) of the entry:



[1] *Gage Canadian Dictionary* (Toronto: Gage Educational Publishing Company, 1998). Reprinted by permission.

1. This is the *entry word*, which gives the spelling of the word. The entry word also shows how a word is divided into syllables.

2. A phonetic spelling of the entry word is given to indicate the pronunciation. (A pronunciation key is provided in the dictionary. You should check how different symbols are related to sound.)

3. The part or parts of speech are given.

4. Other forms of the entry word may be given.

5. The definitions of the word are given.

6. The *etymology* or origin of the word may be given. The languages that the word originally came from may be indicated (for example, ME = Middle English, OF = Old French, L = Latin). The original word may be given. The part of speech and meaning of the original word may also be given.

7. A *citation* might be given to show the meaning of the word in context. Citations often appear in *italic print* or in angle brackets.

8. Other words derived from the entry word may be given. (Sometimes if the word you're looking for doesn't seem to be in the dictionary, it may appear under an entry word similar in form. For example, *hidden* would probably appear under *hide*.)

9. *Synonyms*, words that have a similar meaning, and *antonyms*, words that have opposite meanings, may be given. The dictionary may have additional entries for *homographs* (words that are spelled and pronounced the same but have different meanings and origins).

Dictionaries are useful tools in helping you better understand your language. Students and professional writers alike often must use the dictionary to check the meanings, spellings, pronunciations, and usages of the words they encounter every day.

Special Dictionaries

Besides the regular dictionary, many special dictionaries are useful in locating information. Here are some types of special dictionaries that you might find:

Biographical dictionaries give information on the lives of famous people. Some biographical dictionaries focus on a particular group of people, such as authors or scientists.

A dictionary of *quotations* contains well-known words from speeches, poetry, and other sources. The quotations are indexed by their key words so that you can look up a word or phrase and then find the complete quotation and its author.

Bilingual dictionaries translate words and expressions from one language to another.

A *rhyming* dictionary lists words that rhyme with each other. This type of dictionary is helpful if you're writing rhyming poetry or songs.

A *gazetteer* is a geographical dictionary. It lists the names of places in the world and gives their locations.

Some dictionaries focus on *slang* and *colloquial language*. Another lists *acronyms* (words made from the first letters or syllables of other words) and *abbreviations*.

Other special dictionaries focus on particular topics, such as health, computers, music, or art. There's even a dictionary of awards and prizes.

Using a Thesaurus

A thesaurus is a dictionary of *synonyms*—words with similar meanings. Usually, a thesaurus also includes *antonyms*—words with opposite meanings. It's a reference book that many people find helpful in preparing their written and spoken communications.

Words in a thesaurus are generally arranged in alphabetical order. When the word is used as different parts of speech (for example, noun, verb, or adjective), synonyms are given for each part. To get a complete list of synonyms, you may be referred to another word. Here's an example of an entry for the word *embarrassment*:

embarrassment *noun*

1. Self-conscious distress: *a face red with embarrassment; financial embarrassment.*	1. *Syns*: abashment, chagrin, confusion, discomfiture, discomposure, disconcertion, disconcertment.
2. A condition of going or being beyond what is needed, desired, or appropriate.	2. EXCESS *noun*.

[1]

The following paragraph has dull, repetitious language:

> Halima got the spade for her father. Then she got the hoe and the rake. She got the seeds from the house. Halima and her father got their neighbour to help them with their garden. They got the garden planted by evening. That night they got some rain to help the garden grow.

If your paragraphs sound like this because the same words are used over and over, you can use a thesaurus to find different words with similar meanings to give your writing more life. Note how the sample paragraph has been improved with the addition of a few different words:

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[1] *Roget's II: The New Thesaurus Expanded Edition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988). Reprinted by permission.

Halima *found* the spade for her father and then *located* the hoe and the rake. She *brought* the seeds from the house, and she and her father *convinced* their neighbour to help them with their garden. By evening they had *succeeded* in planting the entire garden. That night *a gentle* rain *fell* and helped the garden grow.

Good writing depends on using exact words. Often, writers grope for the exact word to fit the idea they have in mind. A thesaurus helps to solve this problem. With a thesaurus you can find the word or phrase that best suits the idea.

A word of warning: Though a thesaurus can be a great help for a writer, don't forget that it doesn't always present exact synonyms. A thesaurus also contains words with related, but slightly different, meanings. Be very careful of the words you find in a thesaurus if you want your writing to be clear and exact. The best way to use a thesaurus is to allow it to jog your memory. If you find a word you've never encountered before, be sure it means just what you want it to before including it in a composition. A dictionary can help you make sure of the exact meaning of any synonym given to you by your thesaurus.

The Library

The library is the place where you'll most likely head whenever you're called upon to investigate a topic. If you're unfamiliar with the facilities and services available to you in your library or with the procedures involved in retrieving information from it, you may find yourself confused. The following material will help you find information in a library.

The Card Catalogue

Most books in a library are kept in the *stacks* or open bookshelves. To find the books you need, you'll need to use the *card catalogue*, an index of all of the books held by the library. In the past, the card catalogue consisted of paper cards filed alphabetically in long drawers in a series of filing cabinets.

Today, however, most libraries use computerized systems that enable library users to access the information in the card catalogue from computer terminals. Many libraries allow you to search their card catalogues via the Internet, so you don't always have to go to the library to find out which books it has.

To find the books you want, you'll have to understand how libraries organize their holdings. Non-fiction books are always shelved separately from fiction books. Fiction books are arranged alphabetically according to the author's last name. Non-fiction books are organized on the shelves according to subject or topic.

Searching for Non-Fiction Books

When you're looking for non-fiction books, you can search the card catalogue in three different ways: by the book's title, author, and subject.

The entry for each non-fiction book in the library will tell you the following information:

- title
- author
- subject
- publisher, place, and date of publication
- number of pages
- other information (for example, size or illustrations)
- call number

The call number is the code that states where on the shelf you can find the book. Every book has its own call number, written on the spine of the book, indicating its precise spot on the shelves.

The call number of a non-fiction book consists of the Dewey decimal number, followed by the first letters of the author's last name.

Searching for Fiction Books

When you're looking for a fiction book, on most systems, you can search the card catalogue using the subject or key word, the title, or the author's name. The information in the card catalogue is similar to a non-fiction book. The call number of a fiction book consists of a designation like *Fic*, followed by the first letters of the author's last name. Fiction books are arranged on the shelves alphabetically by the last name of the author.

If you've never used the card catalogue before, ask the librarian to show you how to use it. You'll soon be an expert at locating the materials you need.

The Dewey Decimal System

Most libraries in Canada use the Dewey decimal system to organize non-fiction materials. The Dewey decimal system arranges non-fiction in numerical order, according to the subject. This system has ten main divisions:

```
000–099 General Works (including reference books)
100–199 Philosophy and Related Disciplines
200–299 Religion and Mythology
300–399 The Social Sciences
400–499 Languages and Communication
500–599 Pure Sciences
600–699 Technology
700–799 Fine Arts and Recreation
800–899 Literature
900–999 Geography, Travel, Biography, and History
```

Each of these classifications has many further subdivisions. In the 900s category, for example, the 970–979 numbers are reserved for the history of North America. Canadian history is classified under 971. A book about the Riel Rebellion, for example, would be assigned a number such as 971.042. If you were looking for this book, you would start by looking for the 900s section of the library, then the 970s, and finally 971.

The Library of Congress System

Another system of organizing non-fiction materials is the Library of Congress system, which uses letters followed by numerals or other letters. The Library of Congress system is used mainly in university libraries. Its main classes are as follows:

A. General Works
B. Philosophy, Religion
C. History, Auxiliary Sciences
D. History, Topography (except American)
E. } American History
F. }
G. Geography, Anthropology
H. Social Sciences
J. Political Science
K. Law
L. Education
M. Music
N. Fine Arts
P. Language and Literature
Q. Science
R. Medicine
S. Agriculture, Husbandry
T. Technology
U. Military Science
V. Naval Science
Z. Bibliography, Library Science

According to this system, a book on science would be classified under *Q*. *The McGraw-Hill Encyclopedia of Environmental Science*, for example, is classified as

QH
5404
.M3

Similarly, books on technology are classified under *T*. For example, Drew Langsner's *A Logbuilder's Handbook* is classified as

TH
4840
.L36

Reference Materials

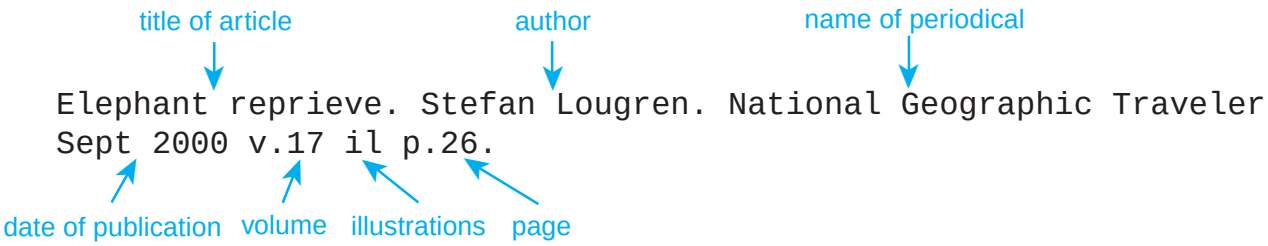
Periodicals

Your research won't always be confined to books. Much has been written in magazines and newspapers over the years that may be highly relevant to the topic you're investigating. Libraries generally save past issues of newspapers and magazines (also called *periodicals* because they're published periodically), often bound in book form or sometimes recorded on microfilm (a film of small photographs of pages). Periodicals usually have more recent information than you can find in books.

Periodical Indexes

You can imagine how frustrating and time-consuming it would be to search through all the magazines in a library to find information on a particular topic. Fortunately, periodicals are indexed, much the way the information in a set of encyclopedias is organized in an index.

Assume, for example, that your topic is *elephants* and you're particularly interested in the subject of poaching. You look up the word *elephants* in a periodical index. You may see several subheadings, such as *Elephants—hunting* and *Elephants—Thailand*. You may come to an entry that looks like this:



Most libraries now have online periodical indexes. Instead of looking in a book, you search for an article in a computer index. Depending on the library, you may be able to access articles directly online, you may be able to request the article online, or you may have to make your request at the library's *circulation desk* by filling out a slip indicating the precise issue of the magazine you'd like to see. In some libraries, you can simply proceed straight to the stacks and locate the article yourself. Note that some libraries don't allow periodicals to be taken out of the building. Ask your librarian about the policies at your library.

The Encyclopedia

In many cases, you'll find an encyclopedia a good place to start your research. Encyclopedia entries will offer a quick overview of a subject, which will lead the way to a more detailed study. If you have a very broad topic, the encyclopedia may help you to narrow it, once you realize how much information is covered under your original topic.

Encyclopedias have traditionally been printed and bound in the multi-volume sets with which you're probably very familiar; today, however, most encyclopedias are also available online or on CD-ROMs. This electronic format allows the companies that produce the encyclopedias to keep them up-to-date more easily. Ask your librarian about accessing encyclopedias available electronically in your library.

Items in a printed set of encyclopedias are arranged in alphabetical order, and each volume is conveniently labelled on the outside. Assume that you're doing a paper on the athlete Jesse Owens. You could go to the volume containing the *O*s, but a more useful strategy is to use the *index*, a separately bound volume usually placed at the end of the set. It, too, is in alphabetical order. The index will list all references to your subject, which may not even be addressed in an "obvious" place. Here's a sample of what you might find if you looked up Owens, Jesse in the index:

Owens, Jesse (athlete) 16 – 107
Broad jump 13 – 133
Olympics 16 – 946
Running 19 – 760

The first number appearing after the topic indicates the *volume number* in which the subject is discussed. In this example, volume 16 has information on Jesse Owens. The second number, 107, indicates the page.

Usually you'll find an explanation of how to use the index and a list of abbreviations at the beginning of the index. Indexes also have a system of *cross-referencing* which makes it possible to find information by looking up one of several possible entry words. For example, if you looked up *mining*, you might find the following:

Mining, Coal: see **Coal** and **Coal Mining**

This is called *cross-reference*. You could now look up *Coal* and *Coal Mining* in the index.

If you look up the name *Samuel Clemens* in the index, you'll probably find

Clemens, Samuel Langhorne: see **Twain, Mark**

This cross-reference refers you to Clemens's pen name, Mark Twain. You then turn to *Twain, Mark* in the index to find the information you want. You'll find the encyclopedia a much more valuable and rewarding source of information if you first use the index.

Other Reference Materials

As well as books, dictionaries, periodicals, and encyclopedias, libraries have other reference materials. Since each library has its own reference section, take some time to browse through the reference materials in the library you use so that you become familiar with what's available. Here are some of the reference materials that you might find in a library:

- *Atlases* are important reference books; they contain maps, tables, and other information. Many libraries have several kinds of atlases. Some focus on particular countries or regions; others, called *historical atlases*, show events and places of the past. You could use a historical atlas to learn more about the exploration of North America, Napoleon's conquest of Europe, or the battles of World War II.

- *Almanacs* and *yearbooks* contain factual and statistical information related to a particular country, subject, or year. These reference books will tell you about population, culture, government, trade, weather, sports, and hundreds of other topics. Since these books are usually published every year, the information is current.

- *Phone books, business directories,* and other publications provide information on the local area and other places in the province and country.

- The *vertical file* contains pamphlets and photographs, usually arranged by subject.

The Internet

The *Internet* is a network of computers that spans the planet. Anyone who has access to a computer that's connected to the Internet has access to information stored on *servers*—large computers that store data for other computer users to access. Telephone lines, fibre-optic cables, and even satellites provide the connections for the Internet.

Though the Internet is a very recent creation, it has already revolutionized the research process. A person with access to the Internet is connected to the world's largest library. Moreover, in this library, much of the information is constantly being brought up-to-date. A book's publisher can't change what the book says if it becomes dated; all that can be done is to publish a newer edition of the book, and that takes time and money. By contrast, it's easy to update information online (on the Internet). To locate valuable, up-to-date information, it's important that you learn how to do research on the Internet.

The World Wide Web

The *World Wide Web* is the principal component of the Internet. It's a worldwide collection of *web pages* containing data. These pages can contain text (words), graphics, video clips, audio clips, and animation.

To access the World Wide Web from a computer, you must have a *browser* installed on the computer, and you must be hooked up to an *Internet service provider* such as a telephone company or cable company. A browser is simply a package of computer software that allows you to move from one *website* (or *site*) to another on the *Web* (the shortened term for World Wide Web). The two most popular browsers are *Netscape* Communicator ™ and *Microsoft* ® Internet Explorer ™.

Once you're hooked up and have a browser installed, you can move from site to site on servers all over the globe. Each site has a home page that welcomes you and tells you what information you can find there. Complex sites will provide a table of contents or site map referring to other pages on that site that supply information.

Web pages normally have *hotlinks*—words or graphics which, when clicked on with your mouse, will take you directly to other pages on that site or to related sites. In this way, you can move from page to page and from site to site looking for information relevant to the topic you're researching.

Web pages all have addresses, known as *uniform resource locators*—or *URL*s for short. If you want to go to a site, one way is simply to type this URL into a special space—the location bar—at the top of the page, and hit the *enter* key on the keyboard.

Here's an example of a URL. It's the URL for Alberta Learning:

http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/

The latter part of this address—after the double slash—identifies the site and also lets you know what sort of site it is. In this case, the last three abbreviations tell you that this is a government site, that it's Albertan, and that it's Canadian. You may also see the abbreviation *edu*, which indicates an educational site (probably a university, college, or technical school). Non-profit organizations use the designation *org*. The abbreviation *com* identifies a commercial site—one that may be trying to sell you something.

If you find a site you'd like to revisit in the future, your browser lets you bookmark it. This way, a record (a *bookmark*, a *favorite*, or a *hotlist*) is kept, and you can easily return to that site by clicking on the bookmark.

Searching the Internet

Beginning a search for information on the Internet is like starting any sort of research project. You must know what sort of information you want and why you want it. You must also be able to assess the information and decide whether it's worth keeping and how much of it you'll need. Not all information on the Internet is accurate or truthful.

If you know the URL of a site you want, just type it in and go there directly. Once there, other links will likely allow you to move around (or *surf*) from page to page or site to site. However, you usually won't know the URL. Here are some suggestions to help you search the Internet:

- Limit your topic to a reasonable size. For example, if you want information on the Edmonton Oilers, *sports* would be too general, *hockey* would be better, *National Hockey League* would be better yet, and *Edmonton Oilers* would be even better. If you can narrow your topic even more, so much the better.

- Go to a site that offers an Internet directory (also called an *online database*), such as *Yahoo! Canada* (the URL for this site is **http://ca.yahoo.com/**). Once there, you select a general subject area (for instance, *Entertainment*) and start limiting your search (for example, to *Movies*), becoming more and more specific as you go.

- Use a *search engine*. A search engine searches the web for sites to add to its list, and when you ask for a specific topic, it will give you a list of links to sites it thinks you might find useful. The process is simple: you simply type in a *key word* or phrase (such as "Edmonton Oilers" or "windsurfing") and the search engine finds you possibly useful sites.

  There are many search engines available. Three that you might find useful are AltaVista Canada (**http://ca-en.altavista.com**), Google Canada (**http://www.google.ca**), and Vivismo (**http://vivismo.com**). Since different search engines bring up different sites, don't limit yourself to only one. Of course, once you've reached a useful site, it will probably have links to take you to related sites so you can stop relying on your search engine.

- Narrow your search by entering two key words so that the search engine will give you only sites containing both those words or perhaps only sites that contain one but not the other. Some search engines will want you to use words like *and*, *or*, and *not*, whereas others might want you to enter a plus or minus sign. Quotation marks may also be used. The search engine itself will have hints on how to use the search tool most effectively.

- Be aware that there's a great deal of information posted on the Internet that's of questionable taste and value. There are sites that offer pornographic material, sites that only want to sell you something, and sites that promote hatred against specific groups.

- Check information carefully. Some sites appear to offer reliable information but get their facts wrong. When a writer writes a book, the editors of the publishing company try to verify the material, but this isn't the case online where anybody can post information. You, the researcher, must decide what information has value and what is worthless or unreliable. To verify the facts and statistics you've found on the Internet, see if you can find this information on several different websites. Another way of checking the validity of the information is to check the source. Find out who the author or owner of the site is and decide whether this person or organization is a reliable source of information.

Taking Notes

As you do your research for a report or research paper, it's important to take effective notes. Taking good notes is something that becomes easier with practice, but there are some techniques you can learn that make the process easier.

Note Cards

Many students doing serious research find that it helps to make notes on cards; the 10 cm $\times$ 15 cm size (4 inch $\times$ 6 inch) have plenty of space for your information. Later, you can arrange these cards in an organized fashion, blending material that you obtained from a variety of sources.

You can make note-taking easier by using running notes. Be brief. Write down only the words and phrases that give the main ideas and details. Omit illustrations or minor details. When you rewrite the running notes into a final report, be sure to use your own writing style; this will prevent you from *plagiarizing* (copying another writer's words without acknowledging your source). Always be sure to record precisely which source you've used for each set of running notes and the page number of the information, in case you need to locate it again.

As you take notes on your cards, don't quote verbatim (word-for-word) from your sources very often. Usually, you should summarize what you read into a minimum number of words, generally in point form. If you do want to quote a specific passage, put quotation marks around it to identify it as a quotation. Jot down the page number. You'll need this page number for your *citation*. (When you use someone else's words or ideas in your report, you need to identify or acknowledge where you got them.) Record the source and page number of any controversial or unusual material as well. This information also needs to be acknowledged in your report.

Make sure that each card is complete. It should contain information (usually about one specific point) from one source. At the top of the card, record the information about the source that you'll need to create a bibliography:

1. the complete title
2. the author's name
3. place of publication
4. the publisher
5. date of publication
6. relevant page numbers

It's also a good idea to record the call number so that you can easily find the book again if you need it.

Here's a sample note card containing, in point form, information taken for a report on an incident in Western Canadian history:

Sitting Bull: The Years in Canada by Grant MacEwan. Edmonton: Hurtig, 1973.
971.202

– Walsh—true encounter—Sioux vs. NWMP—Late 1870s

– 1875—US, Can—most Natives had signed treaties—reservations/reserves

– US—some tribes refused—Sioux the largest—in today's Montana, N. Dakota

– Chief—Sitting Bull

– US ordered—on reserves by Jan '76 or else—S.B. refused to obey

– 1877 S.B. and 1000 Sioux crossed border into Canada in Cypress Hills

The big advantage of using note cards is that later, when you've organized the material, you can arrange your cards into the order you want. When it comes time to write your first draft, you can then simply move through your stack of cards one after another. Not only will your major points be in the desired sequence, but you'll be able to acknowledge your sources because you'll know exactly where every bit of information came from.

Whatever method of note-taking you use, follow these general rules:

- Be accurate.
- Include all important points.
- Use your own words as much as possible.
- Be brief; omit illustrations and minor details.
- Include bibliographic information for each source.
- Record page numbers of all quotations and significant information.

Summarizing

Many students find that writing a *summary*, or a shortened version of a text they're researching, is an effective research strategy. Not only does this produce a condensed version of the material, featuring only the most important facts, but the very process of producing the summary helps you focus on the material and understand it.

A summary of this type is often called a *précis*. Précis writing is a valuable skill because it requires careful reading, clear thinking, and precise writing. It's a useful skill to develop because it helps you to recognize the key points in a passage.

Look at the statement that follows and the précis that comes after it. The précis indicates the key points in the longer sentence.

> Those who have travelled year after year to countries beyond the borders of their native land often develop an accurate understanding of the economic problems that now beset the world.
>
> **Précis:** People who travel abroad understand the world's economic problems better.

A good précis has these characteristics:

- It's much shorter than the original—usually about a quarter to a third of the length.
- It contains the main points and should omit unimportant details.
- It's written in sentences—not as notes or jottings.
- It's as clear and simple as possible.
- In general, it keeps the same order of thoughts and the same tense as the original.

Here are six steps to help you in précis writing:

- To determine the approximate length your précis should be, count the words or lines in the original passage and divide by four (or simply estimate).
- Read the passage through two or three times (or more) until you understand its meaning. (The topic sentences in paragraphs will help you to understand the main ideas.)
- Read the passage through and divide it into its units of thought. (A unit of thought is all the text dealing with one main idea. Generally, paragraphs are indications of units of thought.)
- Using your own words, summarize each unit of thought into sentences.
- Reread and revise your rough draft to make sure your précis reads smoothly.
- Give your précis a title that sums up the original passage.

Paraphrasing

When you paraphrase a piece of writing, you put it into your own words without significantly shortening or altering it. Paraphrasing is easier than summarizing, because you don't have to decide what to keep and what to discard. Nonetheless, paraphrasing, like summarizing, forces you to think about what you're reading.

Complex passages that can't be summarized in point form can be paraphrased on your note cards. Paraphrasing the information you read will force you to think rather than just copy, and it will ensure that your notes will be in your own words. It will also make your notes easier to understand when writing your report.

When approaching a passage to be paraphrased, read (and reread) it until you understand it fully. Then rewrite it in your own words, being careful to include all of the important details.

As you paraphrase, try to retain the balance of the original. Look at how much text is used in the original passage for each unit of thought (main idea). The most important or complex units of thought will have the most text. The less complex or lesser important units will have less text devoted to them. In general, your paraphrase should devote a similar proportion of text to each unit of thought.

The Interview

It's very possible that you'll find yourself interviewing someone as part of the research necessary for a report or a research paper. If you do set up an interview, it's important to go about it properly. Here are some guidelines to follow:

- Be well prepared. You should write down all of the questions that you intend to ask. Leave adequate spaces between the questions for making notes on your interviewee's responses (unless you intend to record the interview on audio or videotape or in another electronic format). If additional questions come to mind during the interview, ask them as well.

- Take careful notes, but don't try to write down every word. Use point form unless a direct quotation seems particularly important. If you do write down a direct quotation, read it back to the interviewee to make sure it's accurate.

- During the interview, don't take notes on note cards; use a large pad of paper instead. Later (but as soon as possible after the interview while it's still fresh in your mind) you can expand the information from these rough notes and transfer it onto note cards. The note cards can then be rearranged to suit your purposes.

- If possible, record your interview using an electronic medium such as audio- or videotape. Recording the interview allows you to make written notes later, and it prevents you from misquoting your interviewee. When you're freed from having to write notes during the interview, you can listen more attentively and effectively to your subject. You'll also have more time to organize your thoughts and questions during the interview. Be sure to ask permission to record the interview when you first contact the interviewee. (Some people are uncomfortable with having their voices or images recorded.) Then you know in advance whether you'll be recording the interview or depending entirely on your notes.

- If you record the interview in an electronic form like audio or videotape, make written notes from it as soon as you can. Write your report from your written notes rather than from the recording. However, don't erase the recording until you have completed your report, because you might still need it to clarify a point.

- Finally, when you write your actual report, make sure that you quote, paraphrase, and summarize your interviewee's words precisely. An excellent idea is to show the finished report to your interviewee to verify the accuracy of what you have written.

Section 7: Understanding Literature

As an English Language Arts student, you need to be familiar with basic literary terminology. The material in this part of the *English Language Arts Handbook for Secondary Students* will help you understand many literary terms.

Prose and Poetry

Works of literature can be divided into two broad categories: prose and poetry.

Prose is spoken or written language. Prose includes the everyday language that people use as well as crafted language used in literature. Poetry is characterized by qualities such as an intense emotional appeal, a concentrated form, layers of meaning, and sound effects (like rhythm, alliteration, or rhyme).

Varieties of Prose

Prose writings can be divided into two groups:

- works of *fiction*, which are products of writers' imaginations
- works of *non-fiction*, which are based on fact and reality

Prose Fiction

Fictional works written in prose are classified into several types, or *genres*:

- *Short stories* are stories that can normally be read at one sitting. A short story generally has about 3000 to 4000 words, and takes up to half an hour to read. (Some short stories are longer than this.) Short stories, because of their length, generally have only a few essential characters and focus on one specific event.

- *Novels* are long stories; most novels have more than 50 000 words. Some have over a thousand pages. Novels, unlike short stories, are usually characterized by complex plots and many characters. Separate plots often intertwine within a novel. Popular types of novels include

  – historical fiction
  – murder mysteries
  – fantasy novels
  – science fiction
  – romance fiction
  – realistic fiction

- *Novellas* (or *novelettes*) can be thought of as long short stories or short novels.

- *Traditional stories* include folk tales, myths, fairy tales, fables, and legends.

- *Plays* are stories made to be performed on a stage or, possibly, over the radio. Because they're meant to be performed, plays rely on dialogue and action. (Some plays, such as those written by Shakespeare, are actually poetry.)

Prose Non-Fiction

Prose non-fiction occurs in many forms:

- magazine articles, news stories, and essays
- biographies and autobiographies
- how-to books
- textbooks
- diaries and journals
- histories
- any book discussing a true-to-life situation rather than imaginary happenings

Varieties of Poetry

Poems differ from prose in their *structure* (the way they're constructed), tone, and their use of language. Some poems tell stories. These narrative poems have characters, setting, conflict, and plot. Most poems, however, express ideas and feelings.

Like stories, poems have themes. A theme in a poem is not the same as its topic. For example, a poem written on the topic of spring may express the theme that spring is a time for the renewal of life.

Sometimes, a poet will write a poem as though someone is speaking it (similar to a narrator in a story). The *speaker* may present the poet's views or may present the views of a *persona* (someone the poet pretends to be). It's important to understand that the speaker isn't always the poet. For example, the poet may pretend to be a villainous persona who has committed a terrible crime.

Poems generally express feelings. The poet's feelings or attitude toward the subject of the poem is called *tone*. Poems express a variety of tones, such as sympathy, disgust, fear, anger, bitterness, resentment, enthusiasm, admiration, and joy.

The most important characteristic of poetry is its use of language. Because most poems are relatively short, the feelings and ideas must be expressed in carefully chosen words that often convey intense, vivid images. You'll find more information on imagery and figurative language in *Literary Devices* later in this section.

Poems are classified in different ways, according to their purpose and structure. Some poems are written in *stanzas*; their lines are arranged in groups with spaces between each group. The examples that follow show some types of poems that you may encounter.

A **lyric** poem is a short work concerned with expressing the poet's feelings. It usually sounds graceful:

```
Fall, leaves, fall; die, flowers, away;
Lengthen night and shorten day;
Every leaf speaks bliss to me
Fluttering from the autumn tree.

I shall smile when wreaths of snow
Blossom where the rose should grow;
I shall sing when night's decay
Ushers in a drearier day.
```

– "Fall, Leaves, Fall" by Emily Brontë

A **traditional ballad** is a narrative poem that has been passed on from generation to generation. Its author is unknown. It usually has direct speech and often uses a dialect. Traditional ballads were usually composed to be sung. Here's one stanza from a traditional ballad:

```
"O where ha you been, Lord Randal, my son?
And where ha you been, my handsome young man?"
"I ha been at the greenwood; mother, make my bed soon,
For I'm wearied wi hunting, and fain wad lie down."
```

– Traditional ballad "Lord Randal"

A **limerick** is a silly, humorous poem of five lines. It follows a distinct pattern. The first, second, and last lines rhyme with each other, with each line having three strong beats. The third and fourth lines rhyme. These two lines, which are usually shorter than the other three, have only two strong beats in each line. The rhyme scheme of a limerick is *aabba*.

```
There was a young man from the city,
Who met what he thought was a kitty;
He gave it a pat,
And said, "Nice little cat!"
And they buried his clothes out of pity.
```

A **haiku** is a Japanese word picture, which usually describes an aspect of nature. A haiku poem is built around a contrast. Usually there are three lines with 17 syllables: 5 in the first line, 7 in the second, and 5 in the last:

```
What a splendid day
No one in all the village
Doing anything
```

– "Traditional Haiku" by Shiki

A **narrative** poem tells a story. Some narrative poems are very long. “Casey at the Bat” and “The Cremation of Sam McGee” are narrative poems you may be familiar with.

A **literary ballad** is written in the style of the traditional ballad, but its author is known.

A **sonnet** is a 14-line poem with a regular rhythm and a rhyme scheme. Sonnets have five strong beats in each line. (This rhythm is called *iambic pentameter.*)

His friends drudged in an aeroplane factory.
The theory of speed was their sweaty talk;
And one who reclaimed rust machinery
Swore men hereafter would not run or walk.
Another crowed, pointing to his watch: “Feet?
As sure as I’m staring at Time’s own face
Our offspring shall be a limbless race,
Hopping in crystal ships from street to street.”
Icarus went on working on his wings.
Really he despised their tame discussion;
He’d fly, but as a god towards the sun;
And rubbing the strong wax into the strings,
He leaped into the air—to hear the chorus
Of dismayed cries: “You’re bluffing, Icarus!”[1]

– “Icarus” by Irving Layton

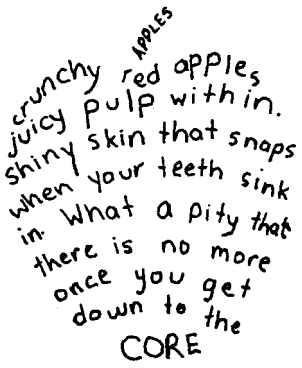
Free verse is poetry that doesn’t follow any regular pattern or rhythm: it’s free of the restrictions of traditional poetry. Some free-verse poets omit punctuation and capital letters. Free verse focuses on ideas and imagery.

i have a dragon feeling tight-leashed,
held fast by chains of the dignity of family and friends
and of the security of the ritual of afternoon tea,
and of the fragility of bone china cups and saucers—
invincible chains that hold it back
from storming at the world,
wings flapping, fire blazing, and claws unsheathed,
and soiling the fine white linen napkins,
and slashing the dainty, new-upholstered velvet chairs,
and shocking those who keep company here with me.
i feel it straining to escape and i laugh
for it is mine and i am master of it.

– “a dragon feeling” by Sharon Howe

[1] *Collected Poems* by Irving Layton. Used by permission, McClelland & Stewart Ltd. *The Canadian Publishers*.

A **concrete** poem is one that's printed in such a way that it resembles its subject matter. It's usually written in free verse. Here's an example of a concrete poem:



"Apples" by Sherry Currell

For more information on the techniques and devices used in poetry, see **Literary Devices** in this section.

The Elements of a Story

A story is usually characterized by a number of *elements*. Understanding these elements will help you enjoy and comprehend stories.

Plot and Conflict

A story's *plot* is the action that happens. A short story will typically have one plot whereas a novel may have one main plot and several lesser ones. These subplots will be related in such a way that the story is unified.

A plot is based on *conflict*. The main character of the story usually has a problem to solve or an obstacle to overcome. The *suspense*, or tension, in the story comes from witnessing the character in his or her struggle to overcome the *opposing force.*

Conflict

Conflicts are normally classified in three ways, depending on the main character's opposing force:

- In a *person-versus-person* conflict, the opposing force is one person or a specific group of people. Stories about competition, rivalry, hatred, and a desire for revenge feature this type of conflict.

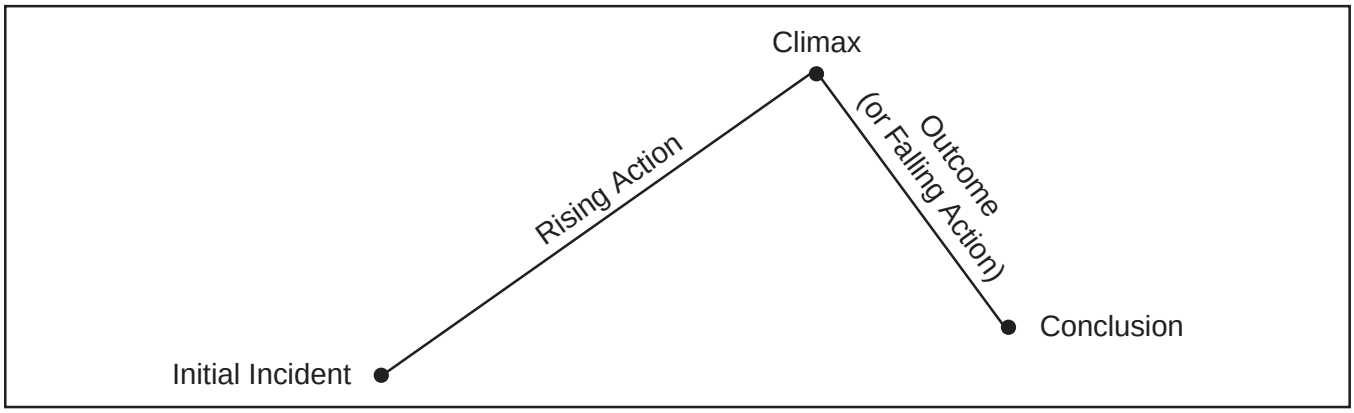
- In a *person-versus-environment* conflict, the opposing force is the physical surroundings (such as a hostile environment) or society at large. A fight to survive is one type of example.

- In a *person-versus-self* conflict, the opposing force is within the main character, who is in a *dilemma*. The character may be trying to make a decision or wrestling with guilt. This conflict is sometimes called a *mental* or *internal* conflict.

Elements of a Plot

The plot of most stories has five distinct parts:

- The *initial incident* is the event that gets the plot going. In a story, the initial incident usually happens right at the start.
- The *rising action* is the period during which tension or suspense builds. The author may use foreshadowing to add to the suspense.
- The *climax* is the point of highest tension; the point where the conflict reaches its peak. Occasionally, a writer will stop the story at the climax, creating a *cliffhanger* ending by leaving the outcome uncertain.
- The *outcome* (also called *the falling action*) tells how the conflict is *resolved.* In the outcome, the fate of the main character is revealed.
- The *conclusion* is the story's ending. Sometimes a brief explanation is needed to tie up the loose ends or to clarify the theme. Not all stories have a conclusion.



Characters

Characters are the people (or animals or creatures) who appear in stories. They perform the action. If a story is to be believable, the characters in it must seem realistic or *plausible*; they must act and think like real people (or animals or creatures).

The main character in a story is called the *protagonist*; the opposing force is called the *antagonist*. Depending on the conflict, the antagonist can be a character or something else—nature, perhaps, or the protagonist's feelings or conscience.

Some characters change in some fundamental way as the story unfolds. These are called *dynamic characters*. Characters who stay the same are *static characters*. Characters who display several personality traits (like real people) are sometimes called *round characters* whereas those who have only one quality (for example, a bad temper) can be termed *flat characters.* In a short story, it's unlikely that anyone other than the protagonist will be developed into a round character because there just isn't enough time.

Characters who behave in an expected or predictable way are called *stereotypical*. These characters act as though they were cast from a mold. They aren't individuals; instead, they represent a type, such as the big, non-academic athlete or the brilliant, obsessive academic with glasses.

Characters can also be classified as *heroic* or *antiheroic.* A heroic character possesses qualities such as goodness, bravery, honesty, determination, and strength. Antiheroic characters may have some good qualities, but they also have weaknesses. They are often afraid and indecisive. A *villain* is a character who works against the protagonist through evil motives or actions.

Another way of classifying characters is as either major or minor. *Major* characters include the protagonist and antagonist. Normally, everyone else in a story is a *minor* character. While minor characters can be flat—that is, they display only one character trait—it's important for major characters to be plausible, especially the protagonist. But even flat, minor characters can be realistic. If characters are realistically developed, readers should be able to relate to them and identify with their thoughts and feelings.

Setting

The *setting* is the place and time in which a story occurs. Normally, a short story will have a single setting, but the action in a novel can occur in several places and over an extended period of time. Similarly, novelists have the time to describe and develop their settings whereas short-story writers must present most aspects of setting in brief glimpses at selected moments.

Knowing the setting of a story may help you to imagine details that aren't included in the story. If you know that a story takes place in a large city in the current historical period, for instance, you would at once imagine things like cars, skyscrapers, people, noise, and hustle and bustle without specifically being told about them.

Mood

The *mood* of a story is the prevailing feeling or atmosphere. Writers create mood through a description of the setting and characters. The mood might be one of happiness, sadness, frustration, anger, or fear. A short story will normally have one dominant mood, while the mood of a novel may change.

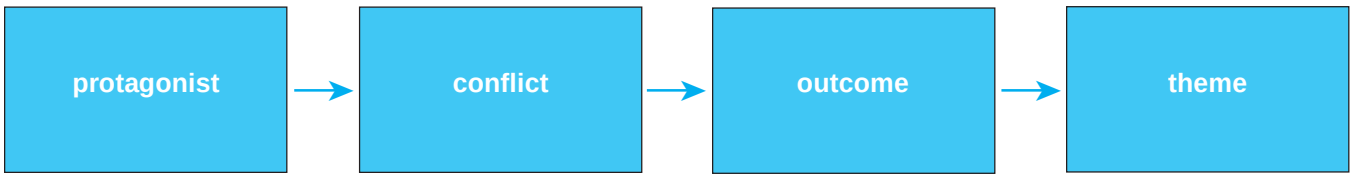
Theme

Theme is the controlling idea or central insight in a work of literature. It's a unifying generalization about life, either stated or implied in the literature. Here are some tips to help you understand theme:

- Theme isn't a summary of the main events of a story.
- Theme doesn't teach a lesson as a *moral* does; however, it *can* be a message about life that the writer wants to present.
- Theme is generally a statement about human behaviour. It pertains specifically to the story in which it's found, but it also applies to similar situations in real life.

- Theme is always supported by the story. No details in the story will contradict any part of the theme.
- A theme may be stated in more than one way according to each person's own reactions to the work of literature.
- A theme shouldn't be expressed in an adage or proverb, such as "Pride goes before a fall" or "A stitch in time saves nine."
- Not every story has a strong theme. It may be difficult to find something significant about life in stories written primarily for entertainment.

When you're asked to state the theme of a selection, begin by deciding on the human behaviour that's being illustrated in the story. Clues to theme might be found in the main conflict, the outcome, and the title of the story.



Point of View

Some stories are told as if an all-knowing, all-seeing narrator was telling them. Other stories are told by one of the characters, who, like any real person, is limited in what he or she knows and sees. The term used to describe this feature of a story is *narrative point of view.*

There are four narrative points of view. A writer may use one point of view throughout a story or a variation or combination:

- **Omniscient (all-knowing):** This is the most common point of view since it gives the author the greatest flexibility and scope. The story is told in the third person by an unseen observer who sees all, hears all, and knows all. Omniscient narrators move from character to character, incident to incident; they know the motivation, thoughts, and feelings of the characters, and they give information to their readers when and where they choose.
- **Limited Omniscient:** In this point of view, the story is told in the third person, but it's told from the viewpoint of only one of the characters. The limited omniscient point of view offers a more limited field of observation than the omniscient, but it's closer to real life because it acquaints the reader with the world through the mind and senses of only one person. Sometimes, an author will focus on one character for part of a story or novel and then switch the point of view to another character. In this way, readers are given insights into the minds and senses of more than one character.
- **First Person:** The writer disappears into one of the characters and tells the story in the first person using the words *I*, *me*, *we*, and *us*. The *narrator* (the character telling the story) may be an individual or a spokesperson for a group. The narrator knows only what that one character can know. This point of view can make a story sound true.

- **Objective:** In this point of view, the author presents only what is seen and heard. Like a camera, the author only records the events. The author doesn't comment, interpret, or enter a character's mind. The reader must interpret the meaning of the events that are shown.

Elements of a Play

Plays share many of the characteristics of stories and novels. Plays have characters, a setting, a conflict and plot, and a theme. In some ways, however, plays are different from stories and novels. One difference is that most plays are written in acts or scenes. A new act or scene usually suggests a change in time or place.

Another important difference is that although plays can be *read*, they are meant to be *seen* (or, in the case of radio plays, *heard*). When you read a play, you must rely on the dialogue and stage directions to help you visualize the action.

Dialogue

Dialogue (the words spoken by actors) in a play serves many purposes:

- **Dialogue Reveals Character**
  Dialogue reveals the personality of the characters. From the words spoken, you can often tell how a character feels or what the character is thinking. You may be able to tell whether the character is telling the truth or is lying, or whether he or she is innocent or guilty.

- **Dialogue Develops the Setting**
  The words in the play may give you information about the time and place of the action. When a new act or scene begins, you may learn that time has passed or that the place has changed.

- **Dialogue Advances the Plot**
  Suspense and conflict are essential in a play, just as in a story or novel. In a play, suspense and conflict are created through the words spoken. Some speeches may foreshadow later events.

Action

Action is the essence of drama. When the events are dramatized on stage, they can have a powerful impact on the audience. In some plays, for example, supernatural events mesmerize the audience; in others, fights and murders provide excitement.

Sometimes it's not practical to show the action on stage. Although a battle, a shipwreck, or the destruction of a castle or city can be shown on film using special effects, these events are difficult to stage effectively. In such scenes, the action may be *reported* by the characters. For example, one character may tell another that a battle has been lost or a city destroyed.

When you're reading a play, you must pay close attention to the *stage directions*, which indicate what action is taking place on the stage. The stage directions will help you visualize what the actors would be doing in a live production.

The Script

The format of a play is different from that of a story. A play is written as a *script*:

- The script usually lists the actors with a brief description of who they are and what they look like.
- The script indicates the setting of each act and scene.
- The script contains the words that the actors must speak (the dialogue).
- The script provides *stage directions*, which tell the actors how to speak their lines and what to do as they talk. The stage directions also tell when the actors enter and exit the stage.

When you're reading a play, it's important to pay attention to the stage directions so that you can visualize what's happening on the stage. The stage directions are usually printed in italics with parentheses. The following example shows a piece of a script from a play:

Scene One: Jean and Aunt Betty are sitting on chairs in the kitchen. It is evening.

Jean: (*watching her aunt carefully*) What are you going to do, Aunt Betty?

Betty: (*staring at a paper on the table in front of her)* I don't know, Jean. I never expected this to happen.

Jean: (*looks around the room)* If we leave this house, where will we go?

Betty: (*reassuringly*) We'll figure something out. Don't you worry. They're not going to take this house away from us.

Jean: (*shaking her head*) I don't see how you'll stop them from evicting us. They're a powerful corporation. They have lawyers and money. How can we—

(*A knock on the door. Jean and Betty look at one another. Jean rises and walks to the door and opens it. Enter George, their neighbour.)*

Characters

In a play, the author can't directly describe the characters as the author of a story can. Instead, the playwright (the author of a play) must *show* the characters to the audience. The playwright reveals the characters in several ways:

- The characters' thoughts and feelings are shown through their words and actions.
- Sometimes the playwright has other characters talk about a character.
- *How* characters speak is just as important as *what* they say. To reveal emotion, actors use a lot of expression as they speak their lines.
- Actors use movements, gestures, facial expressions, and body language to reveal the thoughts and feelings of the characters.
- The way that the characters look (their appearance and costume) can tell a lot about them.

Sets and Props

Plays are generally written to be performed on a stage. Radio plays (plays written to be broadcast on the radio) are different because they are made to be heard rather than seen.

To make a play realistic, a *set* (scenery) is sometimes built on the stage. Some sets are very elaborate: they may include walls, windows, staircases, cupboards, even a fireplace. Other sets are simple and economical. In some plays, a *backdrop* (a large cloth with a scene painted on it) may be used to suggest a place.

Props (properties; items used by actors) are also important in a play. Props include furniture and other movable items. In the preceding script, for example, the props would include two chairs, a kitchen table, and a paper.

Lighting and sound effects contribute to the realism of a play. Lighting suggests the time of day (for example, morning, evening, night), the season of the year, and the weather (a sunny or rainy day). The lighting may also develop the mood or atmosphere in a play. For instance, bright light might create a cheerful mood, whereas dull lighting might suggest a gloomy or sinister mood.

In many plays, sound effects are used. In radio plays, sound effects are essential to help the audience visualize what's happening. Some examples of sound effects are music, wind, rain, a phone ringing, a gunshot, a thunderstorm, a car crash, and an offstage scream.

Literary Devices

Writers use a range of techniques and devices to create the effects they're after. Some of these devices are used principally by poets, whereas others are common to writers of both prose and poetry.

Imagery

You can have experience only through your five senses: you can see, hear, feel, taste, and smell. When writers want to share their experiences, they try to appeal to the senses by describing how something looks, sounds, feels, tastes, or smells. Sensory details are the specific words that appeal to your senses to support the dominant impression of a description.

An *image* is a word picture that is created by using vivid sensory details. Writing that creates images in the minds of readers is said to contain imagery. When writers use *imagery*, their words make you feel as though you can see, smell, touch, hear, or even taste what they're describing. Here are examples of writing that appeals to each sense:

Sight: sparkling diamond
Hearing: shrieking siren
Taste: salty, buttered popcorn
Smell: rotten eggs
Touch: slimy slug

It's easy to see that imagery uses colourful, specific words to create a picture in the reader's mind. Sensory details must be very specific words in order to create effective images. The sentence, "The dog made a noise," doesn't give the reader a very clear picture. However, the sentence, "The panting, struggling German shepherd whimpered in his agony," creates a more effective image. Not only do you see and hear the dog, but you also get the impression of suffering.

Figurative Language

Here are two statements that say approximately the same thing:

Try to do great things.
Hitch your wagon to a star.

Although both statements have the same meaning, one is more interesting than the other. The first one makes a straightforward statement; it uses *literal language*. The second example, on the other hand, encourages you to use your imagination to create a special image. It uses *figurative language*.

Figurative language is effective because it adds vividness to a description. It also gives concreteness, beauty, and humour to words and ideas. Figurative language contributes to the mood or theme of a poem or passage.

Figures of Speech

Figures of speech are some of the tools a writer uses to create imagery. For example, "rough as sandpaper" very effectively appeals to the sense of touch. "Diamond-studded sky" creates a visual image more effectively than the phrase "many stars in the sky."

Four common figures of speech are similes, metaphors, personification, and hyperbole.

The Simile

A good way to increase the effectiveness of a word picture or image is to compare an object or person to something else. This comparison can be a forceful tool in both writing and speaking. A *simile* is a comparison introduced by the word *like* or *as*:

> The frisky puppy was as wiggly as an eel.
> Leaves drifted in the gentle wind like tiny parachutes.

Notice that in these examples the two things compared in each sentence are unlike in most ways, but appear to be alike in one important aspect. This unusual comparison is what makes a simile striking.

The Metaphor

A *metaphor* is another type of comparison that's used frequently in prose and poetry. A metaphor, like a simile, makes a comparison, but it doesn't use the words *like* or *as*:

> On their shining tracks, the waiting diesel engines were crouching cats, purring softly.
>
> The ripe pumpkins were golden idols among the corn stalks.

In these examples, one thing is described as if it were something else. The diesel engines were purring cats, and the pumpkins were golden idols.

Once you can recognize metaphors in poetry and prose, you'll be able to appreciate their effectiveness in language. Sometimes a writer uses a metaphorical comparison over an entire poem or written work. This *extended metaphor* is often easier to recognize because it is developed over the entire piece of writing, and it then becomes more obvious. In the next example, the author compares clouds to several things:

> I remember once, as a kid, lying on my back watching clouds. Row upon row of factory-perfect models drifted along the assembly line. There went a nifty schooner, flag flying—and look, a snapping toy poodle with the most absurd cut! Next came chilly Greenland, with Labrador much too close for comfort. But the banana split was the best one of all.

Personification

Personification is the giving of human characteristics, powers, or feelings to something non-human. Personification is really a type of metaphor in which the comparison is always made to a human being:

> The telephone poles marched along the highway as far as the eye could see.
>
> The waters of the brook chuckled as they passed us on their way.

In the first of these examples, the telephone poles are being compared to soldiers as they march, standing straight and evenly spaced, along the road. In the second example, the waters in the brook are compared to chuckling, happy people—children perhaps.

Hyperbole

Hyperbole is an extravagant exaggeration, usually used for comic or dramatic effect:

```
The story would burn your ears off if I told you.
```

The story wouldn't really burn off your ears, but this exaggeration helps to emphasize what's being said. Hyperbole is intentional exaggeration used to emphasize an idea.

Here are two more examples of hyperbole—ones you've probably heard many times:

```
It was so funny I split my sides laughing.
I simply died of embarrassment.
```

Irony

Irony has a wide range of meanings. At its simplest, irony is a form of expression that implies something different or even opposite to what is actually said, as in this example:

```
So you broke your arm the day of the big game! That's just great.
```

Irony of this sort, when a person says the opposite of what he or she means, is called *verbal irony*.

Another kind of irony occurs when something turns out in an opposite way to what is expected. Suppose that a team has played splendidly all year but, in the final game, plays very badly and suffers a humiliating defeat. This strange twist, which often occurs with events, is called *irony of situation.*

In literature, the true meaning of a set of circumstances often isn't revealed until the outcome of the circumstances is seen; then a contradiction in the expected outcome is the result. The situation may seem to be developing to its logical conclusion, yet almost at the end it takes an opposite turn. This unexpected, or unintended, development is an example of irony of situation.

In the short story, "The Gift of the Magi," by O. Henry, Della sells her beautiful long hair in order to buy her husband, Jim, a watch chain. Meanwhile, Jim pawns his cherished watch to buy Della a present of hair combs. This ironic twist of fate produces a conclusion that, to both characters and readers, is entirely unexpected.

Satire

Satire is a form of writing in which the writer criticizes or ridicules something, such as society, institutions, politics, religion, or education. However, it isn't direct criticism. Satire often describes a completely different situation, but makes indirect parallels and references to things you know so that you realize what the writer is criticizing.

In one very famous satirical work, the writer Jonathan Swift wrote an essay in which he suggested that the poor people of his country should sell their children to the rich as a source of food. Of course, his point was to criticize his society, in which some people lived in such grinding poverty that they found it very difficult to feed and clothe themselves and their children, whereas others in society had much more than they needed and refused to share their wealth. In his satirical essay, Swift suggested that since the rich were taking everything else from the poor anyway, they might as well take their children. Readers who missed Swift's satire were horrified by his proposal.

Very often writers use satire to achieve humour in their writing. In fact, to be effective, satire must be humorous; it should have sharpness, but it shouldn't be bitter and caustic. It scores its point without causing hurt. Good satire is often subtle, sometimes so subtle that some people misunderstand it.

Symbolism

A *symbol* is something that stands for something else. It can be a word, a person, an action, or an object that takes on a meaning far beyond its ordinary meaning. For example, the dove and the olive branch are symbols of peace. The fist is a symbol of aggression.

A symbol is more than a sign. A sign brings to mind a single meaning; a symbol brings to mind a more complex idea that signals both mind and emotion. For example, the Canadian maple leaf is a symbol; it represents a cluster of ideas, attitudes, and feelings.

A literary symbol is an object, a situation, or an action that has a literal meaning within a story or poem, but suggests other meanings as well. For example, darkness might symbolize ignorance or depression, while dawn might mean a new beginning.

Don't fall into the trap, however, of assuming that a literary symbol must always mean the same thing. For example, the Sun often symbolizes life, but a writer might use it as a symbol of power or dominance or something entirely different. Always let the story or poem itself alert you to what a symbol means.

Allusion

An *allusion* is an indirect reference to something or someone generally familiar. Many allusions are to historical or mythological figures. For example, "He's as old as Methuselah" is an allusion to a man who's said to have lived 969 years. Of course, if the reader doesn't know of Methuselah, the allusion is meaningless. The allusion then becomes a barrier to communication.

If writers want to get their message across to readers, they must be aware of possible barriers and write specifically for a group of readers. Readers, on the other hand, must also be aware of these barriers and take steps to remove as many as possible. The more you read and learn, the more allusions you'll be able to recognize. You can also use a dictionary to help you discover the meaning of many allusions.

Flashback

Flashback is a common technique for revealing something important that happened in the past. The readers or viewers, typically, are involved in the present action when suddenly the writer takes them back to the past for a while. This return to the past is sometimes done as a memory.

An author may signal a flashback in different ways. Occasionally, an author will leave additional space between the part of the story in the current time and the flashback. Some authors change the font to emphasize a flashback.

Most of the time, an author signals a flashback with words. A verb tense shift from the present to the past tense may be used:

> I remember the night so clearly. I had gone upstairs to change for the party. Suddenly, I heard a scream outside my window….

Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing occurs when the author gives hints or clues about what's going to happen. Sometimes the hints are so subtle that you may miss them until the event has occurred. Upon rereading the story, however, you'll find foreshadowing more obvious. This technique adds interest and suspense as you wait for what you're subtly warned about to happen:

> As I walked past the graveyard that foggy night, I felt that someone was watching me. Yet, when I turned around, no one was there.
>
> I should have known that Marco could not be trusted.

Although these examples are somewhat obvious, not all foreshadowing is this simple. A writer will often leave subtle clues for the reader: a particular brand of cough drops, a peculiar habit, a way of speaking, an odd noise, a strange glance. It takes a discerning reader to become aware of these hints.

Sound Devices

Writers, especially poets, use a variety of devices to appeal to their readers' sense of hearing. These techniques are sometimes called *sound devices*.

Rhythm

Rhythm is part of everyone's life. Rhythm—or a regular beat—exists in

- the galloping of a horse
- the rise and fall of the tides
- the beating of our hearts
- the ticking of a clock
- the chug of a tractor

Most people enjoy rhythm and respond to it. They may clap their hands, tap their feet, as well as swing or sway to the rhythm of music or a song.

In speech, people say certain syllables or words with greater emphasis than others. These stressed syllables are called *accented syllables.* A poet often arranges the accented syllables in a line of poetry so that they happen at regular intervals. The poet can thus achieve a rhythm that will be pleasing to the reader and will help convey the mood of the poem.

Poets often vary the rhythm patterns according to the type of poem. A light, nonsensical poem will usually have a quick and lively rhythm that makes it suitable to skip or dance to. Many nursery rhymes fall into this category:

Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water.
Jack fell down and broke his crown
And Jill came tumbling after.

A poem that deals with a serious topic, such as battles of war, will have a slower, heavier rhythm than that used in other, less serious poetry. Examine these lines from William Makepeace Thackeray's poem "Pocahontas":

Wearied arm and broken sword
Wage in vain the desperate fight:

Sometimes a poet will use a rhythmical pattern that attempts to imitate a specific rhythm. These lines from "The Sea" by Barry Cornwall show how the poem reflects the rhythm of gentle waves:

The sea! the sea! the open sea
The blue, the fresh, the ever free!

Notice the galloping rhythm used in the first two lines of the poem "The Charge of the Light Brigade" by Alfred, Lord Tennyson:

Half a league, half a league,
  Half a league onward,

Metre

Some poems have a regular rhythm pattern; others have a freer pattern of rhythm. When the rhythm in a poem follows a definite pattern, it is called *metre*.

Metre is developed through the regular pattern of stressed beats. When the metre of a poem is analysed, the syllable that's stressed can be marked with a slash (/) and the syllable that's unstressed can be marked with the symbol ◡.

The following lines from W. H. Davies' poem "Leisure" illustrate how the stressed and unstressed syllables are marked:

```
∪   /   ∪   /    ∪   /    ∪   /
What is | this life | if, full | of | care, |

∪  /    ∪  /    ∪  /     ∪  /
We have | no time | to stand | and stare. |
```

When a line of poetry is divided into a number of sections that have similar arrangements of stress, each section is called a *foot*. Each foot has only one stressed syllable, though the number of unstressed syllables may vary. In the preceding lines, there are four stressed syllables in each line; therefore, there are four feet in each line.

Dividing a line of poetry into feet and marking the stressed syllables is called *scanning*. Here are two lines from the poem "Matilda" by Hilaire Belloc:

```
∪  /   ∪  /   ∪   /     ∪  /
Ma til | da told |such Dread | ful Lies, |

∪ /   ∪   /    ∪   /       ∪    /
It made |one Gasp | and Stretch | one's Eyes. |
```

Notice that the accented words are usually the important words. The regular spacing of these accents gives the poem its rhythm.

Several different types of metre are common in English poetry. Two common types are iambic and trochaic.

In *iambic metre,* each foot consists of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable—much like a heartbeat (da DUM, da DUM, da DUM). Iambic metre is sometimes referred to as *marching metre*. Most English poetry uses this metre because the accent of much of our speech falls naturally into this rhythm. The lines from "Matilda" are an example of iambic rhythm.

Another type of rhythm is called *trochaic metre*. This metre also has feet composed of two syllables, but unlike iambic metre, the first syllable is stressed and the second is unstressed. Trochaic metre is often called *running measure* because, like a runner, it starts with a strong foot first.

Here's an example of trochaic metre from "Hiawatha's Childhood" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:

```
/      ∪   / ∪   /   ∪    /  ∪
Learned of | every | bird its | language, |

/      ∪      /   ∪    /  ∪      /  ∪
Learned their | names and | all their | secrets,
```

There are other types of metre, of course, but they are relatively uncommon:

```
dactyllic metre  (/ ∪ ∪)
anapestic metre  (∪ ∪ /)
spondaic metre   ( / / )
```

Lines vary in length according to the number of feet they contain. The following terms are used to indicate the number of feet in each line:

```
monometer:   one foot
dimeter:     two feet
trimeter:    three feet
tetrameter:  four feet
pentameter:  five feet
hexameter:   six feet
heptameter:  seven feet
```

The lines from “Hiawatha’s Childhood” are written in trochaic metre. Each line has four feet so the poem is said to be written in *trochaic tetrameter*.

The lines from “Matilda” have four iambic feet in each line. This is called *iambic tetrameter*, one of the most common metres in English poetry.

A poem won’t always follow the same metre throughout. It may vary somewhat in order to provide a contrast and, thereby, avoid monotony.

Rhyme

Rhyme is the use of identical sounds in accented syllables. In poetry, rhyming words generally occur at the end of separate lines. This is called *end rhyme*. Shakespeare uses this type of rhyme in these lines from *Macbeth:*

```
Round about the cauldron go;
In the poison’d entrails throw.
```

When rhyming words occur in the middle and at the end of a single line, the poet is using *internal rhyme*. Robert Service’s poem “The Cremation of Sam McGee” contains internal rhyme:

```
There are strange things done in the midnight sun
```

You’ll notice that words don’t necessarily have to be spelled the same in order to rhyme. It’s the *sound* that counts.

The pattern of rhyme in a poem is called its *rhyme scheme*. The rhyme scheme of a poem can be determined by identifying each line with a letter of the alphabet. All of the lines that rhyme with each other are given the same letter. Start with the letter *a* and go on alphabetically. Here's the rhyme scheme of a poem you probably know:

Little Bo-Peep	***a***
Has lost her sheep,	***a***
And can't tell where to find them.	***b***
Leave them alone,	***c***
And they'll come home	***c***
Wagging their tails behind them.	***b***

Keep in mind that it isn't essential for poetry to have a regular rhythm or rhyme pattern. For example, free verse has no regular rhyme or rhythm. Free verse does, however, have a rhythmic quality and sometimes features other sound devices, such as alliteration.

Alliteration

Alliteration is the repeated use of an initial consonant sound in two or more words in close proximity (the same line or nearby lines). This sound device contributes to the melody of the writing. Writers often use alliteration to gain attention, to bind phrases together, or to create a musical effect.

In this line by Edgar Allan Poe from his poem "The Bells," the *t* sound is emphasized:

What a ***t***ale of ***t***error, now, their ***t***urbulency ***t***ells!

Here's another example of alliteration from Tennyson's "The Eagle":

He ***c***lasps the ***c***rag with ***c***rookèd hands;

Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia or *imitative harmony* is the use of words whose sound suggests their meaning:

swish	buzz	bubble
drip	crash	hum
hiss	plop	bang
whir		

When Alfred Noyes wanted to show the sound of a horse in his poem "The Highwayman," he used the following words:

Over the cobbles he **clattered** and **clashed** in the dark inn-yard,

Later in the poem, Noyes uses onomatopoeia again:

> **Tlot-tlot**; **tlot-tlot**! Had they heard it? The horse-hoofs ringing clear;

Sometimes a poem will use an entire line or even a stanza of imitative words to convey a special effect, as in these lines from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*:

> Double, double, toil and trouble;
> Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.

Repetition

Poets, along with other writers, frequently repeat words or phrases to emphasize them or to create a rhythmic effect. Here's an example from the poem "The Highwayman" by Alfred Noyes:

> And the highwayman came **riding**—
> **Riding**—**riding**—
> The highwayman came **riding**, up to the old inn-door.

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