

INTRODUCTION

A *Writer's Basic Toolkit* is not intended to be a complete grammar text. It does, however, provide what I believe to be the essential concepts of sentence structure and grammar in a way that many of my students have found accessible. Much of what is presented here may at first seem strange. It should; English grammar is often contradictory and illogical, but have faith. You *can* figure it out.

The diagnostic exercises are designed to reinforce the concepts presented in the first half of *A Writer's Basic Toolkit* and should be used as you move from one section to the next. Don't expect everything to make sense at once. In fact, you may initially experience dizziness, nausea and other unpleasant side effects, but repeated exposure will bring understanding.* Do not attempt to drive or operate heavy machinery immediately after reading this book.

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*On very rare occasions simultaneous expulsion of the eyeballs from their sockets, mild seizures, total hair loss, and out-of-body experiences have been reported. If any of these symptoms persist, consult your doctor.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT
SECTION 1

PARTS OF SPEECH

NOUNS denote people, places or things.

Jack is a convicted embezzler.

PRONOUNS replace nouns.

He is a convicted embezzler.

VERBS express action (physical or mental) or state of being.

Verbs expressing action are called **action verbs**.

Elaine threw the cake at her brother. [What did Elaine do?]

Gaspar slammed the knife down on the counter. [What did Gaspar do?]

I concentrated on the sharp teeth of the weasel. [What did I do?]

Verbs expressing a state of being are called **linking verbs**.

The General seems tired.

I am confused.

Common linking verbs include the following: *look, feel, seem, appear, become, smell, taste, sound*, and all forms of the verb *to be*.

NOTE!!

In some cases, a verb can be used as either an action or a linking verb.

I felt sick. [Linking]

I felt the smooth surface. [Action]

If you can substitute *is* or *was* for the verb, you are dealing with a linking verb. If you can't, you have an action verb.

After walking home in the blizzard, Herb felt embarrassed.
After walking home in the blizzard, Herb was embarrassed.

The substitution works in this case. The verb *felt* is used as a linking verb in this example.

ADJECTIVES describe or modify nouns or pronouns. They tell *which, what kind, how many* or *whose*.

This dark room is an unpleasant place.

Regular Adjectives tell *what kind* and form the largest group of adjectives.

I watched the old, nervous, skinny, filthy dog stagger across the street. (What kind of dog?)

Demonstrative Adjectives tell *which* and consist of the following: *this, these, those, and that*.

I need those pliers hanging on the wall. (Which pliers?)

Articles include *the, a* and *an*.

Janice was an excellent ice climber.

Possessive Adjectives tell *whose* and are formed by adding an apostrophe (') and often an *s* to the end of a noun. Possessive adjectives can also be formed from pronouns.

Sam's forgotten lunch began to rot in the hot sun. (Whose lunch?)

Someone's dog clawed at the outside of the trunk. (Whose dog?)

Quantitative Adjectives tell *how many* and *how much*. They consist of numbers and of words such as *some, many, much, more, all* and *few*.

Blake ate sixteen cheeseburgers in one sitting. (How many cheeseburgers? How many sittings?)

I had some trouble with the lawnmower. (How much trouble?)

NOTE!!

A word may be used as different parts of speech. For example, the following adjectives can also be used as pronouns: *all, either, each, any, both, another, neither, much, few, many, more, most, other, one, that, these, this, those, which, what, and some.*

ADJECTIVE: Which car should we fix? [*Which* modifies the noun *car*.]

PRONOUN: Which should we fix? [*Which* replaces the noun *car*.]

ADJECTIVE: A few congressmen were honest. [*Few* tells how many congressmen.]

PRONOUN: A few were honest. [*Few* takes the place of the noun *congressmen*.]

Also, numbers can be used as pronouns or adjectives.

ADJECTIVE: Blake ate sixteen burgers.

PRONOUN: Blake loved burgers, and he ate sixteen.

ADVERBS most commonly are used to describe or modify verbs. They will often tell *when, where, how* or *under what circumstance*.

WHEN: We always enjoy going to the drive-in.

HOW: The car spun wildly.

WHERE: Ramona was surprised to find her wallet there.

Adverbs can also modify adjectives or other adverbs.

Jake tried to cool down the very hot engine.
(*Very* tells how hot the engine was.)

The guitarist played too loudly.
(*Too* tells how loudly.)

PREPOSITIONS introduce prepositional phrases. They always have an object, which is usually the first noun or pronoun that follows. They establish a relationship (such as time or space) between its object and other words in the sentence.

SPACE: The stork flew over the house, circled above the roof, then landed safely on the chimney top.

The preposition *over* shows the relationship between its object - *house*- and the verb *flew*. The preposition *above* shows the relationship between its object - *roof* - and the verb *circled*. The preposition *on* shows the relationship between its object - *chimney* - and the verb *safely*.

TIME: I fainted during my wedding ceremony.
Frank waited until dusk.

Again, the preposition *during* shows the relationship between the object -*ceremony* -and the verb *fainted*. In the same way, the preposition *until* links its object - *dusk* -with the verb *waited*.

COMMON PREPOSITIONS

about, above, across, after, against, along, amid, among, around, at, before, behind, below, beneath, beside, besides, between, beyond, but, by, concerning, down, during, except, for, from, in, into, like, of, off, on, over, past, since, through, throughout, to , toward, under, underneath, until, unto, up, upon, with, within, without.

COMMON MULTIPLE WORD PREPOSITIONS

according to	in addition to	in spite of
ahead of	in case of	inside of
as well as	in front of	instead of
because of	in place of	rather than

NOTE!!!!!!!

Many prepositions from the above list can also be used as adverbs. In these instances, an object will not follow. Included in this group are *above, below, before, after, beyond, down, up, inside, outside, near, off, and on*.

ADVERB: When I heard the howl, I went inside.
[*Inside* tells where I went.]

PREPOSITION: When I heard the howl, I went inside the shack.
[*Inside* is followed by a noun and therefore introduces a prepositional phrase.]

ADVERB: I was doing fine until I looked down.
[*Down* tells where I looked.]

PREPOSITION: I was doing fine until I looked down the ladder.
[*Down* is followed by a noun and therefore introduces a prepositional phrase.]

CONJUNCTIONS join words, phrases, clauses and sentences.

I enjoy reading and writing, but I'd rather be skiing.

INTERJECTIONS express strong feeling.

WOW! Look at that mist!

Oh, @#\$%&**@! I missed the mail again.

VERBALS are formed from verbs, but they have other functions within the sentence. They can act as nouns, adjectives or adverbs. Verbals end in *ed*, *ing*, and sometimes *n* or *t*. They also are formed from the infinitive, which is formed by adding *to* in front of the verb in the present tense (to go, to be, to eat).

ADJECTIVE: The man drooling over the catalog of surgical instruments was Dr. Melliot.

[*Drooling* describes Dr Melliot.]

Shattered by the rejection, Louis sought refuge in stamp collecting.
[*Shattered* describes Louis.]

NOUN: Skiing is my favorite sport.
[*Skiing* acts as subject.]

I hated to leave the party so early.
[*To leave* acts as direct object.]

ADVERB: Orlov spent his spare time spying on his tenants.
[*Spying* tells how Orlov spent his time.]

Verbals are especially confusing. While they do not function as verbs, they retain certain characteristics of verbs: they connote action and they can take direct and indirect objects.

The man smoking the cigar attacked the waiter with his salad fork.

In the above sentence, the verb is *attacked*. *Smoking* is a verbal describing the man, and *cigar* is the direct object of the verbal.

NOTE!

All verb forms ending in *ed*, *ing*, *d*, or *t* are not necessarily functioning as verbals. In some cases you may be dealing with a simple past tense or part of an auxiliary verb construction.

VERBAL: The man smoking the cigar attacked the waiter.

PAST TENSE The man smoked the cigar.

AUXILIARY VERB CONSTRUCTION: The man was smoking the cigar.

Auxiliary constructions often consist of a form of the verb *to be* preceding another verb. If the above sentence had read *The man smoking the cigar*, you would probably have sensed that something was wrong. Specifically, this group of words is not a complete sentence because it contains no verb. For *smoking* to be functioning as a verb, it would need to be part of an auxiliary construction. In other words, it would need to have another verb along with it:

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Section 2

THE SENTENCE

A **SENTENCE** is a series of words expressing a complete idea, thought or action, containing at least one subject (a noun or pronoun) and one verb.

People drive.

The **SUBJECT** of a sentence is the word or words that do something or about which something is said. In the above sentence, the subject is *People*. A subject can be a person, a group, an idea, or an activity. The subject tells who or what the sentence is about.

The **VERB** tells what the subject is doing. In the above sentence, the verb *drive* tells what the people are doing.

A sentence can have more than one main subject and verb. A **COMPOUND SUBJECT** is any subject in which more than one person, place, thing or idea does the same thing or has the same thing said about them. When a sentence has more than one main verb, the sentence has a **COMPOUND VERB**. The compound subjects and verbs are underlined in the sentences below.

Bill, Alice, and Hortense stared in amazement as the car exploded in front of Ames. (Compound subject)

The rotting old Plymouth lurched and wheezed its way up the hill after the guerrillas began their attack. (Compound verb)

The **KERNEL** refers to the subject and verb in the main clause of the sentence, that part of the sentence that can stand alone.

OBJECTS

The **DIRECT OBJECT** receives the action of the verb. In the following sentences, the direct objects are underlined.

I wrote a letter. (I wrote what?)

Pete played the guitar. (Pete played what?)

Beth answered the phone. (Beth answered what?)

INDIRECT OBJECTS tell *to whom* or *to what*. In the following sentences, the indirect objects are underlined.

I gave Beth the envelope. (To whom did I give the envelope?)

I sent Oswald the book. (To whom did I send the book?)

OBJECTS OF THE PREPOSITION are simply the nouns or pronouns that follow prepositions. The objects of the preposition are underlined in the following sentences.

I left the chops on the table. [The object follows the preposition *on*.]

He vomited over the balcony. [The object follows the preposition *over*.]

Just as action verbs are often followed by a direct object, linking verbs are often followed by either **PREDICATE NOUNS** or **PREDICATE ADJECTIVES**.

Jim Douglas is the governor. (Predicate noun)

A **PREDICATE NOUN** is a noun that follows a linking verb and simply restates the subject (Jim Douglas) in another way (the governor).

A **PREDICATE ADJECTIVE** is an adjective that follows a linking verb and simply describes the subject.

Bill is famous for his barbecue sauce.

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Section 3

PHRASES AND CLAUSES

PHRASES and **CLAUSES** (excepting **INDEPENDENT CLAUSES**) are groups of words that function within a sentence as specific parts of speech – as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs. Think of the difference between a solo musician and a band playing the same song. The nouns, adjectives, and adverbs function as solo musicians whereas phrases and clauses function as bands. Understanding the function of nouns, adjectives, and adverbs is essential to understanding phrases and clauses.

ADJECTIVE: The nasty cop gave me a ticket.
The single word *nasty* describes the cop.

CLAUSE AS ADJECTIVE: The cop, who was nasty, gave me a ticket.
The group of words *who was nasty* describes the cop.

PHRASES are groups of words that do not contain a subject or a verb and that act as nouns, adjectives, or adverbs within the sentence. Phrases add detail, information, and clarity to sentences.

PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES begin with a preposition and end with an object of the preposition, which is a noun or a pronoun.

For the most part, prepositional phrases act only as adjectives or adverbs. The subject of a sentence will never be within a prepositional phrase.

ADJECTIVE: Dr. Melliotas was the man in the white lab coat.
[The prepositional phrase describes the man.]

ADVERB: Victor jumped over the electric fence.
[The prepositional phrase describes the verb and tells us where Victor jumped.]

COMMON PREPOSITIONS

about, above, across, after, against, along, amid, among, around, at, before, behind, below, beneath, beside, besides, between, beyond, but, by, concerning, down, during, except, for, from, in, into, like, of, off, on, over, past, since, through, throughout, to, toward, under, underneath, until, unto, up, upon, with, within, without.

COMMON MULTIPLE WORD PREPOSITIONS

according to	in addition to	in spite of
ahead of	in case of	inside of
as well as	in front of	instead of
because of	in place of	rather than
	out of	

HOT TIP: IF YOU SEE ONE OF THESE WORDS FOLLOWED BY A NOUN AND ANY WORDS DESCRIBING THAT NOUN, YOU ARE LOOKING AT A PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE.

CAUTION: *TO* DOES NOT ALWAYS FUNCTION AS A PREPOSITION. IF A VERB FOLLOWS DIRECTLY, AN INFINITIVE, WHICH IS A VERBAL, IS CREATED.

I went to the window to see the Northern Lights.

In the above sentence, the first phrase is a prepositional phrase; the second one is a verbal phrase.

VERBAL PHRASES begin with verbals and can serve as subjects, objects, adjectives, adverbs, or as predicate adjectives or predicate nouns.

SUBJECT: Taking out the trash is not my favorite chore.
[The verbal phrase tells what is not my favorite chore.]

DIRECT OBJECT: I hate to go.
[The verbal phrase tells what I hate.]

PRED. ADJ: Betsy felt embarrassed for Emile.
[The verbal phrase follows the linking verb *felt*.]

PRED. NOUN: Bert's favorite diversion is cooking Chinese food.
[The verbal phrase follows the linking verb *is* and restates the subject.]

ADJECTIVE: The man smoking the cigar was Dr. Melliot. *es*.
[The verbal phrase tells us which man.]

ADVERB: She went running up the road.
[The verbal phrase tells us where she went.]

APPOSITIVE PHRASES function as adjectives within the sentence. Appositive phrases often begin with the words *a*, *an*, or *the*.

APPOSITIVE:: The Smith Mansion, a creaky old house, was rumored to be haunted.

The underlined phrase describes the Smith Mansion.

APPOSITIVE: Monique, a recent arrival from France, was shocked by my family's behavior at Thanksgiving.

The underlined phrase describes Monique.

APPOSITIVE Quebec, my favorite province in Canada, is only minutes away.

The underlined phrase describes Quebec.

REMEMBER

A PHRASE IS A GROUP OF WORDS THAT DOES NOT CONTAIN A SUBJECT OR VERB AND THAT ACTS AS A NOUN, ADJECTIVE, OR ADVERB.

PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES BEGIN WITH PREPOSITIONS AND FUNCTION AS MODIFIERS.

THE SUBJECT OF A SENTENCE WILL NEVER BE WITHIN A PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE.

PHRASES BEGINNING WITH VERBALS ARE VERBAL PHRASES.

VERBAL PHRASES FUNCTION AS ADJECTIVES, ADVERBS OR NOUNS (SUBJECTS, OBJECTS OR PREDICATE NOUNS).

APPOSITIVE PHRASES FUNCTION AS ADJECTIVES AND OFTEN BEGIN WITH THE WORDS *A*, *AN*, OR *THE*.

CLAUSES

CLAUSE is any group of words with at least one subject and one verb. There are three kinds of clauses: independent clauses, dependent clauses, and relative clauses.

INDEPENDENT CLAUSES contain at least one subject and one verb and can stand alone as complete sentences.

Dr. Melliot's drooped over the catalog of surgical instruments.

His hand trembled with anticipation.

Both sentences are independent clauses.

DEPENDENT CLAUSES contain at least one subject and one verb; however, they cannot stand alone.

Dependent clauses begin with a subordinating conjunction.

When Maria had a chance, she went to the library.

The first part of the sentence, *When Maria had a chance*, although it has a subject (Maria) and a verb (had), can not stand alone. It does not express a complete idea. It depends on the second clause, *she went to the library*, which can stand alone, to complete the thought.

Dependent clauses are created by adding a subordinating conjunction to an independent clause.

COMMON SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS

after, although, as, as if, as soon as, as though, because, before, how, if, since, so that, though, unless, until, when, whenever, wherever, while.

Dependent clauses often function as adverbs, telling us *how*, *when*, *where*, *why*, and *under what circumstances*.

HOW: Suzanne wrote as if her life depended on it.

WHEN: I'll call you after I return.

WHERE: Orlov met the Countess where the paths joined.

WHY: I shook because I was terrified.

CIRCUMSTANCE: Carla loved him even though he was a swine.

Dependent clauses can function as nouns, usually as direct objects.

DIRECT OBJECT: I don't know when the President arrived.
[The clause answers the question, "Know what?"]

CAUTION!

Remember that in English, parts of speech are determined by the use of the word within the sentence rather than by the word itself. Some subordinating conjunctions can also function as prepositions or as adverbs. Figuring out how the word is used is easy. Simply check to see if there is a subject and verb following the word in question. If so, you have a clause, and the word functions as a subordinating conjunction. If just a noun and the words that describe it follow, the word functions as a preposition. If the word is used by itself, it is used as an adverb.

SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTION: After he locked the door, Melliotte staggered to his desk.
[*After* introduces a dependent clause]

PREPOSITION: I went for a long walk after breakfast.
[*After* introduces a prepositional phrase]

ADVERB: I went for a long walk after.
[*After* tells us when.]

Notice that in all three examples, *after* tells us when an action happened.

RELATIVE CLAUSES begin with a relative pronoun and contain a subject and a verb., Like dependent clauses, they can never stand alone.

RELATIVE PRONOUNS

who, whoever, which, what, whom, whomever, that, whose.

Relative clauses function as subjects, objects, or as modifiers in other clauses. Relative clauses work best as modifiers and as direct objects. When used as subjects or as predicate nouns, they can be awkward.

SUBJECT: Whoever put the cayenne pepper in the wedding cake should be ashamed. [Who should be ashamed?]

DIRECT. OBJECT: Anna didn't know that Melliotés was listening to her phone calls. [Anna didn't know what?]

ADJECTIVE: Melliotés, who was ill-tempered in the best of times, flew into a rage when he discovered the plot against him. [The clause describes Melliotés.]

ADJECTIVE: The shovel that stood in the doorway was my only hope. [The clause describes the shovel by telling us which shovel.]

PREDICATE. NOUN: The problem is that nobody wants to confront the old man. [The clause follows a linking verb.]

REMEMBER

INDEPENDENT CLAUSES CAN STAND ALONE AS SENTENCES.

A DEPENDENT OR RELATIVE CLAUSE IS A GROUP OF WORDS THAT HAS A SUBJECT AND A VERB, AND THAT ACTS AS A NOUN, ADJECTIVE, OR ADVERB WITHIN THE SENTENCE.

DEPENDENT CLAUSES BEGIN WITH SUBORDINATING CONJUNCTIONS.

RELATIVE CLAUSES BEGIN WITH RELATIVE PRONOUNS.

DEPENDENT CLAUSES AND RELATIVE CLAUSES CANNOT STAND ALONE.

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Section 4

SENTENCE TYPES AND COMBINATIONS

The four sentence types form the basis for combining sentences to show more clearly the relationships between the thoughts expressed in your sentences. To achieve a smooth, balanced style, vary your sentence types.

SIMPLE SENTENCES consist of one independent clause.

Melliotes walked slowly to the control panel.

Anna Duran began to shake her head in protest.

COMPOUND SENTENCES consist of two or more independent clauses linked with either a comma and a coordinating conjunction (but, or, yet, for, and, nor, so) or a semicolon and a conjunctive adverb.

Melliotes walked slowly to the control panel, and Anna shook her head violently.

HOT TIP:

For ease of memorization, think of the word *boyfans*: *but, or, yet, for, and, nor, so*.

When joining independent clauses with a coordinating conjunction, use a comma.

Melliotes shook his head in disgust, for Brazov's hand trembled when he picked up the syringe.

You can also create compound sentences by putting together independent clauses using conjunctive adverbs.

I fell into a deep, dreamless sleep; however, when I awoke, I was curiously exhausted.

If you join independent clauses with a conjunctive adverb, use a semicolon before the conjunctive adverb and a comma after.

COMMON CONJUNCTIVE ADVERBS

also, consequently, furthermore, finally, hence, however, instead, nevertheless, next,
otherwise, still, then, therefore, thus.

Often, the choice between using a coordinating conjunction and a conjunctive adverb is one of style. The former tends to be less formal. Just be sure the connecting word makes sense in the context of the two clauses to be joined.

COMPLEX SENTENCES consist of at least one dependent clause and one independent clause.

When Melliotos walked slowly to the control panel, Anna shook her head violently.

An INDEPENDENT CLAUSE (Melliotos walked slowly to the control panel.) has been changed to a DEPENDENT CLAUSE by adding a subordinating conjunction, *when*, to the beginning.

COMPOUND-COMPLEX SENTENCES consist of at least one dependent clause and two or more independent clauses.

When Melliotos walked slowly to the control panel, Anna shook her head violently; however, he ignored her protests.

The same set of sentences can be combined in different ways depending on the relationship between them and the style desired.

SIMPLE SENTENCES: The lion roared. I ran.

COMPOUND SENTENCE: The lion roared, so I ran. [cause and effect]

COMPLEX SENTENCE: Because the lion roared, I ran. [cause and effect.]

COMPLEX SENTENCE: When the lion roared, I ran. [time]

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Section 5

GUIDE TO COMMON SENTENCE FLAWS

The most common sentence structure errors are **COMMA SPLICES**, **SENTENCE FRAGMENTS** and **RUN-ON SENTENCES**.

COMMA SPLICES occur when two independent clauses are joined with a comma but without using a coordinating conjunction (BOYFANS).

SPLICE: I saw Frank at the other end of the room, he didn't seem to recognize me.

CORRECT: I saw Frank at the other end of the room, but he didn't seem to recognize me.

SPLICE: I didn't think of the consequences, I just ran into the burning building to rescue the blind parrot.

CORRECT: I didn't think of the consequences, so I just ran into the burning building to rescue the blind parrot.

SPLICE: Anna didn't like the look in Melliot's eyes, she decided she just had to get out of there.

CORRECT: Anna didn't like the look in Melliot's eyes, and she decided she just had to get out of there.

SENTENCE FRAGMENTS occur when phrases and dependent or relative clauses are used as sentences. Sentences must have a subject and a verb and must express a complete thought.

FRAGMENT: The Count slapped General Orlov in the face. With his white gloves.

(Prepositional phrase is used incorrectly as a sentence.)

CORRECT: The Count slapped General Orlov in the face with his white gloves.

FRAGMENT: Maria ran to the library. Although she knew Victor had already left.

(Dependent clause is used incorrectly as a sentence.)

CORRECT: Maria ran to the library although she knew Victor had already left.

FRAGMENT: Donald loved his new toupee. Which he thought made him look like Burt Reynolds.

(Relative clause is used incorrectly as a sentence.)

CORRECT: Donald loved his new toupee, which he thought made him look like Burt Reynolds.

FUSED OR RUN-ON SENTENCES occur when sentences are joined with no punctuation or conjunctions.

FUSED: The Model A Ford swayed dangerously when it hit the hairpin curve the driver spat out a curse before throwing himself from the car.

CORRECT: The Model A Ford swayed dangerously. When it hit the hairpin curve, the driver spat out a curse before throwing himself from the car.

OR

The Model A Ford swayed dangerously when it hit the hairpin curve, and the driver spat out a curse before throwing himself from the car.

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Section 6

PRONOUNS

PRONOUNS are used in place of nouns. There are five types of pronouns: personal, relative, interrogative, demonstrative and indefinite.

PERSONAL PRONOUNS – *I/me, you, he/him, she/her, it, we/us, you, they/them*, and *who/whom* refer to people, pets, or in some cases things.

He walked slowly into the flames.

REFLEXIVE and **INTENSIVE PRONOUNS** – are formed by adding the suffix *self* to personal pronouns: *myself, yourself, himself, herself, itself, ourselves, yourselves* and *themselves*. They can be used either reflexively or to show emphasis.

Reflexive: George shot himself in the foot.

Intensive: I myself witnessed the pay-off.

DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUNS – *this, that, these, and those* – are used to point out or identify an **antecedent**, the word to which a pronoun refers.

These have a better flavor.

RELATIVE PRONOUNS – *who, what, which, that, whom, whose, whoever*, and *whomever* – introduce relative clauses.

The man who passed us is driving your car.

INTERROGATIVE PRONOUNS – *who, whom, whose, which*, and *what* – ask questions.

Who is the idiot who burned the steak?

INDEFINITE PRONOUNS – *all, any, anybody, anyone, both, each, either, everybody, everyone, few, many, neither, nobody, none, no one, one, several, some, somebody, someone* – do not refer to specific nouns.

Each of you has a mission.

NUMERICAL PRONOUNS – *one, two, three*, etc.

I love Michigan Red Hots. Today I ate five.

PRONOUN CASE

Pronouns are expressed in three cases or forms: subjective, objective, and possessive.

SUBJECTIVE CASE is used for subjects of the sentence and for predicate nouns.

She asked for a large fries. [subject of sentence]

Amos was unaware that it was she. [predicate noun]

OBJECTIVE CASE is used for direct objects, indirect objects and objects of the preposition.

Give the gun to him. [object of preposition]

I gave her the book. [indirect object]

I gave her the book. [direct object]

POSSESSIVE CASE indicates whose.

His dreams hinged upon completion of the plan.

Sam's dog waited by the car.

SUBJECTIVE	OBJECTIVE	POSSESSIVE
I	me	mine
you	you	your
he/she	her/him	his/her
it	it	its
we	us	our/ours
they	them	their/theirs
who	whom	whose

PRONOUN NUMBER AND AGREEMENT

Pronouns must agree with their antecedents in number and gender. Compliance with this rule, as well as with subject/verb agreement, sometimes can be tricky, especially when working with indefinite pronouns.

ALWAYS SINGULAR: *Another, each, every, everyone, everybody, either, neither, anybody, anything, anyone, nobody, nothing, no one, somebody, someone.*

Each of the students is renting his own bike.

Jack and Bill are here, but *neither* is going.

Everyone is accounted for.

ALWAYS PLURAL: *Both, many, others, and several.*

Both are poor choices.

Many of the rules are meant to be broken.

SINGULAR OR PLURAL DEPENDING ON ANTECEDENT: *All, none, any, some, more, most, one, who, which, and that.*

She is one of those rare people who are never ill. [*Who* refers to *people* and therefore must take a plural verb.]

All of my work is finished. [*All* refers to *work*, which is singular.]

All of the cars are ready to go. [*All* refers to *cars*, which is plural.]

PRONOUN REFERENCE PROBLEMS

Clear, focused writing requires clear pronoun reference. Give the pronoun a clear antecedent. Since a pronoun replaces a noun, it has no definite meaning unless the reader knows the antecedent.

CLEAR: I saw Mellioties hunched over the shock machine, but he was unaware of me.

CLEAR: The machine could turn a human brain to sawdust, but it was useless without electricity.

CLEAR: The Institute for Human Research was located on a bluff that overlooked the pine barrens.

AMBIGUOUS REFERENCE occurs when the pronoun refers to two antecedents but only one is applicable.

UNCLEAR: Mellioties was talking to Orlov, and he looked angry. [Who looked angry?]

CLEAR: Mellioties was talking to Orlov, who looked angry.

GENERAL REFERENCE occurs when the antecedent is vaguely expressed. The pronouns *this, that, it, and which* are often used in general reference. While accepted, too much general reference can lead to confusion and loss of focus. For clarity, these pronouns should refer to specific nouns.

GENERAL: Jake's eyes were bloodshot, his breath smelled like a distillery, and his clothes were covered with mud. This didn't win him points with the judge.

What exactly does the word *This* refer to?

CLEAR: His condition did not win him points with the judge.

GENERAL: Lloyd insisted on wearing Hawaiian shirts to the office, which angered his boss.

What exactly does *which* refer to?

CLEAR: Lloyd's insistence upon wearing Hawaiian shirts to the office angered his boss.

GENERAL: Far below her, the hawk played with the air currents, and it was thrilling.

What exactly does *it* refer to?

CLEAR: The sight was thrilling.- OR - She was thrilled to see the hawk playing with the air currents far below her.

WEAK REFERENCE occurs when the antecedent has not been expressed and is merely implied.

WEAK: Although Ray worked behind the bar, he never gave me any free ones.

CLEAR: Although Ray worked behind the bar, he never gave me any free drinks.

WEAK: After boarding the train for Kansas City, we discovered it would take twenty-six hours.

CLEAR: After boarding the train for Kansas City, we discovered the trip would take twenty-six hours.

INDEFINITE USE of the pronouns *it*, *they*, and *you* is a common writer error and should be avoided.

INDEFINITE: Under the former regime, you (people)feared the secret police.

INDEFINITE: On long distance trains, they (the crew serves)serve meals.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT
Section 7

PUNCTUATION

COMMAS

1) Use a comma to join two independent clauses with the coordinating conjunctions *but, or, yet, for, and, nor, and so*.

The congressman denied all knowledge of the theft, but the stolen transcripts were found in his safe.

I decided to sell the car, and I placed an advertisement in the classified section of the local paper.

Do not use a comma before a coordinating conjunction when simply joining compound verbs.

I went to the store and bought a quart of milk.

2) Use commas to separate three or more items in a series.

The new Turbo is offered in red, white, or blue.

Santa brought toys for the kids, books for Mother, and an ant farm for Dad.

I opened the letter, realized it was a death threat, and called the police.

Words usually used in pairs are considered to be one item in a series.

Today's menu choices are pork and beans, corned beef and cabbage, macaroni and cheese, and coffee or tea.

If all items in a series are joined by *or, nor, or and*, don't use commas.

We've got a choice of steak or chicken or shrimp.

You may use commas to separate short independent clauses in a series.

This morning we swam in the lake, we played softball, and we blew up our car in front of Ames.

Commas are used to separate adjectives and adverbs in a series when they act independently to modify a single noun or pronoun in the case of an adjective or a single verb or adjective in the case of an adverb:

The old, rotting, miserable building had a sinister quality.
[*Old, rotting, and miserable* all describe the noun *building*.]

The dark gray battleship loomed on the horizon.
[*Dark* describes *gray* while *gray* describes *battleship*.]

3) Use commas to set off nonessential phrases and clauses.

Demitar Cristo, a Bulgarian physicist, believed time travel to be possible.
[appositive phrase]

Demitar Cristo, who was a Bulgarian physicist, believed time travel to be possible.[relative clause]

Quebec, my favorite city in North America, is only a four-hour drive from my house. [appositive phrase]

My little brother, concentrating intently on the timer, failed to notice the smoke coming from the oven. [verbal phrase]

These phrases and clauses add information or detail, but without them the sentence would still make its main point. If, however, the phrase or clause is essential to the meaning of the sentence (restrictive), a comma should not be used.

People who live in glass houses should buy curtains.
[relative clause]

I have nine shovels, but the one that is leaning against the wall is my favorite.
[relative clause]

The man sitting second from the end in the third row was my intended target.
[verbal phrase]

The woman who answered the want ad waited patiently in the doctor's office.
[relative clause].

These clauses and phrases are restrictive in the sense they identify the particular thing or person rather than adding description.

Use commas before and after sentence interrupters.

The place looked like a resort for cockroaches. The food, however, was superb.

We will, of course, expect certain favors in return for reconsidering your case.

Bribing a police officer, as you must certainly know, is the best way to avoid costly legal fees.

Lawyers, consequently, have gone to great pains to make bribery a serious crime.

Sentence interrupters break the flow of the sentence but add detail or description that is not essential to the meaning or grammatical coherence of the sentence. Common sentence interrupters are phrases, dependent clauses and conjunctive adverbs.

4) Use commas following introductory phrases, clauses or words.

While Dr. Melliot continued his grotesque experiments, the patients lived in terror. [dependent clause]

Seething over his many humiliations at the polls, Nixon plotted his revenge. [verbal phrase]

Yesterday, life changed for the kids at Doofus Academy.

Well, the first thing we need to do is eat.

In the case of an introductory prepositional phrase, use a comma if necessary to avoid confusion.

By the way, you're standing on a rotten step.

After breakfast I usually buy a paper.

5) Use commas to set off words in direct address.

To avoid that run down feeling, Jack, look both ways before crossing the street.

The way to a better future, my friend, is sometimes the less scenic route.

6) With dates and addresses, use a comma with every item after the first. If only the month and day is given, no comma is required.

June 12 was a very lucky day for me.

On Wednesday, June 12, 1953, my father bought his first new car.

November 22, 1963, is a date I will never forget.

You can find her at 12 Maple Court, Apartment 6, Bayfield, Oregon.

My favorite town is Bayfield, Oregon.

7) Use a comma to introduce direct quotations.

Jack said, "Let's go."

8) Use a comma after the opening of a friendly letter and after the closing.

Dear Jake,

Sincerely,

THE SEMICOLON

1) Use a semicolon between independent clauses not connected by coordinating conjunctions.

Usually conjunctive adverbs such as *however, nevertheless, therefore, instead, still, consequently, besides, then, thus, and for instance* will be used as the connectives in these cases.

Dr. Melliores was clearly insane; however, only the inmates of his asylum seemed aware of this disturbing fact.

When short sentences are joined, a semicolon can be used without a connector. (Employ semicolons in this fashion sparingly.)

If the plane ditches in the sea, stay calm; leave the plane in an orderly fashion.

2) Use a semicolon between items in a series if those items contain commas.

The three elements of a screenplay are the slug line, which establishes time and place for each scene; dialogue, which provides spoken words; and stage directions, which describe scenery and action.

3) Use a semicolon between independent clauses joined by a coordinating conjunction when commas occur within those clauses.

Dr. Melliores, whose temper was all too well-known, subjected his patients to ice baths, long-term exposure to John Denver music, and to reruns of *Mr.Ed*; but the medical community, surprisingly, continued to regard him highly.

THE COLON

1) Use a colon to introduce a list of items.

I have three favorite foods: pasta, fried chicken, and cheeseburgers.

Do not use a colon if a complete statement does not precede the list.

My favorite foods are pasta, fried chicken, and lentil soup.

2) Use a colon to combine two separate but closely related statements in a single sentence.

A demo tape is not a final product: it's a sales tool.

3) Use a colon to introduce an appositive at the end of a sentence to stress the relationship between the appositive and a key word preceding it

I knew by this point that we could only reach one verdict: guilty.

4) Use a colon to divide hours and minutes when stating the time.

Meet me at 8:45 by the tunnel entrance.

5) Use a colon after the opening of a business letter.

Dear Mr. Blitherspoon:

QUOTATION MARKS

1) Use quotation marks to enclose a direct quote.

Leaning over the operating table, Dr. Mellioties said menacingly, "The brain is so very complex, Miss Duran. One slip of this knife and you'll never regain consciousness. I hope I have no tremors this morning."

2) Enclose a person's thoughts in quotation marks if the exact words are expressed.

Strapped to the cold, steel table, Miss Duran stared at Dr. Mellioties, who leered inches from her face. "What horrible breath," she thought as the needle went into her arm.

When the quotation continues into another paragraph, put quotation marks at the beginning of each paragraph and at the end of the entire quoted passage. Do not put quotes at the end of each paragraph.

3) Use single quotation marks to set off quotes within quotes.

I was shocked when Ralph cried, "Don't forget that old motto, 'Live Free or Die.'"

4) Use quotation marks to enclose titles of chapters, articles, short stories, and other parts of magazines or anthologies. Titles of books, names of publications and titles of albums and anthologies are in Italics.

My favorite short story is "The Lottery."

5) Use quotation marks to enclose nicknames.

I idolized Tommy "Big Tuna" Delfuccio.

6) Quotation marks can also denote sarcasm or a word used jokingly.

Jack's "gift" consisted of a bill for twenty-eight dollars.

7) Use quotation marks when using someone else's exact words.

The wise old geezer wrote, "Wherever you go, there you are."

Using other punctuation marks with quotation marks can be confusing

Commas and **periods** always go inside quotation marks (except for parenthetical citations in certain cases).

"Bill," he said, "don't come back without that book."
I sat down to read Stephen King's short story "Survivor Type."

Question marks, **exclamation points** and **dashes** go within quotation marks when they apply only to the quoted passage. Place them outside when they do not.

Melliotes sneered as he asked, "What is truth?"
Who said, "Give me liberty or give me death"?

Colons and **semicolons** should be placed outside the quotation marks.

You would do well to remember the "Gang of Four": Mona, Clark, Morton, and Henry.

THE APOSTROPHE

1) Use apostrophes to form the possessive case of nouns and indefinite pronouns.

The car's paint was peeling.
 Blake's shoes smelled like a corpse.
 What one does is one's own business.

Singular and plural nouns ending in *s* simply take an apostrophe at the end to form the possessive. You do not need to add an additional *s*. Either way is acceptable

The virus' method of spreading was not understood.

If the plural form of the noun is formed by adding an *s* to the end of the word, form the plural possessive by adding an apostrophe after the *s*.

The boy's clothes were missing. [singular]
 The boys' clothes were missing. [plural]

The student's complaints were ignored. [singular]
 The students' complaints were ignored. [plural]

If the plural form of a noun is created by changing the word itself, use an 's to form the plural possessive.

The man's coat was caught in the escalator. [singular]
 The men's coats were caught in the escalator. [plural]

The child's room was freezing. [singular]
 The children's room was freezing. [plural]

Do not use an apostrophe to form the possessive of the pronoun *it*.

RIGHT: Its feelings were hurt.
 WRONG: It's feelings were hurt.

It's is a contraction meaning *it is*.

When forming a joint possessive, use an apostrophe for the last noun only:

Bill and Ted's excellent adventure

If possession is individual, make each noun possessive.

Alec's and John's impressions of the truth varied widely.

2) Use Apostrophes for omitted words, letters, or numbers.

She isn't here. [she is not here.]

It's five o'clock. [of the clock]

3) Apostrophes may be used to form plurals in certain circumstances – numbers, words mentioned as words, letters and some abbreviations – although current usage tends to avoid this in many of these applications. Either way is acceptable unless you are following Associated Press protocol. Then, omit the apostrophe for abbreviated plurals, numbers, and decades.

Don't for get to burn those CDs for me. Don't forget to burn those CD's for me.
I don't remember the 1960s (1960's) very well because I was there.

How many *and*'s did you use in that sentence?

Remember to cross your *t*'s and dot your *i*'s. In this case not having the apostrophes would be somewhat awkward. Mostly, it's a matter of consistency.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT
Section 8

TWELVE TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE WRITING

1) AVOID THE PASSIVE VOICE WHEN POSSIBLE.

A sentence is in the passive voice when the subject receives the action of the verb. Sometimes this construction is desirable, but a pattern of passive voiced sentences leads to writing that is indirect, weakly focused, and flabby.

PASSIVE VOICE: I was robbed by three men wearing Richard Nixon masks.
[ten words]

A sentence is in the **active voice** when the subject is performing the action. Active voiced sentences are direct, kinetic, and focused.

ACTIVE VOICE: Three men wearing Richard Nixon masks robbed me.
[eight words]

2) AVOID REDUNDANCIES.

Strive for work that is lean and incisive. Do not pad your writing with redundant or otherwise unnecessary words because they obscure your message.

REDUNDANT: The old 1953 Rambler was brown in color.

Obviously the Rambler is old if it was built in 1953; furthermore, *in color* adds nothing to this sentence but two words.

BETTER: The 1953 Rambler was brown.

REDUNDANT: I awoke at 5:00 a.m. this morning.

Morning is unnecessary because *a.m.* has been stated.

BETTER: I awoke at 5:00 a.m.

3) BE CONCISE: AVOID FLAB.

Flabby words and phrases rob sentences of motion and focus. They take up space while contributing nothing. Eliminate them and clarify your message.

FLABBY: I was late due to the fact that I fell through a crack in the space/time continuum.

LEAN: I was late because I fell through a crack in the space/time continuum.

FLABBY: I dressed up for the purpose of impressing her parents.

LEAN: I dressed up to impress her parents.

FLABBY: In the event that you arrive before me, please wait until such time as I arrive.

LEAN: Please wait for me if you arrive first.

FLABBY: He washed on a daily basis.

LEAN: He washed daily.

COMMON FLABBY PHRASES AND THEIR EQUIVALENTS

at the present time	now
at this point in time	now
for the purpose of	for
in order to	to
for the reason that	because
due to the fact that	because
in the event that	if
in the final analysis	finally
of the opinion that	think
on a daily basis	daily
at all times	always
by means of	by
period of time	time

4) AVOID CLICHES.

Clichés are trite, worn-out expressions which have become so familiar that they provide no useful information; avoid them like the plague.

CLICHE: I awoke at the crack of dawn after sleeping like a log all night.

REVISED: I awoke at dawn after sleeping deeply all night.

CLICHE: It was a crying shame that Senator Predergast continued to beat around the bush.

REVISED: Unfortunately, Senator Predergast continued to evade the question.

5) BE CLEAR: AVOID DOUBLESPEAK.

Good writing is clear writing, and doublespeak destroys clarity. William Lutz, editor of *Quarterly Review of Doublespeak*, defines doublespeak as "language that pretends to communicate but doesn't...language that conceals or prevents thought."

DOUBLESPEAK: reassigned

TRANSLATION: fired

DOUBLESPEAK: negative patient outcome

TRANSLATION: death

DOUBLESPEAK: revenue enhancement

TRANSLATION: taxes

DOUBLESPEAK: involuntary conversion of a 747

TRANSLATION: crash

6) AVOID DANGLING OR MISPLACED MODIFYING PHRASES AND CLAUSES.

Misplaced or dangling phrases and clauses can be very confusing.

MISPLACED MODIFIERS are simply in the wrong place, an error of position.

MISPLACED: I chased the dog wearing nothing but my socks.

Who wore the socks?

CORRECT: Wearing nothing but my socks, I chased the dog.

The underlined verbal phrase is now correctly positioned to modify the subject of the sentence rather than the dog.

MISPLACED: I wanted to marry her frequently.

CORRECT: I frequently wanted to marry her.

DANGLING MODIFIERS describe something that has been omitted from the sentence, an error of omission.

DANGLING: At the age of five, my father died.

The introductory prepositional phrase clearly does not modify my father, unless he had a *very* early puberty.

CORRECT: When I was five, my father died.

7) MAINTAIN SENTENCE PARALLELISM.

Parallelism is the use of equivalent grammatical structures to express ideas of equal importance within a sentence.

These equivalent structures often consist of a series or a list.

FAULTY: To win her forgiveness, Clay tried begging, promising, and tears.

Clay tried three things, two of which are expressed as verbals - begging and promising. The third is a regular noun. In this case, all three should be verbals.

PARALLEL: To win her forgiveness, Clay tried begging, promising, and crying.

Be sure that phrases and clauses used to express parallel ideas occur in the same grammatical form.

FAULTY: The senator admitted he needed money to buy a new car, to finance his mother's liposuction, and for paying off his bookie.

The first two elements in this series are expressed in verbal phrases while the last one is expressed in a prepositional phrase. All three elements should be expressed in verbal phrases.

PARALLEL: The senator admitted he needed money to buy a new car, to finance his mother's liposuction, and to pay off his bookie.

8) AVOID EXPLETIVE CONSTRUCTIONS WHENEVER POSSIBLE.

Expletive constructions consist of *it* or *there* followed by a form of the verb *to be*. They are empty words that nevertheless serve as subjects in sentences. Expletives are undesirable because they obscure the real subject of a sentence; they are weak, indirect, and wordy.

EXPLETIVE: There is a student in my class who is a former rock star.

The subject of this sentence should be *student* or *former rock star* instead of *There*, which means nothing.

DIRECT: A former rock star is a student in my class.

EXPLETIVE: It is clear that you are insane.
 DIRECT: Clearly, you are insane.

9) PUNCTUATE PROPERLY.

Proper punctuation is essential for clear writing.

CONFUSING: The Model A Ford swerved dangerously when it hit the hairpin curve the driver cursed before throwing himself from the car.

CLEAR: The Model A Ford swerved dangerously when it hit the hairpin curve. The driver cursed before throwing himself from the car.

10) MAKE SURE PRONOUNS HAVE CLEAR ANTECEDENTS.

Because pronouns refer to other words, unambiguous reference is essential for clarity.

UNCLEAR: Betty talked to Alice, and she seemed angry.

[Who seemed angry?]

CLEAR: Betty talked to Alice, who seemed angry.

[Alice seemed angry.]

See Section 6.

11) BE VIVID: SHOW, DON'T TELL.

Effective writing is vivid and lively. Use dynamic verbs and modifiers; evoke the senses when applicable; and use specific, concrete nouns and adjectives instead of general terms to create images for the reader and to convey information precisely.

TELL: When Melliotos opened his mouth, I smelled his foul breath.

SHOW: When Melliotos opened his mouth, I recoiled from the stench of rotting meat and sour milk.

12) STAY FOCUSED.

Be sure that you have a clear thesis and that all paragraphs serve to develop that thesis. Use clear, strong topic sentences in your paragraphs. For smoothness and clarity, be sure to use transitional words and phrases where needed. Avoid abstractions and include plenty of concrete, specific examples to support your assertions or ideas.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

Section 9

PROOFREADING CHECKLIST

Use these questions as a guide for developing your own proofreading strategies. Remember, your ideas are only as good as your presentation.

- 1) Are verb tenses consistent?
- 2) Do all subjects and verbs agree in number?
- 3) Is the narrative voice consistent? Beware of random shifts, especially with second person voice (you).
- 4) Are there sentence fragments?
- 5) Are there comma splices?
- 6) Are there run-on sentences?
- 7) Are pronoun/antecedent references correct? Check for the following:
 - a) ambiguous reference
 - b) weak reference
 - c) general reference
 - d) indefinite reference
- 8) Are pronouns in the proper case?
- 9) Do pronouns agree in number and gender with their antecedents? Remember, their is plural!
- 10) Are there misplaced or dangling modifiers?
- 11) Is the punctuation correct?
- 12) Is the spelling correct?
- 13) Are there redundancies and flabby expressions?
- 14) Have you maintained the active voice as much as possible?
- 15) Is there a clear thesis statement?
- 16) Do your paragraphs function properly? Check for the following:
 - a) clear topic sentences
 - b) paragraph unity and cohesion
 - c) smooth transitions
- 17) Do all paragraphs serve to develop and support the thesis?
- 18) Have you wrapped up your essay with a conclusion that relates directly to your thesis?

**EXERCISES FOR
A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT**

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

SUBJECT EXERCISE #1

PLEASE IDENTIFY ALL SUBJECTS IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES.

- 1) Creeping slowly around the desk, Melliot reached for the scalpel.
- 2) The car exploded in front of our very eyes.
- 3) Three men wearing ski masks robbed the bank.
- 4) Dorcas sang like an angel, looked like a model, and cursed like a plumber.
- 5) Christo was a confirmed skeptic.
- 6) Behind the counter beneath the cash register, the bat stood ready.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

VERB EXERCISE #1

IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES, PLEASE CIRCLE THE KERNEL, WHICH IS THE SUBJECT AND VERB OF THE MAIN CLAUSE IN THE SENTENCE. THEN, INDICATE WHETHER THE VERB IS AN ACTION VERB OR A LINKING VERB.

EXAMPLE: Dr. Melliotos threw the vial against the wall. _____

Karen drank the warm soda. _____

He returned the car with a full tank of gas. _____

The advertisement appeared on page fourteen. _____

The chef was terribly disorganized. _____

Gaston played the guitar magnificently. _____

I saw Frank put the hot pepper in the wedding cake. _____

Alice was by his side during the entire ordeal. _____

The poodle fell from the balcony into the pool. _____

Unfortunately, I look like Larry of the Three Stooges. _____

I looked straight into Ed McMahon's eyes and fainted. _____

She wanted more than I could give. _____

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

VERB EXERCISE #2

CIRCLE THE ACTION VERBS IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES. SOME SENTENCES MAY CONTAIN MORE THAN ONE ACTION VERB.

- 1) Cole Barnett squinted as the sun hit his eyes.
- 2) He spat into the dirt.
- 3) Karma drove non-stop from Toronto.
- 4) Carl hoped for a miracle.
- 5) Blake reached for the glass behind the counter.
- 6) Melliores, who drove like a madman, cursed the stoplight.
- 7) Frank, who was an unusually observant man, noticed the strange old man in the corner.
- 8) I left before Monique returned.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

VERB EXERCISE #3

PLEASE CIRCLE THE LINKING VERBS IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES.
THERE MAY BE MORE THAN ONE.

- 1) Jake was an idiot.
- 2) Carl seemed distracted this morning.
- 3) Melliot's face looked like a collapsed lung.
- 4) I felt curiously indifferent.
- 5) They were ready to begin the experiment.
- 6) Although they had prepared for the ordeal, no one seemed ready when the machine roared to life.
- 7) Monique was disgusted when my father vomited in the potato salad.
- 8) Claire smelled like a tropical herb garden.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

OBJECT EXERCISE #1

IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES, PLEASE CIRCLE THE KERNELS AND UNDERLINE THE DIRECT OBJECTS.

- 1) Gaspar slammed the knife on the counter.
- 2) Arlene sprinkled the cayenne into the cake batter.
- 3) Miss Duran frantically turned the key.
- 4) Outside, she heard Melliot's raspy laugh in the hallway.
- 5) Frank gave me the banana.
- 6) Not easily rattled, Jake nevertheless dropped the wrench.
- 7) Gloria sang the song as beautifully as her tone deafness would permit.
- 8) I built that house in nine days.
- 9) Vince played the guitar brilliantly.
- 10) This course gives me a pain in the butt.
- 11) Pierre ate sixteen lobsters before he passed out.
- 12) After breakfast, we painted the house.
- 13) Alice told the story with great vigor.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

OBJECT EXERCISE #2

IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES, PLEASE CIRCLE THE KERNELS AND UNDERLINE THE INDIRECT OBJECTS.

- 1) Clair sent Robert a passionate love letter.
- 2) This guy gives me a pain in the butt.
- 3) Carl sent Monique a bouquet of roses.
- 4) Pedro gave Carlos the benefit of the doubt.
- 5) Bill mailed Detective Stein the incriminating photos.

IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES PLEASE CIRCLE THE KERNELS AND UNDERLINE THE OBJECTS OF THE PREPOSITION.

- 1) I hid behind the counter.
- 2) Clark dove under the porch when the police arrived.
- 3) After breakfast we headed down the shaft.
- 4) The police looked behind the barn for the missing bales.
- 5) The old car glistened in the sunlight.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

ADJECTIVE EXERCISE

PLEASE CIRCLE THE KERNELS IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES. THEN DRAW AN ARROW FROM EACH UNDERLINED ADJECTIVE TO THE WORD IT DESCRIBES.

REMEMBER: ADJECTIVES MODIFY NOUNS OR PRONOUNS AND TELL US SUCH THINGS AS *WHICH, WHAT, WHOSE, WHAT KIND, AND HOW MANY*.

EXAMPLE: Paul placed the ancient, shattered cup in the antique safe.

- 1) I couldn't believe the horrible mess that suddenly greeted us.
- 2) Her brother, who was a respected judge, gladly accepted the generous bribe.
- 3) This screwdriver was very important to my complicated plans of escape.
- 4) Although forty senior congressmen finally confessed to accepting bribes, Frank's editor strongly argued that the lead story was not an earthshaking scandal.
- 5) Melliores' cavernous office had a sinister quality.
- 6) Paula's ambitious dreams of escaping this dreary routine soon became a reality.
- 7) The razor-like teeth of the rabid weasel glistened in the bright moonlight.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

ADVERB EXERCISE

IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES, PLEASE CIRCLE THE KERNELS. THEN PLEASE DRAW AN ARROW FROM EACH UNDERLINED ADVERB TO THE WORD IT DESCRIBES.

REMEMBER: ADVERBS MODIFY VERBS, ADJECTIVES AND OTHER ADVERBS. THEY TELL US *WHEN*, *WHERE*, *TO WHAT EXTENT*, AND *HOW*.

EXAMPLE: Although his hands were finally free, Hans still struggled desperately.

- 1) The last Studebaker rolled too slowly off the assembly line.
- 2) Yesterday, Orlov acted very strangely before he went away.
- 3) Dr. Melliotis almost succeeded in connecting the hot wire to the shower handle.
- 4) Because he was not able to lock the door, he was interrupted much too soon.
- 5) I never liked the lower part of town.
- 6) Natasha was extremely grateful for the totally unexpected windfall.
- 7) You will go there now.
- 8) Below, the bone snapped very loudly, making a sound that closely resembled a tree cracking in the brutally harsh cold of a Siberian winter night.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

PHRASE EXERCISE #1

IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES, PLEASE IDENTIFY THE UNDERLINED PHRASES AS EITHER PREPOSITIONAL, VERBAL, OR APPOSITIVE BY WRITING P, V OR A ABOVE THE UNDERLINED SEGMENTS.

ALSO CIRCLE THE KERNELS - THE SIMPLE SUBJECT AND THE SIMPLE PREDICATE - IN EACH SENTENCE.

- 1) Walking slowly backwards, Angelo was unaware of the rabid weasel, which waited patiently in the darkness.
- 2) He felt a sharp stab of pain above his ankle and then started limping frantically towards the dumpster.
- 3) Glowing eerily in the fog, the weasel's razor sharp teeth sunk deeper into Angelo's now bloody leg.
- 4) Diving headfirst into the relative safety of the dumpster seemed to be his only option.
- 5) A few of the baby weasels in the bottom of the dumpster began to drool when Angelo landed next to them.
- 6) Angelo, a mild-mannered person, was no match for the hungry infants.
- 7) Despite his grotesque screams, no one came to rescue him.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

PHRASE/CLAUSE EXERCISE #1

In the following sentences, please circle the kernel parts and identify underlined segments as either VERBAL (V), APPOSITIVE (A) or PREPOSITIONAL (P) PHRASES, OR as either RELATIVE (R) or DEPENDENT (D) CLAUSES.

REMEMBER:

PHRASES NEVER HAVE SUBJECTS OR VERBS. CLAUSES ALWAYS HAVE SUBJECTS AND VERBS.

- 1) Bribing a police officer, as you must certainly know, is the best way to avoid legal fees.
- 2) Dr. Melliot, who had recently arrived from Montenegro, was completely insane,
although the inmates were the only ones who realized it.
- 3) People who live in glass houses should buy curtains.
- 4) A few of my favorite shovels leaned against the post supporting the main beam.
- 5) While Dr. Melliot continued his grotesque experiments, his patients lived in terror.
- 6) The woman who answered the want ad waited patiently in the doctor's office.
- 7) Melliot, a gaunt, reptilian man, kept mostly to himself.
- 8) Despite his scandal-ridden past, Melliot was able to fool many reputable doctors.
- 9) Believing the lies that Melliot so convincingly told, Anna Duran's aged, concerned grandparents committed her to the Sandor Asylum.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

PHRASE/CLAUSE EXERCISE #2

IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES, PLEASE CIRCLE THE KERNELS AND IDENTIFY THE UNDERLINED SEGMENTS AS EITHER VERBAL (V), APPOSITIVE (A), OR PREPOSITIONAL (P) PHRASES, OR AS EITHER RELATIVE (R) OR DEPENDENT(D) CLAUSES.

- 1) Choosing caution over bravery, I watched as the pack of howling dogs savaged Melliot's henchman, who had seriously miscalculated when he went outside the perimeter.
- 2) The yelps of the wild dogs blended with the screams of the unfortunate Mr. Brazov, a man clearly out of his element.
- 3) Dr. Melliot's, tired of this cat and mouse game, decided to employ harsher measures when Miss. Duran refused to open the door.
- 4) As soon as he turned the dial on the control panel, Anna smelled the distinct aroma of ripe peaches.
- 5) Squinting into the sun, Cole Barnett surveyed the wreckage as he lit a match on his beard stubble.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

PHRASE/CLAUSE EXERCISE #3

IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES, PLEASE CIRCLE THE KERNELS AND IDENTIFY THE UNDERLINED SEGMENTS AS EITHER VERBAL (V), APPOSITIVE (A), OR PREPOSITIONAL (P) PHRASES, OR AS EITHER RELATIVE (R) OR DEPENDENT(D) CLAUSES.

- 1) When I realized the brake lines had been cut, I tried to shift the car into reverse.
- 2) The machine, which could freeze-dry a human brain, was useless after the fuse blew.
- 4) Fearing the worst, the authorities began to sift through the rubble of the compound before the fire was extinguished.
- 5) The waffle iron that lay gathering dust on the top shelf of the kitchen cabinet had a long and sinister history.
- 6) I refused to answer any more questions about the car when I became convinced that my attorney was trying to frame me.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

PHRASE/CLAUSE EXERCISE #4

IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES, PLEASE CIRCLE THE KERNELS AND IDENTIFY THE UNDERLINED SEGMENTS AS EITHER VERBAL (V), APPOSITIVE (A), OR PREPOSITIONAL (P) PHRASES, OR AS EITHER RELATIVE (R) OR DEPENDENT(D) CLAUSES.

- 1) Forced to make this most difficult decision, Anna chose to risk her life rather than to endure another night in this madhouse.
- 2) As she crept down the cold, drafty hallway, Anna detected the horrible odor of chloroform coming from the operating room, which was situated at the far end of the corridor.
- 3) She could also hear the steady wheeze of the iron lung that had become her beloved Victor's gruesome prison after Melliot's gave him the curare injection.
- 4) Although she was tempted to kiss Victor good-bye, Anna realized that she had only seven minutes before her absence would be noticed.
- 5) After she crawled for a hundred yards beneath the kitchen to a bulkhead leading outdoors, she felt the sedative that Melliot's slipped into her tea begin to work.
- 6) As she lost consciousness, she heard the pitiful screams, which came from the tower room.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

PHRASE/CLAUSE EXERCISE #5

IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES, PLEASE CIRCLE THE KERNELS AND IDENTIFY THE UNDERLINED SEGMENTS AS EITHER VERBAL (V), APPOSITIVE (A), OR PREPOSITIONAL (P) PHRASES, OR AS EITHER RELATIVE (R) OR DEPENDENT(D) CLAUSES.

- 1) Fearing discovery, Adam burned the documents in the stove that stood in the corner of the room.
- 2) I ducked behind the liquor store by the all-night laundromat.
- 3) After it crested the steep hill, the old Cadillac swerved as it shot across the median line.
- 4) Most of the congressmen, despite their denials, were guilty of perjury although the public seemed oblivious.
- 5) A few of the lobsters escaped from the tank, which was in the middle of the restaurant.
- 6) Leaning into the wind, Maria, who had a fear of heights, balanced precariously on the wing as the plane began to plunge towards the barn.
- 7) Richard Nixon, embittered by the public's rejection of him, decided to blow up the Lincoln Memorial.
- 8) Swimming in the moonlight on a warm night is one of my favorite pastimes.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

PHRASE/CLAUSE EXERCISE #6

IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES, PLEASE CIRCLE THE KERNELS AND IDENTIFY THE UNDERLINED SEGMENTS AS EITHER VERBAL (V), APPOSITIVE (A), OR PREPOSITIONAL (P) PHRASES, OR AS EITHER RELATIVE (R) OR DEPENDENT (D) CLAUSES.

- 1) Before Anna had a chance to grab the key, Mellioties lunged at her outstretched hand.
- 2) Alerted by Mellioties' raspy wheeze, she withdrew her hand only seconds before the knife, which Mellioties wielded with the accuracy of a surgeon, sliced into the soft door.
- 3) Although Mellioties could smell Anna's fear, he decided to try charm one more time.
- 4) Through the closed door, she could hear Mellioties wheezing as he tried to convince her to give up.
- 4) Anna now understood that her only hope was strapped inside an iron lung on the third floor.
- 5) The thought of Mellioties' morgue breath and oozing lips inspired her to climb into the airshaft above the waiting room.
- 6) Fearing Mellioties' wrath, Anna pried the cover from the ventilator shaft.
- 7) As the door behind her began to buckle, Anna inched her way to safety.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

PHRASE/CLAUSE EXERCISE #7

IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES, PLEASE CIRCLE THE KERNELS AND IDENTIFY THE UNDERLINED SEGMENTS AS EITHER VERBAL (V), APPOSITIVE (A), OR PREPOSITIONAL (P) PHRASES, OR AS EITHER RELATIVE (R) OR DEPENDENT(D) CLAUSES.

- 1) As Anna clawed her way onto the roof, the glowing eyes of the weasels receded in the distance.
- 2) Scanning the roof, Anna, who was afraid of heights, realized that she had jumped out of the pan and into the fire.
- 3) After she had calculated the risks, she inched her way across the top of the roof, shaking violently from her fear.
- 4) Laughing suddenly, she realized that her high heel shoes could be her undoing.
- 5) Behind the door, she heard the savage snarls as Mellioties attacked the hinges with an iron bar.
- 6) When she saw the door begin to buckle, Anna knew that she had nowhere to run.
- 7) Thinking of her beloved Victor inside the iron lung, Anna braced herself for the inevitable confrontation.
- 8) With a bestial snarl, Mellioties tore the hinges from the door before he climbed through the hatchway.
- 9) He roared with laughter when he saw the look of terror that showed on Anna's face.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

PHRASE/CLAUSE EXERCISE #8

IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES, PLEASE CIRCLE THE KERNELS AND IDENTIFY THE UNDERLINED SEGMENTS AS EITHER VERBAL (V), APPOSITIVE (A), OR PREPOSITIONAL (P) PHRASES, OR AS EITHER RELATIVE (R) OR DEPENDENT(D) CLAUSES.

- 1) As Melliotes scrambled onto the steep roof, Anna pulled off her high heels to gain a better footing.
- 2) Scanning the top of the building, Anna saw a door which might lead to safety.
- 3) Melliotes hissed that Miss Durant would never leave the Institute alive.
- 4) When she reached the door, she tried to open it.
- 5) Despite her best efforts, the door wouldn't move although she used all her strength..
- 6) Realizing all was lost, Anna decided that she would rather leap from the roof than be imprisoned again in this mad house.
- 7) Melliotes was now only two feet from her face.
- 8) After she said a silent prayer, she struck the wheezing man in the face with one of her stiletto shoes.
- 9) Melliotes shrieked in pain as the pointed heel gouged his left eye.
- 10) He balanced precariously on the roof for a moment before he plunged into the river that lay far below.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

PHRASE/CLAUSE EXERCISE #9

IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES, PLEASE CIRCLE THE KERNELS AND IDENTIFY THE UNDERLINED SEGMENTS AS EITHER VERBAL (V), APPOSITIVE (A), OR PREPOSITIONAL (P) PHRASES, OR AS EITHER RELATIVE (R) OR DEPENDENT(D) CLAUSES.

- 1) Anna watched with disbelief as Mellioties cartwheeled through the air before he finally disappeared into the nearly frozen river.
- 2) Balanced precariously on the roof, she struggled for balance while the wind tore at her.
- 3) After she regained her composure, Anna climbed into the ventilator shaft, determined to free Victor from the iron lung.
- 4) Although Mellioties could no longer hurt her, she hugged the wall of the corridor outside the operating room when she heard the rabid weasels on the stairs above her.
- 5) She decided to free the other patients before she would try to help her old friend escape from his iron cocoon.
- 6) Unfortunately for her, Mellioties had hidden the massive keys that opened the door to the main ward.
- 7) When she realized that she would never figure out what the demented doctor had done with the keys, Anna decided to open the doors with an axe, which lay in a utility closet.
- 8) As Anna prepared to free the inmates, Mellioties sunk deeper into the ooze of the river bottom.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

SENTENCE COMBINING EXERCISE #1

PLEASE COMBINE THE FOLLOWING SETS OF SENTENCES IN TWO WAYS. FIRST, CREATE A COMPLEX SENTENCE BY CHANGING THE FIRST SENTENCE INTO A DEPENDENT CLAUSE AND LINKING IT WITH THE SECOND SENTENCE. THEN CREATE A COMPOUND SENTENCE BY JOINING THE TWO SENTENCES USING A COMMA AND A COORDINATING CONJUNCTION OR A SEMICOLON AND A CONJUNCTIVE ADVERB.

EXAMPLE:

The lion roared. I was terrified.

Complex: When the lion roared, I was terrified.

Compound: The lion roared, so I was terrified.

Anna was out of ammunition. She pointed the gun at Melliot, aiming between his wildly blinking eyes.

The course was very difficult. I studied much harder than I had before.

The old Flathead Mercury threw a rod. A plume of blue smoke poured out of the tailpipe.

I was certain that the next click would open the safe. I wasn't worried about the guard returning.

Melliot smelled like a dumpster full of rotting pizza. The lovely young woman recoiled as he approached.

IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES, CHANGE THE RELATIVE CLAUSES TO EITHER APPOSITIVE, VERBAL OR PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES.

The man who stood on the window ledge seemed unconcerned.

The bathroom that was at the end of the hall seemed too far away for a man in my condition.

The car, which was an Armstrong Sidley, idled seductively at the curb.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

SENTENCE COMBINING EXERCISE #2

PLEASE COMBINE THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES AS INDICATED.

1) Melliot's heard the sound of feet on the roof above his head. He realized Anna had escaped. (Create a complex sentence by turning the first sentence into a dependent clause.)

2) I worked late last night. I overslept today. (Create a compound sentence using a BOYFANS.)

3) The woman on the bus stood up to leave. The driver jammed on the brakes. (Create a complex sentence by changing the first sentence to a dependent clause.)

4) I practiced all week for this test. I am confident that I have done well. (Create a compound sentence using a conjunctive adverb.)

5) The police overlooked the murder weapon despite the exhaustive search. The waffle iron lay undisturbed on the top shelf for twenty years. (Create a compound sentence using BOYFANS.)

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

SENTENCE COMBINING EXERCISE #3

PLEASE COMBINE THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES EXACTLY AS INDICATED.

1) Melliotés plunged towards the icy waters. He cursed his fate. (Create a **COMPLEX** sentence by turning the first sentence into a dependent clause.)

2) He hit the water with tremendous force. Everything went blank. (Create a **COMPOUND** sentence using one of the **BOYFANS** and the proper punctuation.)

3) Anna realized that finally fate had looked favorably upon her. She allowed herself a moment to relax. (Create a **COMPOUND** sentence by using a semicolon and an appropriate conjunction.)

4) The inmates began to celebrate. They learned that Melliotés would torture them no more. (Create a **COMPLEX** sentence by turning the second sentence into a dependent clause.)

5) The car was brand new. It was parked in front of Burger King. The car was stolen. (Combine all three sentences into one **SIMPLE** sentence.)

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

SENTENCE COMBINING EXERCISE #4

PLEASE COMBINE THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES EXACTLY AS REQUIRED.

- 1) Don't look for me when you get back. I'll be gone. (Create a COMPLEX sentence.)

- 2) Blake was sure he could keep the old car under control. The Model A Ford swerved dangerously close to the edge of the ravine. (Create a COMPOUND sentence.)

- 3) You could maybe find a better deal. You would have to look for a long time. (Create a COMPLEX sentence.)

- 4) Melliot's spoke with a thick accent. He was from Montenegro. (Create a SIMPLE sentence by creating a relative clause out of the second sentence.)

- 5) The police overlooked the murder weapon despite the exhaustive search. The waffle iron lay undisturbed on the top shelf for twenty five years. (Create a COMPOUND sentence by using a BOYFANS.)

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

SENTENCE FLAW EXERCISE #1

BELOW ARE EXAMPLES OF COMMA SPLICES, FRAGMENTS AND RUN-ON SENTENCES. IN THE SPACE PROVIDED AT THE RIGHT OF EACH EACH EXAMPLE, PLEASE IDENTIFY THE MISTAKE AS EITHER A FRAGMENT (F), A SPLICE (S), OR AS A RUN-ON (RO).

THEN CORRECT THE ERROR ANY WAY YOU WISH.

EXAMPLE:

Arlene refused the invitation, she was too poor to have the proper clothes.

1) John lunged at the door. Which surprised me.

2) I took one look over the edge of the balcony, I turned and returned to the room._____

3) The general was furious. After the failed coup attempt.

4) The day was so beautiful, I had to get up

5) The accident sounded horrible. Although the damage was minimal.

6) Deep in the woods Brazov struggled for life the wolf lunged at him.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

SENTENCE FLAW EXERCISE #2

BELOW ARE EXAMPLES OF COMMA SPLICES, FRAGMENTS AND RUN-ON SENTENCES. IN THE SPACE PROVIDED AT THE RIGHT OF EACH EXAMPLE, PLEASE IDENTIFY THE MISTAKE AS EITHER A FRAGMENT (F), A SPLICE (S), OR AS A RUN-ON (RO).

THEN CORRECT THE ERROR ANY WAY YOU WISH.

1) I stared straight ahead. Seeing nothing but telephone poles spreading towards the horizon. _____

2) Melliot's stared at the surgical supply catalogue he began to drool. _____

3) It made no sense. That he could treat me this way. _____

4) Eleanor tried the number a few times, she was getting nowhere. _____

5) Brazov returned with the money. Which surprised everyone at the institute. Except Melliot's. _____

6) I was so hungry, I ate five hot dogs and a pound of onion rings. _____

7) I was so relieved. When Francis returned. _____

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

SENTENCE FLAW EXERCISE #3

PLEASE IDENTIFY THE FOLLOWING SENTENCE FLAWS AS EITHER SPLICES, FRAGMENTS, OR RUN-ONS. THEN FIX THEM IN ANY WAY YOU WISH.

- 1) I was so hungry, I began to look at my pet parrot in a different way. _____
- 2) Jake only looked to the left. Which was most unfortunate. _____
- 3) The truck approached from the right and struck him, Jake didn't have a chance. _____
- 4) He landed on a vegetable cart. Before the poor vendor could move it. _____
- 5) Never go to that part of town alone things can happen that can never be undone. ____.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

PRONOUN EXERCISE #1

Please circle the correct pronouns in the following sentences.

Between you and (me / I), Dr. Mellioties plans to kill all of us.

Ed McMahon's constant phone calls gave Isador and (he / him) a big pain in the butt.

Either Jerry or (she/her) will send you the money after we have received the incriminating photos.

Are (we/us) party animals invited as well?

Calvin and (she / her) have gone shopping with my credit card.

Certainly you must remember Edna and (I / me), especially after that incident with the Jello in the hot tub.

Bill entered after Frank and (I / me).

Despite the obvious fact that we were nowhere in the vicinity at the time, Judge Morrissey blamed (we/ us) three for the revolting deposit he discovered all too late on his car seat.

Did you think it was (he / him)?

I tried to convince Miss Duran that if (we / us) patients didn't stick together, Dr. Mellioties would prevail in this demented game of cat and mouse.

When I realized the implications, I looked at Stella and said, "Do you mean to tell me that Mellioties is alone in there with my mother and (she/ her)?"

The "good doctor" enticed them to the Institute by promising to treat her husband and (she/ her) for free.

Neither Bill nor (he /him) had any information.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

PRONOUN EXERCISE #2

IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES, PLEASE CIRCLE THE CORRECT WORD CHOICE.

- 1) Despite his protestations, Jake gave Frank and I/me a full refund.
- 2) Although Cord knew that Sarge and I/me had been fighting, he didn't think there was a serious problem.
- 3) I didn't realize that Mona and he/him were sleeping under the tarp when I fired up the Weed Whacker.
- 4) The whole crew decided to go along with Olga, Brazov and me/I.
- 5) Each student must take care of their/her own problems.
- 6) Everyone wants their/his own way.
- 7) William Shatner and me/I are old friends.
- 8) Donna didn't believe that Berryl and him/he were plotting to kill her.
- 9) We/Us five were the only ones who knew the dreadful secret of the old waffle iron.
- 10) He had no idea when Florence and me/I would be ready to go.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

PRONOUN EXERCISE #3: AGREEMENT

PLEASE CIRCLE THE CORRECT WORD OR WORDS IN EACH OF THESE SENTENCES.

According to the latest statistics, one out of every three household accidents is/are caused by the faulty use of ladders.

Dr. Melliot's glared hatefully at Nurse Ostriker when he realized that each of his orders to increase Miss Dorand's medication was/were being ignored.

None of the children were/was allowed in the office.

When an employer is interviewing you, one of the first things she/they look/looks for is experience.

Neither of the men was/were able to reach his/their goal.

Dr. Melliot's is one of those rare men who is/are able to inspire revulsion and adoration at the same time.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

PUNCTUATION EXERCISE #1

IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES, PLEASE ADD THE CORRECT PUNCTUATION WHERE NEEDED. IN SOME CASES IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO CHANGE LOWER CASE LETTERS TO CAPITAL LETTERS. THESE SENTENCES CONTAIN COMMON PUNCTUATION ERRORS. MANY ARE ALSO EXAMPLES OF SPLICES OR RUN-ON SENTENCES.

- 1) Dr. Melliores who had just arrived from Montenegro was considered by other doctors to be a desperate worthless demented nut.
- 2) The trouble with you Professor Braun is that you lack vision.
- 3) On my vacation I visited Romania Bulgaria and Macedonia.
- 4) After making sure the bears were securely tied I was able to settle in for the night
- 5) Of course I will accept your invitation don't think however that I will let down my guard.
- 6) The place was a total mess but the food was great
- 7) I will let you go if you make one comment about this evening however I will have you shot
- 8) I turned on the ignition the engine roared to life.
- 9) I looked at Anna and said Please marry me.
- 10) Anna who looked truly surprised laughed and said Not on your life.
- 11) Romania a country long associated with vampires has had a tragic history.
- 12) I looked up Harry Green s number in the book and I copied the address.
- 13) The event was not without problems however we at least were paid on time.
- 14) To receive your free copy of *Modern Mercenary* just send in this handy order form.
- 15) Jake turned the corner and ran straight into the back of a police cruiser.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

PUNCTUATION EXERCISE #2

PLEASE PROVIDE PUNCTUATION WHERE NEEDED IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES.

- 1) After Jason dove from the speeding car he vowed never to hitch a ride again.
- 2) Melliot's leered at Miss Durant and hissed If you insist on being difficult there are ways of making it easier.
- 3) The menu for tonight is as follows rice and beans sourdough bread tossed salad and buffalo chips.
- 4) Despite the obvious risks involved in Paula's scheme Jack who had just arrived agreed to the plan.
- 5) Why do you treat me like an idiot
- 6) The crowd seethed with ill will however no violence erupted that night.
- 7) The problem here Jack is one of poverty.
- 8) I'd rather be in Dodge City Kansas the historic home of Marshall Matt Dillon
- 9) I took a last look behind me and then I turned away and just kept moving.
- 10) People who have nasty secrets by the way shouldnt contemplate a career in politics.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

PUNCTUATION EXERCISE #3

PLEASE ADD PUNCTUATION WHERE NEEDED IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES.

- 1) Alexander a fervid admirer of Curly Howard never recovered from his idol's tragic death in 1947.
- 2) The car s paint job looked perfect however the vehicle was really a bondo bucket.
- 3) The cop looked at Myrna and said sarcastically Have you had a little bit to drink
- 4) Paulas record collection featured rare discs by Fabian Sonny Fisher and Louis Jordan.
- 5) Despite his repulsive manner Dr. Melliot was able to convince the jury of his innocence.
- 6) John disconnected the car battery and then he went inside.
- 7) Just who do you think you are
- 8) The Major lived in a sad shabby apartment in Kansas City Missouri.
- 9) Although Nixon denied ever telling a lie photographs clearly show his nose growing larger during his years as president.
- 10) Quiet on the set yelled the director.
- 11) Ben ate a ham sandwich and then walked off the cliff.
- 12) I have three favorite cars Model A Fords Studebakers and Morris Minors.
- 13) Sulfitas a naturally occurring substance in wine can be fatal to some people.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

PUNCTUATION EXERCISE #4

PLEASE PUNCTUATE THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES AS NEEDED.

- 1) After securing the lock on the operating room door Dr. Mellioten began work on the shock therapy machine.
- 2) He stared at Anna and said If you insist on plotting against me I will arrange for an accident to happen
- 3) Richard Nixon who had the dubious distinction of being the only president to resign in disgrace vowed revenge on his tormentors.
- 4) The ingredients are as follows baking soda ginger cayenne and whisky.
- 5) Please Victor pass the ammunition.
- 6) I will do whatever it takes however I am not happy about this situation.
- 7) Help
- 8) What did you say
- 9) Anyway we had a great time.
- 10) Looking over his shoulder Jake walked right into the telephone pole.
- 11) Paula s car was a rolling disaster.
- 12) I ate five chili dogs and then went to sleep.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

PUNCTUATION EXERCISE #5

PLEASE CORRECT ANY PUNCTUATION ERRORS IN THE FOLLOWING SENTENCES.

- 1) Although she suffered from vertigo Anna forgot her fear as she pulled herself towards the first landing.
- 2) Melliot who by now had forced his way through the locked door looked in vain for his prey and then he did a strange thing.
- 3) Realizing Anna had squeezed herself into the small opening of the airshaft he laughed obscenely and then ran from the room.
- 4) He returned a few minutes later however he was not alone.
- 5) He held a writhing sack in one hand he bent down and hissed into the airshaft.
- 6) He said I don't want you to be lonely Miss Duran in that nasty ventilator shaft therefore I've brought you some company.
- 7) Cackling insanely Melliot emptied the bag of snarling weasels into the airshaft.
- 8) Anna looked down to see five sets of glowing hateful red eyes growing closer by the minute.
- 9) She had only three options staying in the air shaft to fight it out making it to the next opening or becoming supper for a bunch of furry piranha.
- 10) What happened next however defied any explanation.

A WRITER'S BASIC TOOLKIT

PUNCTUATION EXERCISE #6

- 1) As Mellioties scrambled onto the steep roof Anna who had a fear of heights pulled off her high heels to gain a better footing.
- 2) Scanning the top of the building Anna saw a door and she began to move toward it.
- 3) Mellioties hissed Miss Duran you'll never leave the Institute alive.
- 4) Anna reached the door and tried to open it.
- 5) Despite her best efforts the door wouldn't move however she wasn't about to give up.
- 6) Anna realized she had only three choices to leap to a certain death from the roof to beg for mercy or to attempt to survive Mellioties murderous intentions.
- 7) Realizing all was lost Anna decided that she would rather leap from the roof than be imprisoned again in this mad house.
- 8) Mellioties who by now was only two feet from her face broke out in a broad nasty grin.
- 9) What happened next however was not what he had in mind.
- 10) After she said a silent prayer she struck the obese malodorous wheezing man in the face with one of her stiletto heels.
- 11) As the pointed heel gouged his left eye Mellioties shrieked in pain
- 12) He balanced precariously on the roof for a moment and then he plunged into the river far below.

FOOLPROOF PHRASE / CLAUSE "CHEAT SHEET"

If you follow these simple steps, you can, without fail, determine the type of phrase or clause underlined in the phrase/clause exercises.

- 1) Determine whether you're dealing with a phrase or clause by asking whether or not the underlined segment contains a subject and a verb.

If the answer is "NO," you're dealing with a PHRASE. If the answer is "YES," you're dealing with a CLAUSE.

- 2) Next, determine what type of phrase or clause you have by asking the following series of questions:

IF IT'S A PHRASE:

- 1) Does it begin with a verbal? (Word ending in *ed*, *ing*, or *to + verb*?)

If it does, you have a VERBAL PHRASE. If it doesn't, continue with the following questions:

- 2) Does it begin with an article (*a*, *an*, or *the*)?

If it does, you have an APPOSITIVE PHRASE.

If it doesn't, you have a PREPOSITIONAL PHRASE.

IF IT'S A CLAUSE:

- 1) Does it begin with a relative pronoun (*who*, *what*, *which*, *that*, *whom*, *whomever*, *whoever*, *whose*)?

If it does, you have a RELATIVE CLAUSE.

If it doesn't, you have a DEPENDENT CLAUSE