

Sentence FAQs

What is a sentence?

A sentence is a statement. It is a complete thought beginning with a capital letter and ending with a period, question mark, or exclamation point. A grammatically correct sentence communicates something about a subject.

Vocabulary for Words

Noun

A person, place, thing or idea.

- writer, America, period, theory

Pronoun

A substitute for a noun.

- I, you, it, their, this, who, anyone

Verb

An action or way of being.

- write, begins, is, communicate

Adjective

Describes nouns and pronouns.

- complete, capital, precise

Adverb

Describes verbs, adjectives, or adverbs grammatically.

- *clearly* writing, read instructions *first*

Preposition

Describes words in terms of their relationship to place or time.

- *before* a verb, *during* revision, *near* the end

Conjunction

Describes relationship of words, phrases, and clauses to each other.

- for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so

Interjection

Expresses emotional tone, usually at the beginning of the sentence.

- Oh, Wow! Hey, Indeed

Vocabulary for Sentences

Subject

Who or what a sentence is about, the main point.

- The *food* on the plate grew cold.

Object

Something that receives an action.

- The students revised their *drafts.*

Predicate

The main action and/or description of a sentence.

- The pizza on my plate, a large slice, *was growing cold.*

Nominalization

Making words or phrases into nouns.

- This illustrates the *applicability* of annotating readings.

Phrase

A small group of words without a subject and verb used for a single notion or idea.

- The pizza *on my plate,* *a large slice,* was growing cold.

Clause

A group of words with a subject and verb communicating a larger, but not complete, notion.

- *While I ate,* *chewing slowly as I thought of other things,* the food grew cold and lost its taste.

Fragment

A phrase or clause punctuated as if it were a sentence.

- While I ate.

Run-on

A sentence where clauses are not properly separated with punctuation, or which makes more than one statement.

- Students achieve their goals they study many hours a week.

How do I punctuate a sentence?

At the end of a sentence

- Period for neutral statements.
- Question mark asks something?
- Exclamation point to indicate excitement!
- Numbers above the text at the end of a sentence indicate a footnote or endnote used for citation or explanation of something relevant.*¹*

Inside a sentence

- Comma to separate ideas, notions, or simple lists.
- Em dash to highlight important ideas—notions that are related but slightly different.
- Semicolon; to indicate a closely related clause.
- Colon: to introduce an independent clause, a complicated list, a block quote, dialogue, an indented list, or to separate titles from subtitles.
- Quotation marks at the “beginning and end of words that are exactly quoted from a source or for dialog”; most punctuation is placed inside the mark at the end, “like this.” Semicolons and colons go outside them. If there is a citation, place the period after the second parenthesis, like this (Author, page).
- Parentheses are used to set apart points (that can be left out but explain something useful) or citations (Author, year, page).
- Square brackets inside a quote are for “things [words or punctuation] added to make the quotation useful” in the context of the sentence.
- Ellipses are three spaced periods indicating, “Something . . . left out of a quote.”
- Apostrophes can indicate ownership, as in the writer’s pen; a contraction, as in don’t for do not; or mark a “quote ‘inside’ a quotation.”

¹ Most major citation styles use notes, but APA does not.

How can I correct sentences?

Tips for Proofreading

- Read the piece backward; start with the last paragraph.
- Only work with one sentence at a time.
- Read very slowly; it's best if someone who is not the writer reads.

Clarity

Read the sentence slowly to someone else. If it seems unclear to either one of you, use other words, punctuate, or rearrange the phrases.

Unclear: I ate, thought other thoughts chewing slowly while the food lost its taste the plate grew cold.

Revised: While I ate, chewing slowly as I thought of other things, the food grew cold and lost its taste.

Sentence Fragment

Either add what is missing or attach it to another sentence in order to make a complete statement.

Fragment: While they slowly ate.

Revised: While they slowly ate, the food lost its taste.

Revised: The food lost its taste while they slowly ate.

Run-on Sentence

Separate the notions with punctuation or explain how they are related.

- Make it into two sentences by using a period.
- Use a semi-colon to connect closely related clauses.
- Use a comma and a conjunction, so your reader knows how the ideas are related: and, but, or, nor, for, so, yet.

Run-on: Metro students reach their goals they study many hours.

Revised: Metro students reach their goals. They study many hours.

Revised: Metro students reach their goals; they study many hours.

Revised: Metro students reach their goals, but they study many hours.